A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF PROACTIVITY DURING SOCIALIZATION

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A Longitudinal Study of Proactivity During Socialization

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my advisor and mentor, Mark Ehrhart. Without all of his support, assistance, and guidance I never would have made it this far. Thanks Mark!
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

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Over the past couple of decades organizations have become increasingly flat and decentralized, and have began to emphasize a more active role for employees in their own job management and development. As a result, the concept of employee proactivity has been a growing area of theory and research. Within the workplace, proactive people are conceptualized as those who take initiative to improve their current circumstances, and take active rather than passive roles within their current positions. These employee characteristics have been shown to be desirable in various situations, resulting in beneficial employee and organizational outcomes, such as promotions, career success, innovation, self-efficacy, and perceived insider status. Of particular interest for the current study, employee proactivity has also been linked to successful socialization outcomes. The socialization period can be very important for employees in determining their future relationship with their employers and their future success in the organization. Research has examined the role that a proactive disposition and proactive behavior can play in the socialization period. Additionally, researchers have looked into the relationship between proactive personality and various employee characteristics, including proactive behavior. However, there has been little research on the link between proactive dispositions and various behaviors and characteristics from job entry and throughout the socialization period. The current research aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining proactive personality and various behaviors and characteristics during the socialization period. Specifically, it was hypothesized that proactive personality will predict feedback seeking, self-efficacy, goal clarity and fit. Additionally, it was hypothesized that changes in self-efficacy, goal clarity and fit would be related to changes in feedback seeking throughout the socialization period. Participants were 188 management trainees from an international transportation company based in the eastern United States. A repeated measures design was used, and the participants received online surveys at five time points throughout their training. Multilevel slopes-as-outcomes analyses were used to test the first set of hypotheses on the relationship between proactive personality and other variables, and parallel process growth modeling was used to assess the second set of hypotheses on the relationship between changes in variables over different time points. Results showed that proactive personality significantly predicted changes in feedback seeking throughout the socialization period, such that individuals with proactive personalities were more likely to increase their feedback seeking behaviors throughout the socialization period. Additionally, it was shown that there was a significant positive relationship between the changes in feedback seeking behaviors and changes in reported levels of goal clarity. The results of this study can provide organizations that desire a more proactive workforce insight
into how employee proactivity is related to other desirable characteristics, and how the display of proactive behavior can change throughout the socialization period.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYEE PROACTIVITY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Early Proactivity Research</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Further Construct Development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROACTIVE PERSONALITY RESEARCH</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR RESEARCH AND SOCIALIZATION</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HYPOTHESES</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Proactive Personality and Socialization</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feedback Seeking, Self-Efficacy, Employee Fit and Goal Clarity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Procedure</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Measures</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Statistical Analyses</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unconditional Growth Models</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Slopes-As-Outcomes Models</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parallel Process Model</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Limitations</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengths and Implications</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conclusion</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Time Range between Training Start Date and Data Collection in Days ..................28
Table 2. Response Rates......................................................................................................29
Table 3. Participant Response Frequencies ..........................................................................29
Table 4. Scale Reliabilities ..................................................................................................31
Table 5. Correlations for Self-Efficacy ................................................................................31
Table 6. Correlations for Fit ................................................................................................32
Table 7. Correlations for Goal Clarity..................................................................................32
Table 8. Correlations for Feedback Seeking.........................................................................32
Table 9. Correlations between Proactive Personality Scale Score and Control Variables .................................................................................................................33
Table 10. Correlations between Self Efficacy Scale Scores and Control Variables ...............33
Table 11. Correlations between Fit Scale Scores and Control Variables...............................34
Table 12. Correlations between Goal Clarity Scale Scores and Control Variables ................34
Table 13. Correlations between Feedback Seeking Scale Scores and Control Variables ..........35
Table 14. Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables at All Time Points ...................37
Table 15. Unconditional Growth Model Parameters and Variability ....................................38
Table 16. Overall Model Fit for All Hypothesized Models ..................................................39
LIST OF FIGURES

PAGE

Figure 1. Theoretical model.................................................................21
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INTRODUCTION

The construct of proactivity, as either a dispositional trait or behavioral characteristic, captures the idea of individuals taking an active role within their environments by initiating and creating changes as opposed to simply reacting and acquiescing to the demands of their surroundings (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Although proactivity was formally introduced in the organizational research literature in the 1980’s, the concept lacked a solid operational definition for many years. A more recent widely cited definition of proactive behavior by Crant (2000) has been “taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present conditions” (p. 436). Proactivity in an employee is characterized by an action-oriented role toward one’s work, such that an employee is more attentive to opportunities and taking the initiative (Bateman & Crant, 1993). This action-oriented tendency is usually thought to be aimed at creating change that is believed to enhance the employee’s current circumstances (Crant, 2000). A main feature of proactive behavior is a self-directed attempt at thinking ahead and subsequently changing either specific self or situational characteristics to produce beneficial outcomes for oneself (Bindl & Parker, 2010). A key outcome of proactive behaviors that has been widely established is an increase in organizational and individual success (Ashford & Black, 1996; Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005; Seibert, Crant & Kramer, 1999). These outcomes point to the desirable nature of proactivity as an individual characteristic in the workplace, and the benefit of identifying such characteristics. Additionally, recent claims have been made that proactive behavior is becoming that much more important due to the changing nature of the work environment (Crant, 2000; Parker, 1998). The workplace is becoming much more flat and decentralized, with an increased emphasis on innovation, competition and self-motivated employees. Thus, proactive employees will have a higher chance of success in such an environment.

The literature surrounding proactive behaviors has looked at many different domains in which proactivity takes place, including career management, stress coping, innovation, issue selling, and socialization (Crant, 2000). While employee proactivity can be beneficial throughout different workplace situations and stages of employment, a time when it may be
particularly helpful is during the initial period of employment. This time can be critical in establishing the path that one’s career will take, as well as in laying the groundwork for the relationship between a new employee and the organization. This socialization period can be used to introduce newcomers to their position and the requirements and expectations that go along with it, as well as to show both the employee and the employer whether or not the newcomers will fit with the organization and eventually become successful members of the organizational culture (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). According to the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Model proposed by Schneider (1987), if a person feels that his or her beliefs, values and behaviors do not align with an organization’s culture, they will choose to leave. The initial period of employment can serve as an opportune time for these people to determine whether or not they should continue their career at that organization or choose to find a better fit elsewhere.

Many factors and processes can facilitate a successful socialization period that will foreshadow the future career of employees and their relationship with their organization. Various studies have found a positive relationship between socialization and levels of fit, commitment, loyalty, and attachment for new employees, which can all be seen as expressions of adjustment (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas, van Vianen, & Anderson; 2004; Riordan, Weatherly, Vandenberg, & Self, 2001). Various factors have also been found to influence how well employees are socialized into their new organizations and roles. These include both organizational and individual characteristics. Employee proactivity, as expressed through behavioral and dispositional characteristics, has been one individual construct that has been of interest to socialization researchers. Proactive characteristics can be seen to play a contributing role in the socialization process, and can be seen as desirable employee characteristics in many aspects of organizational life, including socialization.

The current study is focused on the relationships among proactive personality, proactive behaviors, and other individual characteristics that have been shown to be important for the success of individuals in the workplace. People with proactive dispositions should be more likely to take the initiative during the beginning of a new job, either creating their own socialization period or supplementing a formal socialization program. Additionally, various proactive behaviors could be helpful during this entry period. Due to the uncertainty that often typifies this period for new employees, information and feedback seeking
behaviors would be helpful for employees to gather useful information about the organization that will help them adjust easier and quicker (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). While some previous research has looked at employee proactive personality during the socialization period (Kim, Hon, & Crant, 2009), the link between proactive personality and proactive behaviors (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001), and proactive behaviors during socialization (Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1998; Brett, Feldman, & Weingart, 1990; Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006; Kim et al., 2005; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), researchers have not examined the relationship between proactive personality and feedback seeking during the socialization period. The current study will address this specific relationship. Even further, this current study will also address the predictive ability of proactive personality in terms of some commonly studied employee characteristics in addition to feedback seeking. The characteristics of interest are self-efficacy, goal clarity and perceived employee fit. Finally, the relationship between changes in those employee characteristics and changes in proactive behavior during the socialization period will be examined as well. These longitudinal relationships have not been examined in prior research, nor have the possible links between changes in various behaviors; therefore, the current study can contribute to filling this gap in the literature. These longitudinal and change elements are noteworthy pieces of the current study, and can offer some very interesting insight in to a pattern of variation of the behaviors and characteristics of interest over time.

To begin, an introduction and background to proactive behavior and personality research will be provided, along with addressing some antecedents and motivating factors. Following this will be a review of some literature that has established links between proactive behaviors and personality with other work-related constructs as well as the socialization process that will provide a basis for the predictions of the current study.
EMPLOYEE PROACTIVITY

The occurrence and relevance of proactive dispositions and behaviors have been studied in the organizational setting since the early 1980’s (Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Throughout the following years, the popularity of the topic grew, and different behaviors and tendencies were slowly conceptualized and labeled as “proactive.” These early attempts to study this type of behavior mainly revolved around feedback seeking (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Brett et al., 1990) and information seeking (Bauer & Green, 1998; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993). Some other behaviors that were attended to also included relationship building, job-change negotiations, and positive framing (Ashford & Black, 1996). While these studies conceptualized proactive behavior as self-initiated acts that aimed at invoking change and improvement in oneself or their environment, there was a lack of consistency when it came to labeling such behaviors, and differing theoretical rationales have characterized this research (Parker et al., 2006). It was not until 1993 that a concrete attempt was made to conceptualize the dispositional element of proactive behaviors (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Researchers have attended to many different proactive behaviors, as well as antecedents and outcomes of those behaviors, and more recently, many authors have attempted to integrate the various research streams on proactivity (Bindl & Parker, 2010; Crant, 2000; Parker & Collins, 2010). These have begun to provide thorough reviews of these various findings of the proactive constructs, while integrating and differentiating the various behaviors that have been studied over the past few decades. The next section will provided some background on early proactive research prior to solid construct development, which will be followed by the most recent conceptualizations of proactive behaviors and personality in the research literature.

EARLY PROACTIVITY RESEARCH

Whereas much previous research on individual workplace behavior had considered employees as passive and reactive, some studies in the early 1980’s began to view employee behavior as proactive. As mentioned previously, some of these early efforts aimed at studying proactivity in the workplace began with what was referred to as feedback-seeking
behaviors (FSB; Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985). This initial research studied FSB as a valuable resource for employees to utilize in order to reduce feelings characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity in regard to work roles and contingency. The role that contextual factors, such as an individuals’ tolerance for uncertainty, organizational tenure, and job involvement, played in their FSB was also addressed. Besides determining the utility of FSB as a useful behavior in dealing with personal characteristics and contextual factors, another useful finding from this early research was that newcomers in an organization displayed higher levels of proactive feedback seeking behavior than their more tenured counterparts. This showed that the proactive feedback seeking behaviors displayed by newcomers was an important and helpful response to a new environment (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985).

**Further Construct Development**

**Proactive behavior.** In an attempt to organize and compile much of the early research, Crant (2000) provided a comprehensive organization of many different proactive behaviors and antecedents into several domains. According to Crant (2000) the research looking at different types of proactive constructs and cognitive states that encourage these behaviors can be characterized as either dispositional or contextual factors. It was suggested that each of these two categories consists of two more specific constructs. First, within the dispositional domain, there is proactive personality, characterized by initiative, action and perseverance (Bateman & Crant, 1993), and personal initiative, which involves self-motivation and going above and beyond role requirements. Second, there are more situation-specific cognitions and behaviors, which include role-based self-efficacy (RBSE) and taking charge, respectively. RBSE is usually seen as employees’ confidence in their ability to expand their knowledge and skills into a broader, more proactive role than what is required of them. It was noted that this differs from the concept of traditional self-efficacy, which usually focuses on a specific task (Parker, 1998). Taking charge is conceptualized as an employee’s efforts at executing functional change aimed at improvement (Crant, 2000).

Under these broad domains (dispositional and contextual), more specific types of behavior have been addressed. These include information and feedback seeking, relationship building, modeling, job-change negotiations, extracurricular work activities, positive
framing, and behavioral self-management (Griffin, Colella, & Goparaju, 2000). The first five types of behavior focus more on the environment and its people (e.g., co-workers and supervisors), as well as the manipulation of both. The last two, positive framing and behavioral management, are more self-focused. These self-management techniques, both behavioral and cognitive, aim at increasing control over a situation (Ashford & Black, 1996). Within the research, information and feedback seeking behavior has been studied most frequently, and this type of behavior is a focus of the current research. However, to provide a solid background of proactive research and foundation for the current research, multiple behaviors will be reviewed.

Building on earlier work by Crant (2000), Parker and Collins (2010) sought to organize, integrate, and differentiate the multiple proactive behaviors that had been studied over the prior couple of decades. They proposed and found support for several distinguishable behavioral domains. First was the domain referred to as proactive work behavior, which involved behaviors characterized by changing the internal organizational work environment. These behaviors were taking charge, voice, individual innovation and problem prevention. The next domain, proactive strategic behavior, included behaviors that were aimed at changing the organization’s fit with the external environment. The behaviors included issue selling and strategic scanning. The third dimension they developed was proactive person-environment (P-E) fit behaviors, referring to behaviors that were used to change the individual’s fit with the organizational environment. These behaviors were feedback-seeking, socialization and career initiative. Parker and Collins (2010) referred to these three domains as the “big three” proactive dimensions. The authors proposed some benefits to utilizing this higher order framework, including that it provided a more parsimonious organization of multiple similar sounding behaviors for ease of use and understanding by management, and it helped to reduce halo error.

Proactive personality. In addition to interest and research into proactive behaviors, researchers have investigated the motives and antecedents that explain proactive behavior within the work place. As stated earlier and has been shown in much research, there are both individual differences and situational factors that will motivate a person to engage in proactive behavior (Bindl & Parker, 2010). It can be beneficial for organizations to understand these influential factors, especially if they desire proactive behaviors among their
employees. Bateman and Crant (1993) developed the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) to measure a dispositional dimension of proactivity that could contribute to the prediction of proactive behaviors.

Stemming from previous research based on the interactionist approach (Jones, 1986), which states that individuals can interact with their environments to produce outcomes, Bateman and Crant (1993) developed and validated the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) to assess the personal disposition that people have toward engaging in proactive behavior in order to alter their environment. While acknowledging the importance of situational factors in influencing proactive behavior, their main focus was the personal causes of proactive behavior – namely, proactive personality. Their intent was to develop a scale to assess proactive personality that could ideally be used to predict proactive behaviors. Bateman and Crant (1993) defined an individual with proactive personality as “one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces, and who affects environmental change…scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change” (p. 105). Based on this definition, an initial scale was developed and tested using three different samples. They subsequently revised the measure and showed evidence for its reliability and validity. Due to conceptual similarities it was predicted that the proactive personality scale would positively correlate with degree of involvement in extracurricular and service activities, degree of constructive environmental change resulting from personal achievements, and identification by peers as transformational leaders. These relationships were found to be significant, demonstrating criterion validity for the PPS. The final version of the measure had 17 items and was shown to be a unidimensional measure of proactive personality. In addition to successfully developing their scale, Bateman and Crant (1993) also found relationships between their measure and conscientiousness, extraversion, need for achievement, and need for dominance, which supported their contention that proactive personality was a legitimate construct in the field of organizational behavior. Since the development of the PPS, much research has established additional support for the construct by linking it to a number of individual workplace constructs. For example, Crant (1995) utilized the PPS when looking at the job performance of real estate agents. This study demonstrated the utility of the PPS as a powerful measurement tool by explaining variance in
agents’ job performance over and above that explained by conscientiousness, extraversion, general mental ability, work experience and social desirability (Crant, 1995).

Following its initial development, a shortened version of the PPS was created for a study that looked at the relationship between proactive personality and career success (Seibert et al., 1999). The authors selected the 10 items with the highest average factor loading across all three of the original studies in Bateman and Crant (1993). Validity and reliability were established to support the use of this shortened 10-item PPS, with a correlation between the scales of .96, and $\alpha = .86$ for the shortened version (compared to $\alpha = .88$ for the original). The results of their study using the shortened version of the PPS showed proactive personality to be positively correlated with both subjective and objective measures of career satisfaction. Individuals higher in levels of proactive personality were shown to have higher rates of career satisfaction, current salary, and number of promotions. The development of the PPS and its shortened version prompted an increase in research on proactive personality over the last 10 years.
PROACTIVE PERSONALITY RESEARCH

Proactive personality research has addressed a number of topics, and the construct has been used to predict behavior and performance in a number of settings. As an extension of their earlier research, Seibert et al. (2001) looked at the addition of proactive behaviors as a link between proactive personality and career success. Using the same sample, the authors utilized additional data gathered after the previous study to address the mediating role of the proactive behaviors of voice, innovation, and career initiative in the relationship between proactive personality and career success. The first two behaviors refer to individual actions aimed at addressing perceived contextual problems and attempting to resolve them. The second two behaviors focus more specifically on changing one’s own situation in regard to his or her job or career. Results from this study supported a relationship for proactive personality with salary progression and promotions that was fully mediated by the proactive behaviors. This study was one of the first to provide longitudinal evidence for the indirect relationship between proactive personality and career success through proactive behaviors. The authors suggest the implication from their results that people can actively shape themselves and their environments to create desirable outcomes. This is in line with the traditional definition and theory of proactivity in the workplace that people are not constrained by environmental factors and take personal initiative in affecting environmental change (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

A recent study by Parker et al. (2006) looked at the relationship between proactive personality and proactive behaviors via proactive cognitive motivational states. They looked at Parker’s (1998) concept of RBSE, as well as control appraisals (expectations for feelings of control in a workplace situation to influence change), change orientation (approach and attitude in dealing with change), and flexible role orientation (broad view of personal role and responsibilities outside of technical tasks). The behavioral outcomes they assessed were proactive idea implementation, which is similar to innovation, and proactive problem solving. In line with the interactionist perspective, job autonomy, co-worker trust, and supportive supervision were also included as work-related contextual factors in addition to proactive personality as antecedents of the cognitive-motivational states. Results from Parker
et al. (2006) showed evidence for a relationship between proactive personality and their measured proactive behaviors that was mediated by both RBSE and flexible role orientation. They also found a significant relationship between job autonomy and proactive behavior, which was partially mediated by RBSE and flexible role orientation. These findings suggest the importance of situational and individual characteristics as antecedents of proactive behavior.

While many studies have addressed the obvious conceptual relationship between proactive personality and proactive behaviors, other researchers have looked into other behaviors that may stem from proactive personality. Although some of these behaviors may be similar in nature to proactive behaviors, it is interesting nonetheless to examine a less obvious disposition-behavior relationship than proactive personality and proactive behavior. One study that did just this was Kim et al. (2009). This research combined some elements from previous proactive personality research (Seibert et al., 2001; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000) to address the link between proactive personality and career satisfaction as mediated by employee creativity in a longitudinal study of new hires. In addition to career satisfaction, they also looked at perceived insider status as a newcomer outcome. Their predicted mediated relationship was supported, implying the importance of newcomer proactivity for resulting outcomes. It was suggested that newcomers predisposed to proactivity could actively adapt, understand and shape their environments through creative, innovative behavior to attain career satisfaction and feelings of insider status. These findings supported previous research showing a relationship between proactive personality and desirable employee behaviors (Seibert et al., 1999; Seibert et al., 2001).

In a similar vein, Joo and Lim (2009) looked at proactive personality and its effect on organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation. In addition to the dispositional characteristic, the authors also measured the environmental characteristics of organizational learning culture and job complexity. A proposed interactive effect of organizational learning culture and proactive personality influencing the outcome variables was found for organizational commitment. That is, employees who had lower levels of proactive personality benefited more from a culture characterized by learning in terms of their organizational commitment. This finding points to the importance of a structured workplace with more support and developmental opportunities for less proactively inclined employees.
Relevant for the current proposal, a formal organizational socialization or training program could particularly benefit newcomers with lower levels of proactive personality. Joo and Lim (2009) also found that those reporting higher levels of proactive personality demonstrated higher levels of intrinsic motivation. These individuals were also shown to report higher levels of perceived job complexity, implying that proactive individuals may find their jobs more enriching than less proactively disposed individuals, or perhaps that proactive individuals simply chose more complex jobs to begin with than less proactive individuals. Conceptually, intrinsic motivation could be argued to be similar to proactive behaviors, in that they are characterized by active attempts to initiate change. Those who are highly intrinsically motivated are probably more likely to also take personal initiative in their workplace activities. Similar to Parker et al. (2006), this study demonstrated the possible interaction of both contextual and personal characteristics on proactive behaviors of employees in the workplace. One noted limitation of their study was the cross-sectional nature of the research. Therefore, as many other researchers have suggested, Joo and Lim (2009) recommended more longitudinal analyses to further investigate relationships surrounding proactivity.

While the focus of this study is not to justify proactive personality as a valid dispositional construct, the distinction between proactive personality and other dispositional constructs should be mentioned. Specifically, the similarity between conscientiousness and proactive personality can be observed. Conscientious individuals can be characterized as responsible, planful, persevering, and achievement-oriented (Barrick & Mount, 1991). These elements may sound similar to the aspects of proactive personality such as initiative, perseverance, and seeking opportunities to take action (Bateman & Crant, 1993). While these dispositional constructs may seem to overlap, research has shown differential predictive abilities of the two when it comes to various work related outcomes (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Additionally, while much research has shown the link between proactive personality and proactive behaviors, some research has found no relationship between conscientiousness and proactive behaviors (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). For example, in a study looking at antecedents for motivation to learn, Major, Turner, and Fletcher (2006) found the following correlations between proactive personality and four of the Big Five personality characteristics: neuroticism ($r = -.15$), extraversion ($r = .20$), openness ($r = .37$), and
conscientiousness \((r = .15)\). However, when they regressed proactive personality on each of the factors, they found that the overall set of Big Five factors only explained 26% of the variance of proactive personality, concluding that proactive personality is an independent individual characteristic (Major et al., 2006). Additionally, similar findings were reported by Thomas, Whitman, and Viswesvaran (2010). They found correlations between proactive personality and conscientiousness \((\rho = .39)\), emotional stability \((\rho = .31)\), extraversion \((\rho = .42)\), and openness \((\rho = .38)\); however, they also determined that employee proactive personality was a valid predictor of performance distinct and independent from the Big Five factors (Thomas et al., 2010). Again, the purpose of the current study was not to explore the theoretical difference between proactive personality and the Big Five dimensions, and therefore the review or research exploring the relationship is not by any means exhaustive. However, it appears that in regard to proactive behaviors, proactive personality is a legitimate theoretical concept that can account for variations in behaviors independently from the Big Five.

In summary, proactive personality has been linked to various behaviors, cognitive processes, and work-related outcomes. These various behavioral and cognitive constructs include voice, innovation, and career initiative (Seibert et al., 2001), RBSE and role orientations (Parker et al., 2006), and perceived insider status (Kim et al., 2009). Some other work-related behaviors and outcomes that have also been linked to proactive personality include job performance (Crant, 1995), career satisfaction (Kim et al., 2009; Seibert et al., 1999; Seibert et al., 2001), salary and promotions (Seibert et al., 1999), and organizational commitment and intrinsic motivation (Joo & Lim, 2009). These desirable outcomes provide evidence for the important role that individual proactive characteristics can play on the work environment, as well as the benefit of studying them. Following this review of the role of proactive personality, and how it relates to various organizationally relevant behaviors, processes and outcomes, will be a look into proactive behaviors and their relationship with some of these organizationally relevant constructs.
PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR RESEARCH AND SOCIALIZATION

In addition to its relationship with dispositional characteristics, proactive behavior has also been linked to a number of other organizational constructs such as self efficacy (Gruman et al., 2006; Ohly & Fritz, 2007), fit (Brett et al., 1990; Gruman et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2005), performance (Ashford & Black, 1996), socialization outcomes (Morrison, 1993), job design, leadership, and climate-related constructs (Bindl & Parker, 2010). As was stated earlier, many of these individual characteristics are often recognized as successful socialization outcomes. In other words, these occurrences can signal that individuals have successfully integrated into their new organizations. To further demonstrate the contribution that proactive behaviors have in the workplace, I will first review some previous research on various proactive behaviors in general as well as during socialization periods in the following section.

Some noteworthy research that has linked proactive behavior to some desirable work-related characteristics was conducted by Ohly and Fritz (2007), who looked to extend previous research of Parker et al. (2006). They examined RBSE and role orientation as antecedents to proactive behavior. Consistent with the findings of Parker et al. (2006), Ohly and Fritz (2007) found that RBSE was positively related to proactive behaviors, and role orientation was moderately related as well. While these findings were not specifically related to the socialization period, it can be assumed that these relationships would be apparent in various organizational situations. People with higher levels of RBSE and role orientation would be more likely to exhibit proactive behaviors during their entry into a new organization, which could contribute to their successful individual socialization.

While some previous research has looked at motivators of proactive behavior in general, other research has looked at influential factors that predict more specific types of proactive behavior within the socialization process. As was stated earlier, the socialization period can play an important role in newcomers’ adjustment and successful integration into an organization. However, due to the novelty of the situation, there are some factors that can stand as a roadblock to this success include anxiety and stress, lack of control, and lack of
information or knowledge pertinent to job and role success (Ashford & Black, 1996; Crant, 2000; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993). To overcome these feelings, employees can and may engage in various proactive behaviors. The following research helps to provide some evidence for the importance of proactive behaviors in the workplace, and specifically during the beginning stages of organizational entry for newcomers. Although a variety of proactive behaviors will be discussed, a majority of research on proactivity has focused on feedback and information seeking behaviors. Therefore most reviewed literature will revolve around this type of behavior.

Brett et al. (1990) studied the relationship between proactive behaviors, and feedback seeking in particular, and socialization. They argued that adjustment is an important outcome of the socialization process and therefore examined the direction of the relationship between adjustment and feedback seeking in order to investigate the role of employee proactivity in the socialization process. For their purposes, they defined *adjustment* as attachment to one’s career, job and company as expressed through organizational fit and identification, and *feedback seeking* as active discussions about a new job with supervisors and co-workers. In terms of a causal relationship, they found that higher levels of adjustment led to higher levels of feedback seeking (Brett et al., 1990). These findings support the idea that the socialization outcome of adjustment can influence employee proactive behaviors.

In an overview of various theories, Miller and Jablin (1991) provided information on both individual and contextual factors that influence information/feedback seeking in newcomers, as well as some specific tactics used in this behavioral domain. Based on their overview, they made various propositions. They suggested that newcomers seek information and feedback in order to reduce *uncertainty* about the behavioral expectations of their role and interpersonal relationships. Next, they proposed that perceived *social costs* would predict information/feedback seeking. Other research has shown that if perceived social costs are high, individuals may be less likely to engage in seeking behaviors, or be more selective in their information seeking behavior (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). Third, they proposed that the type of available *information source* will influence a newcomer’s proactive behavior, and that the most highly valued sources are supervisors and co-workers. Finally, they suggested that different *types of information* are important in socialization, and these will influence information seeking. These types include *referent* information about job requirements;
appraisal information about an individual’s level of performance; and relational information about interpersonal relationships (Miller & Jablin, 1991). These four antecedents, uncertainty, social costs, information source, and types of information, will determine the type of information/feedback seeking that a newcomer will engage in, which include overt/covert questions, direct/indirect questions, third parties (due to lack of primary and secondary sources), testing limits, disguising conversation, observation and surveillance. Miller and Jablin (1991) suggested that it is more than likely that newcomers will engage in more than one of these types of information/feedback seeking at the same time.

In a similar study, Morrison (1993) looked at the specific influence of newcomers’ information and feedback seeking on the socialization process. She proposed that certain types of information – technical, referent, and normative – and feedback – performance and social – are necessary and would therefore be sought after to achieve success in four primary socialization tasks: task mastery, role clarification, social integration, and acculturation. She found the following positive relationships between information/feedback seeking and socialization tasks: technical information and performance feedback were related to task mastery, referent information and performance feedback were related to role clarity, and normative information and social feedback were related to social integration and moderately related to acculturation (Morrison, 1993). These results show how increased levels of success in the socialization tasks as a result of newcomer information and feedback seeking, and help make an argument for the important role that employees can potentially play in their own socialization process. Morrison (1993) suggested that future research not only explore the joint effects of newcomer and organizational characteristics, but also the role that information seeking and gathering plays in the entry period.

Ashford and Black (1996) also looked at information and feedback seeking during socialization, as well as three additional types of proactive behavior, and desire for control as a specific motivator of proactive behavior. Desire for control can be conceptualized as similar to a desire for reduction of uncertainty, as proposed by Miller and Jablin (1991). It was proposed that higher levels of desire for control among newcomers would result in increased levels of the following proactive behaviors: information and feedback seeking; relationship building, which includes socializing, networking, and developing a relationship with one’s boss; job-change negotiations, which refers to the initiation of environmental and
job role changes to better suit one’s skills and abilities; and, *framing*, which is a cognitive tool used to enhance one’s own self-efficacy and confidence by manipulating perceptions of the external environment, rather than actual manipulation of the context. It was further predicted that these proactive behaviors would then enhance newcomer satisfaction and performance, except for job-change negotiations, which would only lead to higher levels of performance (Ashford & Black, 1996). Their results showed that a newcomer’s desire for control was moderately related to proactive behaviors. Further, the behaviors that desire for control was related to were in turn not related to satisfaction and performance, and the behaviors that were related to satisfaction and performance, were not associated with a desire for control. The only behavior that was significantly related to both desire for control and performance, serving as a mediator between the two, was positive framing. Overall, their results suggested that some newcomer proactive behaviors could facilitate the socialization process and help to achieve desired outcomes, such as higher levels of performance (Ashford & Black, 1996).

The important role of organizational information for newcomers and their related seeking behaviors discussed earlier (Morrison, 1993), was also addressed by Bauer and Green (1998). They looked not only at newcomer’s task oriented and social oriented information seeking behaviors, but also the interaction of those with various manager behaviors, such as clarification and social support, and how that interaction influenced the socialization process. They found that in the presence of manager’s clarifying and supportive behavior, the influence of the newcomer’s information seeking diminished (Bauer & Green, 1998). This is consistent with the findings from Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993) that showed an absence of proactive behaviors when a mentoring relationship was present. Due to the fact that other research (Joo & Lim, 2009) has offered support for the role that proactivity among newcomers can play in the socialization process, it was argued that future research might needed to address the interaction between employee and organizational characteristics during socialization further (Bauer & Green, 1998).

One study that was briefly discussed earlier, that subsequently addressed this issue was Kim et al. (2005). Their goal was to address the proactive behaviors as examined by Ashford and Black (1996), specifically *framing*, *sense making*, and *relationship building*, and their moderating effects on the relationship between organizational socialization and P-O fit.
They proposed that the presence of positive framing and the absence of sense making and relationship building, would all moderate the relationship between socialization and P-O fit, which previous research had shown to be significant and important (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004). They determined that positive framing strengthened the positive relationship between socialization and P-O fit, as did relationship building in the form of general socializing. But, they found that relationship building in regard to the employee-supervisor relationship negatively influenced the positive relationship between socialization tactics and P-O fit. Consistent with previous research (Bauer & Green, 1998; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993), these findings showed that different employee proactive behaviors can either hinder or enhance the socialization process, which calls for continued research on the effect of employee proactive behaviors during organizational and related outcomes (Kim et al., 2005).

Griffin et al. (2000) offered a thorough review of research on individual proactive socialization tactics and organizational socialization tactics. Their review resulted in their proposal of a model in which organizational socialization influences the likelihood of certain proactive behaviors. The model also posited that the organizational tactics moderate the effects of those proactive behaviors on various outcomes, including satisfaction, performance, commitment, and integration. They suggested the adoption of this interactionist perspective to be used in future research (Griffin et al., 2000). Other studies reviewed thus far have also suggested an interactionist approach to this area of research (Bauer & Green, 1998; Kim et al., 2005; Morrison, 1993). As well as a direct suggestion for the use of such a model, findings from research in both areas, proactivity and organizational socialization, have offered support for the complementary nature of the two constructs. Both socialization and proactive characteristics exhibited during socialization have been linked to similar beneficial outcomes, such as satisfaction, performance, P-O fit, commitment, and low turnover intentions (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Joo & Lim, 2009; Kim et al., 2005). Newcomer proactive behaviors have the potential to play an important role during socialization to produce desirable outcomes.

More recently, Gruman et al. (2006) have attended to this interactionist perspective, while considering a new individual characteristic – self-efficacy – that had not been looked at
in previous research on newcomer proactive behavior. While the role of self-efficacy has been demonstrated in the socialization process, as well as resulting outcomes (Jones, 1986), this individual characteristic has not been addressed in relationship to proactive behavior before Gruman et al. (2006). They studied the proactive behaviors of feedback and information-seeking, socializing, boss relationship building, networking and job change negotiations. The socialization outcomes of interest were task mastery, role clarity, social integration, person-job (P-J) and P-O fit, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent to return. Not surprisingly, many important and noteworthy findings resulted out of all the relationships examined. It was determined that a more structured and formalized socialization period, such as that of an organized training period for newcomers, resulted in higher levels of feedback and information seeking. It was also discovered that higher levels of self-efficacy were also related to increased levels of the same proactive behaviors despite organizational factors (i.e., formalized socialization). Another noteworthy finding was that socialization tactics, self-efficacy, and proactive behaviors all interacted to influence successful socialization outcomes. Finally, a very important finding of Gruman et al. (2006) was that feedback and information seeking moderated the relationship between organizational socialization and socialization outcomes, such that the relationship between organizational socialization and socialization outcomes were stronger when employees engaged in fewer proactive behaviors. While Kim et al. (2005) showed these same moderating effects for P-O fit perceptions, Gruman et al. (2006) replicated as well as extended their findings to the other socialization outcomes of social integration, job satisfaction, and intent to return. These findings can be very helpful when organizations are selecting and recruiting, as well as planning and organizing socialization procedures. If organizations do not have the time and resources to plan and implement a formal training or socialization program, they may want to target proactive individuals in recruitment, as they will be more likely to supplement their own socialization with proactive behaviors. Also similar to previous research (Bauer & Green, 1998; Joo & Lim, 2009; Kim et al., 2005), the authors provided evidence for the phenomena that organizational socialization characteristics are more influential on newcomers who exhibit lower levels of proactivity.

Using a similar longitudinal design, Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller (2000) also looked at personality as a predictor of proactive behaviors, but instead focused on the Big 5
personality traits as opposed to proactive personality. Extending research from previous findings that showed the benefit of proactive behaviors for new hires in the socialization process (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Gruman et al., 2006; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993), the authors looked at both antecedents and outcomes of proactive behavior. Specifically, the role the Big Five personality variables (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) played in predicting employee proactive behaviors was addressed, as was the relation of those behaviors to socialization outcomes. It was found that the proactive behaviors of feedback seeking and relationship building were the most highly associated with work-related outcomes. Feedback seeking was positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with actual turnover. Relationship building was also positively related to job satisfaction, social integration, role clarity, and intention to stay at one's job. In terms of the personality dimensions and how they related to proactive behaviors, only two significant relationships were found. It was determined that extraversion was positively related to feedback seeking and relationship building, and openness to experience was related to feedback seeking and positive framing. Similar to Seibert et al. (2001), the longitudinal results of this study lend support to the causal relationship of proactive personality and proactive behaviors, as well between those behaviors and desirable socialization outcomes. Similar to Ashford and Cummings (1985), the suggestion was made that feedback seeking, and relationship building, are particularly useful behaviors for newcomers to actively contribute to success in the on-boarding process.

In summary, this review of the literature revealed research that has looked at different types of newcomer proactive behavior during the socialization period (Ashforth & Saks, 1996) as well as in the general work domain (Ohly & Fitz, 2007), as well as research examining individual characteristics as they relate to common socialization outcomes (Bauer & Green, 1998; Griffin et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2005; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993). However, there is a limited amount of research surrounding proactive personality, proactive behaviors and other related newcomer characteristics. More specifically, past research has not examined the extent to which various proactive behaviors are related to changes in individual characteristics throughout the socialization process. This is the strength of the contribution of the current study. As will be elaborated further later in the paper, changes in
the proactive behavior of feedback seeking as they relate to changes in self-efficacy, goal clarity, and three dimensions of employee fit will be examined.
HYPOTHESES

As was stated earlier, the current study is particularly focused on employee proactivity during the initial socialization period. In order to extend previous research in this area, as well as introduce some constructs less frequently studied in relation to proactive personality, the current study looks specifically at the proactive behaviors of feedback seeking, as well as employee perceptions of self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity all within an organization’s socialization period for new management trainees (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Theoretical model.

PROACTIVE PERSONALITY AND SOCIALIZATION

A common theme among all different types of proactive behaviors is that they are characterized by an active attempt to change current circumstances or situations. As a result, various proactive behaviors will have similar antecedents as well, as was demonstrated by the integration of proactive behaviors by Parker et al. (2006). Based on the relationship between proactive personality and other proactive behaviors (Seibert et al., 2001), it is predicted that proactive personality will be positively related to increases in feedback seeking among newcomers throughout the socialization period. Engaging in feedback seeking will help employees determine which sources provide valuable information within their training...
environment and new workplace. As they learn which sources will provide the most useful and helpful information, those higher in proactive personality will likely increase their rate of feedback seeking, whereas the feedback seeking of those who are lower in proactive personality will be unlikely to change. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this relationship has never been examined before in this context, thus providing a potential contribution of the following hypothesis to the study of newcomer proactive constructs.

- **Hypothesis 1**: Proactive personality will be positively related to the changes in the proactive behaviors of feedback and information seeking. That is, higher levels of proactive personality will predict increases in levels of feedback and information seeking among newcomers during the socialization period.

Additionally, based on evidence linking proactive personalities with other individual characteristics, the current study focused on newcomer self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity. Self-efficacy has been conceptualized as an individual’s belief that they will be able to complete a given task and achieve the subsequent outcome (Jex & Bliese, 1999; Jones, 1986), and variations of this construct have been linked to proactive personality (Parker et al., 2006). Because proactively inclined individuals are more action oriented and likely to initiate changes with regard to goals and desired outcomes, it is likely that they have confidence in their abilities to succeed in their actions and reach their goals. If an individual does not believe in themselves and their abilities, they are less likely to take action that is self-directed and not required of them. As a result of taking action to enforce change in one’s current circumstances, employees with high levels of proactive personality will experience increased levels of self-efficacy. As proactive employees reach desired goals and outcomes throughout socialization due to their own initiative and action-orientation, they will become more confident in their abilities to achieve those goals, increasing their self-efficacy. Increases in employees’ confidence of their abilities will likely result in their continual effort to achieve outcomes, in turn contributing to a continual increase in newcomer self-efficacy. This reasoning, along with previous research, provides rationale for the following prediction.

- **Hypothesis 2a**: Proactive personality will be positively related to changes in newcomer self-efficacy. That is, higher levels of proactive personality will predict increases in levels of self-efficacy among newcomers during the socialization period.

The aggregate construct of employee perceived fit will be based on the three different dimensions of fit will be addressed in this study based on Cable and DeRue (2002). *Person-organization fit* (P-O fit) can be conceptualized as the values congruence perceived by
individuals between their own values and those of an organization and its members (Cable & DeRue, 2002). When committing themselves to a new organization, most individuals desire a sense of belonging as well as a correspondence between their personal beliefs and values and their organization’s. People may be motivated to achieve this fit, which could provide validation for their employment in that organization. Individuals who tend to take the initiative to achieve what they desire will be more likely to engage in behaviors that will reinforce their feelings of compatibility with their organization. As proactive individuals continue through the socialization period, engaging in activities to reinforce and validate their compatibility, perceived fit will likely increase over time. The next two dimensions of fit, needs-supplies and demands-abilities, fall into another fit category - person-job fit, as opposed to P-O fit. First, needs-supplies fit is conceptualized as the congruence between an individual’s needs and the rewards they receive for their efforts and contributions in the workplace (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Not only will individuals who are inclined to take personal initiative be more likely to engage in actions outside of their prescribed job description, which could result in higher frequency of rewards, but they also may be more likely to seek out actions that will provide them with what they desire, or need. Perceived levels of needs-supplies fit will likely increase throughout the socialization period for proactive individuals as they continue to engage in behaviors and actions to ensure their needs and desires are met. This could stem from either an effort to maintain the current level of their needs that are met, or the exploration of the limits in terms of how many, and how much of their needs and demands can and will be met. As employees engage in these behaviors, the possibility that they will obtain desired rewards will also increase, which will result in increases in levels of perceived needs-supplies fit. Finally, the third fit construct, demands-abilities fit is considered the perceived match between individual abilities and what is demanded of them by a specific job and its duties and responsibilities (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Employees who are more proactive in their personalities will take more action to meet demands of a certain situation. One element of proactive personalities is initiating changes to meet personal or situational demands (Crant, 2000). Although an employee may initially lack some skills needed to fulfill their job requirements, some will be more motivated to take action to ensure their abilities meet those job demands. Due to the nature of the training and socialization period, it is likely that job requirements will be introduced incrementally, giving
employees time to familiarize themselves with each of their new responsibilities. Therefore, it is likely that proactive employees will continue to ensure they meet such demands as they are introduced, and with each added responsibility they will report increases in their perceived demands-abilities fit. Additionally, Kim et al. (2005) showed a link between proactive behavior and P-O fit. The link between proactive behaviors and proactive personality (Seibert et al., 2001), proactive behaviors and P-O fit (Kim et al., 2005) lend support to the following prediction.

- **Hypothesis 2b: Proactive personality will be positively related to changes in newcomer perceived fit. That is, higher levels of proactive personality will predict increases in levels of perceived fit among newcomers during the socialization period.**

Finally, a proposed relationship between proactive personality and goal clarity is predicted. As defined by Sawyer (1992), goal clarity refers to the extent to which outcomes, goals and objectives of an individual’s job are clearly stated and well defined. Although no literature could be identified investigating the relationship between these two variables, based on the finding that proactively disposed individuals have been shown to display innovative behaviors and career initiative, individuals high in proactive personality should also express high levels of goal clarity. People who are proactively disposed will take more initiative and action in their own socialization process, aiming to create their own successful socialization outcomes. These initiatives can help resolve any ambiguities or uncertainties within the socialization period. By engaging in action-oriented activities, people will be likely be clear in terms of what is expected of them in their new role and organization. As proactive employees continues through the socialization period, they will continually engage in activities that will help them successfully navigate through this time, learning more about their duties and responsibilities, thus continually increasing their goal clarity. Therefore, the following hypothesis was made:

- **Hypothesis 2c: Proactive personality will be positively related to changes in newcomer reported goal clarity. That is, higher levels of proactive personality will predict increases in levels of reported goal clarity among newcomers during the socialization period.**

**FEEDBACK SEEKING, SELF-EFFICACY, EMPLOYEE FIT AND GOAL CLARITY**

In addition to the above hypotheses related to proactive personality, the current study also addresses the relationship between changes in proactive behavior and changes in other
behavioral constructs within an organization’s socialization period for new management trainees (see Figure 1 for all hypotheses). Based on previous research that has shown the relationship between proactive behaviors and various individual characteristics (Ohly & Fritz, 2007) as well as an interactive effect between proactive behaviors and the socialization process (Gruman et al., 2006), it is likely that proactive behaviors change in frequency during the socialization process, and that these changes are related to changes in the individual characteristics that were hypothesized earlier in relation to proactive personality: self-efficacy, the three fit dimensions, and goal clarity. An individual whose levels of self-efficacy increase throughout the socialization period will more than likely exhibit higher levels of feedback seeking due to higher levels of confidence resulting from self-efficacy. If employees are more confident in themselves, and their abilities, they will be less hesitant when it comes to seeking feedback regarding these abilities. Additionally, it can be argued that in an effort to maintain one’s confidence in his or her abilities to achieve tasks and outcomes, an individual will take any action necessary to fully complete a given tasks, including seeking any feedback that can assist them in reaching goals. With regard to fit, when new employees begins to feel that that their beliefs are more aligned with the organization, their needs are being met, and their abilities adequately meet the demands of their job, they will feel more confident and comfortable in their new organization and job. This will help them to feel more comfortable approaching supervisors and requesting personal and work-related feedback. As feelings of fit increase, employees will more likely feel a personal connection with their supervisors, or other incumbent employees, making it easier to approach them and ask for feedback. Further, it is likely that feelings of fit and similarity will lead to an expectation of value in regard to the knowledge and information held by supervisors and new co-workers, enhancing the aid and utility of such knowledge and information, making employees more likely to seek it via feedback. Finally, it can be argued that with increased levels of feedback seeking throughout the socialization period, an employee’s goal clarity will also increase. Increased frequency of feedback seeking results in more information on how to perform and what is expected – in other words, the clarity of goals of one’s job will increase. It could also be argued that as employees’ idea of what is expected of them in their new role increases, they will want to maintain this clarity. In an effort to ensure that they continue to know what is expected of them, especially if those
responsibilities and standards are likely to vary and change, they will increase their feedback seeking behaviors. Based on these arguments, the following are proposed:

- **Hypothesis 3a:** Changes in self-efficacy will be positively related to changes in proactive behavior throughout the socialization period.
- **Hypothesis 3b:** Changes in the three fit dimensions will be positively related to changes in proactive behavior throughout the socialization period.
- **Hypothesis 3c:** Changes in proactive behavior will be positively related to changes in goal clarity throughout the socialization period.

All of these variables can be thought of as important for the socialization process, and therefore determining their relationship to proactive behaviors, as well as proactive personality as an antecedent could be beneficial for organizations in their recruitment, selection, and training procedures. Proactive behaviors and successful socialization have both been linked to such beneficial outcomes as satisfaction, performance, and low turnover rates. Knowing which proactive behaviors to look for and reinforce could be helpful in ensuring successful socialization, and eventual performance and satisfaction within the organization.
METHODS

The participants, procedures, measures, and analyses for the current study will now be reviewed.

PARTICIPANTS

Data for this study were collected from 188 newly hired management trainees from an international transportation company based in the eastern United States. The mean age was 32.6 years ($sd = 7.62$ years). The sample was 81.7% White/Caucasian/European American, 17.4% Black/African American, 1.7% Hispanic/Latino/a, 1.2% Asian/Asian American, 1.2% Other, and 0.4% specified American Indian/Alaska Native. The sample was 91.6% male and 8.4% female. Within the sample there were various different departmental groups, who also varied between external hires (52.8%) and internal hires (47.2%).

The trainees participated in a formal training program that ranged in length from five to eight months depending on the exact training program. Total data collection lasted 13 months, from January 2010 to February 2011. Within the training program, there were various sections of training that ranged in length from one week to eight weeks. After the training was completed, trainees were placed into their new management positions at various company locations.

PROCEDURE

The current study utilized a repeated measures design to collect data. An online survey format was used that allowed for individualized survey web links to be sent via e-mail to all trainees. An initial pre-trainings survey was sent within a week prior to the start of the training program ($Time \, 0$). A total of 188 initial surveys were sent, with 165 responses (88%). In addition to demographic characteristics, this initial survey was intended to measure proactive personality, self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity before beginning the management training program. Subsequent surveys were sent following the end of the sections of training at $Time \, 1$, $Time \, 2$, $Time \, 3$, and $Time \, 4$. These were used to measure self-efficacy, fit, goal clarity, and feedback seeking during the socialization process. Consistency of survey delivery was attempted as much as the program design would allow. The average length of time...
between surveys varied from 3.6 weeks \((\text{Time 0 to Time 1})\) to 7.0 weeks \((\text{Time 3 to Time 4})\). The variety of times between surveys was due to differences in training schedules for some departmental groups. While most of the training groups continued on the same track, a few groups completed training on a more department-specific course. Although not always on the same schedule, a majority of the groups completed the same training sections.

Additionally, due to this variation in survey delivery and response dates, it was necessary to measure each participant’s time score for each time point as the number of days since they had begun training. While an effort was made to maintain a consistent amount of time between data collection for all groups, absolute consistency was not always possible. This resulted in a moderate amount of variation in the individual dates of data collection (Table 1).

### Table 1. Time Range between Training Start Date and Data Collection in Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 0</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
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<td>102</td>
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<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final response rates for each time period were as follows: 165 (88%) at Time 1, 132 (70%) at Time 2, 115 (61%) at Time 3, 100 (53%) at Time 4, and 15 (0.8%) at Time 5. The decline in response rates as the training progressed is likely due to the course of trainings and differential ending dates. Some trainees finished their training and were placed in the organization before others, and therefore may not have received surveys at the later times. In other words, some trainees completed their training before the fourth and fifth data collection point, so they were no longer available to participate in the study. Corrected response rates have been calculated to take this into account (Table 2). An additional perspective in looking at the response rates is to look at the response frequencies. That is, observing how many people responded at all six time periods, how many responded at five time periods, and so on.
Table 2. Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Total N</th>
<th>Corrected N</th>
<th>Actual sent</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>169</td>
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<td>68%</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 3). It is interesting to note that 32% \( (n = 60) \) of the participants responded for all but one time point, and the majority \( (58\%, n = 110) \) responded at four time points or more.

Table 3. Participant Response Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency count</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of total N (188)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
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<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEASURES

A number of control variables were included in the surveys that participants received. These were age, gender, ethnicity, previous experience with the company, supervisory experience, and previous experience in various relevant industries or positions, such as being on call for 24 hours, construction, railroad, civil engineering, agriculture, and military. Alphas are reported below for reliabilities, as well as in Table 3, and the full measures for all constructs can be found in the Appendix.
Proactive personality. Proactive personality was measured using the shortened version of Bateman and Crant’s (1993) Proactive Personality Scale (PPS). The shortened version was developed by Seibert et al. (1999) using the 10 items from the original scale with the highest average factor loadings. An example from the 10-item scale is “If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.” Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In the current study, reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .91$.

Self-efficacy. A shortened version of Jones’ (1986) self-efficacy scale developed by Jex and Bliese (1999) was used. This scale consisted of five items, an example of which is “My new job is well within the scope of my abilities.” Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .81$.

Fit. To measure the three dimensions of perceived employee fit, person-organization (P-O), needs-supplies, and demands-abilities, a nine-item scale was used from Cable and DeRue (2002). An example item for P-O fit was “My personal values match my company’s values and culture.” An example of an item that measured needs-supplies fit was “The job that I will hold gives me just about everything that I want from a job.” Finally, an example of an item measuring demands-abilities fit was “My abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of my new job.” Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The total scale reliability was $\alpha = .93$, and the individual reliabilities for each of the three item scales were $\alpha = .95$, $\alpha = .90$, and $\alpha = .89$, respectively.

Goal clarity. To measure goal clarity, the five-item scale developed by Sawyer (1992) was used. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale addressing respondents level of clarity on for the five items, ranging from very unclear to very clear. An example of an item rated for clarity is “The goals and objectives for my job.” The current study reported a reliability of $\alpha = .95$ for this scale.

Feedback seeking. The last construct of interest was assessed using a four-item scale from Ashford and Black (1996). Participants were asked to report the extent to which they had performed each of the four behaviors during the several weeks prior to the survey. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from to no extent to to a great extent, they rated such
questions as “To what extent have you sought feedback on your performance after assignments?” The current study reported a reliability of \( \alpha = .94 \) for this scale.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSES**

To begin, reliability analyses were conducted for all scales, which were reported above. As can be seen, all reliabilities were of an acceptable level (Table 4). Next, for each scale, overall composite scale scores were created across all time points, as well as for each individual time point, *Time 0 – Time 5*. The only exception to this was for the proactive personality scale, which was only administered at *Time 0*, and the feedback seeking scale, which was only administered for *Time 1 – Time 5*. Correlations were initially run for each scale, except for proactive personality, using the time point scale scores to examine the strength of the scales throughout the repeated measures (Table 5-8).

### Table 4. Scale Reliabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Cronbach's ( \alpha )</th>
<th>Number of scale items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time 0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Personality</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Clarity</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback Seeking</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5. Correlations for Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 0</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>.360**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>.367**</td>
<td>.508**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td>.266*</td>
<td>.448**</td>
<td>.559**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td>.319**</td>
<td>.559**</td>
<td>.540**</td>
<td>.589**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.686*</td>
<td>.849**</td>
<td>.900**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * = *p* < .05, ** = *p* < .01.*
Table 6. Correlations for Fit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 0</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.506**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.511**</td>
<td>.628**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.628**</td>
<td>.750**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.657**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.917**</td>
<td>.905**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.

Table 7. Correlations for Goal Clarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 0</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.380**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.398**</td>
<td>.452**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.327**</td>
<td>.405**</td>
<td>.347**</td>
<td>.282*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>.855**</td>
<td>.746*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.

Table 8. Correlations for Feedback Seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
<th>Time 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>.446**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>.396**</td>
<td>.460**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.524**</td>
<td>.430**</td>
<td>.553**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>.789*</td>
<td>.578</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.
Following, correlation analyses were initially run for the composite scale scores with the control variables. Further, additional correlations were run between the time point composite scale scores and the control variables that showed significant relationships with the overall composite scale score. For example, gender, previous experience with the company, and previous railroad experience were significantly related to overall self-efficacy, so they were also correlated with each self-efficacy time point scale score (Tables 9-13). While there were some significant correlations at the overall composite level, there were no consistent correlations across time points for any of the control variables; therefore they were excluded from all further analyses. For the sake of space, all that is reported in the tables are the correlations between the measures at individual time points and the control variables that were significantly correlated with their corresponding composite scale scores.

**Table 9. Correlations between Proactive Personality Scale Score and Control Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Previous Company Experience</th>
<th>Total Years of Work Experience</th>
<th>Previous Railroad Experience</th>
<th>Previous Logistics Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 0</td>
<td>.182*</td>
<td>-.364*</td>
<td>-.182*</td>
<td>.275**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.*

**Table 10. Correlations between Self Efficacy Scale Scores and Control Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Previous Company Experience</th>
<th>24/7 On-Call Experience</th>
<th>Previous Railroad Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>-.202**</td>
<td>-.173*</td>
<td>.196*</td>
<td>.213**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 0</td>
<td>-.123</td>
<td>-.085</td>
<td>.208**</td>
<td>.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>-.273**</td>
<td>-.136</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.190*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>-.210*</td>
<td>-.191*</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.193*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td>-.240*</td>
<td>-.076</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td>-.143</td>
<td>-.176</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td>-.737*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>.121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.*
Table 11. Correlations between Fit Scale Scores and Control Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>24/7 On-Call Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.184*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 0</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>.137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td>.235*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.*

Table 12. Correlations between Goal Clarity Scale Scores and Control Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Previous Company Experience</th>
<th>24/7 On-Call Experience</th>
<th>Previous Railroad Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>-.233**</td>
<td>-.173*</td>
<td>.185*</td>
<td>.170*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 0</td>
<td>-.144</td>
<td>-.217**</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.207**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>-.277**</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>.220**</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>-.178*</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>-.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td>-.714*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.*
Table 13. Correlations between Feedback Seeking Scale Scores and Control Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>24/7 On-Call Experience</th>
<th>Previous Civil Engineering experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.158*</td>
<td>.181*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>.166*</td>
<td>.183*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>.211*</td>
<td>.183*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 3</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 4</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.217*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 5</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>.189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01.

Before beginning any hypothesis testing of the longitudinal relationships, it was first, necessary to determine the rates of change, or unconditional growth trajectories (slopes) of proactive behavior, self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity throughout the socialization period using latent growth curve modeling. Once these slopes for the constructs were established, their relationship to each other, as well as proactive personality as a predictor, could be examined. To determine these slopes, growth models for individually-varying times of observation and random slopes for continuous variables were run in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2010) which was also used for all of the subsequent analyses. Due to the nature of the data – varying collection time points among individuals – it was necessary to use a model with individual time measures. Given the data, the most logical way to organize the time scores were by the number of days since the beginning of training. Therefore, all participants had their own unique time score for each of the time points they provided responses. These time scores were used with their respective scale scores to determine the slopes for each of the individual characteristic variables. To determine goodness of fit, the following criteria were used: (a) the Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) with values greater than .95 indicating acceptable model fit; (b) the Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR), with values less than .05, were indicative of well-fitting models; and (c) the likelihood ratio $\chi^2$ is also reported for completeness (Roesch et al., 2009).

After these unconditional growth trajectory models were established for each individual characteristic variable, they could be used to test the hypotheses. To test hypothesis 1, the proactive personality score from Time 0 was entered as a predictor of the
established growth trajectories for the individual characteristics. This would determine whether a directional relationship was present, that is, whether proactive personality predicted the growth rate of each of the individual characteristics throughout socialization. The same methods and analyses were used to test the relationships between proactive personality and self-efficacy, the three dimensions of fit, and goal clarity (hypotheses 2a – 2c).

To test hypotheses 3a – 3c that predicted that changes in the three individual constructs would be related to changes in feedback seeking during socialization, parallel process growth modeling was used. More specifically, the latent growth models established for self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity were each correlated with the growth model for proactive behavior. This analysis allowed for the examination of the relationships between concurrent changes in time (slopes) for self-efficacy, fit and goal clarity and the proactive behavior of feedback seeking.
RESULTS

Prior to beginning any hypothesis testing, means and standard deviations were established (Table 14). It is interesting to note that proactive personality, self-efficacy, and fit all started out with fairly high overall levels, and self-efficacy and fit maintained those levels throughout. However, goal clarity and feedback seeking starting at the beginning were lower, but increased throughout the socialization period.

Table 14. Means and Standard Deviations for All Variables at All Time Points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Personality</td>
<td>4.11 (.51)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>4.29 (.54)</td>
<td>4.16 (.61)</td>
<td>4.17 (.60)</td>
<td>4.34 (.51)</td>
<td>4.31 (.57)</td>
<td>4.28 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>4.31 (.54)</td>
<td>4.36 (.49)</td>
<td>4.28 (.54)</td>
<td>4.40 (.51)</td>
<td>4.30 (.66)</td>
<td>4.27 (.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Clarity</td>
<td>3.60 (.86)</td>
<td>3.71 (.92)</td>
<td>3.99 (.76)</td>
<td>4.29 (.72)</td>
<td>4.37 (.58)</td>
<td>4.30 (.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback Seeking</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.26 (.95)</td>
<td>3.63 (.84)</td>
<td>3.98 (.72)</td>
<td>3.82 (.80)</td>
<td>4.20 (.63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNCONDITIONAL GROWTH MODELS

Scores for each time period were used to determine slope estimates for each variable of interest. Initially, for self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity there were five time points for responses, and four time points for proactive behavior. However, due to some of the reasons mentioned earlier, there were fewer responses for some of the later time periods. Mplus would not provide models when the following time points were included: Time 4 and Time 5 for self-efficacy and proactive behavior, and Time 5 for fit and goal clarity. The final data
used to determine the growth trajectories were Time 1 – Time 3 for proactive behavior, Time 0 – Time 3 for self efficacy, and Time 0 – Time 4 for fit and goal clarity. To determine if the estimated growth trajectories were adequate models to use in the parallel process model analyses, the variability around each estimated slope needed to be significant. All slopes showed a significant amount of variance, so hypothesis testing could be completed (Table 15). While the criteria for using the latent growth models to test the hypotheses was significant variance, the slopes themselves can be of interest as well. While not directly hypothesized, it can also be noted that proactive behavior (feedback seeking) and goal clarity each had significant and positive mean slopes, while self-efficacy and fit did not report significant mean slopes. That is, feedback seeking and reported goal clarity increased throughout the socialization period, whereas self-efficacy and perceived levels of fit did not. Note that this finding is consistent with the overall means reported in Table 14 (p. 37).

Table 15. Unconditional Growth Model Parameters and Variability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Linear Growth</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slope</td>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Behavior</td>
<td>.008***</td>
<td>3.03***</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>4.22***</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>4.32***</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Clarity</td>
<td>.005***</td>
<td>3.63***</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001.

SLOPES-AS-OUTCOMES MODELS

First, for hypothesis 1, a slopes-as-outcomes model was used to test whether proactive personality at Time 0 was predictive of the slope of proactive behavior across the time points. According to the fit indices, the hypothesized model did fit well, $\chi^2 (5) = 2.620$, $p = 0.7584$, CFI = 1.000, SRMR = 0.043 (Table 16). Additionally, proactive personality was a significant predictor of the slope for proactive feedback seeking behavior, $\gamma_{11} = 0.192$, $p < .01$. Thus, individuals’ levels of proactive personality as measured at the beginning of the
Table 16. Overall Model Fit for All Hypothesized Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Proactive Personality $\rightarrow$ Proactive Behavior</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a: Proactive Personality $\rightarrow$ Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>68.83***</td>
<td>.447</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b: Proactive Personality $\rightarrow$ Fit</td>
<td>63.22***</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2c: Proactive Personality $\rightarrow$ Goal Clarity</td>
<td>32.74**</td>
<td>.762</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a: Self-Efficacy $\leftrightarrow$ Proactive Behavior</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b: Fit $\leftrightarrow$ Proactive Behavior</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c: Proactive Behavior $\leftrightarrow$ Goal Clarity</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

socialization period were predictive of significant increases in their feedback seeking behavior throughout the socialization period. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported. As an additional exploratory analysis, an intercepts-as-outcomes model was run to examine whether proactive personality also predicted feedback seeking at the beginning of socialization. Results showed that proactive personality also significantly predicted the intercept of feedback seeking, $\gamma_{10} = 0.276, p < .05$.

Hypotheses 2a-2c were tested using the same analysis as hypothesis 1. Proactive personality at Time 0 was used to predict the slopes of self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity, respectively. Based on the fit indices, none of the models for hypotheses 2a-2c were shown to be a good fit (Table 16). Therefore, even though proactive personality was found to predict the slope for self-efficacy ($\gamma_{11} = 0.022, p < .05$) and, to some extent, the slope for fit ($\gamma_{11} = 0.192, p = .064$), these results could not be interpreted with any confidence because of the lack of fit for the overall model. Therefore, hypotheses 2a-2c were not supported.

**PARALLEL PROCESS MODEL**

Next, hypothesis testing was conducted for hypothesis 3a-3c. Unfortunately, Mplus would not complete the analyses for hypothesis 3a and 3b. This is most likely due to a lack of practical variability and non-significant slopes for both of the constructs, self-efficacy and fit. This is also in line with the pattern of means levels for these two constructs in (Table 14).
Both variables maintained consistent levels throughout socialization, with levels at the beginning similar to levels upon completion of the socialization period. Although the variability for these slopes were shown to be statistically significant in the unconditional growth models, when testing the full models the variance for both came out as 0.000, resulting in the inability to run the models. Therefore, the relationship between changes in self-efficacy and changes in feedback seeking, as well as the relationship between changes in fit and changes in feedback seeing, could not be further explored in the current study.

Hypothesis 3c, that changes in proactive behavior would be related to changes in goal clarity, could be tested. In order to do this, each of the growth trajectory models for feedback seeking and goal clarity were correlated. This model did fit well, \( \chi^2 (7) = 7.073, p = .421, \) CFI = .999, SRMR = .042 (Table 16). The relationship between the growth of proactive behavior and growth of goal clarity was found to be significant, \( \beta_1 = .104, p < .005. \) The rate of growth for each of these constructs was positive; therefore it can be concluded that positive changes in levels of feedback seeking were significantly associated with positive changes in levels of goal clarity throughout the socialization period. Therefore, hypothesis 3c was supported.
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between proactive personality and changes in various employee characteristics throughout the socialization period, as well as the relationships between the changes in those characteristics. Being able to identify individuals who are inclined toward higher levels of certain desirable employee characteristics, such as self-efficacy, perceived fit in an organization, goal clarity, and feedback seeking behaviors, can be beneficial information for organizations, especially when it comes to selection and training processes. A group of management trainees participated in the study to investigate these relationships. Proactive personality was measured at the beginning of the formal training and socialization period, and the four individual characteristics mentioned above were measured at multiple time points throughout that same period. Growth trajectories were established for self-efficacy, employee fit, goal clarity, and feedback seeking behaviors to examine changes in those variables over time. The initial levels of proactive personality and their relationship with the growth trajectories were examined, as were the relationships between the growth models for feedback seeking and each of the other three employee characteristics. To some extent, the study’s findings were disappointing, as two of the hypotheses could not be tested, and three were found to have poor model fit. Nevertheless, support was found for two of the hypotheses. Some discussion of the supported hypotheses and future directions related to those will be presented, followed by some speculations for why the hypotheses 2a-c, 3a, and 3b could not be fully explored. Finally, some limitations, further suggestions for future research, and implications will be discussed.

Similar to previous findings regarding feedback seeking as a valuable resource (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985), the current study found that this type of proactive behavior was a significant factor in the socialization period. First, it was determined that there was a significant mean slope for feedback seeking. This showed that there was a significant increase in the reported occurrence of feedback seeking among new employees throughout their initial training period. Further, it was found that proactive personality, when measured at the start of the socialization and training period, significantly
predicted that increase in feedback seeking throughout that period of time. At first, it might not sound particularly surprising that individuals who display higher levels of proactive personality will also display increases of proactive behaviors throughout the socialization period. Conceptually, it makes sense that an individual who is proactively predisposed will engage in more proactive behaviors, which is what was found. However, a strong contribution of the current study was the ability to look at changes in various behaviors over time. This allowed for the demonstration that proactive personality not only predicted the initial levels of proactive behavior at the beginning of socialization, but also that it significantly predicted the changes in feedback seeking throughout the socialization period. That is, proactive individuals were both more likely to demonstrate a higher occurrence of feedback seeking at the beginning of their training period, and also more likely to increase the occurrence of those behaviors at a higher rate over time. This finding confirms previous research that has also linked proactive personality and other proactive behaviors (Seibert et al., 2001), as well and extends other findings relating feedback seeking and the socialization period (Brett et al., 1990; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993). However, there were some differentiating elements of the current research. Whereas some research has looked at other antecedents of feedback seeking during socialization, this study appears to be the first to address proactive personality as being predictive of feedback seeking. Additionally, another distinctive aspect of the current study was the longitudinal nature of the data, which allowed for an exploration of changes in feedback seeking, which found that employee proactive behavior increased over time. This was a unique contribution of this study in the realm of employee proactivity.

Looking at changes in behaviors over time and how they are predicted by a proactive disposition is quite interesting. It is possible that this could be due to an interactive effect of a proactive disposition and the socialization period. By definition, a main feature of proactive personalities is that individuals are driven to engage in behaviors and take action-oriented roles that are likely to create change to achieve desired outcomes. Individuals who are proactive are more likely to take the initiative to manipulate themselves and/or their environment to reach their goals and objectives (Crant, 2000). In the current situation, the participants were new hires in an organization, which is a setting that can provoke feelings of anxiety, stress, lack of control, and uncertainty for some employees (Ashford & Black 1996;
These feelings can drive employees to want to feel comfortable in their new organization and roles sooner rather than later, motivating them to engage in behaviors that will enhance feelings of comfort, safety, security and inclusion. Proactive behaviors such as feedback seeking can increase knowledge of the role and organization, which can create comfort and security. As was shown, people who are proactively disposed will increase their feedback seeking behaviors, likely in attempt to speed up the socialization process to assuage any feelings of discomfort that come along with being a newcomer. Given the nature of the socialization period in this study, where individuals with proactive personalities may be more likely to increase their proactive behaviors, it would be interesting to see if the same relationship occurs in other situations where employees are more comfortable and established in their roles.

The additional hypothesis that was supported was hypothesis 3c, which predicted a relationship between the changes in feedback seeking behaviors and the changes in reported employee goal clarity. It was found that as instances of feedback seeking during the socialization and training period increased, reported levels of goal clarity increased as well. When individuals have goal clarity, the goals and objectives of their job are clearly defined and stated for them (Sawyer, 1992). If employees are provided with more information regarding their job objectives, they will in turn have a better idea of what is expected of them. Employees who engage in higher levels of feedback seeking from their supervisor will subsequently receive helpful information on their new job and the expectations for them. This information can be extremely helpful during the socialization period, when some employees may not be aware of everything that is required of them in their new job. While some individuals may be more reserved, hesitant and unsure about requesting clarifying information, some employees may be motivated to actively engage in feedback seeking. This in turn can help them adjust to their organization more quickly, and begin to feel more comfortable in their position sooner rather than later. Employees who engage in higher levels of feedback seeking can begin to develop an idea of what is and what is not expected during the beginning of stages of their employment.

A suggested area for future research would be to determine if changes in feedback seeking and goal clarity would also predict future job performance. While increased feedback seeking and goal clarity may have some short term benefits by decreasing the length of
socialization and any feelings of discomfort, the questions is whether there would be long-
term benefits as well. It could be very helpful to determine if feedback seeking and goal
clarity were related to long-term employee success. Specifically, it would be interesting to
independently explore the effect that changes in each of those variables may have on future
job performance. It may be the case that increases in levels of reported goal clarity would be
related to higher levels of employee performance on the job. Perhaps individuals who quickly
develop a clear idea of what is expected of them on the job will subsequently be able to fulfill
all of their tasks and responsibilities faster than others. This could translate into an efficient
and effective transition from a new employee in a trainee role, to a valuable, contributing
member of the workforce. In the long run, these employees may also be able to adapt faster
and easier throughout the years to any changes and developments within their job
requirements and expectations. Individuals who are able to quickly understand what is
expected and required of them would be quite valuable as flexible and adaptable employees
when the needs for change and evolution arise within organizations. The same argument
could be made for those individuals who are more likely to increase in their amount feedback
seeking behaviors. Individuals who increasingly seek more feedback will likely also receive
increasingly more information on how to perform their job in order to meet expectations,
which could lead to an easier transition to contributing employees as well. Additionally, they
may be more likely to receive information regarding necessary changes and developments to
their tasks and job role throughout the years.

As was suggested for the relationship between proactive personality and feedback
seeking, it would also be interesting to explore the relationship between changes in feedback
seeking and goal clarity in contexts outside of the socialization period. Perhaps the
relationship found in the current study was due to the stage of employment. It may not be as
helpful to engage in feedback seeking when it comes to goal clarity if an employee already
has a well established idea of what is expected of them, and those expectations are relatively
stable. However, this relationship may still be present at all stages of employment in a
learning-oriented organization that values and requires continual development and adaptation
of roles and requirements throughout all life stages of employment. It could be beneficial to
determine what various types of organizations, or industries, would value employees who
actively engages in feedback seeking to enhance their understanding of expectations and requirements.

The above discussion of the relationship between feedback seeking and goal clarity has come from the point of view that feedback seeking behaviors influence goal clarity. However, the analyses did not test the causal direction of the relationship, and therefore, it could also be the case that goal clarity influences feedback seeking. Perhaps individuals who have a better idea of what is expected of them, for whatever reason, will engage in more feedback seeking in an effort to maintain that clarity. Knowing what is expected of oneself will undoubtedly cause less stress and anxiety, more comfort and control, and make one’s job and work role easier. In an effort to maintain feelings of confidence, security and comfort, individuals may seek feedback to ensure that they always know what is expected of them. It is also possible that if these individuals do in fact have higher levels of confidence and comfort resulting from increased goal clarity, it could also be the case that these factors increases their likelihood of seeking feedback. Individuals who are more confident and more comfortable in their positions will be less hesitant and reserved when it comes to approaching supervisors for feedback.

Unfortunately, all hypothesized models for the second set of hypotheses showed poor fit, and therefore the relationships for these hypotheses could not be reported. It can be speculated that this misfit could be due to nonlinearity of the data or possibly correlated errors terms that were used to represent autocorrelations in the analysis of the data at various time points. It is possible that given the specific context looked at, as well as the specific constructs, a linear model may not be ideal. The current study utilized linear growth curve modeling, but perhaps there is a non-linear relationship between proactive personality and self-efficacy, fit, and goal clarity. That is, once individuals reach a certain level of self-efficacy, fit, or goal clarity, they likely will plateau, or even decline. This would make sense given the context. During socialization, initial increases in the above stated individual attributes are expected; however, once employees become more comfortable and familiar with their new organization and job, perhaps it is not necessary to continue to increase such characteristics. For example, while increasing levels of self-efficacy can be helpful in the beginning of socialization to accomplish new tasks and obtain necessary socialization outcomes, after employees become more automated in their tasks, their self-efficacy may
level off, and cease to continue increasing. A similar argument can be made for goal clarity. When employees are new to an organization and job, they will not have a very clear idea of their new responsibilities and expectations. However, as they continue to become more familiar with their job, and perform their new tasks their goal clarity will increase until they have the clearest idea possible in terms of what is expected of them. There is likely a ceiling that employees will hit in terms of knowing what is expected of them in their job.

Another speculation regarding fit is that if more data was gathered, the fit of the models may be improved. There was a good amount of missing data, which is not surprising given the longitudinal nature of the study. If a larger sample size could be obtained, the missing data may not be as problematic in terms of the analyses. Another possible explanation could have been the decline in response rates throughout the study from Time 0 to Time 5; the highest response rates were at Time 0 (86%) and Time 1 (87%), and decreased thought data collection to 50% at Time 4, and .05% at Time 5. However, as was noted earlier, these response rates may not fully represent the true response trend. After adjusting for the actual number of surveys sent out, which at later time points was not always as high as the original sample size, the response rate decline was as follows: from 88% at Time 0 and 89% at Time 1 to 67% at Time 4, and 56% at Time 5. While these response rates are better than as originally reported, the sample sizes were still very small at these time points. The response rate at Time 5 represents only 15 responses. As a result, data from some of the constructs from the later time periods could not be used due to very few responses. It is possible that if there had been complete data across all time points, the models would have shown to be a better fit.

The final two hypotheses that could not be explored were 3a and 3b, which focused on the relationship between self-efficacy and feedback seeking, and fit and feedback seeking, respectively. These models were not fully run in Mplus, most likely due to a lack of practical variance in the slopes for self-efficacy and fit. It is worth noting an interesting observation regarding the lack of practical variance. When the growth models were estimated for self-efficacy, fit, goal clarity, and feedback seeking, all showed significant variability. However, as was mentioned earlier, all constructs also showed a variance of 0.000. Further, the relationship between feedback seeking and goal clarity could be fully tested, while the other two relationships could not. What can be noted is that both mean slopes for self-efficacy and
fit were non significant, while the slopes for feedback seeking and goal clarity were significant (Table 15, p. 38). This may offer some insight into why the hypotheses regarding self-efficacy and fit were not fully tested.

Most of the failures to fully test all hypotheses are more than likely due to the nature of data that was collected. The data was collected from four different groups of participants, which were each subdivided as well. These subgroups varied in their training schedules, and so they subsequently received surveys for the time points at various times. As mentioned earlier, the time point variables for each participant was measured as the number of days since they had begun training. As can be expected from the variation in training schedules, there was a good amount of variation in the individual time scores for data collection. For example, the days from the beginning of training to the responses for Time 1 ranged from 12 to 42 (Table 2). While an effort was made to account for this variability with unique individual time scores, the nature of these analyses was more complicated than other alternatives, making it more likely for problems to occur.

LIMITATIONS

As was previously discussed, there were some methodological limitations for the current study. The range of variation for each participant’s time measure was a limitation, as was the decreasing response rates over time points. Various reasons could have contributed to the decline in response rates. Some of the training groups completed their training earlier than others. Therefore, some participants did not receive surveys at Time 4, and a majority did not receive surveys at Time 5 (Table 3, p. 29). For those that did receive surveys at the final two time periods, a decrease in their response rates could have been due to survey fatigue after five to eight months of surveys. While an effort was made to space out the survey distribution so as to not overwhelm participants, it is still possible that they grew weary of filling out the surveys. Additionally, when participants neared the end of their training program, they also could have been distracted by the excitement of finally starting their new position. This could have resulted in less of a time commitment than they had previously made, and their participation may not have been as much of a priority. Additionally, while the participants were required to attend their new hire training program, their participation in responding to the surveys for the current study was voluntary. Although
management communicated the value and benefit of their feedback on the surveys, there were no direct incentives. Reminders were used in an effort to increase responses for each survey sent, but in the end responses were completely voluntary.

While speculations can be made, the exact reason for the missing data cannot be provided. However, in an effort to make some sense out of the missing data, missing data patterns, as provided by Mplus, were examined to determine whether there were any noteworthy patterns in which logical speculations could be made. A total of 40 patterns were found when looking at all variables over all time points. All patterns but six included the measures of all variables at Time 5. Additionally, the most frequently occurring pattern, with 50 occurrences, was the pattern in which only measures from the final time period were missing. The other three most frequently occurring patterns were those in which all of the measures from the last two time periods were missing. These observations of the missing data patterns support the argument above that the declining sample size throughout the study was a significant factor in the problems running some of the hypothesized models.

In addition to the methodological and data limitations, there are also some conceptual areas for improvement and future research. In an effort to keep the survey concise, only one proactive behavior was explored. Feedback seeking is a behavior that targets change at the individual level, attempting to make behavioral changes to fit with the organizational environment. However, it may be interesting to look at other types of proactive behaviors that focus on external change, and how these may be related to changes in goal clarity as well. For example, research could look at increases in taking charge behaviors, which are defined as “constructive efforts by employees to effect functional change with respect to how work is executed” (Crant, 2000, p. 443). These types of behaviors could also be related to goal clarity. If an employee contributes to a procedural change in the execution of a task that they are responsible for, they will more than likely have a clear idea of what is expected of them in terms of that task outcome.

A final limitation worth mentioning was that there may have been range restriction within the sample in the sense that the participants were all management trainees. It could be that the type of employees that seek out and are hired into a management position are inherently more proactive, and engage in more proactive behaviors than other types of employees. Something worth mentioning that may support this suggestion was the high mean
for proactive personality. Prior to the socialization period, the average level of proactive personality among the management trainees was 4.11 ($SD = .51$; Table 14, p. 37), which on a scale of 1-5 was fairly high. It would be beneficial in the future to explore different levels of employees to see if the relationships found in the current study would be replicated among lower level employees.

**STRENGTHS AND IMPLICATIONS**

While there were some limitations and difficulties with the analyses, the current study does offer some contributions to the proactivity literature. Overall, the realm of employee proactive personality and behavior has not been as rigorously researched as many other workplace-related employee characteristics. More specifically, there have been few longitudinal studies, and to the best of my knowledge, none that have looked at changes over time in proactive behaviors as they relate to changes in other individual characteristics. In a training or socialization context, the goal is often to enhance certain behaviors, attitudes and beliefs that are believed to contribute to eventual employee success within the organization. Demonstrating actual increases in behaviors, and how those increases are related to increases in other behavior, can be valuable information for organizations. In terms of recruitment and selection, organizations can target employees who display certain behaviors, knowing that other desirable employee characteristics are likely to be present and increase as well. Similarly, in terms of personality characteristics, organizations can target people who are proactively oriented, with the safe assumption that they will display such proactive behaviors as feedback seeking, and increase instances of these behaviors.

Organizations, and their staff, are very busy, and outside of a formal training program, are not always available to train and socialize new employees. For these organizations, it can be beneficial to hire people who are proactively predisposed, will engage in more independent feedback seeking, and in turn encompass a better idea of what is expected of them. This can take some of the pressure and burden to constantly offer guidance and training for new employees off of incumbents and supervisors.

Based on the current findings, it is argued that employee proactivity is quite important during the socialization period. However, it is also necessary that the established relationships be examined in a variety of settings, contexts and career stages. Perhaps the
socialization period is more influential in drawing out proactive behaviors, and their occurrence may decrease as employees become more comfortable and begin to feel a sense of belonging in their new organization. It may be the case that regardless of how high individuals are on the proactive personality trait, if their circumstances do not provoke feelings of discomfort and ambiguity, they may not feel it necessary to engage in behaviors intended to invoke change in their environment.

An additional context or setting that could be interesting to examine increases in employee proactivity and goal clarity would be at the group or organizational level. While the current study looked at individual-level measures, the participants were involved in a group training program. It could be possible that individuals who are more inclined to behave proactively and increase the frequency of those behaviors could influence others to engage in similar behaviors. This could be helpful during the socialization period, assisting those who are less proactively inclined in their adjustment to a new role and organization. This behavioral influence could also be useful in team settings, with one team member encouraging and motivating others to behave in a proactive manner. Bateman and Crant (1993) suggest that groups and organizations that are more proactive, based on an aggregate of individual proactivity, will hold more competitive advantage over others that are less likely to identify and seek out strategic opportunities, and respond with innovation to external demands. Future research looking into this occurrence could offer valuable information to organizations that seek to build a more innovative, and adaptable workforce overall.

On a more methodological note, future research should also continue to engage in longitudinal research that employs multiple time points to assess employee proactivity. This can be very valuable in that it has the potential to provide evidence of a strong, consistent relationship between personality characteristics and other employee attributes, as well as the strength of employee characteristics throughout time. An attempt should be made to ensure consistent data collection to lend to methodological strength and increase the likelihood of establishing strong, significant relationships.

Although the focus and implications of this study have been on the individual, some suggestions can be made for organizations as well based on the current findings. While most of the constructs of interest are purely individual attributes (personality, self-efficacy, perceived fit, and feedback seeking), goal clarity can additionally be thought of as something
that can be influenced by the organization. Employees can affect their own level of goal clarity by seeking out or being attentive to information that will provide insight into their new expectations and responsibilities. At the same time, the organization can attempt to ensure that job descriptions and expectations are clearly defined and easily accessible to employees. As the relationship between increases in feedback seeking and goal clarity has been established, it could be advisable for organizations to assist employees in reaching higher levels of goal clarity if they desire increased levels of proactive behaviors among their workforce.

**CONCLUSION**

As organizations continue to develop an increased perceived value in self-directed and motivated employees, identifying those who will be more likely to take initiative and adapt to their work environment when necessary can be key to success. Leveraging these employees and their attributes can contribute to organizational success and competitive advantage. Employees who seek out information and feedback, and develop and adapt their ideas of what is expected of them on their own will be more likely to succeed in the ever changing and evolving nature of the workplace. This can be especially true of industries or organizations that are highly learning-oriented and require continual development and training in order to succeed and be competitive. Knowledge of these ideal employee characteristics can help organizations take advantage of their human resources, at the same time that these employees enjoy their socialization experiences and personal success.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

FULL SCALE ITEMS FOR MEASURES
**Proactive Personality from Siebert et al. (1999)**

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.
2. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.
3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.
4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.
5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.
6. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.
7. I excel at identifying opportunities.
8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.
9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.
10. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

**Self-Efficacy from Jex & Bliese (1999)**

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. Based on my experiences, I am confident that I will be able to successfully perform my new job.
2. I feel confident that my skills and abilities equal or exceed those of my future colleagues.
3. My new job is well within the scope of my abilities
4. I do not anticipate any problems in adjusting to my new job.
5. I have all the technical knowledge I need to perform my new job; all I need now is practical experience.

**Fit from Cable & DeRue (2002)**

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. The match is very good between the demands of my new job and my personal skills.
2. My abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of my new job.
3. My personal abilities and education provide a good match with the demands that my new job will place on me.
4. There is a good fit between what my new job offers me and what I am looking for in a job.
5. The attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled very well by my new job.
6. The job that I will hold gives me just about everything that I want from a job.
7. The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my company values.
8. My personal values match my company’s values and culture.

9. My company’s values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life.

**Goal Clarity from Sawyer (1992)**

How clear are you about each of the following aspects of your new job?

1. My duties and responsibilities.

2. The goals and objectives for my job.

3. How my work relates to the overall objectives of my work unit.

4. The expected results of my work.

5. What aspects of my work will lead to positive evaluations.

**Feedback Seeking from Ashford & Black (1996)**

Thinking back over the last several weeks, please rate the extent to which you have performed each of the following behaviors.

1. To what extent have you sought feedback on your performance after assignments?

2. To what extent have you solicited critiques from your boss?

3. To what extent have you sought out feedback on your performance during assignments?

4. To what extent have you asked for your boss’s opinion of your work?