

THE DARK SIDE OF SOCIALIZATION: A LONGITUDINAL INVESTIGATION OF NEWCOMER ALCOHOL USE

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Organizational veterans and external stakeholders such as clients often play an important and informal role in newcomer socialization, influencing newcomer cognition and behavior and providing learning opportunities and social support that facilitate employee adjustment and performance enhancement. However, from a sensemaking perspective, newcomers may also draw insight from stakeholder behavior in order to better understand how to best meet job-related objectives and expectations. These understandings may manifest as performance-related motives, leading to the adoption of risky behaviors that can be detrimental to newcomer health and organizational effectiveness. Using multisource, multilevel, and longitudinal data, we demonstrate that the alcohol use norms of both organizational veterans and clients are significantly associated with the performance drinking motives of newcomers in sales and client service teams, suggesting that veteran and client norms signal to newcomers that drinking alcohol is an effective and legitimate means to improve job performance. In addition, we demonstrate that performance drinking motives mediate the positive relationship between veteran and client alcohol use norms and newcomers' frequency of work-based heavy drinking. Finally, we find that the frequency of work-based heavy drinking is positively related to newcomer alcohol misuse and mediates the positive relationship between performance drinking motives and newcomer alcohol misuse.

Newcomer socialization refers to the process through which new employees “acquire the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes required for

effective participation in an organization” (Allen, McManus, & Russell, 1999: 456); a process that can have a significant impact on newcomers' adjustment (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Wang, Kammeyer-Mueller, Liu, & Li, 2015; Wang, Zhan, McCune, & Truxillo, 2011). Meta-analytic evidence suggests that formal organizational socialization efforts are related to higher levels of role clarity, self-efficacy, and social acceptance, and that these variables, in turn, are related to higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to remain (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). In addition, successful socialization has been associated

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with important organizational outcomes such as job performance. For instance, studies have shown that formal socialization efforts by organizations help foster learning experiences that may promote better individual performance, performance growth, and team performance (e.g., Chen, 2005). Uncertainty reduction lies at the core of such efforts (e.g., Berger, 1979; Morrison, 1993), with organizations using a variety of socialization tactics, such as new employee orientation and training programs, to improve goal clarity, knowledge acquisition, and skill mastery.

Nevertheless, formal organizational socialization efforts tend to do a better job specifying organizational imperatives and task objectives (e.g., productivity, quality standards, sales volumes, and revenues) than in explaining how, in the context of equivocality and uncertainty, these imperatives and objectives may be most effectively and legitimately achieved (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Moreland & Levine, 2001; Wang et al., 2015). Accordingly, newcomers often have little choice but to glean insights into how to achieve these imperatives and objectives from informants around them (Morrison, 1993). The newcomer socialization literature is rich in studies demonstrating the nature of this more informal socialization process, noting that it is largely through social learning—by observing, seeking information from, and receiving feedback from supervisors and veteran coworkers that newcomers derive effective strategies to achieve performance goals (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Morrison, 1993). These studies suggest that information and knowledge gathered from the employee's social environment generally enhance self-efficacy and have positive implications with respect to both newcomer adjustment and performance (e.g., Allen et al., 1999; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

However, there may also be situations in which such informal socialization generates outcomes that, at least in the longer term, could be dysfunctional for the newcomers and/or their employers. For example, to meet performance goals under time pressure, new factory workers may adopt the unsafe habits of their coworkers (e.g., taking shortcuts and not using essential safety equipment), resulting in an increased risk of accidents and injuries (Choudhry & Fang, 2008). Similarly, new medical residents may learn, from more experienced peers, that they have to work excessively long hours to perform according to standard and meet the expectations of their mentors, despite that such work

patterns have been associated with exhaustion and risky medical practice (Burke & Cooper, 2008). Finally, sales and client service professionals, the focus of the current study, may learn from veteran peers and clients about the importance of particular practices and “traditions” that may be “required” to build deep interpersonal relations that enhance clients' service experience and boost sales. To the degree that some of these practices and traditions may involve risky behaviors, their adoption could result in injury, impaired health, and productivity loss (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Biron, 2010; Corrao, Bagnardi, Zambon, & La Vecchia, 2004). Unfortunately, beyond the few, largely ethnographic studies noted above, we know little about how and why such informal socialization can result in dysfunctional outcomes.

In the current study, we seek to extend the organizational socialization literature by generating and testing theory regarding how two sets of socialization agents—namely, veteran peers and clients—may contribute to the onset and/or exacerbation of one such dysfunctional outcome: work-based heavy drinking. *Heavy drinking* has been defined as the consumption of five or more units of alcohol per drinking occasion (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2004). When occurring during or just prior to work—which we refer to as *work-based heavy drinking*—such a pattern of alcohol use has the potential to impair work-related cognitive processing and decision making, thus adversely affecting work-related outcomes (Frone, 2013). Additionally, frequent heavy drinking has been associated with a heightened rate of employee absence (Bacharach et al., 2010), an increased risk of hazardous and harmful drinking and alcohol dependence (Jennison, 2004), as well as chronic illness (e.g., esophageal cancer and liver cirrhosis) and injury, all of which can take a heavy toll on employee health and productivity (e.g., Bacharach et al., 2010; Corrao et al., 2004). Accordingly, exploring the role of key socialization agents in the onset and/or exacerbation of newcomers' work-based heavy drinking provides a useful empirical referent for understanding the way in which informal socialization may yield less than beneficial outcomes.

Although a number of theories highlight the role of social interaction in shaping human behavior (e.g., social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991)), for three

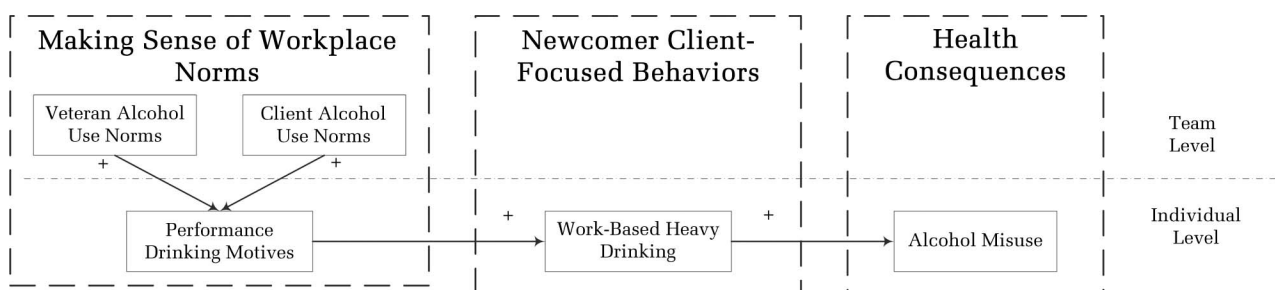
main reasons, we ground our analysis on organizational sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995). First, sensemaking theory, with its emphasis on the management of contextual equivocality and the facilitation of framework stability through self-justification, is particularly well suited to the situation typically experienced by organizational newcomers (Louis, 1980; Schwandt, 2005)—one characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and inherent contradictions and tensions. Second, in contrast with learning-based theories emphasizing the development of “insightful and foresightful behavior” through observation, dialogue, and reflection (Bandura, 1971: 3), sensemaking emphasizes how even behaviors with detrimental long-term consequences (e.g., heavy drinking) may be adopted and maintained by newcomers through the “swift and hasty” normalization of dissonant inputs in an effort to preserve and maintain extant frames (Louis, 1980). Finally, by focusing on the emergence of implicit theories, sensemaking provides important insights into the cognitive processes allowing people to justify actions that might otherwise contradict certain role-based expectations and/or deep-seated personal values.

Drawing from sensemaking theory, we propose that the descriptive norms of veteran peers and clients drive newcomers’ cognitive accounts of critical work behavior–outcome linkages, which, in turn, influence their job-related behaviors. Previous qualitative research (Harris, 1994; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Louis, 1980) suggests that sensemaking underlies much of the informal socialization process, with newcomers looking to the environment for cues afforded by key socialization agents to better understand which behaviors are not only legitimate but also exemplary in the new work environment. Descriptive norms set by such socialization agents, therefore, serve as an important

sensegiving device, which helps newcomers manage uncertainty by creating rational accounts of the world; accounts that, by reducing equivocality and normalizing discrepancies, enable action. Accordingly, we develop a model positing that descriptive norms of alcohol use among veteran peers and clients provide a basis upon which newcomers develop an understanding of how alcohol use may enhance job performance. We propose that this understanding is manifested in performance drinking motives, which, in turn, predict newcomers’ work-based heavy drinking and alcohol misuse.

We test this model on the basis of a multisource, multilevel, longitudinal study design, using a sample of 147 sales and client service professionals newly hired by two manufacturing companies located in China. Our findings shed light on how shifts in newcomer behaviors unfold over time, and the role of socialization agents, in and outside of the organization, in shaping these shifts. Accordingly, our study contributes to the newcomer adjustment literature in three primary ways. First, we sensitize management scholars to what may best be termed the “dark side” of organizational socialization and the notion that informal socialization based on veteran peers’ and clients’ descriptive norms may result in the adoption of newcomer behaviors that pose a risk to both the new employees and their employers. Second, we posit and demonstrate that not only peers but also external stakeholders (i.e., clients) play critical roles in the newcomer sensemaking process underlying the adoption of problematic work behaviors. Finally, we introduce performance motives as a cognitive mechanism linking norms embedded in the newcomer’s social environment to the adoption and/or exacerbation of risky behaviors. Our theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
The Theoretical Model



THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Sensemaking and Newcomer Socialization

Sensemaking refers to “the process of social construction in which individuals attempt to interpret and explain sets of cues from their environment” (Maitlis, 2005: 21) to create or restore a sense of stability and predictability (Schwandt, 2005). It occurs when organization members confront events, issues, and actions that are equivocal in nature, and thus surprising or confusing (Weick, 1995). As such, sensemaking plays a key role in organizational entry, in that newcomers typically have to cope with high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty inherent to an unfamiliar work environment (Louis, 1980). In an attempt to interpret and explain discrepant cues from their environments, newcomers attempt to identify patterns and relations between elements in order to develop an implicit, cognitive model of antecedents and consequences, and, most importantly, the mechanisms linking the two. These mechanisms or *accounts* (i.e., “discursive constructions of reality that interpret or explain”; Maitlis, 2005: 21) represent individuals’ implicit theories about how actions link to outcomes in their environments. They are essential for action, in that they allow individuals to anticipate otherwise ambiguous future situations and develop appropriate responses to them (Bacharach, Bamberger, & McKinney, 2000; Klein, Moon, & Hoffman, 2006). As noted by Louis (1980: 233), “newcomers need situation- or culture-specific interpretation schemes in order to make sense of happenings in the setting and to respond with meaningful and appropriate actions.”

Scholars examining accounts in sensemaking have typically adopted a qualitative approach, inferring accounts on the basis of participants’ descriptions of how they interpreted and responded to puzzling or unfamiliar situations (Cornelissen, 2012; Monin, Noorderhaven, Vaara, & Kroon, 2013). Moreover, much of this research identifies behavioral legitimacy and efficacy as the foundation upon which most accounts are established (Monin et al., 2013). Although we are unaware of any quantitative approach to directly assessing accounts, we propose that newcomers’ accounts can be captured in the form of motives, which, by their very nature, provide an explicit manifestation of individuals’ implicit assumptions about how outcomes are likely to be achieved through specific actions (Pinder, 2008). Additionally, by connecting particular behaviors to intended outcomes, motives typically reflect newcomers’ implicit understand-

ings regarding which behaviors are likely to be most legitimate and efficacious in ambiguous work situations (e.g., Bacharach et al., 2000). As newcomers are likely to more strongly endorse those motives that they believe to be central to their organizational reality, we conceptualize motives as the explicit expression of newcomers’ accounts.

In developing such motives, newcomers’ social environment often plays an instrumental role, with much of the extant research on the social processes of sensemaking focusing on the sensegiving role of leaders (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005). Largely through formal instruction, leaders may attempt to influence the meaning construction of organizational newcomers. For example, by explicitly explaining the procedures and assigning tasks, supervisors may help newcomers develop an understanding about unit work processes.

However, much of the information that newcomers receive through leaders’ formal instruction is generic, whereas a major concern of newcomers is the translation and application of generic information to their specific situation and concerns (Ashforth et al., 2007). From a sensemaking perspective, such voids of equivocality may be filled through the observation of the behaviors of other stakeholders, such as veteran peers and clients, not so much by providing a basis for modeling and imitation, but, rather, by providing a normative basis for account formation. More specifically, sensemaking theory suggests that the consistent behavioral patterns of veteran peers and clients (i.e., *descriptive norms*) serve as the basis for understanding how actions lead to outcomes at work. Indeed, as noted by Schwandt (2005: 183), “it is the experience of collective action that is important for the individual to create and test meaning.” Accordingly, when the most appropriate behavior is unclear, descriptive norms may provide insight into the most effective, justifiable, and least risky action for the situation (Bamberger & Biron, 2007). For example, using interviews and observational data, Scott and Myers (2005) demonstrated that new firefighters learn about the implications of emotional regulation on the job by observing emotion management tactics consistently used by veteran members of their work group. Similarly, Levine, Choi, and Moreland (2003) suggested that newcomers are more likely to understand the value of generating and sharing innovative ideas when members of their work group consistently engage in behaviors favoring innovation. The observation of client behaviors may also provide insights into efficacious behav-

iors for newcomers. For instance, Sutton and Rafaeli (1988) offered numerous examples from the ethnographic literature as to how workers are attentive to customer behaviors in order to better understand customers' general preferences and predict what types of service behaviors would lead to more rewarding job outcomes (e.g., tips).

Stakeholder Descriptive Alcohol Use Norms and Newcomer Performance Drinking Motives

Over the past 20 years, a substantial body of evidence suggests that the social availability of alcohol in general and workplace alcohol-use norms in particular are critical determinants of employee workplace drinking (Frone, 2013). For example, Trice and Sonnenstuhl (1990) suggested that work groups may establish norms, rationales, and social controls about how, when, and where to drink. More specifically, they (1990: 207) propose that "heavy drinking may be encouraged at business lunches, conferences, office parties and managerial retreats or among specific groups of workers who believe that it promotes health and prevents industrial disease or is in some other way functional." Empirical findings are generally consistent with this notion, with studies indicating a positive correlation between permissive drinking norms and employee alcohol consumption. For example, Bacharach, Bamberger, and Sonnenstuhl (2002) tested the role of permissive drinking norms relative to other workplace risk factors as antecedents of employee problem drinking, finding that norms not only had a direct impact on such behavior, but also amplified the impact of other workplace risk factors (e.g., stress and alcohol policy enforcement) on drinking. More recent studies have reported similar findings, such that perceived descriptive alcohol-use norms are positively related to alcohol use and impairment at work as well as overall alcohol misuse (e.g., Frone & Brown, 2010).

Drawing from sensemaking theory, we posit that performance drinking motives, as an operational manifestation of accounts, serve as the primary mechanism linking veteran peers' and clients' drinking norms to newcomer work-based heavy drinking during organizational entry. Motives refer to the "why" (i.e., goals to achieve) of behaviors (McClelland, 1985), and the concept of drinking motives is based on the assumption that people drink to attain certain valued outcomes (Cooper, 1994). Prior research on alcohol use has focused on two primary motives: coping motives and social

motives. *Coping motives* refer to "drinking to reduce or regulate negative emotions" (Cooper, 1994: 118); with the implicit logic being that one may use alcohol to achieve tension reduction. *Social motives* refer to "drinking to obtain positive social rewards" (Cooper, 1994: 118); with the accounts being that one may use alcohol as a means to solidify social relations. Numerous studies have demonstrated a link between both types of drinking motives and drinking behavior (Cooper, 1994; Fisher, Fried, & Anushko, 2007). While both of these motives may be developed during organizational entry, we posit that a third motive relating to performance enhancement may represent newcomers' primary accounts of work-based heavy drinking. Such performance motives may be particularly salient for individuals in client-focused occupations. In many contemporary organizations, there is an increased pressure to provide exceptional solutions to clients (e.g., Ibarra, 1999). Accordingly, behaviors that may facilitate the provision of such exceptional service—ranging from service with a smile and being available 24/7 to playing golf and drinking alcohol with clients—are highly desirable and often explicitly encouraged.

As suggested above, the construction of accounts or motives is precipitated when individuals enter an unfamiliar environment or sense something "out of the ordinary" (Louis, 1980). Accordingly, particularly in light of the general uncertainty they face upon organizational entry, newcomers are likely to have a keen interest in making sense of unusual or unexpected work-based behaviors such as work-based heavy drinking, forming motives reflecting their interpretation and explanation of such behavior in terms of key outcomes. Previous research suggests that, particularly under conditions of uncertainty, motives are strongly influenced by social demands and normative pressure (e.g., Koestner, Weinberger, & McClelland, 1991), with norms influencing motive formulation in two main ways. First, norms inform motives by providing important insights into cause-effect or means-ends linkages (Walker, 1985). For example, workplace norms regarding "deals on the green" may provide insights to a newcomer that enhancing his or her golf swing may be linked to better relationships with business partners and a higher likelihood of successful negotiations (Rynecki, 2007), both being exemplary performance-related outcomes. Second, social norms can shed light on the legitimacy or social acceptability of using certain means to achieve certain objectives. Therefore, to the extent

that workplace drinking norms suggest that work-based drinking is not only acceptable but also an important means to enhance client relationships and satisfaction, such norms may elicit the construction of a performance-based drinking motive for the newcomers.

In the current study, we focus on the impact of two particular forms of descriptive alcohol use norms in the workplace—veteran peers' alcohol use norms and clients' alcohol use norms—on the development of performance drinking motives. Such norms are likely to play a significant role in shaping newcomers' accounts in general, and work-based drinking motives in particular, for two main reasons. First, sensemaking theory suggests that individuals make sense of events on the basis of available information (e.g., Louis, 1980). For organizational newcomers, the descriptive drinking norms of veteran peers and clients are likely to be highly accessible, in that, by definition, descriptive norms are expressed in observable patterns of behavior. Second, research on the impact of norms on attitudes and behavior (Biron & Bamberger, 2012; Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000) suggests that the potency of norms is greatest when the source of such norms is more salient to the individual. Veteran peers and clients are likely to be highly salient to newcomers in that both are agents upon whom newcomers tend to be highly dependent for information and resources essential to job and career success (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006).

Veteran peers' alcohol use norms refer to shared beliefs and perceptions among veteran team members regarding the extent to which it is legitimate for business encounters with clients to involve alcohol consumption. Because the veteran peers in newcomers' work teams are likely to be the primary context for their socialization and an important referent group during times of uncertainty (Moreland & Levine, 2001; Wang et al., 2015), we posit that newcomers are likely to form accounts that rationalize workplace behaviors consistently performed by their veteran peers. While limited, empirical research supports the notion that new entrants in a variety of occupations learn from their veteran peers how drinking may be instrumental to their career. For example, Popp and Swora (2001) reported that new construction workers learn from more experienced peers of the importance of engaging in heavy drinking with important decision makers (e.g., contractors and coworkers) as a means

through which to enhance their own job security. Similarly, Dobson (2010) found that freelance musicians quickly learn from their veteran peers to participate in social drinking as a way of increasing offers of work or retaining existing work. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 1. Veteran peers' alcohol use norms are positively related to newcomers' performance drinking motives.

In addition to veteran peers, clients are also important stakeholders for the career success of the newcomer. Drinking with clients can help facilitate relationship building (Schweitzer & Kerr, 2000; Shore & Pieri, 1992), particularly with clients who enjoy drinking. Indeed, a recent *New York Times* article reported that a failure to partake in drinking with clients can be costly in business, with a therapist who counsels Wall Street workers in recovery noting that, "those who don't drink complain that they can't close a deal, can't even get into early negotiations because they won't engage in drinking behaviors" (Quenqua, 2012). Thus, positive *client alcohol use norms*, referring to the extent to which the clients deem drinking legitimate or even expected as a part of normal business encounters, are likely to shape newcomers' accounts for work-based drinking behavior and elicit performance drinking motives.

Ethnographic research has identified a wide range of occupations in which drinking with clients serves as a key element of the job, and suggests a number of reasons why drinking with customers is often considered an integral part of the job for individuals engaged in client-intensive work such as sales and professional services (Schweitzer & Kerr, 2000). First, by lowering inhibitions and encouraging a sense of camaraderie, alcohol is often believed to facilitate free and open information exchange, thus allowing for the development of cordial relations among those about to engage in business activities together. Second, by reducing individuals' ability to think and act clearly, drinking creates an atmosphere of shared dependency and vulnerability, which, in turn, may be viewed as enhancing trust and facilitating the emergence of relational cohesion (Heath, 1995). Finally, the tradition of closing a deal with a drink may reinforce the instrumentality of alcohol consumption in deal making. Based on sensemaking theory and this body of ethnographic research, we posit:

Hypothesis 2. Clients' alcohol use norms are positively related to newcomers' performance drinking motives.

The production of accounts in the sensemaking process provides a foundation for action such that people act according to their implicit theories about how specific behaviors link to outcomes in their environments (Weick, 1995). In addition, accounts tend to facilitate consistent, rather than one-time, goal-directed behavior over time (Maitlis, 2005). Building on these propositions in sensemaking theory and our previous discussion of how workplace norms facilitate and shape newcomer drinking motives, we posit that the accounts developed by newcomers in the forms of motives during organizational entry may be the underlying mechanism linking workplace norms to newcomer behaviors. Specifically, *performance drinking motives*, which capture newcomers' accounts of work-based alcohol use, may inform their actions in two ways. First, given that they encompass an implicit theory of the actions that are most likely to lead to exemplary performance, drinking motives energize, direct, and sustain purposeful alcohol use behaviors. Second, to the extent that they capture a sense of the appropriateness of alcohol use in the workplace, drinking motives provide individuals with the legitimacy and justification for behaviors, allowing individuals to feel more at ease or comfortable with work-based drinking behavior. Theorists regard drinking motives as the final common pathway to alcohol use—that is, the gateway through which more distal influences are mediated (Cooper, 1994). For example, previous research has suggested that those understanding that alcohol not only does not diminish but might even enhance their performance are more likely to report heavy drinking (e.g., Spada, Moneta, & Wells, 2007). Accordingly, we propose:

Hypothesis 3. Newcomers' performance drinking motives mediate the positive relationship between veteran peers' alcohol use norms and newcomers' work-based heavy drinking.

Hypothesis 4. Newcomers' performance drinking motives mediate the positive relationship between clients' alcohol use norms and newcomers' work-based heavy drinking.

Risk for Alcohol Misuse

In the short term, behaviors adopted by the newcomers on the basis of performance motives might

be beneficial to the employer by generating faster production, more work offers, or higher sales revenue. In the long run, however, some of these behaviors may pose severe risks for employees and the organizations employing them. For example, cutting corners, often attributable to a goal to work faster, could lead to more injuries, accidents, and even death, causing serious negative material or reputational consequences to the organization. Similarly, frequent heavy drinking with clients by sales and client service personnel may enhance sales revenues for the firm and even solidify company relationships with the clients. However, the same behavior may also pose significant risk to the employer and the employee to the extent that such behavior elicits a more stable pattern of alcohol misuse. Therefore, to the extent that heavy drinking with clients becomes a stable and significant part of their daily routine and lifestyle, employees may be at risk for alcohol-related injuries or illness and the employer may pay the price in the form of increased absenteeism, health care and worker's compensation costs, and reduced employee productivity (e.g., Bacharach et al., 2010; Frone, 2013).

Frequent, work-based heavy drinking may, for some, result in a more general pattern of alcohol misuse, manifested beyond the work context in the form of harmful or hazardous drinking or even physiological alcohol dependence. Indeed, findings indicate that those most at risk for alcohol abuse and dependence are those already engaging in heavy drinking (Harford, Yi, & Grant, 2010; Jenkinson, 2004). Underlying this trajectory from frequent heavy drinking to alcohol dependence is a process of neurological adaptation. More specifically, neurological evidence suggests that, with frequent exposure to alcohol, the human brain starts to change to adapt to the chemical changes caused by alcohol intoxication (Graybiel, 2008; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2009). Because alcohol slows signal transmission in the brain, potentially causing sleepiness and sedation, the brain tends to increase the level of excitatory neurotransmitters and reduce the level of inhibitory neurotransmitters to speed up these signals. In this way, the brain attempts to restore itself to a normal state in the presence of alcohol; a process that, over time, may result in increased alcohol tolerance. If the influence of alcohol is suddenly removed (that is, if frequent heavy drinkers suddenly stop drinking), the brain may have to readjust once again. This may lead to the unpleasant feeling associated with alcohol withdrawal, such as expe-

riencing “the shakes” or increased anxiety, thus motivating frequent heavy drinkers to consume more alcohol. In other words, over time, repeated heavy alcohol intake, either on or off the job, may become increasingly “necessary” to prevent the negative consequences of alcohol withdrawal, resulting in a pattern of habitual, hazardous, and harmful drinking, and eventual physiological dependence (characterized by evidence of tolerance and/or withdrawal; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Accordingly, we posit that, to the extent that they engage in more frequent work-based heavy drinking, organizational newcomers will be more likely to exhibit a pattern of hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption over time. Or, in other words:

Hypothesis 5. Newcomers’ work-based heavy drinking is positively related to the emergence of a more general pattern of alcohol misuse over time.

To the extent that norms and motives are predictive of more frequent work-based heavy drinking, and that such a pattern of work-based drinking is itself predictive of a more general pattern of alcohol misuse (characterized by, at the very least, harmful and hazardous drinking), by definition, both work-based norms and drinking motives (the antecedents mentioned above) can be expected to have an indirect/mediated influence on the emergence of newcomer alcohol misuse. Hence, we posit:

Hypothesis 6. Newcomers’ performance drinking motives have a significant indirect effect on the emergence of a more general pattern of alcohol misuse (via more frequent work-based heavy drinking).

Hypothesis 7. Veteran peers’ alcohol use norms have a significant indirect effect on the emergence of a more general pattern of alcohol misuse (via performance drinking motives and more frequent work-based heavy drinking).

Hypothesis 8. Clients’ alcohol use norms have a significant indirect effect on the emergence of a more general pattern of alcohol misuse (via performance drinking motives and more frequent work-based heavy drinking).

METHODS

Sample and Procedures

Participants were recruited from the sales and client service departments of two manufacturing

companies headquartered in southern China. The core tasks of these employees include contacting and visiting new and existing customers to discuss their needs and explaining how these needs could be met by specific products and services provided by the organization, negotiating prices or terms of sales or service agreements, and resolving clients’ complaints regarding sales and service. The study’s participants work in sales and client service teams dispersed throughout China. With the help of the companies’ human resources department, we distributed the study announcement along with a letter assuring confidentiality and voluntary participation to all eligible employees in the sales and client service departments (approximately 430 employees from 65 teams in total, as well as the supervisors of the 65 teams). In both companies, employees were considered newcomers if they were in the first six months of their employment. Thus, the Wave 1 “newcomer questionnaires” were distributed to employees who had been employed for less than six months. In order to avoid any overlap between newcomers and more senior employees, we distributed the “veteran questionnaires” to employees who had been employed for no less than 12 months. Wave 2 and Wave 3 questionnaires were sent to the newcomers three months and six months after the Wave 1 assessment to avoid common method bias and to help establish temporal sequence of the variables.

Fifty-seven supervisors (response rate = 88%) completed the supervisor survey. In these 57 teams, 330 employees (response rate = 77%) provided complete responses. Among them, 147 were newcomers and 183 were veteran teammates. For newcomers, the average age was 24 years, 51% were male, and the average organizational tenure was 3.01 months at the time of the Wave 1 assessment. For veteran teammates, the average age was 29 years, 48% were male, and the average organizational tenure was 4.28 years. For supervisors, the average age was 31 years, 44% were male, and the average organizational tenure was 4.68 years.

Measures

All the assessments in the current study were conducted in Chinese. A translation-back translation procedure was followed to translate the English-based measures into Chinese. To our knowledge, no existing measures directly capture the three key constructs in our study (i.e., veteran alcohol use norms, client alcohol use norms, and

performance drinking motives). Therefore, we took four steps to develop our measures and ensure their construct validity (Hinkin, 1998). First, we generated a set of items for each construct based on: (a) our experience observing business contacts in sales professions and service industries, (b) our expertise in conducting work-related alcohol use research, and (c) our direct consultation with subject matter experts (SMEs; i.e., sales and client service employees). Second, we organized a focus group of seven SMEs and asked them to describe scenarios in which they and their team members had drunk alcohol with clients or had observed their clients using alcohol in business settings. We also asked them to describe their rationale for drinking alcohol with clients. We then mapped our items onto the responses from the SMEs, making sure that the items captured all the important aspects of SMEs' responses. Third, we organized another focus group of six SMEs and presented the items to them. We asked them to judge the extent to which these items captured our intended constructs and if they could generate additional items to capture the same constructs. These SMEs provided high content validity ratings for our items and were not able to generate additional non-overlapping items to capture the same constructs. Finally, we used a separate sample of sales and client service employees ($n = 82$) and their supervisors ($n = 20$) to examine the reliability and construct validity of these new measures. Exploratory factor analysis showed three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, consistent with the intended three-factor structure. Together, these three factors explained 76.88% of the total variance. In addition, all items loaded significantly onto the corresponding factor (factor loadings ranged from .68 to 1.00). Further, the alpha reliabilities of all three measures were above .80. Thus, all the initial items were retained. Moreover, both employee-rated veteran alcohol use norms and supervisor-rated client alcohol use norms were positively related to employee performance drinking motives ($r = .65$ and $r = .53$, $ps < .05$), work-based heavy drinking ($r = .36$ and $r = .31$, $ps < .05$), and work-based modal drinking ($r = .32$ and $r = .46$, $ps < .05$), demonstrating good convergent and divergent validity. Because this separate data set was small, we present additional construct validity evidence (i.e., testing a measurement model using the data reported in the main study) below.

Veteran alcohol use norms (rated by veteran teammates at Wave 1). To measure veteran peers' alcohol use norms, we asked the veteran teammates

to evaluate the extent to which they agreed with the following five statements: "My team often drinks alcohol with the clients," "Drinking alcohol together is an important part of the interactions between my team and the clients," "My team drinks alcohol with clients to win their trust," "Drinking alcohol together is an important way to establish relationships between my team and the clients," and "For my team, business meetings with clients often involve drinking alcohol." These items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). Cronbach alpha was .96.

Because veteran peers' alcohol use norms were conceptualized as a shared team-level perception, veteran teammates' responses were aggregated to the team level. To justify the aggregations, we based a calculation of interrater agreement ($r_{WG(j)}$) on a uniform expected variance distribution (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984). We also calculated two intraclass correlations: ICC(1), which indicates the percentage of team-level variance, and ICC(2), which indicates the stability of group means (Bliese, 2000). The average $r_{WG(j)}$ for veteran alcohol use norms in this study was .83, which is above the .70 benchmark proposed by James et al. (1984). $ICC(1) = .58$, $F = 5.39$, $p < .01$, indicating that a significant amount of the variance (58%) in ratings was accounted for by team membership. $ICC(2) = .81$, indicating high reliability of the group means. These statistics supported aggregating the individual responses to the team level.

Client alcohol use norms (rated by team supervisors at Wave 1). To avoid same source bias, we asked each team supervisor to assess the alcohol use norms of his/her team's clients using four items: "Our clients often drink alcohol during business meetings," "For our clients, drinking alcohol is an important way to strengthen business relationships," "Our clients talk about business while drinking alcohol," and "Our clients often drink alcohol with business partners." These items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). Cronbach alpha was .91.

Motives for alcohol use (rated by newcomers at Wave 2). We asked participants to rate, when they drank alcohol, how often their drinking was due to the named reasons, with responses ranged from 1 = "never" to 5 = "always." Five items each from Cooper (1994) were used to measure newcomers' social and coping motives for alcohol use. A sample item for social motives (alpha = .94) was "be-

cause alcohol makes social gatherings more fun.” A sample item for coping motives ($\alpha = .95$) was “because alcohol helps you when you feel depressed or nervous.” We also used five items to measure performance motives for alcohol use ($\alpha = .96$): “to do my job better,” “for the benefit of my organization,” “for good business,” “for greater success on the job,” and “to achieve important work-related goals.” In our analyses, social and coping motives are used as control variables in predicting work-based heavy drinking.

Work-based heavy drinking (rated by newcomers at Waves 1 and 2). The work of the sales and service personnel who participated in our study is highly client focused. Prior to conducting the study, we were informed through qualitative interviews with the managers that drinking on the part of sales and service personnel occurs almost entirely with clients. Accordingly, we operationalized work-based heavy drinking in terms of the frequency with which our participants engaged in heavy drinking with clients. We based our single-item measure on the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2004) metric noted earlier, asking participants how often in the past month, in the context of some form of client engagement (such as a formal meeting, lunch, dinner, or party), they consumed five or more drinks (1 = “never” to 5 = “almost every day”; a *drink* was defined as 12 oz. of beer, 4 oz. of wine, and 1 oz. of liquor).

Alcohol misuse (rated by newcomers at Waves 1 and 3). We used the World Health Organization’s AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test; Babor, Higgins-Biddle, Saunders, & Monteiro, 2001) to assess alcohol misuse. The AUDIT has 10 questions, each with a value of 0–4 points, for a total maximum of 40 points. A sample item was “How often during the past year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?” Responses ranged from 0 = “never” to 4 = “daily or almost daily.” Cronbach alpha was .95. The total AUDIT score reflects the individual’s risk of alcohol misuse. Therefore, in our main analysis, we used the total AUDIT score as the outcome variable. In addition, according to the AUDIT manual (Babor et al., 2001) and its Chinese version (Tsai, Tsai, Chen, & Liu, 2005), a total score of 8 or greater is indicative of hazardous and harmful alcohol use, mandating some form of intervention. Accordingly, in addition to examining misuse as a continuous variable, using this 8-point cutoff, we also examine the extent to which our model predicts hazardous

and harmful alcohol use (i.e., a score of 8 or higher on the AUDIT).

Control variables (rated by newcomers at Wave 1). Age, gender, education, marital status, work experience, and organizational tenure could be related to employee alcohol use (Frone, 2013; Liu, Wang, Zhan, & Shi, 2009; Wang, Liu, Zhan, & Shi, 2010), thus they were used as control variables. Because we are interested in the emergence/exacerbation of heavy alcohol use and alcohol misuse among organizational newcomers, we also controlled for their Wave 1 work-based heavy drinking and alcohol misuse. In doing so, we account for the self-selection process whereby workers predisposed to heavy drinking and alcohol misuse are attracted to work environments that reinforce those behaviors. Moreover, to show that work-based heavy drinking instead of work-based modal drinking is predictive of alcohol misuse, we measured *work-based modal drinking* (i.e., quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption with clients) as a control variable in predicting alcohol misuse. Specifically, we adopted the approach of Blum, Roman, and Martin (1993) and Bacharach et al. (2010), calculating the product of responses to two consumption items; namely, (a) how often do you drink alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine, or liquor with clients (i.e., frequency of alcohol consumption; 1 = “never” to 5 = “almost every day”) and (b) on those occasions when you did drink alcoholic beverages with clients in the past month, what was the average number of drinks you consumed each time (i.e., average quantity of consumption)? Finally, we also measured social desirability (19 items from Paulhus, 1998; Cronbach alpha was .77) to control for potential tendency of respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others (e.g., supervisors or coworkers).

Analytical Strategy

To partition the variance at the individual- and team-levels in hypothesis testing, we applied multilevel modeling using *Mplus* 6.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). A multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to demonstrate construct distinction. A logistic link function was used to model the risk of hazardous and harmful alcohol use, a dichotomous variable. The percentage of variance explained at the individual (Level 1) and the team (Level 2) levels is reported as an indicator of effect size. In testing mediation effects, we used

the procedures outlined by Preacher, Zyphur, and Zhang (2010). In addition, Monte Carlo simulation was used to better estimate the confidence intervals (CIs) of the indirect effects.

RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among variables are displayed in Table 1. Before testing the hypotheses, we examined whether the outcome variables (i.e., performance drinking motives, frequency of work-based heavy drinking, and alcohol misuse) varied at both the individual level as well as the team level of analysis via a series of random intercept-only models. Specifically, for performance drinking motives, 71% of its total variance was at the team level (i.e., $ICC(1) = .71$); for the frequency of work-based heavy drinking, 50% of its total variance was at the team level (i.e., $ICC(1) = .50$), and, for alcohol misuse, 2% of its total variance was at the team level (i.e., $ICC(1) = .02$). These supported using multilevel modeling in analyzing the data. In addition, these ICCs as well as the ICC for veteran alcohol use norms indicated that work teams, although performing similar tasks, varied widely in the extent to which alcohol was used in the work setting. Company membership and social desirability were not significantly related to performance drinking motives (Wave 2), work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2), or alcohol misuse (Wave 3), and thus were excluded from further model testing.

Testing the Measurement Model

To examine whether the constructs measured are distinguishable from one another, we conducted a multilevel CFA in which veteran alcohol use norms and client alcohol use norms were treated as team-level factors; social motives, coping motives, and alcohol misuse were treated as individual-level factors; and performance motives were treated as both team-level and individual-level factors. The model fit the data well, $\chi^2(701) = 966.02$, $p < .01$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .94, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .95, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05. All items loaded significantly on their corresponding factor. Correlations among factors at the individual level ranged from .19 to .73 (mean correlation was .39). Correlations among factors at the team level ranged from .43 to .51 (mean correlation was .47). This measurement model fit the data better than all six constrained models in

which any two of the four factors at the individual level were combined ($273.52 \leq \Delta\chi^2(\Delta df = 3) \leq 883.72$, $ps < .01$). This model also fit the data better than all three constrained models in which any two of the three factors at the team level were combined ($10.95 \leq \Delta\chi^2(\Delta df = 2) \leq 38.52$, $ps < .01$). Beyond the findings regarding construct validity noted earlier, these findings demonstrate additional evidence of construct distinction at both the individual level and the team level.

Hypothesis Testing

We tested two multilevel models, the results of which are reported in Table 2. Specifically, in Model 1, both individual-level and team-level control variables were used to predict performance drinking motives, work-based heavy drinking, and alcohol misuse. In Model 2 (i.e., hypothesized model), performance drinking motives were predicted by veteran alcohol use norms and client alcohol use norms. In addition, performance drinking motives were used as both individual-level and team-level predictors of the frequency of work-based heavy drinking. Furthermore, work-based heavy drinking was used as both an individual-level and a team-level predictor of alcohol misuse. The model, shown in Figure 2, fit the data well, $\chi^2(64) = 89.41$ ($p < .05$), CFI = .95, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .05. Both the veteran alcohol use norms ($\gamma = .33$, $p < .05$) and the client alcohol use norms ($\gamma = .25$, $p < .01$) were positively related to performance drinking motives, supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. These indicated that, when veteran members of the team often drank alcohol with the clients and when the clients they served liked to drink alcohol during business meetings, newcomers in sales and client service teams were more likely to hold the belief that alcohol might be used to enhance their job performance. In addition, newcomers' performance drinking motives were positively related to the frequency of work-based heavy drinking at both the individual level ($\gamma = .47$, $p < .01$) and the team level ($\gamma = .70$, $p < .01$). Newcomers who believed that alcohol could be used to enhance their job performance were more likely to drink heavily with their clients. When the average performance drinking motives among newcomers was higher (vs. lower) in a team, the average frequency of heavy drinking with clients among newcomers was also higher (vs. lower).

Using the *Mplus* and *R* code provided by Preacher et al. (2010), we estimated indirect effects

TABLE 1
Individual-level Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations among Measures^a

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Age (Wave 1)	24.35	3.50																		
2. Gender (Wave 1)	1.51	.50	-.11																	
3. Years of education (Wave 1)	14.20	2.21	.15	-.23**																
4. Years of work experience (Wave 1)	2.30	3.06	.72**	.04	-.26**															
5. Tenure (Wave 1)	2.99	2.34	.34**	-.22**	-.24**	.38**														
6. Marital status (Wave 1)	0.20	.40	.53**	.09	-.19*	.52**	.33**													
7. Organization (Wave 1)	1.59	.49	.06	.27**	-.06	.04	-.06	.04												
8. Team size (Wave 1)	5.79	3.02	-.33**	.08	.27**	-.42**	-.64**	-.26**	.23**											
9. Social desirability (Wave 1)	4.09	.68	.02	-.13	.08	-.12	-.02	-.03	-.10	-.09										
10. Veteran alcohol use norms (Wave 1)	2.30	1.00	-.16	-.23**	.21**	-.25**	-.31**	-.15	-.32**	.34**	.03	(.96)								
11. Client alcohol use norms (Wave 1)	2.88	.95	-.11	-.24**	.08	-.22**	-.16	-.11	-.29**	.26**	.05	.48**	(.91)							
12. Frequent of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 1)	1.81	.93	-.02	-.27**	.09	-.12	-.09	-.06	-.08	.17*	.15	.18*	.17*							
13. Alcohol misuse (Wave 1)	3.40	4.19	.04	-.52**	.20*	-.08	.00	.04	-.16*	.04	.18*	.26**	.13	.34**						
14. Coping motives (Wave 2)	2.13	1.10	-.27**	-.16	.20*	-.38**	-.45**	-.20*	.11	.59**	.01	.37**	.33**	.18*	.14	(.94)				
15. Social motives (Wave 2)	2.64	1.04	-.16	-.32**	.26**	-.29**	-.28**	-.21*	.05	.43**	.01	.40**	.28**	.12	.22**	.58**	(.95)			
16. Work-based moral drinking (Wave 2)	2.17	3.32	-.14	-.30**	-.25**	-.22**	-.34**	-.14	-.18*	.33**	.07	.65**	.43**	.19*	.41**	.35**	.37**			
17. Performance drinking motives (Wave 2)	2.40	1.23	-.25**	-.20*	.22**	-.36**	-.52**	-.22**	-.03	.59**	.03	.60**	.46**	.08	.21**	.55**	.56**	.62**	(.96)	
18. Frequency of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2)	1.84	1.26	-.26**	-.11	.27**	-.36**	-.54**	-.23**	.01	.54**	.07	.49**	.40**	.11	.15	.53**	.49**	.45**	.68**	
19. Alcohol misuse (Wave 3)	4.33	7.45	-.04	-.17**	.25**	-.19*	-.22*	-.08	-.07	.19*	.07	.37**	.22*	-.06	.16*	.39**	.39**	.42**	.39**	

^a $n = 147$ at individual level, $n = 57$ at team level. Reliabilities of the scales are in the diagonals. Data on variables 1–6, 9, and 12–19 were reported by newcomers; data on variable 10 were collected from veteran members of the team, and variable 11 was evaluated by team supervisor. For gender: “1” = male, “2” = female.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

TABLE 2
Multilevel Modeling Results^a

Model Variable	Model 1 (Control variables)			Model 2 (Mediation)		
	Performance drinking motives (Wave 2)	Frequency of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2)	Alcohol misuse (Wave 3)	Performance drinking motives (Wave 2)	Frequency of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2)	Alcohol misuse (Wave 3)
Intercept	3.08**	2.16*	4.73	2.24**	1.21	-.96
<i>Level 1 control variables</i>						
Age	.01	-.03	.08	-.02	-.03	.08
Gender	-.59**	-.33	-2.70**	-.50**	.01	-.91
Years of education	-.04	.02	.45	-.04	.04	.37
Marital status	.09	.05	1.52*	.10	-.01	.97
Years of work experience	-.03	-.01	-.33	-.02	.01	-.22
Tenure	-.09*	-.13**	-.62*	-.08*	-.08*	-.10
Coping motives (Wave 2)		.37			.32	
Social motives (Wave 2)		-.05			-.05	
Frequency of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 1)		.04			.01	
Work-based modal drinking (Wave 2)			.30			.34
Alcohol misuse (Wave 1)			-.22			-.21
<i>Level 1 predictors</i>						
Performance drinking motives (Wave 2)					.47**	1.66
Frequency of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2)						1.01*
<i>Level 2 control variable</i>						
Team size	.14**	.11*	.01	.09**	.01	-.23
<i>Level 2 predictors</i>						
Veteran alcohol use norms (Wave 1)					.08	1.63*
Client alcohol use norms (Wave 1)					.06	-.11
Performance drinking motives (Wave 2)					.70**	4.45
Frequency of work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2)						-3.52
Level 1 R^2	.05	.18	.13	.05	.33	.25
Level 2 R^2	.58	.57	0	.72	.95	.96

^a $n = 147$ at individual level, $n = 57$ at team level. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

using a multilevel structural equation modeling framework. Specifically, the indirect effect of veteran alcohol use norms on newcomer work-based heavy drinking through performance drinking motives was significant (indirect effect = .23, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [.04, .47]). Similarly, the indirect effect of client alcohol use norms on newcomers' frequency of work-based heavy drinking through performance drinking motives was significant (indirect effect = .17, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [.05, .33]). These results were consistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4, and indicated that alcohol use norms had a positive impact on newcomers' frequency of work-based heavy drinking through heightened performance drinking motives.

We also found the Level 1 (i.e., individual level) effect of the frequency of work-based heavy drinking on alcohol misuse to be significant ($\gamma = 1.01$, $p < .05$). This result was consistent with Hypothesis 5. Similarly, when a logistic regression was used to predict the dichotomous outcome of hazardous and harmful alcohol use (the dichotomous variable form of misuse), the odds ratio for frequency of work-based heavy drinking (2.70) was also significant ($p < .01$). As shown in Figure 3, newcomers with one unit higher in the frequency of work-based heavy drinking were 2.7 times more likely to subsequently engage in a more general pattern of harmful and hazardous alcohol use. In addition, at

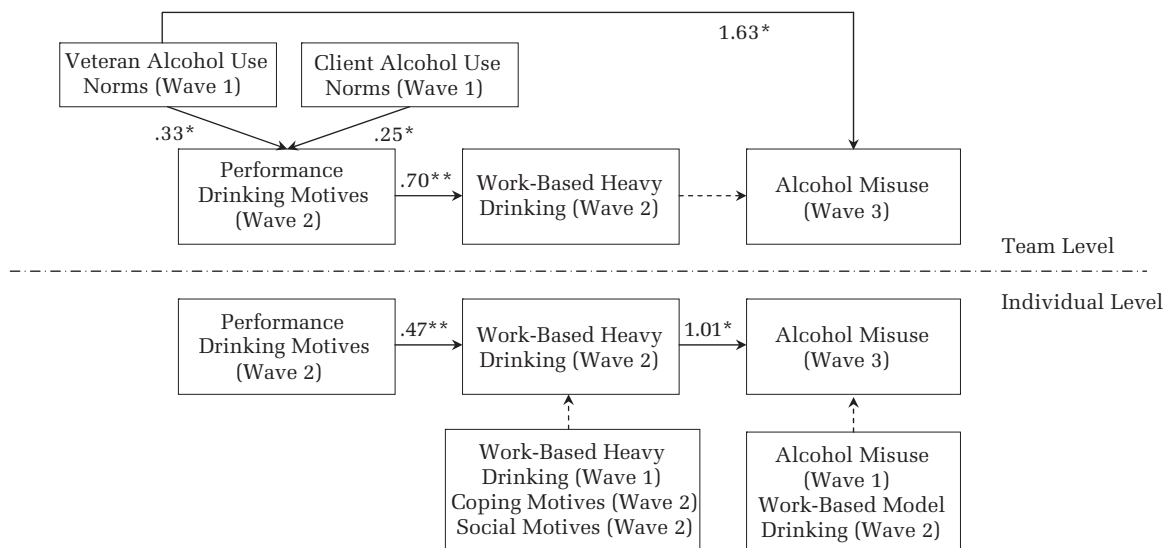
the individual level, the indirect effect of performance drinking motives on alcohol misuse through the frequency of work-based heavy drinking was significant (indirect effect = .47, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [.02, 1.10]). This result was consistent with Hypothesis 6 and indicated that performance drinking motives had a positive impact on subsequent alcohol misuse through the frequency of work-based heavy drinking.

However, Hypotheses 7 and 8 were not supported. Although veteran (but not client) alcohol use norms were significantly related to newcomers' alcohol misuse (i.e., the more often veterans in a team drank alcohol with their clients, the greater the extent to which its newcomers misuse alcohol), the indirect effects of veteran alcohol use norms and client alcohol use norms on alcohol misuse were not significant (indirect effect = $-.82$ and $-.61$, respectively, $ps > .05$).

DISCUSSION

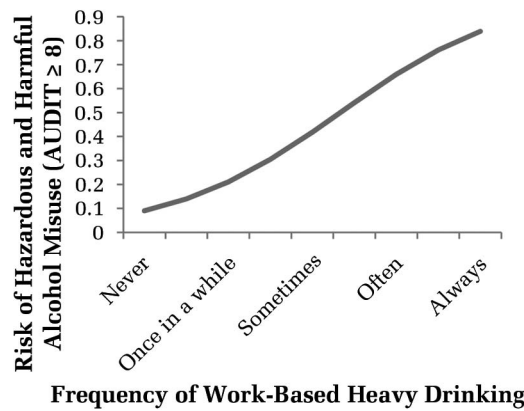
In the current study, we use sensemaking as an overarching perspective to shed light on how contextual norms shape newcomer work behaviors. In particular, we demonstrate that these norms may elicit employee accounts in the form of work-related motives that can generate problematic outcomes for both the employees and the organization.

FIGURE 2
The Final Model with Coefficients



Unstandardized coefficients are presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). Dashed line indicates control variables and non-significant paths. For brevity, the effects of additional control variables (i.e., team size and demographic variables) on performance drinking motives (Wave 2), work-based heavy drinking (Wave 2), and alcohol misuse (Wave 3) were not included in the figure.

FIGURE 3
Frequency of Work-Based Heavy Drinking
Predicts Risk of Hazardous and Harmful
Alcohol Use



Specifically, we found that both veteran alcohol use norms and client alcohol use norms had a significant impact on performance drinking motives, which, in turn, influenced the frequency of work-based heavy drinking among newcomers engaged in high client-interface occupations. Further, the frequency of work-based heavy drinking was positively related to overall alcohol misuse and also mediated the positive relationship between performance drinking motives and alcohol misuse.

Interestingly, however, while a significant direct effect of veteran drinking norms on alcohol misuse was found, we found no evidence of an indirect effect of veteran and client drinking norms on a more general pattern of alcohol misuse. A combination of factors may explain this anomaly. First, the direct effect of veteran drinking norms on a more generalized pattern of alcohol misuse may stem from a spillover effect in which newcomers, influenced by veteran drinking norms, engage in heavy drinking outside of the work context. For example, in teams in which veteran drinking norms are more permissive, newcomers may infer that it is not only client-focused drinking that is accommodated or encouraged, but drinking with peers after work as well. To the degree that such drinking is heavy and frequent, it may—similar to heavy drinking with clients—generate a more generalized pattern of alcohol misuse. Second, some of these relationships, such as those between client drinking norms and a more general pattern of alcohol misuse, may only be observable in the longer term. In other words, the six months between our first and third wave of data collection may have been insuf-

ficient for such distal effect to emerge in a manner sufficiently robust to be picked up in our tests. Finally, the relatively small size of our sample may fail to provide the statistical power necessary to detect the indirect relationships, the effect sizes of which are typically small (Preacher & Kelley, 2011).

Theoretical Implications

The current study offers several important theoretical implications. In particular, we extend theories of sensemaking to newcomer socialization in three ways. First, we explicate the role of stakeholders, inside and outside of an organization, in newcomer sensemaking processes. Specifically, our findings suggest that both veteran peers and clients are critical socializing agents whose behaviors serve as important inputs to newcomer sensemaking. Second, we highlight the role of descriptive norms of stakeholders in shaping newcomer actions. Previous research on newcomer socialization tends to focus on an explicit, leader sense-giving process, while our study emphasizes an implicit, stakeholder-led process. Our findings suggest that newcomers develop accounts not only on the basis of what they are told by leaders but what they infer from peers and clients. This is important in that it suggests much of the socialization process may be beyond the direct control of organizational leaders. Third, we demonstrate the role of motives as the operational manifestation of accounts and the role of these motives as linking norms to actions. This is important because it facilitates the direct testing of hypotheses grounded on notions of sensemaking— notions that, to date, have almost been exclusively examined on the basis of qualitative analysis.

No less significant, we find that the informal socialization process, in the form of norm affirmation and conformation, may lead to behaviors that, while well intended, have ultimately dysfunctional consequences in the long term. Because newcomers are more likely to view “norms” as rigid rather than flexible, they might perceive overwhelming pressure to conform to the social norms, irrespective of the long-term consequences behavioral conformation might have. Examples of these dysfunctional workplace norms include unsafe shortcut taking (Choudhry & Fang, 2008), working excessively long hours (Burke & Cooper, 2008), absenteeism (Bamberger & Biron, 2007), and an organizational culture of dishonesty (Cialdini, Bator, & Guadagno, 1999).

Considering the profound, long-lasting influence that work-based norms may have on employee behavior, it is important to understand the process by which such norms influence employee behavior and well-being. Aside from shedding light on that process, our study also expands the range of outcomes addressed in organizational socialization research (Bauer et al., 2007).

Additionally, our study complements and extends previous research on the emergence and maintenance of culture-like team characteristics by suggesting that these team characteristics may emerge and be continuously reinforced as newcomers, veterans, and organizational outsiders “do things together” (Trice & Beyer, 1993: 81). These characteristics ultimately “give sense” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) to team members in general (and newcomers in particular) as to how they might best meet their organization’s performance expectations. Put in other terms, our study contributes to theories of newcomer socialization by highlighting the critical role played by veterans and organizational outsiders in helping newcomers learn how they might most efficiently meet the objectives often laid out for them in the context of more formal socialization. It also contributes to theories of cultural emergence and maintenance by shedding light on the central, “sense-giving” role played by clients and veterans in shaping newcomer performance motives as a key mechanism in workplace cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This insight is particularly important in work site alcohol research in that, while several previous studies have documented the effects of workplace permissive drinking norms on employee alcohol use, relatively little research has addressed the theoretical underpinnings of the etiology of drinking cultures (Frone, 2013). However, more generally, an understanding of how newcomer performance-based motives may emerge to reinforce normative team behaviors that are ultimately dysfunctional for the organization and its members is critical if practitioners are to develop informal socialization mechanisms that promote effective and healthy organizational behaviors for both the short and the long term.

Finally, our findings extend our understanding of the origin and role of motive or reason as a basis of behavior determination. Building on Weick’s (1995) core notion that sensemaking is never an individual activity because “what a person does internally is contingent on others” (Schwandt, 2005: 183), we demonstrated that motives are inex-

tricably linked to the descriptive norms dominant in the newcomer environment. We also demonstrated the role played by such motives in shaping the adoption of behaviors that may ultimately be damaging to both the newcomer and their employer. Such findings are important in that they suggest that, in order to better understand how newcomers adopt organizational behaviors (and particularly those that may, ultimately, prove to be detrimental to them, their members, and their clients), it is critical to understand the implicit logics of justification and explanation underlying them, as well as the basis upon which these logics themselves emerge. Recent theorizing in behavioral intention theory has begun to consider such notions, incorporating reason into the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) as a critical factor explaining human behavior (Westaby, 2005). Our findings extend this approach by providing some of the first insights into the social origins of reason, and, more specifically, into how veteran peer and client norms influence newcomers’ reasons (i.e., motives) as a basis for action.

Practical Implications

The results of the current investigation also offer a number of significant practical implications. First, our findings reinforce the notion that informal socialization plays a critical role in helping employees understand the means–ends structure of behaviors in the workplace. To gain insight into how to achieve the performance objectives typically specified during formal socialization, newcomers often have no choice but to draw on implicit workplace norms as a basis for sensemaking and decision making. This tendency may be most pronounced among new employees whose job or position requires them to provide exceptional solutions for clients (Ibarra, 1999). Without proper management of this informal socialization process, new employees may internalize dysfunctional norms, learn risky shortcuts, and develop habits and repertoires that may ultimately do harm to both them and their employers.

An example of one such potentially dysfunctional norm is described by Colella (1994) regarding “the norm to be kind” to persons with disabilities by refraining from telling them anything bad or unpleasant. This norm, while perhaps facilitating interactions with employees with disabilities in the short term, may result in the withholding of negative performance feedback from such employ-

ees, thus allowing discrepancies to emerge between what such employees are told and the administrative decisions ultimately made regarding their advancement and status in the organization. Accordingly, a primary implication of our research is that employers need to pay greater attention to the informal socialization processes that ultimately shape and direct newcomer performance-based motives and behaviors. Although managers may prefer not to interfere with those informal socialization processes, thus speeding employee learning curves and facilitating a quicker return on newly acquired human capital, our findings suggest that such processes can generate significant costs for the firm and its members in the long run. Therefore, a myopic, laissez-faire approach on the part of managers may be risky.

Second, newcomers who fill positions in which they are expected to develop relationships with and provide solutions to critical organizational stakeholders may be particularly at risk for negative health and well-being outcomes. This is because the managers of these employees often adopt the approach that “the ends justify the means” when it comes to strengthening relationships with and providing exceptional solutions for critical clients. Our findings indicate that such an approach may generate adverse consequences for both the employee and their employer if the solutions adopted entail behaviors that are risky by their very nature. This is also consistent with the emotional labor literature, which suggests that client-focused behaviors such as displaying positive emotions could adversely affect employees’ psychological and physical health (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Wang, Liu, Liao, Gong, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Shi, 2013). Unfortunately, the risk of these behaviors may not be seen by the management, especially when the behaviors are so deeply entrenched in the norms and taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in the organization and its line of business. Accordingly, managers of newcomers in such positions may have an ethical and business obligation to identify such risks and guide their new employees to avoid them.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions noted above, a number of limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, our measures of workplace alcohol-use norms may not fully capture the extent to which alcohol use is permitted in the

workplace. In addition to veteran peers and clients, newcomers may seek normative information from other socialization agents, such as other newcomers and employees working for competing firms. Moreover, besides descriptive alcohol use norms measured in the current study, injunctive alcohol use norms—perceptions of how much others approve of drinking—may also have a significant impact on workplace alcohol use and misuse (Frone & Brown, 2010). Therefore, a more comprehensive examination of permissive drinking culture in the workplace, an important area for future research, should include other sources as well as other forms of normative influences.

Second, we used a single-item and self-report measure of work-based heavy drinking. Although this is consistent with previous research (e.g., Bacharach et al., 2010), we acknowledge that this measure may be subject to low reliability and retrieval bias. In previous research, an experience sampling method has been used to assess employee alcohol use (e.g., Wang et al., 2010), which better captures the ebbs and flows of alcohol consumption and should be adopted when possible by future research (Liu, Zhan, & Wang, 2011). Additionally, sales and client service employees may inflate their reporting of drinking with clients, since participants’ coworkers and supervisors could view this type of drinking positively. However, in the current study, a measure of social desirability was not significantly related to performance drinking motives, frequency of heavy drinking with clients, or overall alcohol misuse. Thus, the relationships reported in the current study were unlikely to be biased by social desirability.

Third, our model did not take into account important individual difference factors, which could moderate the relationship among drinking motives, workplace drinking behaviors, and overall alcohol misuse. For example, the relationship between performance drinking motives and heavy drinking with clients may be particularly strong when job demands (e.g., in terms of sales goals) are high. In addition, work-based heavy drinking may be more likely to lead to alcohol misuse for individuals with low tolerance to alcohol. Furthermore, the effects of alcohol use norms may be stronger for young people and for those assuming their first job out of college. Examining these factors may shed light on the important boundary conditions regarding this and other relationships embedded in our model.

Fourth, while our findings indicate that veterans’ drinking norms influence newcomers’ alcohol-re-

lated motives and behavior, it is also likely that, in the process of transmitting these norms to them, veterans also legitimize and reinforce the centrality of these norms to themselves. That is, while the alcohol use norms that we studied served as an important basis of socialization for newcomers, efforts to reproduce these norms among the newcomers may also serve as a basis for cultural entrenchment among veterans. Although in the discussion above we briefly speculated about the nature of this entrenchment, given our focus on newcomer socialization, we leave it to future researchers to examine the degree to which, by socializing newcomers, veterans may implicitly reinforce their own norms and patterns of behavior. Moreover, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer, we encourage those examining the role of newcomer socialization in cultural reproduction to also take newcomer turnover into account. Understanding who leaves and why may provide important insights into the extent to which newcomer socialization plays a role in the entrenched culture of workplace drinking.

Fifth, because performance drinking motives and work-based heavy drinking were measured at the same time, we cannot dismiss the possibility that veteran and client drinking norms lead to work-based heavy drinking, which leads to performance drinking motives as a justification for drinking. In fact, previous research suggests that sensemaking is an iterative process in which accounts and actions reciprocally influence each other (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). To further examine such process, we urge future research to examine this possibility using a cross-lag panel design or experimental design.

Finally, we collected data strictly on sales and client service employees in one particular culture (i.e., China) in which drinking is a well-recognized part of doing business (Hao, Chen, & Su, 2005). Thus, the extent to which our findings are generalizable to other (occupational and national) contexts is of potential concern. However, permissive drinking norms noted here have been observed in a wide variety of industries, including construction, sales, service, health care, manufacturing, entertainment, and the military (e.g., Ames, Duke, Moore, & Cunradi, 2009; Dobson, 2010; Popp & Swora, 2001; Sonnenstuhl, 1996). In addition, as Schweitzer and Kerr (2000: 47) noted, “[I]n many cultures, drinking is considered an essential element in building business relationships, and managers across a wide range of functional areas are likely to encounter

opportunities and even pressure to consume alcohol with business colleagues.” Therefore, we believe our findings that workplace norms inform performance drinking motives which promote work-based heavy drinking are not limited to our particular sample. That being said, we encourage future studies to replicate our findings in other cultural settings.

CONCLUSION

Despite these limitations, our findings sensitize scholars and practitioners to the critical role played by veteran peers and external agents such as clients in newcomer socialization. While much of the management literature focuses on leader sensegiving as a means to reduce newcomer uncertainty and facilitate onboarding, our findings remind us that, when it comes to meeting the objectives laid out for them by their leaders, newcomers often have little choice but to draw survival clues from those in their operating environment such as peers and clients. There is little doubt that these peer and client insights have the potential to enhance employee performance in the short term. However, the significance of our findings lies in demonstrating the risks and ethical dilemmas associated with such sensemaking processes in the long run.

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