



Organizational socialization tactics and newcomer proactive behaviors: An integrative study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between organizational socialization tactics, newcomers' self-efficacy, proactive behaviors, and socialization outcomes. Based on a sample of 140 co-op university students who completed surveys at the end of their work term, the results indicated that newcomers' self-efficacy and institutionalized socialization tactics were positively related to newcomer proactive behaviors. The results also indicated that newcomer proactive behaviors partially mediated the relationship between their self-efficacy and organizational socialization tactics with a number of proximal and distal socialization outcomes. Furthermore, feedback-seeking and information-seeking moderated the relationship between socialization tactics and several socialization outcomes. Institutionalized socialization tactics were more strongly related to socialization outcomes for newcomers who engaged in less feedback-seeking and information-seeking behavior. These results support an interactionist approach to organizational socialization in which newcomers' self-efficacy, proactive behavior, and organizational socialization tactics all contribute to newcomers' adjustment and socialization.

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1. Introduction

When individuals join organizations, they must learn to understand and make sense of their new surroundings (Louis, 1980). The method by which this sense-making occurs is known as organizational socialization. Organizational socialization is the process by which individuals acquire the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills required to participate and function effectively as a member of an organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The manner in which organizations socialize their newcomers is important because it affects the success of socialization and newcomers' adjustment (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a).

One approach to studying organizational socialization involves examining the tactics employed by organizations to structure newcomers' socialization experience (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This approach regards individuals as passive, reactive agents and in isolation may not fully capture the dynamics of the socialization process. More recently, an alternative approach to understanding socialization has emerged in which individuals are viewed as active agents in the socialization process (Morrison, 1993a, 1993b). This approach focuses on self-initiated or proactive behaviors on the part of newcomers in order to navigate the ambiguity inherent in occupying a new organizational role (e.g., Ashford, 1986). A third approach considers the interaction of individual and organizational factors or what is known as the interactionist perspective. The interactionist perspective seeks to integrate the individual and organizational perspectives by examining how they interact to influence socialization outcomes (Griffin, Colella, & Goparaju, 2000).

The interactionist perspective, however, has not received much empirical attention (Griffin et al., 2000). According to Bauer, Morrison, and Callister (1998), most studies have failed to adopt an interactionist perspective of organizational socialization and instead have focused on either the effects of contextual factors or newcomers' attributes or behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to integrate the individual and organizational perspectives in accordance with the interactionist perspective. In particular, we examine the effects of self-efficacy and organizational socialization tactics on newcomer proactivity as well as the mediating and moderating effects of proactivity. Our basic proposition is that the extent to which newcomers can engage in proactive tactics is a function of their self-efficacy and the socialization tactics employed by their organization.

1. Organizational socialization tactics

The most popular typology of organizational socialization is that developed by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) who proposed a theoretical explanation for how specific socialization tactics produce different role orientations. Their typology consists of six bipolar tactics. The tactic of *collective* (vs. *individual*) socialization refers to whether newcomers go through common learning experiences, designed to produce uniform responses to situations, or idiosyncratic experiences that permit a variety of responses. *Formal* (vs. *informal*) socialization refers to whether newcomers are isolated from other organizational members while they learn their roles, or whether they become part of work groups immediately upon occupying their new positions and learn on-the-job. *Sequential* (vs. *random*) socialization refers to whether newcomers receive clear guidelines regarding the sequence of activities

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