

DOCTORAL THESIS

The improvement of organizational socialization in groups: an interactionist perspective of social identity theory

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**The Improvement of Organizational Socialization in Groups: An Interactionist
Perspective of Social Identity Theory**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

Organizational socialization (OS) was considered a vitally important influence on both newcomers and organizations in the past three decades. Responding to the practical need, most of the OS studies focused on OS improvement. However, in spite of a brief boom period in the mid-1990s, OS has been relatively neglected by scholars for some time. This is largely due to stagnation in the development of OS theory, which also impedes the advancement in methodology. To fill the research gaps, I introduce the social identity theory (SIT) as the theoretical basis for the present study. According to this theory, I interpret the nature of OS as a social identity development process within which newcomers develop their self-concept in terms of social identities in order to participate as a member of various new groups in the organization. I further explore the interactive mechanism of OS improvement in groups on the basis of cognitive and motivational depersonalization processes proposed in SIT. After that, I summarize an identity-based interactionist OS model (IIOSM) to logically assemble the relationships proposed in the present research.

To test this model, I conducted a longitudinal survey with three-wave data collection. The data were collected from blue-collar workers in 15 footwear factories and white-collar employees in 15 IT service companies with three-month demarcations. The results supported all propositions in IIOSM. Managerial interventions in terms of organization and group benchmarking strategy and contextual socialization tactics have positive main effects on newcomers' OS

improvement. Newcomers' proactive behaviors, social comparison and self-categorization tactics, also can improve their OS. Moreover, the managerial interventions and newcomers' proactive behaviors moderate each other's effects in newcomers' OS improvement. Beside the moderating effects of newcomers' proactive behaviors, their initial level of self-esteem and their perception of uncertainty also moderate the effects of benchmarking strategy and contextual socialization tactics in OS improvement. These results verify the interactionist perspective in OS study so that firm managers can do better in OS processes through the interaction between organization and newcomers.

I thus provide a new theoretical interpretation about OS from an interactionist perspective of SIT, contributing to the theoretical development of the OS literature. The application of SIT also allows a methodological improvement in the present study, which is advancing the research methodology in OS field. Finally, the new relationships conceptualized in IIOSM beyond previous OS studies provide new knowledge to further future research and benefit human resource practice.

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