

# The influence of proactive socialization behaviors and team socialization on individual performance in the team

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On the basis of the role and the social exchange theories, this research investigated the direct and indirect antecedents of three dimensions of team performance (proficiency, adaptivity, proactivity) developed through cooperative education. The theoretical model examined how proactive socialization behaviors led to team socialization and team performance, and how team socialization mediated the relationship between proactive behaviors and team performance. Results from multiple linear regressions on a sample of 2905 student-workers involved in cooperative education programs globally supported the model. Theoretical and practical implications, as well as limitations and propositions for future research, were discussed. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2016, 17(4), 413-421)

Keywords: Team-performance; proactive socialization behaviors; team socialization

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The increased attention on nurturing talent within organizations has raised employers' expectations with respect to their employees' performance in the workplace. In order to live up to the expectation, workers must be skillful and proactive in order to develop in-role performance – task related performance. However, they also need to develop skills related to extra-role performance. The increased focus on team units in organization (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Kukenberger, Mathieu, & Ruddy, 2015) has required the development of interpersonal skills for extra-role performance - behaviors that contribute to organization less directly (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997), such as citizenship behaviors (Borman, Buck, Hanson, Motowidlo, Stark, & Drasgow, 2001) or team role behavior (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). Individuals must adjust to the work environment to become active members of team units and hence develop specific competencies and behaviors.

Based on the role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978), and defined as the aggregated value to an organization of the set of behaviors that an employee contributes both directly and indirectly to organizational goals (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell, 1990; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993), work-role performance has been poorly investigated through work-integrated learning programs. To participate in filling the gap, we propose to examine the antecedents of team performance at the earliest stage of work, when relational behaviors are nurtured in order to develop team performance, that is to say, individuals' first workplace experiences, prior to graduating. The number of individuals gaining experience in the workplace during their post-secondary education is increasing (NACE, 2013; STIC, 2012), in part through the popularity of work-integrated learning programs (WIL) such as cooperative education (co-op). Co-op is a program of "semester-long paid work placements that are an integral part of an academic degree program based on alternating academic and work-term" (Kramer & Usher, 2011: p.4). While previous research has demonstrated the importance of this period in developing interpersonal skills (Clinton & Thomas, 2011) and in nurturing organizational behaviors (Livens & Sackett, 2012; Pennaforte & Pretti, 2015; Rose, Teo & Connell, 2014), to our knowledge, no study has investigated how team performance may develop prior to graduating. We first present the theoretical background supporting our hypotheses. Second, we define the method used on a sample of 2905 undergraduate student-workers who were employed in workplaces across the world, and then highlight and discuss

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our results. Finally, theoretical and practical implications are provided, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research.

## THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

According to role theory, which describes organizations as a “system of interdependent behaviors” (Katz & Kahn, 1978: p.179), work-role performance is a concept which aims to “describe the full set of work responsibilities in a role and to encompass both organizational context and individual work behavior” (Griffin et al, 2007: p.329). As a multi-dimensional construct (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993), work-role performance is related to job performance, generally conceptualized with two distinct components, task environment and social environment. In-role performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993) refers to the set of expectations for the role, often described in a job description (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). In contrast, extra-role performance includes behaviors that contribute to the organization but deviate from the assigned responsibilities (Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993; Organ, 1988). Accordingly, scholars have investigated the behavioral-related dimensions of job performance such as adaptivity (Allworth & Hesketh, 1999; Griffin, Parker, & Mason, 2010; Huang, Zabel, Ryan, & Palmer, 2014; Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000), proactivity (Crant, 2000; Griffin et al, 2010; Neal, Yeo, Koy, & Xiao, 2012; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006), and proficiency (Griffin et al., 2007). Typically, there are three levels of investigation for role behaviors: task, team, and organization (Griffin, 2007; Neal et al., 2012). As such, team work-role performance - which refers to individuals’ behaviors that contribute to team performance - may be designed with three components, adaptivity, proficiency, and proactivity, as described below.

“Team member adaptivity reflects the degree to which individuals cope with, respond to, and/or support changes that affect their role as member of a team (e.g., responds constructively to team changes). Team member proficiency, describes behaviors that can be formalized and are embedded in a team or group context (e.g., coordinate work with team members). Team member proactivity reflects the extent to which an individual engages in self-starting, future-directed behavior to change a team’s situation or the way the team works (e.g., develop new methods to help the team perform better)” (Griffin et al., 2007, p.332).

With respect to the antecedents of work-role performance, several have been investigated, such as affective states (Barrick & Mount, 1991; George & Zhou, 2002) and personality traits (Neal et al., 2012). This focus establishes the importance of clearly understanding the role expected to be held in the organization (Welbourne et al., 1998). According to the socialization literature based on the social exchange theory (Gouldner, 1960; Blau, 1964), when individuals arrive in the workplace or change roles, they must master several organizational domains (Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Taormina, 1994; 2004) in order to succeed in their new role (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). Effort must be invested in social integration, referring to the newcomer’s success in developing productive relationships with insiders (Chao et al., 1994). In addition to social integration, newcomers must develop an understanding of their role and how it fits into the overall organization (Taormina, 1994). We define this understanding as the clarity of the role (role clarity), the clarity about the role(s) to be held in the environment based on the understanding of organizational goals. Achievement in these two domains will lead to socialization within the team. In order to master these domains, individuals develop proactive socialization behaviors (PSB) to learn the ropes, to reduce the

uncertainty of the position they have filled (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000) in order to become assimilated insiders (Kozlowski, 1995; Schein, 1978; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992). In this endeavor, four PSB may be used (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2007), seeking information (e.g., trying to learn the politics of the organization), seeking feedback from the supervisor (e.g., solicited critiques from the boss), job change negotiating (e.g., negotiated with others about desirable job change), and general socialization (e.g., attended company social gathering). Hence, team performance may be directly or indirectly (through the mediation of role clarity or social integration) influenced by behaviors (Huang et al., 2014) such as PSB (Bauer et al., 2007; Griffin et al., 2007). Given these arguments, we hypothesized the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* Prior to graduating, individuals’ proactive socialization behaviors lead to team performance.

*Hypothesis 2:* Prior to graduating, individuals’ proactive socialization behaviors lead to team socialization.

*Hypothesis 3:* Prior to graduating, the relationship between individuals’ proactive socialization behaviors and team performance is mediated by the team socialization.

The theoretical model (Figure 1) that follows illustrates our hypotheses.

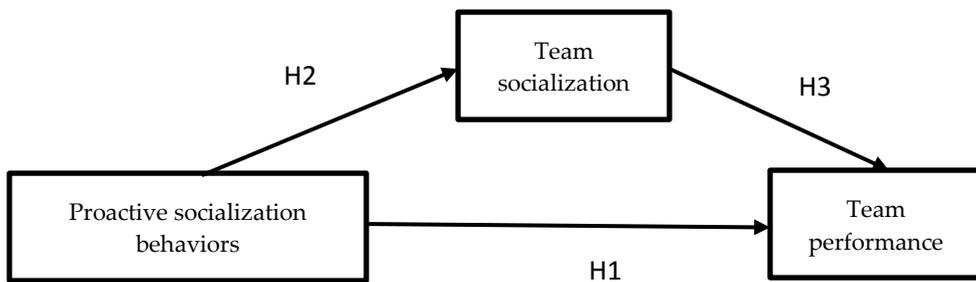


FIGURE 1: Theoretical model of the relationship between proactive socialization behaviors, team socialization, and team performance (proficiency, adaptivity, proactivity)

METHODS

*Participants and Procedure*

In November 2014, after ethics approval was attained, 8416 undergraduate student-workers involved in cooperative education programs from all faculties (Arts, Applied Health Studies, Engineering, Environment, Math, and Science) in a North American university received an email to invite them to participate in an online survey, open for three weeks. Two reminders email were sent out. Data collected were cross-sectional. All student-workers had at least four months of experience in a workplace in North America or somewhere else in the world. They were in their second, third and fourth year of studies. In total, 2985 (response rate=34.6%) participants completed the survey and received \$6.00 remuneration. Once cleaned, the final sample was 2905 student-workers. Participants were male (47.9%) and female (51.1%) ranging in age from 18 to 25 years (mean=20.5). SPSS.22 was used for the analysis.

### *Measurement Instrument*

Existing published scales of the construct measures were used to test the hypotheses and the scales were piloted with a small sample. In addition to the measures described in this section, demographic variables were also collected. Those variables included sex, age, faculty, and length of work experience. These variables were used to determine if the respondent sample was representative of the population.

### *Team Role Performance*

To measure the extent to which participants were performing in their team, we used nine items from Griffin and colleagues (2007) scale measuring team *adaptivity*, *proficiency*, and *proactivity*. Participants were asked to rate how often they carry out the behaviors on a scale ranging from 1, (very little) to 5, (a great deal). An example item is "I coordinate my work with my co-workers". Cronbach's alphas were .74, .76, and .81 respectively.

### *Proactive Socialization Behaviors*

Four proactive socialization behaviors— *feedback seeking*, *information seeking*, *job change negotiating* and *general socialization* – were measured using fourteen items from the Ashford and Black (1996) scale. Participants indicated their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1, (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). An example item is "I try to learn the important politics of the organization". Cronbach's alpha for each of the four tactics were .89, .90, .88, and .90 respectively.

### *Team Socialization Domains*

Two team socialization domains were measured using six items from Chao and colleagues (1994) scale measuring *social integration*, and five items from Taormina (2004) scale measuring an *understanding of role and the organization (role clarity)*. Participants indicated their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1, (strongly agree) to 5, (strongly disagree). An example item is "within my work group, I would be easily identified as "one of the gang"". Cronbach's alphas were .73 for social integration and .85 for role clarity.

## RESULTS

### *General Results*

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for the variables included in the model are shown in Table 1. Means show that among the four PSB, information seeking was the highest (M=3.67; SD=.88). Among the two domains of socialization, individuals mastered their role clarity (M=3.92; SD=.62) more than their social integration (M=3.74; SD=.62). Among the final outcomes of the model, team proficiency (M=4.28; SD=.55) and adaptivity (M=4.12; SD=.52) were high. Significant correlations supported the positive relationship between all the variables of the model, except for job change negotiating with social integration ( $r=.00$ ;  $p=.990$ ). However, correlations between the control variables (sex, age, length of experience) and all the variables of the model were mostly insignificant. The control variable *number of co-workers* (1 to 5 or more than 5) had significant correlation between all the variables of the model, except for team adaptivity ( $r=.03$ ;  $p=.128$ ) and proactivity ( $r=.01$ ;  $p=.570$ ).

TABLE 1: Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for the variables included for the model

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.	1.5													
2.	20.5		.02											
3.	3.2		-.07**	.62**										
4.	2.2		.03	.02	-.02									
5.	3.6	.79	.02	.02	.07**	.05**								
6.	2.9	1.0	-.02	.01	.04*	.08**	.44**							
7.	3.5	1.0	.03	.05**	.13*	.17**	.32**	.27**						
8.	3.6	.88	.04*	.04*	.03	.12**	.35**	.30**	.38**					
9.	3.7	.62	.02	.02	.01	.09**	.11**	.00	.33**	.23**				
10.	3.9	.62	.02	-.07	-.05*	.10**	.21**	.11**	.21**	.32**	.38**			
11.	4.1	.52	-.00	.02	.02	.03	.26**	.12**	.20**	.28**	.31**	.44**		
12.	4.2	.55	.03	.06**	.05**	.05**	.22**	.06**	.21**	.24**	.45**	.44**	.46**	
13.	3.6	.76	-.06**	.00	-.00	.01	.23**	.26**	.21**	.28**	.22**	.30**	.38**	.39**

Where: 1: sex; 2: age; 3: length of experience (4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24 months); 4: number of coworkers (1-5, >5); 5: feedback seeking; 6: job change negotiating; 7: general socialization; 8: information seeking; 9: social integration; 10: role clarity; 11: team adaptivity; 12: team proficiency; 13: team proactivity. N=2905; M=mean; SD=standard deviation; \*p<.01; \*\*p<.001;

Direct Relationships

Hierarchical regressions were used to investigate the effect of PSB on socialization domains, and team performance, and to explore the effects of both PSB and socialization domains on team performance. We first examined the relationships between PSB and team socialization domains, and team performance as shown in Table 2. Among the four factors that comprise PSB, both general socialization and information seeking had a positive effect on role clarity ( $\beta=.07$ ;  $p<.001$  and  $\beta=.07$ ;  $p<.001$  respectively) and social integration ( $\beta=.30$ ;  $p<.001$  and  $\beta=.17$ ;  $p<.001$  respectively). All the PSB had a positive effect on the three components of team performance, except for job change negotiating ( $\beta=-.09$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, individuals' PSB lead to organizational socialization, and team performance. Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported.

TABLE 2: Linear regressions between PSB and organizational domains, and team performance

	Domains		Team Performance		
	Role clarity	Social integration	Adaptivity	Proficiency	Proactivity
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Feedback seeking	.09**	ns	.16**	.16**	.07*
Job change negotiating	ns	-.13**	ns	-.09**	.15**
General socialization	.07**	.30**	.08*	.13**	.07*
Information seeking	.07**	.17**	.21**	.16**	.07*
Model F	99.17	148.23	70.0	56.9	70.9
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	.114	.139	.124	.100	.121

Notes: \*p<.01; \*\*p<.001; N=2905; ns= non-significant ;

Indirect Relationships

Mediation effects were tested using multiple regressions and examining the co-efficient differences (Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). Examining hypothesis 3, related to mediation effects, the addition of social integration and role clarity reduced or eliminated the significance of PSB for predicting performance adaptivity (Table 3, model 2), and proficiency

(Table 3, model 4). In the case of performance proactivity, the addition of socialization domains eliminated but did not reduce the significance of PSB (Table 3, model 6). Therefore, the relationship between individuals' PSB and team performance (adaptivity and proficiency) was partially mediated by the socialization domains. Thus, hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

TABLE 3: Hierarchical regressions on the relationship between PSB and domains, and performance to the team

	Performance adaptivity		Performance proficiency		Performance proactivity	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Feedback seeking</b>	.16**	.13**	.16**	.04*	.07*	Ns
<b>Job change negotiating</b>	ns	Ns	-.09**	.18**	.15**	.18**
<b>General socialization</b>	.08*	Ns	.13**	Ns	.07*	Ns
<b>Information seeking</b>	.21**	.08*	.16**	.10**	.07*	.10**
<b>Role clarity</b>		.32**		.18**		.18**
<b>Social integration</b>		.14**		.10**		.10**
<i>Model F</i>	70.0	86.38	56.9	74.96	70.9	74.96
$\Delta F$		138.23		64.07		64.07
<i>R<sup>2</sup> adjusted</i>	.124	.252	.100	.174	.121	.174
$\Delta R^2$		.136		.050		.126

Notes: \* $p < .01$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ ;  $N = 2905$ ; ns = non-significant;

## DISCUSSION

Prior to graduating, individuals involved in co-op programs develop proactive socialization behaviors which lead directly to the socialization to the team and to three dimensions of team performance, adaptivity, proficiency and proactivity. Team socialization partially mediated the relationship between PSB and the dimensions of team performance. Our results show that individuals' team socialization is a path to develop team performance adaptivity, proactivity and proficiency. Among the four PSB, information seeking and general socialization had the strongest influence on the variables of our model, due to their impact on reducing role uncertainty (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). These results show the importance of information seeking and socialization in order to adapt to the team and to develop team performance proficiency. Through cooperative education, individuals understand the great value of building relationship with others as soon as they arrive, in order to adapt their behavior to perform in the team. Results also show that through co-op, a low social integration to the team does not help individuals to develop team proactivity. More than knowing the ropes and the role to be hold within the team, being a true member, fully socialized, has a great influence for individuals' development of proactive performance. Finally, it seems easier to develop proactive behaviors in order to socialize in the team than to adopt proactive behavior associated with team performance. The proactivity associated with team performance requires high socialization and enough self-confidence to act proactively to increase the performance of several individuals.

For the practitioner, this research shows that individuals, at their first stage of their careers, quickly realize the importance of succeeding in team socialization by developing proactive socialization behaviors. Individuals know quickly where to find information in order to develop clarity of their organizational role, and reduce uncertainty. To do so, co-op stakeholders (co-workers, supervisors) could be a key support for individuals. Accordingly,

employers should foster informal talks, formal and informal relationships built with supervisor and co-workers to help individuals in socializing (Pennaforte, 2016) and hence in developing team performance. Also, welcoming a new team member should encourage employers to maximize the positive influence of the newcomer in bringing new ideas and in energizing the team. The balance between the ideas from the outsider and the established rules and organization of the team unit should initiate proactive behaviors in order to achieve team performance goals.

There are some limitations of this research with respect to the reliability and the methods. First, Cronbach's alpha of the social integration scale ( $\alpha=.73$ ) and of performance adaptivity ( $\alpha=.74$ ) and proficiency ( $\alpha=.76$ ) were low, as previously seen in other studies (e.g.,  $\alpha$  ranging from .67 to .92 for work-role performance in Griffin et al., 2007). Additionally, the generalizability of the results may be affected by the fact this research was based on one sample of student-workers enrolled in a North American university, in one type of work-integrated learning model, with a cross-sectional data collection method. However, data were collected on three different years of study, student-workers were employed in organizations around the world. Finally, to avoid the bias associated with self-reported data, the questionnaire included reversed items to increase its consistency.

Further comprehensive research on the relationships between PSB and team performance should reduce the biases associated to the relatively low reliability of the work-performance and the socialization domain scales. In particular, adapted or using another instrument to assess the work-role performance should be proposed to try to better capture the overall spectrum of performance in multiple organizational roles. Also, given the multiple roles that individuals must hold as soon as they enter the workplaces, and given the strong influence of the norm of reciprocity in organizational studies, further research should connect these two major theories in order to investigate the complexity of individuals' behaviors within the organizations through WIL. To this objective, we invite researchers to use longitudinal designs to discover the transitional moment between two states, for example from outsider to insider. It would also be interesting to examine types of supports provided by the organization in order to develop team performance, such as the Leader-Member-Exchange (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Graen & Scandura, 1987), the HR practices (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007), or teams and co-workers' supports (Engestrom & Tinto, 2008), through a qualitative investigation of these supports. From an individual perspective, the investigation of self-efficacy, for example, would reinforce the comprehension of the development of proactive behaviors, as well as the examination of other targets of commitment and other proactive socialization behaviors as "seeking feedback from team-mates/co-workers". Finally, further research should investigate the counterpart of extra-role performance and examine how individuals behave in the earliest stage of the career with regard to the in-role performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Papers included in this APJCE Special Issue are based on selected manuscripts from the research symposium's refereed proceedings. All manuscripts were expanded and modified to meet APJCE requirements, double-blind reviewed by the APJCE editorial board, and amended before being accepted to be published in APJCE.





## About the Journal

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work-Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

In this Journal, Co-op/WIL is defined as an educational approach that uses relevant work-based projects that form an integrated and assessed part of an academic program of study (e.g., work placements, internships, practicum). These programs should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program. These programs can be described by a variety of names, such as cooperative and work-integrated education, work-based learning, workplace learning, professional training, industry-based learning, engaged industry learning, career and technical education, internships, experiential education, experiential learning, vocational education and training, fieldwork education, and service learning.

The Journal's main aim is to allow specialists working in these areas to disseminate their findings and share their knowledge for the benefit of institutions, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that will lead to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of co-op/WIL, and promote further research.

## Submitting Manuscripts

Before submitting a manuscript, please ensure that the 'instructions for authors' has been followed ([www.apjce.org/instructions-for-authors](http://www.apjce.org/instructions-for-authors)). All manuscripts are to be submitted for blind review directly to the Editor-in-Chief ([editor@apjce.org](mailto:editor@apjce.org)) by way of email attachment. All submissions of manuscripts must be in Microsoft Word format, with manuscript word counts between 3,000 and 5,000 words (excluding references).

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Typically, authors receive the reviewers' comments about 1.5 months after the submission of the manuscript. The Journal uses a constructive process for review and preparation of the manuscript, and encourages its reviewers to give supportive and extensive feedback on the requirements for improving the manuscript as well as guidance on how to make the amendments.

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Types of manuscripts the Journal accepts are primarily of two forms; *research reports* describing research into aspects of Cooperative Education and Work Integrated Learning/Education, and *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and give critical explorative discussion around a topical issue.

The Journal does also accept *best practice* papers but only if it present a unique or innovative practice of a Co-op/WIL program that is likely to be of interest to the broader Co-op/WIL community. The Journal also accepts a limited number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

*Research reports* should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry, a description and justification for the methodology employed, a description of the research findings-tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance for practitioners, and a conclusion preferably incorporating suggestions for further research.

*Topical discussion* articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical discussion of the importance of the issues, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.



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