May 2020

Acronym Usage in Groups: The Relationship of Socialization and Identification

Dara K. Carney-Nedelman
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, dcarneyn@vols.utk.edu

Acronym Usage in Groups: The Relationship of Socialization and Identification

AUIGTROSAI
(Acronym Usage in Groups: The Relationship of Socialization and Identification)

Have you ever been to a country that doesn't speak your native language? You immediately feel like you cannot fully experience the culture of that country because you cannot interact with the people. Or have you ever joined a new group excited for all the possibilities your membership can bring, then on the first day realize the other group members are using unfamiliar terms? The latter experience is the impact of jargon usage in organizations, defined as "the technical terminology of characteristic idiom of a special activity or group" (Strehlow, 1983, pg. 23). Both experiences leave you feeling left out of the group. The member is privy to more information than the newcomer (Wang, Cheng, & Wang, 2016). This leaves the newcomer, feeling disconnected from the organization they just joined since they can't communicate with the other group members, who already know the jargon.

Research has concluded that when assimilated into a group, the group members contribute more. They overall have greater satisfaction (Riddle, Anders, & Martin, 2000). This assimilation can be broken down into two variables: socialization and identification of group members. Both areas have been heavily researched in the communication discipline. This paper is organized around prior research of group socialization and identification, the methods for the study, and a final discussion for review of theoretical/practical implications and limitations. This research project analyzes the relationship between knowledge of acronyms and the group member's socialization and identification.

Literature Review

Group Socialization

Define. Socialization of group members is an important step for group communication effectiveness. Anderson, Riddle, and Martin (1999) define socialization "as a two-way process of

groups influencing individuals and vice versa, a dual perspective of the individual and the group

is essential in developing a comprehensive understanding of socialization process in groups" (pg.

140). In order for newcomers of a group to gain membership in that group they must first go

through the socialization process. This process helps the newcomer learn the culture of the

group, so that they are able to work with and understand the other members (Moreland & Levine,

1982). Socialization leads newcomers and members to evaluate if their goals align (Levine &

Moreland, 1994), and if the newcomer is fulfilling the expectations and goals of the group as a

whole.

   Moreland and Levine Model. The first socialization model was created by Moreland

and Levine in 1982, and it evaluated the process of a newcomer going through socialization,

assimilation, accommodation, and finally becoming a full member. Due to Moreland and

Levine's (1982) social psychological focus, they had a cognitive perspective approach when

developing their "model of group socialization" (pg. 153). The group socialization model is

displayed below as figure 1; "within each phase, evaluations produce change in commitment,

which in turn lead to a role transition when a decision criterion has been reached. Once a role

transition has taken place, a new phase is entered and evaluations begin anew" (Moreland &

Levine, 1982, pg. 151). Moreland and Levine's (1982) model depicts an ideal individual's group

experience through five stages of membership divided by four role transitions. For each of the

stages, which can be from the perspective of the group or individual, there is a continual process

of evaluation of rewards from the individual/group, this evaluation will then impact the

individual/group feeling of commitment towards group goals and values, and due to the changes

in commitment a role transition from the individual/group results (Moreland & Levine, 1982).

Fig. 1. A model of group socialization
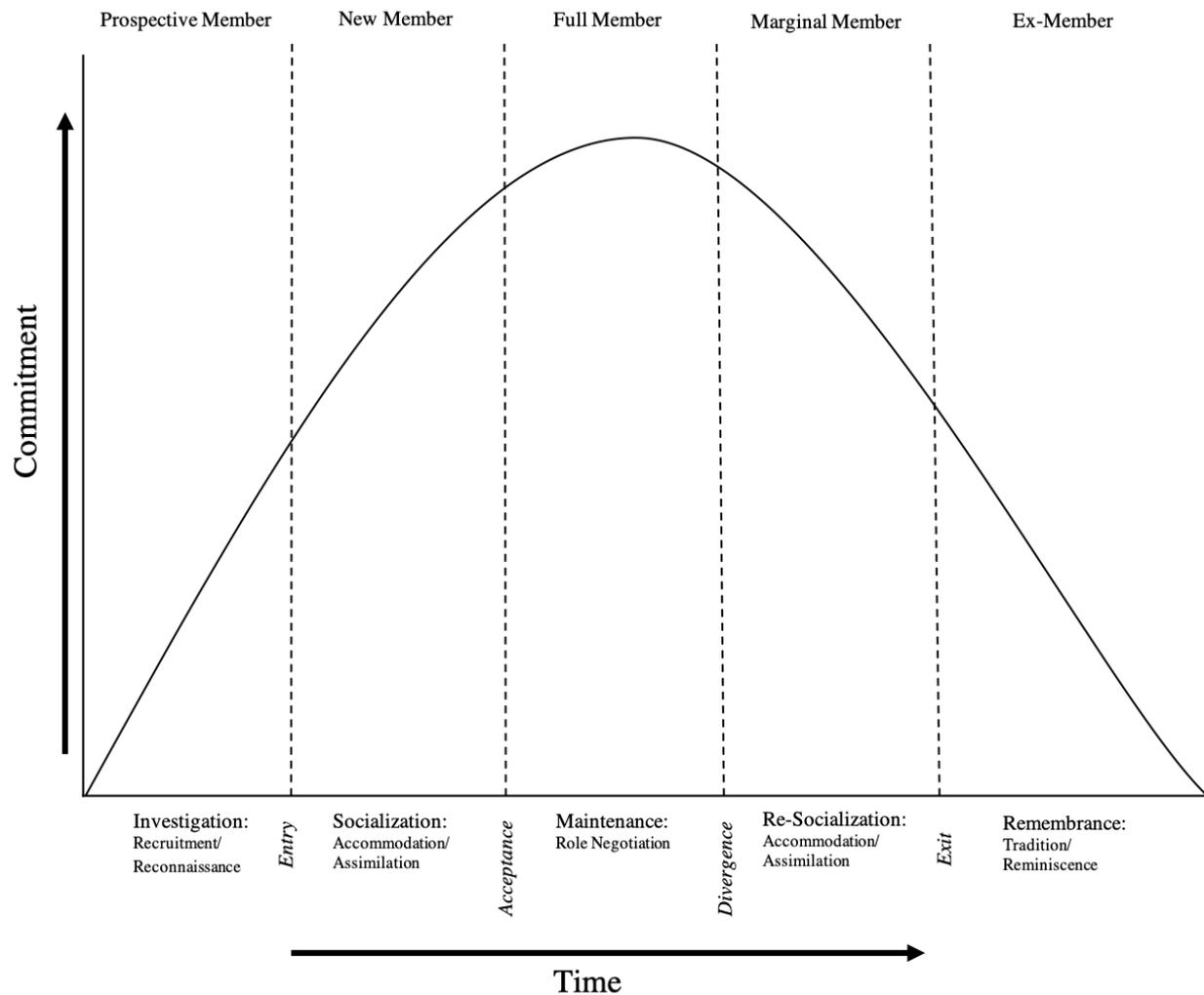
The first stage of the model is investigation, which encompasses the group recruiting

members and the individual does a reconnaissance of other groups to determine which group

they want to join; in this phase the group and the individual "assess the potential value of

forming a relationship with one another" (Moreland & Levine, 1982, pg. 152). Socialization is

the second stage of the model, and the stage that will be the focus of this study. Moreland and

Levine (1982) state socialization is when the "group attempts to teach the individual

'appropriate' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, and evaluates how much he or she contributes to

the attainment of group goals" (pg. 152). The group accommodates to the individual, and the

individual assimilates to the group by adapting and evaluating the group, as well as, having the group modify to fit the individual (Moreland & Levine, 1982).

The next stage of the model is maintenance: "the group attempts to define a specialized role for each full member that maximizes his or her contributions to the attainment of group goals and minimizes the group's obligations to the person" (Moreland & Levine, 1982, pg. 153). The fourth stage of the model is resocialization, another version of the original socialization stage; there is a re-evaluation from the individual/group, which will either lead to modifications from both parties for re-assimilation or will lead to the individual leaving the group (Moreland & Levine, 1982). Finally, if individual leaves the group, the resulting stage is remembrance, the individual reminiscences about their time in the group; the group evaluates the individual's commitment and determines if a tradition should be made from the individual's time in the group (Moreland and Levine, 1982). This socialization model created a foundational understanding of the interworking's of group transitions.

Communication Model. In 1999 Anderson et al. expanded a phase model titled Group Socialization Model: Individual Member. Whereas, Moreland and Levine focused on psychological aspects of the individual, Anderson et al. centered their work on group communication and how groups and individuals interact. This model has five phases representing "both an individual member and a group perspective, essential characteristics that explain how communication serves to shape socialization activities associated with participating in group tasks and developing intragroup relationships" (Anderson et al., 1999, pg. 144). Within this non-linear model, the authors understood that an individual can be a part of another group in a different phase. During group socialization the group may accommodate or reject the newcomer, additionally, groups may repeat phases and will handle the process at different

variations (Anderson et al., 1999; Myers & Anderson, 2008). The five phases will now be

discussed more in depth.

First, the antecedent phase is a step in which the newcomer influences the group through

their beliefs, attitudes, motives, motives for communication, communication traits,

communication apprehension, argumentativeness, and demographics; these influencers impact

the work relationship of the members and the newcomer's perception of the group (Anderson et

al., 1999). Next, the anticipatory phase "describes the pre-affiliation expectations that group

members form about each other" (Anderson et al., 1999, pg. 148). This process involves the

group/individual determining if the expectations set for one another are being met. If

expectations aren't being met, an evaluation of seeing if both parties are willing to change will

occur. The next three phases are encounter, assimilation, and exit. For this research the focus will

be on the encounter and assimilation phase.

The encounter phase is the initial interaction of individuals whether it be computer

mediated or face to face, the phase is the first step in determining group roles and goals

(Anderson et al., 1999). During this socialization phase, members are evaluating if a newcomer

is able to meet their goals, newcomers are inquiring if they appreciate the goals of the group, and

both are determining their roles amongst one another (Anderson et al., 1999). This phase

resembles the 'ribbon cutting of a new building', and newcomers are feeling out the building

during their first walk through. The fourth phase of the model is assimilation, "a process of full

integration into a group culture" (Anderson et al., 1999, pg. 152). Anderson et al. (1999) explains

how this process involves the newcomer understanding the group culture and identifying with

the group's own identity. If both of these feeling align, the newcomer will have a sense of

connection with the group. The final phase is exit, and occurs when an individual leaves a group,

the result of this exit phase leaves the group/individual reflecting on their past time involved with one another (Anderson et al., 1999). Hess (1993) deemed that a group can be perceived as successfully assimilating the out-group members based on their satisfaction, effectiveness, socialization, and personalization. The encounter and assimilation phase are at the root of socializing new members to acclimate to the group culture.

  Outcomes. There are several outcomes as a result of the socialization process that are beneficial for the newcomer and the group. When newcomers enter a group, the newcomer and group itself develops and changes as a result of the new member (Anderson et al., 1999; Moreland & Levine, 2001). The more a newcomer is committed and willing to accommodate to the group's culture, the smoother the assimilation process will be for that newcomer (Kane & Rink, 2015). Gibson and Papa (2000) stated how it is "to the organization's benefit that the newcomer engage in such information-seeking and 'learn the ropes' quickly so that existing efficiency, productivity, morale and cohesion levels are not negatively affected" (pg. 71). However, it isn't only about the newcomer conforming to the group values. Burke, Kraut, and Joyce (2010) stated that "socialization to groups and organizations is a bidirectional process in which newcomers play a proactive role" (pg. 30). The group develops as a result of newcomers, therefore, both new and old members are evaluating their expectations of one another throughout the process.

  Newcomers participate in different styles of evaluation through the socialization process. Moreland and Levine (2001) claim newcomers "engage in surveillance or feedback seeking, encourage mentoring by oldtimers, or collaborate with one another," (pg. 74) and that established members are more liable to help newcomers when they are most familiar to the group. Newcomers interacting through group evaluation show to the members that they are dedicated

and willing to assimilate to be a part of the organizational culture. But one must understand that assimilation is not only the duty of the newcomer. The more successful a group is the less open that group will be to accept new members, and socialization of newcomers requires commitment from both the newcomer and the full-fledged members (Moreland & Levine, 1982).

Group Identification

According to Anderson, Riddle, and Martin (1999) assimilation begins when members are immersed in the culture and have a "shared identity through symbolic interaction that builds group cohesion" (pg. 152). From this, we can conclude that the socialization and identification processes combine in order for newcomers to assimilate into the organization. This process requires the identity of one individual being immersed or merged into the identity of the group.

The foundational studies for identification are rooted in social psychologies' social identity theory from Tajfel and Turner (1979). Due to the basis of the theory in psychology there are two cognitive process at the epicenter of the theory: 'categorization' and 'enhancement of self-esteem' (Hogg & Terry, 2000). This theory explains the relationship between the individual and the group from self-perceptions of cognition and behavior (Abrams, Hogg, Hinkle, & Otten, 2005; Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). Cheney (1983) explained the impact the group has on the individual, by being a "motivational" source for identification, the policies of the organization influence the individuals identity, and have the potential to hold "referent power" over the individuals' identity. Essentially, the social identity theory illustrates the influences and interaction of the organization on the individual's identity.

An assumption of the theory is that individuals in groups normally categorize themselves based on societal categories such as generations, gender, and ethnicity, and when in groups, they a more likely to connect with those who also fall within their own demographics (Bayazit &

Maanix, 2003). This social categorization occurs because group members identify with others based on the same classification (Hogg et al., 2004). The more obvious identity features initially outline group boundaries because it's simpler to see differences, but outwardly apparent social categories are not the only groups people pair with. Individuals will group with those who make them comfortable, which is most normally those with similar identities and therefore complementary attitudes. Abrams et al. (2005) finds that social identity is both the result and catalyst for group attitude. Individuals have a strong role of influence on group behaviors, and this is due to the dynamic experiences and attitudes each member can add to the group. Scott (2007) stated that "SIT has been useful not only for recognizing the organization as one social identification target relevant to individuals but also by illustrating the multiple identification targets (i.e., various social identities) of relevance to organizational members" (pg. 126). However, one must remember that social identity is only a part to a whole and "must be set in the context of individual, relational, and cultural elements in groups" (Abrams et al., 2005, pg. 125). Considering this, it's beneficial to understand the impacts and factors of shared identities in groups.

Define. Identification is the concept that a member feels that their identity aligns with the group they are involved with meaning the group members' values correspond with those of the group (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Cheney (1983) claims that identification is vital, because it aids "us in making sense of our experience, in organizing our thoughts, in achieving decisions, and in anchoring the self" (pg. 342). Understanding the reasoning behind one's membership in a group is a part of the identification process, and there are multiple aspects to process this evaluation. Henry, Arrow, and Carini (1999) broke identification into variables of cognition, affection, and behavior based from Bouas and Arrow's (1996) original work. First Henry, Arrow, and Carini

(1999) state, "the cognitive source taps how social identity and social categorization- aspect of individual cognition and the self – influence group identification" (pg. 561); second, the relational connections interpersonally displayed through emotional feelings; thirdly, the behavior variable "focuses on the group-level construct of cooperative interdependence (pg. 561). In addition, contextual norms of a group share the groups' mutuality and identity, and help to distance the outgroup (Abrams, Hogg, Hinkle, & Otten, 2005). These features help one to understand the variables of identification, and awareness that each person will have to navigate themselves.

The results of a member feeling a strong sense of identity in the group has proven to have positive outcomes on the group and member (Abrams et al., 2005; Cheney, 1983; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994) When a newcomer has a sense of identification with the group, they will be able to align with the goals of the organization more easily. This identification can develop as a result of individuals spending more time involved in an organization, which leads to the group evaluating the individual positively (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Cheney (1983) stated that during this time of organizational identification, newcomers can gain an understanding of protocol, socialization, and the administrative interworking's of the organization.

Remember that identification aligning with a group is an intentional action of the newcomer; it is a representation of their commitment to gain and remain a member. Especially considering that Bayazit and Maanix (2003) deemed there will be a conflict of interest if individual goals are not coordinated with the organizational goals. They conducted a study on the team interactions of eighty- three MBA students, which concluded a member is more willing to continue in the group when there is: "absence of relationship conflict," "individual member's beliefs in the efficacy of the team, and perceived effective team task performance" (Bayazit &

Maanix, 2003, pg. 314). In the process of adjusting one's identity to match the identification of

the group, the newcomer is in pursuit of reducing uncertainty (Bayazit & Maanix, 2003; Hogg et

al., 2004). In this process they will become more comfortable and confident in the group.

Identification in a group leads to a member feeling more interconnected and knowledgeable

about the group.

Rationale

There are more than 6,500 verbal and written languages spoken across the world. In

communication studies, research on group-languages can be traced back to the 1980's from

research on airplane crews and the impact the crew's communication had on the safety and

effectiveness of the piloting (Vinton, 1989). There has also been extensive research on the

development of children's culture and societal norms as a result of the language that they are

surrounded by, defined as the language socialization paradigm (Paugh, 2005). Language plays an

important role in the growth of people, because from the first day one hears a message they are

being socialized to their society, and that "communication style and language...reflect relative

status" (Van Swol & Kane, 2019, pg. 10). Van Swol and Kane (2019) stated that "language helps

to reify status through pronoun use, polite language, and language convergence, and also creates

status differences through inequality of participation" (pg. 25). Group language is a result and

created from the establishment of social norms as group cultures.

Acronyms are a specialized type of language that groups use for efficiency. An acronym

is defined as "a word formed from the first (or first few) letters of a series of words" (Strehlow,

1983, pg. 22). Usage of acronyms and jargon are types of communication that the general public

doesn't understand. Troop (2018) stated, "People see an acronym...they want to know what it

stands for" (pg. 1). This causes issues in organizations that use acronyms, since it will take time

for newcomers to learn the acronym meanings. In addition, organization's communication of

symbols and messages frame the day to day of that group (Anderson, et al., 1999). Therefore,

understanding the messages and communication style of the organization are crucial factors for a

member to function and assimilate into the group.

Language and socialization. The assimilation that newcomers go through has many

variables, and an aspect of this socialization is understanding the group's language. It's

important for newcomers to interpret the group's language. By doing this they are representing to

the full-fledged members they desire to become a part of the group. (Van Swol & Kane, 2019;

Burt, Kraut, & Joyce, 2010). Learning acronyms is a key aspect of socialization in groups.

Moreland and Levine (2001) support this belief, through their explanation that an understanding

of "shared knowledge" (i.e. customs, jargon, symbols) is vital for a newcomer to be accepted

into the group. When newcomers actively ask questions to learn about the group, they are

heightening the group's efficiency, because they can better support the group due to their gained

understanding, (Anderson et al., 1999; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Kane & Rink, 2016). This explains

why understanding the group's language leading to newcomers' socialization is important for the

development of the group; without these steps' groups will not form a cohesive team. Therefore,

this hypothesis was analyzed:

H1: Knowledge of acronym meanings positively relates to a group member's

socialization.

Language and identification. Another example of language research that has been

popular in communication studies is pronoun research. Kane and Rink (2015) looked at

newcomers and their use of "you" versus "we" in group discussion, and the impact on group

dynamics; they concluded when newcomers merged their identity with the group's by using

plural pronouns, they were accepted more (pg. 94). The group may have been more comfortable with the newcomers because the full-fledged members were able to anticipate the newcomer's actions due to their displayed desire to identify and belong (Gibson & Papa, 2010). It is important for newcomers to identity with the group, and a way for newcomers to show this to the group members it to utilize the same group language. Van Swol and Rink (2019) stated that group language can be used by individuals to develop assimilation and unity. This is due to language aiding in understanding of societal cognition (Van Swol, Prahl, Kolb, Lewis, & Carlson, 2016). Through these research findings one can understand the important role language plays for newcomer's identification in groups. Considering this, the below hypothesis was posed:

H2: Knowledge of acronym meaning positively relates to group members' identification.

Time. For assimilation, the longer amount of time a newcomer has for identification (Bayazit & Maanix, 2003) and socialization processes (Moreland & Levine, 1982), the more likely the individuals will identify the newcomer as a member. Therefore, time is a factor that must be considered for the assimilation of newcomers into groups. Moreland and Levine (1994 & 2001) stated that socialization is a process that develops over time, which will allow newcomers to influence the group and be influenced by the group. Considering this, a key concern for members entering an organization and not knowing the language is that newcomers are hesitant to fail (Anderson et al., 1999). Due to this, newcomers will not be comfortable using a specific jargon and will be dissuaded from clarifying the language. Therefore, the longer a newcomer is a part of a group and the more involved that new member is, the more likely they will socialize and identify with the group. Consequently, the following hypothesis were investigated:

H3: Length of membership in XYZ Group has a direct positive relationship to

knowledge of acronym meaning.

H4: Length of membership in XYZ Group has a direct positive relationship to group

member's socialization.

H5: Length of membership in XYZ Group has a direct positive relationship to group

member's identification.

Methods

Sample

The study participants are from a university student group that is affiliated with an

external organization. To maintain anonymity, the name has been changed to XYZ Group. For

this study, participants were gathered through convenience sampling, they survey was sent out

through emails, texts, and group applications. An XYZ Group letter of approval was created by

the XYZ Group leadership. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary. While being a

member of XYZ Group is voluntary, some students are offered scholarships which requires

specific coursework. The majority of participants were offered scholarships through the XYZ

Group (*n*= 55; 69%) and there were some XYZ Group members without scholarships (*n*= 25;

31%). Most of the participants were male (*n*=55; 69%), but there were several female

participants (*n*= 25; 31%). The respondents ranged from 18 to 33 years old and the average age

was 20 (*SD*= 2.423).

Measures

Participants that responded to the survey first shared demographic information for

gender, age, semesters in XYZ group, and scholarship status. Secondly, the participants were

asked to do a self-reported measure on their understanding of a set of popular acronyms. Thirdly,

the participants responded to two scales, organizational identification questionnaire (OIQ) and

small group socialization scale (SGSS). All sections of the survey are attached in Appendix A.

Acronyms. In order to gauge the knowledge of acronyms, a self-reported measure was utilized, created by the researcher. The popularity/knowledge of the acronyms was determined with the help of the XYZ Group leadership. It should be noted that the usage of the acronyms did have a varying frequency in the programs, so there was an original understanding that some acronyms were more popular thus more familiar than others. Each participant stated what the acronym stood for and used it in a sentence they would utilize in XYZ Group. An example of this response is "Close of business…I'll submit that by close of business." The acronyms were chosen to represent the overall acronym understanding of the XYZ Group. By asking participants to state what the acronym stands for and use it in a sentence, it ensures they can use it in the group. The participants appeared to have a solid understanding of the 10 acronyms and the correct sentence usage of the acronyms. When an acronym was defined or used correctly it was coded with a one, and incorrect answers were coded with a zero. Therefore, the maximum number that could be reached was 20. However, the highest a participant scored was 19, and the minimum score was a 1. The mean of all 20 questions was 12.28, there was a range of 18, and *SD*= 4.79.

Organizational identification. To measure how the group members identified in the group the organizational identification questionnaire (OIQ) from Mael and Ashforth's (1992) was used. This scale measures the "perception of oneness with or belongings to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, pg. 104). The identification scale is also a self-reported questionnaire, and participants respond strongly disagree to strongly agree based on a 7-point Likert-type scale. There are six questions that the participants responded to. A sample question

is: "When someone criticizes XYZ Group, it feels like a personal insult." These responses will

be used to evaluate the members' feelings of identification in XYZ Group. The identification

survey has been modified from its original form to fit this particular sample group of XYZ Group

members. All six questions for the OIQ were used, the term "school" in the original survey was

replaced with XYZ Group (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Additionally, OIQ was based on a 5-point

likert scale, whereas, in this survey the responses were based on a 7 point-likert scale. The scale

was reliable (a= .87).

Small group socialization scale. In order to measure group socialization, the small

group socialization scale (SGSS) was developed by Anderson, Riddle, and Martin (1999). SGSS

is a tool "that measures people's perceptions of the communication effectiveness of group

socialization that includes task and relationship dimensions" (Riddle, Anderson, & Martin, 2000,

pg. 555). The SGSS is a self-reported questionnaire, that asks participants to respond on a 7-

point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There are 14 questions,

which were used to analyze how well group members are socialized and have assimilated into

the organization. A sample question is: "I was clear what was expected of me in XYZ Group."

The SGSS has been modified from its original form to fit this particular sample of XYZ Group

members. All fourteen questions of the scale were used, the term "group" in the survey questions

was replaced with XYZ Group (Riddle, Anderson and Martin, 2000). Additionally, SGSS was

based on a 5-point likert scale, whereas, in this survey the responses were based on a 7 point-

likert scale. The scale was reliable (a= .88).

Content Analysis. In order to test a participant's acronym knowledge, the participants

had to fill-in their definition of an acronym and use it in a sentence. The acronyms were selected

by the researcher's knowledge of popular acronyms used in XYZ Group. The popular acronyms

list was then confirmed by XYZ Group leadership. A code book was created for the two

researchers in this project, by taking examples from the responses for each of the 20 acronym

questions. A coder training occurred for the two involved researchers to clarify any questions

before coding took place. Through this training "1" was determined to mean the acronym was

correct and used correctly in a sentence, and that "0" meant the acronym was not correct and not

used correctly in a sentence. Next an inter-coder reliability test was run, by selecting 10% of the

acronym responses. Two researchers completed this inter-coder reliability which resulted in 95%

agreement, and a Cohen kappa of .83.

Results

First, tests were run to confirm there was not a significant difference between the two

subsets of the XYZ Group. No differences were found. However, there was a vast majority of

participants that were supported by scholarship, versus participants not supported by scholarship.

Hypothesis one and two were analyzed using a simple linear regression. Hypothesis one was

computed predicting there is a positive relationship between group member's socialization and

knowledge of acronym meaning. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 78) = 11.72$,

$p < .05$, Adj. $R^2 = .12$. Participants' predicted acronym knowledge of meaning is equal to .06

(Socialization) + 5.03. As knowledge of acronym meaning increases, so does socialization.

Hypothesis two was computed predicting knowledge of acronym meaning related to how

identified a member feels to the group. An insignificant regression equation was found ($F(1, 78)$

$= .063$, $p < .05$, Adj. $R^2 = -0.01$. Participants' predicted acronym knowledge of meaning is equal

to .00 (Identification) + 5.27. As knowledge of acronym meaning increases, identification does

not increase.

Hypothesis three, four, and five were computed using a one-way ANOVA. Hypothesis three compared length of membership in XYZ Group to knowledge of acronym meaning. There was no significant difference found ($F(8, 71) = 1.96, p < .05$). Hypothesis four compared length of membership in XYZ Group to group member's socialization. There was a significant difference found ($F(8, 71) = 2.28, p < .05$). The Games-Howell post hoc test revealed there were significant differences between 1 ($M = 5.58, sd = 0.70$) and 9 ($M = 6.75, sd = 0.15$ semesters, 3 ($M = 6.03, sd = 0.73$) and 9 semesters, 5 ($M = 5.44, sd = 0.95$) and 9 semesters, and 6 ($M = 6.14, sd = 0.10$) and 1 semesters. Hypothesis five compared length of membership in XYZ Group to group member's identification. There was no significant difference found ($F(8, 71) = 2.02, p < .05$).

Discussion

This projected explored assimilation of XYZ Group members. It revealed that aspects of socialization and knowledge of acronym meaning played the most significant impact on group members. While the group members understood the acronyms and didn't feel identified with the organization, they were still able to complete the processes of socialization to the group. This study has theoretical implications in the field, by providing insight to individuals with lengths of membership in an organization, impacts from knowledge of group language; practical implications for XYZ group and organizational importance of language/identification/socialization.

Theoretical Implications

Socialization. The hypothesizes in this study related to socialization were supported and align with the previous socialization work on group membership. Both Moreland and Levine (1982) and Anderson et. al (1999) stated groups evolve over time. The time frame that was studied focused on the socialization and identification of the members to the group, but many

other individual transitions in the group (i.e. antecedent, encounter, and exit) were also occurring. Therefore, while one can determine that having knowledge of acronym meaning and spending time in a group lead to heightened socialization, there are other factors that may contribute. This study was successful in fulfilling Levine and Moreland's (1984) request of doing more research on how groups evolve across time. Due to there being a correlation found between length of membership and socialization.

Knowledge of group language benefits the socialization process. Anderson et. al (1999) stated the better an individual understands the 'group talk' of the organization the stronger their socialization to the organization is. According to Van Swol and Kane (2019) an individual adjusting their language to fit the group means that member wants to assimilate. These conclusions about an individual's socialization were again proven through the significance of hypothesis one in this study, that knowledge of acronym meaning does have a positive relationship to socialization. Paugh (2005) explained that learning language during childhood development is an important key to societal socialization, one may draw the same comparison for group socialization. While understanding language is a key to socialization, that is not the only important aspect of socialization.

Hypothesis three stated that length of membership has a positive relationship to knowledge of acronym meaning. This hypothesis resulted in insignificant results. The insignificance of hypothesis three but significance of hypothesis one and four shows that socialization is more than solely learning the group language. The participants knew the acronyms starting from a low length of membership but did not fully feel socialized until they had been a part of the group for an extended time. They may have known the acronyms due to their familiarity with the XYZ Group external organization. Paugh (2005) explained how

learning language is a part of socialization, and that parents socialize their children to their

culture through language. Since a vast number of participants had family members who had been

a member of XYZ Group external organization, they may have already known the acronyms

before joining the XYZ Group. But since socialization is a specific group process (Vinton, 1989)

previous experience with a similar group, the XYZ Group external organization versus XYZ

Group, does not expedite the process for those members who had family members in the external

organization of XYZ Group. While the participants knew a large number of the acronyms and

their meanings from XYZ Group external organization jargon, they had not experienced the

process of socializing with the XYZ Group external organization for themselves.

     Identification. Identification is how you uniquely feel about the group. The hypotheses

for this study were all insignificant when the identification variable was included. This may have

been due to testing two different groups as one, and the members identifying with the external

organization over the XYZ Group. Additionally, the OIQ used the term 'XYZ Group' instead of

XYZ Group subset 1 and XYZ Group subset 2 for the respective groups. Participants may feel a

stronger sense of identification to their specific XYZ Group subset, versus the XYZ Group in

general. Abrams, Hogg, Hinke, and Otten (2005) stated that social identity "is a self-conception

as sharing a category membership with a set of other people" (pg. 117). Considering this, both

XYZ Groups have two different set of members, so it's logical that one group may feel a strong

sense of identity and the other not feel the same sense of identity. However, it's understandable

that the individuals in each group would still have a strong sense of socialization, because the

processes for each group are very similar.

     Another consideration to make is that the participants may align their identity with the

profession of XYZ Group external organization versus the training program of XYZ Group. This

conclusion can be supported by Russo's (1998) work, which used mixed methods to analyze 281 editors' experiences at their newspaper company; the study found that there was a stronger identification with the journalism profession over the news organization. Similarly, to the news organization, the XYZ Group is a means to an end, with the end goal being to join the XYZ Group external organization as a profession. Therefore, some participants may not identify with the XYZ Group itself but continue to commit to the program due to their desire to become a XYZ Group external organization member.

These participants may have chosen the XYZ Group external organization as their future profession due to their family members involvement with XYZ Group external organization. As stated above the majority of participants had some measure of familiarity with the XYZ Group external organization. This most likely played an effect on their knowledge of acronyms, and it may have an impact on their desire to join and identify in the XYZ Group. Meisenbach and Kramer (2014) found that "a third of our participants expressed a music identity as closely tied into their sense of who and what their family was and did. Thus, their identification with music was embedded within their family identity" (pg. 200). Considering most of the participants family identities may have aligned with the XYZ Group external organization, it's probable the participants felt a stronger identity with the XYZ Group external organization over the XYZ Group program. In the future when studying XYZ Group members and other programs where the individuals may have multiple connections and investments with the group being studied, it would be best to consider the 'nested identities' of those individuals (Meisenbach & Kramer, 2014). By considering the 'nested identities' the researcher would analyze the multiple contributing factors to an individual's identification.

Practical Implications

   XYZ Group. The practical implications to this project provide lots of recommendations

for XYZ Group. Hypothesis four's findings deemed that the longer a member is involved in the

XYZ Group program the stronger their socialization in the organization is. This means that those

who are involved in the group longer have a better understanding of what to expect and higher

satisfaction during their time in XYZ Group. Therefore, an emphasis should be placed on

members being involved in the program for as many semesters as possible. Additionally, there

was a positive relationship between knowledge of acronym meaning and socialization, so the

programs should ensure the members fully understand the XYZ Group acronyms as soon as

possible. Moreland and Levine (2001) recommended having the 'oldtimers' in groups socialize

the 'newcomers.' Therefore, a way to assist all new members in the XYZ Group socializing

process is by establishing a mentorship system, so the assimilated members would guide the new

members through the socialization process. These three recommendations related to socialization

should ensure the members have a more enjoyable and fruitful experience in the program.

   While all identification hypothesizes were false, there is still a lot to learn about the XYZ

Group participants and identification. From Russo's (1998) study we can conclude that the more

the XYZ Group program is related to the participant's professions in the XYZ Group external

organization the better. The members most likely do not identify with the XYZ Group itself

because their identities align to the XYZ Group external organization they hope to join. But for

recruiting members relating involvement in the XYZ Group to developing desired character traits

may be beneficial, as Miesenbach and Kramer (2014) recommended in their study. From these

concepts it must be understood the importance of identifying to an organization in order to best

perform in that organization, but identification is not the sole contributor to an individual's

success in a group. There are many variables that must be understood for group communication in order to give an accurate analysis of group dynamics.

Organizational Importance. This study is relatable to other groups through its analysis of socialization, identification, and acronym knowledge. Groups can take from this study an understanding of the importance of socialization for all members, the benefits of individuals identifying with the organization, and the role acronym knowledge plays in group socialization. This study again confirmed the concept that individuals and groups evolve over time, so the longer someone is involved the more likely they are to socialize in the organization. There is also a relationship to knowledge of group language and the members socialization. However, it's possible for newcomers to understand the group talk very quickly, so it's recommended there be an introduction to the jargon used in the group to speed up the assimilation process.

There are many unknown factors impacting an individual's group interactions, and this must always be taken into consideration as a leader and peer in the group. Some of these considerations may be: previous familiarity with the organization, lack of members including newcomers, length of time involved, and members not identifying with the group. In order to best include the newcomers into the organization there must be intentional actions from the group members and leaders to guide them in their assimilation in the group. In the future, this work can be continued by researching other organizations that heavily use acronyms, such as the medical and education fields, and analyzing the newcomer's assimilation to those organizations. In addition, the understanding of how past experiences impact the individual's identity in the organization.

Limitations and Future Directions

The main limitations from this project is that it only tested the variables against one type of group. The XYZ Group has its own particular traits. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be applicable to another group. However, one can take the methods of investigating group member's acronym knowledge, socialization, identification, and length of membership and apply them. Another limitation was that a greater number of participants had only been involved in the program as an underclassman, the median number of semesters involved from the participants was three semesters. The minimum number of semesters was 1 and the maximum was nine. This is due to their being a greater number of XYZ Group members for one to four semesters, versus five to nine semesters. Additionally, a semester may have been too long to determine knowledge of acronym meaning. If tested based on smaller increments of time from the start of the program, there may have been some significant variation of acronym knowledge.

Appendix

Demographic Questions

1. Are you a member of XYZ Group at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville? ___Yes ___ No

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your gender?

___ Male ___ Female ___ Other ___ Prefer Not to Respond

4. What year did you start at UTK? _____

5. Are you in XYZ Group 1 or XYZ Group 2?

___ XYZ Group subset 1 ___ XYZ Group subset 2

6. How many full semesters have you been in XYZ Group?

___ 1 Semester ___ 2 Semesters ___ 3 Semesters ___ 4 Semesters ___ 5 Semesters

___ 6 Semesters ___ 7 Semesters ___ 8 Semesters ___ 9 Semesters

7. Are you on scholarship to join XYZ Group external organization upon graduation?

____ Yes ____ No

8. What prior XYZ Group external organization familiarity do you have?

(Please select all that apply)

____ self ____ parents ____ siblings ___ grandparents ___ others (please specify)

Acronym Knowledge

Below you will see 10 acronyms used in XYZ Group regularly. For each acronym you will first

type what it stands for, then you will be asked to use the acronym in a sentence.

THIS IS NOT A TEST. We are interested in your experiences with XYZ Group.

9. What does COB stand for?

10. Please use COB in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

11. What does NLT stand for?

12. Please use NLT in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

13. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

14. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

15. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

16. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

17. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

18. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

19. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

20. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

21. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

22. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

23. What does POC stand for?

24. Please use POC in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

25. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

26. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

27. What does ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) stand for?

28. Please use ABC (anonymized for confidentiality) in a sentence you would use in XYZ Group.

Identity

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements. (Seven Point Likert Scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree)

29. When someone criticizes XYZ Group, it feels like a personal insult.

30. I am very interested in what others think about XYZ Group.

31. When I talk about XYZ Group, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.

32. XYZ Group's successes are my successes.

33. When someone praises XYZ Group, it feels like a personal compliment.

34. If a story in the media criticized XYZ Group, I would feel embarrassed.

Socialization

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements. (Seven Point Likert

Scale from strongly disagree to Strongly Agree)

35. I understand what appropriate dress for XYZ Group meetings is.

36. I understand the authority XYZ Group has for doing its work.

37. I did not see myself as an effective XYZ Group member.

38. I understand the "group talk" XYZ Group used to do its work.

39. I found someone in XYZ Group who could provide me with emotional support.

40. It was clear what was expected of me in XYZ Group.

41. I found someone in XYZ Group with whom I could talk about career plans.

42. It was not at all clear what was expected of me in XYZ Group.

43. I depend on other XYZ Group member for support in XYZ Group.

44. I found someone in XYZ Group who could help me adjust to XYZ Group.

45. I found someone in XYZ Group on whom I can depend for support.

46. I had no clear idea of what XYZ Group was to accomplish.

47. I found someone in XYZ Group with whom I could discuss personal matters.

48. There was no one in XYZ Group on whom I could depend for support.

References

Anderson, C. M., Riddle, B. L., & Martin, M. M. (1999). Socialization processes in groups. In L. R. Frey, D. Gouran, & M. S. Poole (Eds.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research*. pp.139-166. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Abrams, D., Hogg, M. A., Hinkle, S., & Otten, S. (2005). The social identity perspective on small groups. In M.S. Poole & A. B. Hollingshead (Eds.), *Theories of small groups: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 99-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bayazit, M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). Should I stay or should I go? Predicting team members' intent to remain in the team. *Small Group Research*, 34(3), 290-321. doi: 10.1177/1046496403251634

Becoming an XYZ Group external organization member (2019). [Online Website]. Retrieved from website. Anonymized for confidentiality.

Bouas, K. S.,& Arrow, H. (1996). The development of group identity in computer and face-to-face groups with membership change. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 4, 153-178. doi: 10.1007/BF00749745

Burke, M., Kraut, R., & Joyce, E. (2010). Membership claims and requests: Conversation-level newcomer socialization strategies in online groups. *Small Group Research*, 41(1), 4-40. doi: 10.1177/1046496409351936

Cheney, G. (1983). On the various and changing meanings of organizational membership: A field study of organizational identification. *Communication Monographs*, 50(4), 342-362. doi: 10.1080/03637758309390174

Gibson, M. K., & Papa, M. J. (2000). The mud, the blood, and the beer guys: Organizational

osmosis in blue-collar work groups. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 28(1),

68-88. doi:10.1080/00909880009365554

Guide to understanding XYZ Group (2019) [Online website]. Retrieved from website

anonymized for confidentiality.

Henry, K., Arrow, H., & Carini, B. (1999). A tripartite model of group identification: Theory and

measurement. *Small Group Research*, 30(5), 558-581. doi:

10.1177/104649649903000504

Hess, J. A. (1993). Assimilating newcomers into an organization: A cultural

perspective. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 21(2), 189. doi:

10.1080/00909889309365366

Hogg, M. A., Abrams, D., Otten, S., & Hinkle, S. (2004). The social identity perspective:

Intergroup relations, self-conception, and small groups. *Small Group Research*, 35, 346-

276. doi: 10.1177/1046496404263424

Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. (2000). Social identity and self-categorization processes in

organizational contexts. *Academy of Management Review, 25*(1), 121-140. doi:

10.2307/259266

John M. Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (1994). Group socialization: Theory and research,

European Review of Social Psychology, 5(1), 305-336. doi:

10.1080/14792779543000093

Kane, A. A., & Rink, F. (2015). How newcomers influence group utilization of their knowledge:

Integrating versus differentiating strategies. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and

Practice, 19*(2), 91. doi: 10.1037/gdn0000024

Kane, A. A., & Rink, F. (2016). When and how groups utilize dissenting newcomer knowledge:

    Newcomers' future prospects condition the effect of language-based identity strategies.

    Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 19(5), 591-607. doi:

    10.1177/1368430216638534

Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (1994). Group socialization: Theory and research. *European*

    Review of Social Psychology, 5(1), 305-336. doi: 10.1080/14792779543000093

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated

    model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13*(2), 103-

    123. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2488176

Meisenbach, R. J., & Kramer, M. W. (2014). Exploring nested identities: Voluntary membership,

    social category identity, and identification in a community choir. *Management*

    Communication Quarterly, 28(2), 187-213. doi: 10.1177/0893318914524059

Miller, V.D., Johnson, J.R., & Grau, J. (1994). Antecedents to willingness to participate in a

    planned organizational change. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 22, 59-80.

    doi: 10.1080/00909889409365387

Moreland, R. L., & Levine J. M. (1982). Socialization in small groups: Temporal changes in

    individual-group relations. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 15, 137-192.

    doi: 10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60297-X

Moreland, R. L., & Levine J. M. (2001). Socialization in organizations and work groups. In M.

    E. Turner (Ed.), *Groups at work: Theory and research* (pp.69-112). Mahwah, NJ: L.

    Erlbaum Associates.

Myers, S., & Anderson, C. M. (2008). *The fundamentals of small group communication*.

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Paugh, A. L. (2005). Learning about work at dinnertime: Language socialization in dual-earner

      American families. *Discourse & Society*, 16(1), 55-78. doi: 10.1177/0957926505048230

Riddle, B. L., Anderson, C. M., & Martin, M. M. (2000). Small group socialization scale:

      Development and validity. *Small Group Research*, 31, 554-572. doi:

      10.1177/104649640003100503

Russo, T. C. (1998). Organizational and professional identification: A case of newspaper

      journalists. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 12(1), 72-111.

      doi:10.1177/0893318998121003

Scott, C. R. (2007) Communication and social identity theory: Existing and potential connections

      in organizational identification research. *Communication Studies*, 58(2),123-138. doi:

      10.1080/10510970701341063

Strehlow, R. A. (1983). Terminology and the well-formed definition. In C. G. Interrante & F. J,

      Heymann (Eds.), *Standardization of Technical Terminology: Principles and Practices*

      *(*pp. 15-25). doi: 10.1520/STP30133S

Troop, D. (2008, November). What's in a name? Letters, and lots of 'em. (educational

      associations' names and acronyms). *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 55*(14).

      Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/Whats-in-a-Name-Letters-and/5385

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin

      & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47).

      Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Van Swol, L. M., & Kane, A. A. (2019). Language and group processes: An integrative,

      interdisciplinary review. *Small Group Research*, 50(1), 3-38. doi:

      10.1177/1046496418785019

Van Swol, L. M., Prahl, A., Kolb, M., Lewis, E., & Carlson, C. (2016). The language of

    extremity: The language of extreme members and how the presence of extremity affects

    group discussion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 35(6), 603-627. doi:

    10.1177/0261927X16629788

Vinton, K. L. (1989). Humor in the workplace: It is more than telling jokes. *Small Group*

    Behavior, 20(2), 151-66. doi: 10.1177/104649648902000202

Wang, L., Cheng, M., & Wang, S. (2018). Carrot or stick? The role of in-group/out-group on

    the multilevel relationship between authoritarian and differential leadership and

    employee turnover intention. *Journal of Business Ethics, 152*(4), 1069-1084. doi:

    10.1007/s10551-016-3299-z