

MISQ Archivist

The Development of the Perceived Distinctiveness Antecedent of Information Systems Professional Identity

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Abstract

This study explores the professional identity of information systems (IS) workers and explicates the set of salient characteristics that comprise perceived distinctiveness of the IS profession. We develop a more complete picture of IS workers' perceived distinctiveness including its composition and outcomes. The perceived distinctiveness of the IS profession, in turn, contributes to individuals' professional identity. We employ a mixed-methods design (qualitative and quantitative) to leverage the strengths of each method. In Study 1, we analyze transcripts of focus group interviews, using a robust qualitative method: revealed causal mapping. Utilizing the mid-range theory that emerged from Study 1, we further explicate and empirically test that method with a quantitative field survey in Study 2. The meta-inference from these relationships can be stated as follows: *The occurrence of change within the profession, the facets of knowledge needed, and the continuous refinement and adaptation of the knowledge base within a mentally demanding work context are what make the IS profession distinctive from other professions.* Specifically, the extent of change; need for continuous learning; use of creativity and logic to solve problems; breadth of knowledge, skills, and abilities required; and the level of technology and business integration, time pressure, and stress composed the perceived distinctiveness of the IS professional. Future research might use the findings to incorporate elements of the IS profession into IS-specific theories.

Keywords: Professional identity, IS workforce, revealed causal mapping, mixed methods