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Organizational identity and organizational identification: A review of the literature and suggestions for future research

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Abstract

In this paper, we present an overview of the literatures on organizational identity and organizational identification. We present overviews of four major approaches to organizational identity: functionalist, social constructionist, psychodynamic, and postmodern. The literature on organizational identification, by contrast, exhibits greater consensus due to the hegemonic power of social identity theory, and is predominantly functionalist. We review recent research on organizational identification regarding performance outcomes and antecedents (mainly focusing on leadership and the social exchange perspective), and in relation to change and virtual contexts. Following an overview of the papers in this special issue, some suggestions for further research are then offered.

Key words: Organizational identity, organizational identification, review, organizational behavior

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Introduction

Over more than two decades organizational identity (OI), along with its associated construct organizational identification (OID), have become two of the most significant concepts (some would argue 'constructs' or 'theoretical lenses') informing organization and management research. OI and OID have come to occupy central positions in efforts to understand organizations and their interactions with the environment. Recently, investigations of global issues including climate change, economic crisis and public spending cuts, have often implicated OI and OID rendering them still more salient issues for theorists. While tremendous theoretical and empirical developments have been made regarding OI and OID, there is still considerable scope for further advances.

Although OI and OID have been widely researched, extant literatures have not yet paid sufficient attention to a number of major issues, and these offer tremendous opportunities for developing identity and identification studies. For example, although OI has been approached from multiple theoretical angles, there is still little work on mapping these divergent approaches. How can OI, and OID mainly conceptualized from a social identity perspective, be integrated with other major theoretical perspectives, such as social exchange theory in order to explain the behavior of individuals, groups and organizations? What is the role of OI and OID in motivating employees to engage in both in-role and extra-role behaviors and performance? How does leadership influence OID and hence employee performance? What is the relationship between employee OID and organizational change? How is OID developed within an organization?

The purpose of this special issue is two-fold. First, it aims to stock-take the achievements of OI and OID research. Second, and more importantly, it aims to stimulate cutting-edge research contributions (including commentaries on new challenges and new opportunities) on OI and OID. We approach the first aim by reviewing the recent literatures on OI and OID in this paper, and the second aim by incorporating a number of articles drawing on the latest research into this special issue. This paper is structured as follows. First, we present an overview of OI research, identifying dominant perspectives (i.e., functionalist, social constuctionist, psychodynamic, and postmodern) and discuss potential future research. Second, we review the recent literatures on OID, with particular focus on (a) OID's relationships with leadership, social exchange, and employee performance and (b) OID in non-traditional organizational contexts. We also present a number of important future research avenues regarding OID. Finally, we introduce the papers that are included in this special issue.

Organizational Identity

'Organizational identity' (OI) has become an increasingly important domain of inquiry for scholars (Brown, 2006; Corley, et. al. 2006) and also a key issue for managers (Cheney, 1991, p. 201). Interest in identities at the level of the organization has, since the publication of Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal work, been accompanied by a vigorous focus on collective and in particular organizational 'selves' and their implications for theory and practice. OI is now recognized as key in efforts to understand strategic change (Ravasi & Phillips, 2011), decision-making (Riantoputra, 2010), internal conflicts (Humphreys & Brown 2002), communication (Fombrun, 1996), issue interpretation and response (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), and pivotal to the theorization of issues centred on legitimacy (He & Baruch, 2010; Sillince & Brown, 2009). Seeking to account for this trend,

sociologists have suggested that in an increasingly fragmented, discontinuous and crisis-ridden world identity issues at all levels are both highlighted and problematized (Giddens, 1991). Others have pointed to the utility of the concept of identity to bridge levels of analysis, link micro- and macro-level structures and processes, and thus to cohere otherwise disparate strands of organization-based research (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 4; Polzer, 2000, p. 628). Ultimately, there is an emergent consensus that it is 'because identity is problematic – and yet so critical…that the dynamics of identity need to be better understood' (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000, p. 14).

In their original formulation of the concept Albert and Whetten (1985) argued that an organization's identity was constituted by a set of claims regarding what was central, distinctive and enduring about it. However, they did not indicate the criteria for specifying these claims (what constitutes 'centrality', for example?), but did recognize explicitly a number of complicating factors which mean that organizations may be characterized by multiple identities and that identities claims are often political acts, and can be ambiguous, complementary, unrelated and contradictory. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, use of the concept over subsequent decades has not been consistent, leading Whetten (2006, p. 220) to complain that 'the concept of organizational identity is suffering an identity crisis' and Pratt (2003, p. 162) to assert that as an explanatory concept identity 'is often overused and under specified'. Recognition of these issues has led to multiple attempts to re-define the concept, for example, as '*the theory that members of an organization have about who they are*' (Stimpert, Gustafson, & Sarason, 1998, p. 87) and more recently as 'the combinative construal of firm culture, history, structure, characteristics, status and reputation' (Martin, Johnson, & French, 2011, p. 576). What is clear, is that organizational identity is about 'self-referential meaning', that is, 'an entity's attempts to define itself' (Corley, et. al. 2006, p. 87), and implicates questions such as 'who are we?' and 'who do we want to become?'

An embarrassment of definitional riches, though, cannot gloss over the fact that the OI field is riven with uncertainties and often fractious disagreements. While most studies have concentrated on internal processes of OI formation, it is increasingly evident that identities are formed in part through dialogue with external stakeholders and are best construed as relational and comparative (Corley, et. al. 2006; Martin, Johnson, & French, 2011). There is agreement that OI is a collective-level concept, but dissensus whether this refers to a 'social actor' (Whetten & Mackey, 2002) or to collections of individual-level understandings (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail 1994; Harquail & King 2003), and if the latter, whether these are an 'aggregate' or some form of 'gestalt' property of organizations. A minority view holds that OI is merely a metaphorical device that suggests resemblances between individual and collective identities (Cornelissen 2002a,b), with most scholars preferring to regard it as a phenomenon referring to psychological and social realities with antecedents and consequences for other social processes and outcomes (Haslam, Postmes, & Ellemers, 2003, p. 359). Considerable debate centers on how to differentiate OI from cognate terms such as corporate image and reputation (images projected to external audiences), construed external image (how insiders believe outsiders view the organization), and particularly organizational culture (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Attempts to address these and other related issues have resulted in a multiplicity of perspectives, with varying ontological and epistemological assumptions and methodological preferences, which we here consider under four (admittedly somewhat arbitrarily imposed) labels: 'functionalist', 'social constuctionist', 'psychodynamic' and 'postmodern'.

Functionalist perspectives

Functionalist perspectives which hold that identities are composed of essential, objective and often tangible features, dominate OI research not just in organization studies

but in allied areas such as marketing and strategy (e.g. Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Cornelissen, Haslam, & Blamer, 2007; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; He, 2012; He & Balmer, 2007; He & Murkherjee, 2009; Martin, Johnson & French, 2011). In the fields of marketing and brand management OI is often associated with corporate logos, physical attributes of corporations, official histories, documentation, and senior managers' speeches (Olins, 1989; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Brun's (2002) analysis of identity change, which focuses on a new logo and visual identity programme at France Telecom is in many ways typical of this stream of research. Within organization and management studies functionalist approaches lead often to attempts to categorize organizations' identities and identity responses to environmental cues, and to concerns with the definition of formal identity constructs with putative explanatory and even predictive powers. Scholars working from a new institutionalist perspective, for example, analyze the isomorphic pressures on organizations to articulate clear and 'acceptable' identities and the potential advantages and drawbacks of nonconformity for performance (Rao, Monim & Durand, 2003; Smith, 2011).

Rarely, though, in these studies, is OI tightly elaborated. One exception is Whetten and Mackey's (2002) attempt to outline a view of organizations as social actors with legal status whose identities can be discerned through their collective entity-level commitments, obligations, and actions. Whetten's (2006, p. 2009) view is that such a conception of OI has 'construct validity' which 'lends itself to model building, hypothesis testing, and empirical measurement'. In effect, though, this conception reifies organizations, attributing to them objectively extant status, while privileging the hegemonic efforts of a few, generally the most senior, executives. Such is the allure of functionalist-essentialist thinking that these tendencies are evident even in sophisticated efforts to unpack the OI concept: Corley et. al. (2006), for example, recognize the limitations of 'exercise[s] in positivist epistemology'

(p.91), but devote much attention to specifying notional identity criteria, dimensions, operationalization and means of assessment. While evidently 'the mainstream' approach to the study of OI, functionalist research often relies on over-socialized views of organizational members, marginalizes the processes whereby sense is made by participants of complicated actions, events and histories, is insensitive to discourse and the embodied nature of cognition, and ignores the relations of power in which identity statements are made, championed, forgotten and contested.

Social constructionist perspectives

Social constructionist perspectives, sometimes also referred to as interpretive or social cognition approaches, regard OI as the socially constructed product of relationships between collectively held, and socially structured individual cognitions regarding 'who the organization is' (Corley, et. al. 2006; Dutton et al., 1994; Harquail & King, 2003). In most formulations, OI refers to relatively shared understandings concerning what is central, distinctive and enduring about an organization, that give meaning to members' experience of work, and which derive from a complex of interactions by multiple actors from across professional groups and hierarchical levels (Glynn, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Kjaergaard & Ravasi, 2011). Two distinctive variants have been outlined by Pratt (2003), who differentiates between an 'aggregate' perspective, where collective identities reside in the minds of individual members and is therefore a summation of individual views; and a 'gestalt' version, which suggests that collective identities are located in the relationships and relational ties that bind cognitively people together. A wealth of research has resulted in a tremendous stockpile of cases which analyse how OI is bound-up and (at least partially) constituted from discourses centred on everything from dress codes (Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997) to processes of remembering/forgetting (Anteby & Molnar, 2012), nostalgia (Brown & Humphreys, 2002), and media attention (Kjaergaard & Ravasi, 2011).

This approach to the conception and study of OI tends generally to depict it as less stable and more malleable, less the product of senior executives' decisions and more open to political influence at different levels, and less clearly defined and more ambiguous than functionalist perspectives maintain. In seeking to elaborate organizations' identities scholars have most usually focused on notional psychological phenomena such as beliefs, values and assumptions or on stakeholders' use of language. For example, Ran and Duimering (2007) argue that identity claims establish value-laden categories, position the organization either positively or negatively within these categories, and construct movement and transformation within them to generate past, present and future identities. Recently, however, Harquail and King (2010) have contended that social cognitions and language use are 'embodied' and, drawing on a substantial literature that emphasizes the biological basis of social and cognitive capacities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), have suggested that this embodiment needs to be appreciated to unpack how people construct organizations' identities. This means focusing on people's 'bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, temporal-aural, and emotional experiences of their organizations' in order to figure out 'what is central, distinctive, and enduring about an organization', resulting in putatively richer analyses involving more different types of information such as temporality, spatiality, rhythms, audio cues, odours, visual and emotional displays (Harquail & King, 2010, p. 1620).

Psychodynamic perspectives

Psychodynamic and psychoanalytic perspectives on OI complement realist and rationalist approaches by drawing attention to otherwise unacknowledged unconscious processes in organizations which shape collective identities (Bion, 1968; Jacques, 1955). Diamond (1993), for example, has analysed OI as a 'defensive solution' to the psychological threats to participants which emanate from their often contradictory and conflicting individual aims; threats which are lessened and rendered tractable by the imposition of

supposedly 'rational' administrative processes which characterize organizational life. Adopting a Lacanian point of view, Driver (2009) has articulated a rather different understanding of OI which emphasizes its 'imaginary' character. In this version of the concept actual identities are unknowable, and attempts to define organizations' identities are illusions or fantasies. This is because answers to questions of identity (individual or collective) are merely conscious efforts 'to cover up an unconscious lack in the subject that cannot be overcome' (Driver, 2009, p. 56). This does not mean that the study of OI is for Driver pointless; rather, such research constitutes opportunities to experience jouissance (enjoyment) that is potentially empowering and liberating as we struggle with our failure to realize desire for self-knowledge.

Drawing on the work of Freud, Brown (1997) and Brown and Starkey (2000) have provided an analysis of the psychodynamics of organizations which depicts organizations as means for regulating collective self-esteem. Their argument is that ego-defense mechanisms such as denial and rationalization function at the organizational level to ameliorate anxieties and that these regressive tendencies may be mitigated through management practices such as critical self-reflexivity, dialogue regarding future possible identities, and the ('wise') cultivation of the desire to explore ego-threatening issues. Drawing on this theorization of OI, researchers have shown how these dynamics are manifested in practice. Duchon and Burns (2008) have illustrated cases of extremely high (Enron), unduly low (Salomon Brothers) and healthy (Liz Claiborne) narcissism and commented on their performance implications. Ketola (2006) has investigated a range of defenses employed by an oil refinery and its parent company during an oil spill to argue that ego-defenses serve a useful function, defending self-esteem while 'responsible' organizational change takes place. Other authors have used psychodynamic approaches to OI to analyze ganging behavior at Enron (Stein & Pinto, 2011), the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster (Schwartz, 1987, and emotions in institutional work

(Voronov & Vince, 2012).

Postmodern and non-standard perspectives

While in management and organization studies, postmodernism is often associated with questioning, challenge, indeterminacy, fragmentation and difference (Rosenau, 1992), as a concept it has its origins in 'a growing sense of the problematization of identity' (Dunn, 1998, p. 2). Although for some, 'identity' at any level is best regarded as a myth or illusion (Baudrillard, 1998), and an invention of power, in the main, 'postmodern' perspectives on OI have come to be associated with discursive (linguistic) and imagistic theorizations and analyses of identity phenomena. For example, Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000, p. 72) have noted how postmodern assumptions result in a fracturing of organizations' identities such that 'Identity no longer holds a distinct and persistent core of its own but becomes a reflection of the images of the present moment'. Based on a case study of Royal Dutch Shell, Coupland and Brown (2004) have analyzed how the identities of organizations are, in part, co-authored in dialogues between supposed 'insiders' and notional 'outsiders', and suggested that identity construction processes are on-going arguments. A distinctive theorization is that offered by Seidl (2005) who considers OI using the work of Luhmann to suggest that organizations are constituted by their autopoesis, and that autopoetic processes define clearly the boundaries of organizations, and differentiate them from each other in ways which render them unique.

The largest body of non-mainstream research has theorized organizational identities as texts constituted through discourse, most usually narratives (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Chreim, 2005' Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). For Czarniawska-Joerges (1994, p. 198), organizations' identities are constructed in continuing processes of narration '…where both the narrator and the audience formulate, edit, applaud, and refuse various elements of the ever-produced narrative'. Complementary to this, Brown (2006) has

defined OI as the totality of identity-relevant narratives that participants author about them in their conversations, written histories, documents such as reports and web presences, and sought to refocus attention on issues of power, reflexivity, voice, plurivocity, temporality and fictionality (Brown, Humphreys, & Gurney, 2005). While there has been, in general, in management and organization studies, a distaste for, distrust of, and disinclination to engage with what are routinely pigeon-holed and marginalized as 'postmodern' conceptions of OI, it has proved impossible to ignore them altogether. So challenging are radical postmodern approaches to OI that Gioia (1998, p. 29) has proposed that we acknowledge their critique of mainstream perspectives and then for pragmatic reasons actively ignore them, '…while trying to accommodate the contributions of the affirmative postmodernists'.

Into the future

What, then, of the future for OI? While there are as yet no signs that interest in OI is declining, neither are there overwhelming grounds for optimism that definitional, ontological, epistemological or methodological disputes between scholars are likely to be resolved any time soon. Rather, what seems most likely is a continuation of parallel streams of research that implicate the concept of OI but which only sporadically make reference to each other. Debates regarding the status of the OI concept as construct (Haslam, Postmes & Ellmers, 2003; Whetten, 2006), the answer to self-referential questions (Brown & Humphreys, 2006), or metaphor (Cornelissen, 2002a,b) will continue to influence the theory and practice of OI research. The future, much like the recent past, is likely to be characterized by a plurivocal, ad hoc and at times somewhat idiosyncratic exploration of collective identities issues.

Should organizations' identities be conceived broadly and investigated using a range of methods to collect multiple forms of data to piece together a rich picture which, although replete with nuance, is also inevitably complex? Or is the field best served by precise, pared down versions of the concept which eschew concern with layers of meaning to yield testable

hypotheses? In analyzing an organization's identity how much detail is worthwhile? Pratt and Foreman's (2000, p. 20) suggestion that '*Organizations have multiple organizational identities when different conceptualizations exist regarding what is central, distinctive, and enduring about the organization*' looks on the face of it very reasonable; but what if it leads to a realization that organizations have as many identities as they have members (e.g. Harrison, 2000)? Most analyses of OI fixate on one or perhaps two notionally rigorously defined identities in an effort to demonstrate antecedents, moderating relationships, and outcomes associated with them; but what do these disengaged, often simplistic studies really tell us about the political dynamics and experiential nature of lived identities? Moreover, in a world characterized by increasing numbers of virtual organizations, co-operative trading blocks, partnership sourcing and a growing awareness that the boundaries of even conventional organizations are not just permeable but symbolically enacted what does it mean to focus specifically on OI? Of course, identity studies can be undertaken at different levels of analysis and on different forms of organizing, but only if they can be made, as Whetten (2002) challenges us, 'identity enough' and 'organizational enough' to promote meaningful scholarship.

To what extent should these and a host of other thorny, perhaps intractable, questions uncertainties, and conflicts concern us? Although Whetten (2006, p. 220) writes that the field is 'suffering an identity crisis', and many others have called for focus and clarity, it is not clear that a univocal, homogenized discourse on OI is one sensibly to be valorized. For those who see utility in the promotion of dialogues between scholars with different research assumptions, or who harbor concerns that 'knowledge' gained in one tradition may not effectively be shared across paradigmatic boundaries, heterogeneity will be a cause for concern or even regret (cf. Corley, et. al. 2006). Those who favor pluralism and difference, who regard multiple competing scholarly conversations as inevitable, productive, or perhaps

indicative of the robust health of a field of inquiry, may be more sanguine.

Organizational identification

The desire of individuals for work-based identifications increases along with the growing turbulence of societies and organizations and the increasing tenuousness of individual-organization relationships (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Compared to the coexistence of multiple paradigms of OI, organizational identification (OID) has garnered consensus on its conceptualization[i]. Our treatment of OID follows the mainstream conceptualization of OID from the social identity perspective (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004). An individual's social identity is the 'knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1978, p.63). Social identity theory has been widely applied to explain employee-organization relationships (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2001). The organization acts as a potentially salient social category with which people can develop identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Organizational identification occurs when employees perceive oneness with an employing organization and feel that they belong to it (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Hence OID refers to, in general terms, the extent to which an organizational member defines himself/herself with reference to his/her organizational membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). OID has a potential capacity to generate a range of positive employee and organizational outcomes, such as low turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior, employee satisfaction and well-being, and employee performance (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005).

A number of previous reviews have been conducted on the OID literature (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Here we discuss mainly some recent developments specifically in OID rather than considering identifications at other levels (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Brickson, 2012; Cooper & Thatcher,

2010), such as relational identification with leaders (Carmeli, Atwater, & Levi, 2011; Chang & Johnson, 2011; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Walumbwa & Hartnell, 2011; Zhang, Chen, Chen, Liu, & Johnson, 2012), occupation/profession (Hekman, Bigley, Steensma, & Hereford, 2009; Vough, 2012), or identification with work units, work groups, or work teams (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Vough, 2012). In particular, we focus on the performance outcomes of employee OID and the antecedents of employee OID from the leadership and social exchange perspectives. In addition, we review the literature on OID in non-traditional working contexts. Finally, we consider some further issues for research.

Performance outcomes of OID

Understanding the impact of OID on employee performance is a central research issue. Earlier meta-analyses showed that a moderate positive relationship between OID and employee performance exists (Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Indeed, some recent studies have found that OID is positively related to both task and job performance (Walumbwa, Avolio, & Zhu, 2008; Weiseke, Ahearne, Lam, & Von Dick, 2008). Recent research has begun to examine the impact of OID on some specific employee performance or performance-related behaviors, such as employee creativity. Employee creativity refers to the generation and voicing of novel and original ideas for improving task and organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). Employee creativity has been analyzed and to some extent demonstrated to be important for organizational innovation and performance. Recent research has examined how employee OID is relevant in explaining employee creativity. A positive effect of OID on employee creativity has been found (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009; Madjar, Greenberg, & Chen, 2011). This effect accords well with theoretical accounts of OID, in that employees are more likely to devote more creative effort, hence higher creativity, to their work because doing so aligns their self-interest and the interest of the

organization. As noted by Hirst et al. (2009), creative effort mediates the impact of employee

OID on employee creativity, which suggests that one important mechanism of OID's impact

on employees' creativity relates to their willingness to put more effort into organizational and

task improvement.

Compared to employee performance, the implication of OID for financial performance

is much less researched. This may be largely due to the difficulties of data access. Two recent

studies have offered promising evidence on the positive effect of aggregated OID at the

organizational level on financial performance (Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009; Weiseke,

et al., 2008). Homburg et al.'s (2009) study found that employee OID positively affects the

financial performance of travel agencies because it enhances customer satisfaction and

customer identification with the organization, which in turn positively affects customer

loyalty and willingness to pay. Similarly, Weiseke et al.'s (2008) study found that both

employees' OID and sales managers' OID are positively associated with their business unit's

financial performance. Nevertheless, research on the impact of employee OID on firms'

financial performance is rather limited. Although the literature offers some initial positive

evidence and identifies some mechanisms of a positive effect, more research is required to

identify further mechanisms and boundary conditions for it.

Leadership antecedents of OID

Organizational factors relating to perceived organizational identity attributes (e.g.,

attractiveness, distinctiveness, prestige, construed external image, etc.) have been

traditionally conceptualized as the major antecedents of employee OID (Dukerich, Golden, &

Shortell, 2002; Dutton, et al., 1994). The overall argument supporting these effects is that

employees are more likely to identify with an attractive organization as it enhances

employees' self-image. This approach to OID development is, though, static and impersonal.

More recent research has found that a number of more dynamic, interactional, and interpersonal factors enhance employee OID, including leadership factors and social exchange factors.

Leaders are able to shape followers' identities (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; Lord & Brown, 2001; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), including OID. Employees' immediate leaders play an important role in their daily work lives in an organization. Thus leaders' behaviors may shape how employees view their relationship and social identifications with their work organization. Employee OID has been found to be positively related to a number of leadership styles, including transformational leadership (Carmeli, et al., 2011; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010) and ethical leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style which is characterized by four features: individualized consideration (attending to the individual needs of the followers), intellectual stimulation (providing job meanings for followers, challenging assumptions, taking risks, and soliciting followers' ideas), inspirational motivation (articulating a vision that inspires followers), and idealized influence (providing a role model for ethical standards and instilling confidence and trust)(Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leadership has been found to be effective in influencing followers' behavior and performance, because it enhances followers' OID (Kark, et al., 2003; Liu, et al., 2010; Walumbwa, et al., 2008). For example, Walumbwa et al. (2008) found that transformational leadership enhances follower job performance because it fosters employee identification with the work unit. Similarly, Liu et al. (2010) found that transformational leadership enhances follower voice behavior because it enhances follower OID.

Ethical leadership refers to leadership behaviors that demonstrate 'normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships' and promote 'such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-

making' (Brown et al., 2005, p. 120). Ethical leadership consists of two dimensions: 'moral person' and 'moral manager' (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). The 'moral person' dimension clarifies that ethical leaders are those with stronger moral characteristics and traits, such as honesty, trustworthiness, approachableness, care, fairness, and so on. The 'moral manager' dimension suggests that ethical leaders establish and communicate ethical standards to their subordinates and enforce those standards. Ethical leadership behaviors are likely to foster follower OID because ethical leaders may increase employee cooperation, organizational trust, feelings of respect, and self-esteem in an organization (Walumbwa, et al., 2011). It has been found that follower OID acts as an important psychological mechanism in the impact of ethical leadership on follower task performance (Walumbwa, et al., 2011). Research has also determined that the effect of leadership on OID may be conditional. For example, it has been found that transformational leadership's positive effect on employee OID may depend on employee affective experience within an organization (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). It has been shown that the positive effect of transformational leadership on employee OID is stronger for employees with more frequent negative affective experience or less frequent positive affective experience in an organization (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

Social exchange antecedents of OID

Recent research has paid increasing attention to the social exchange antecedents of OID. The social exchange perspective argues that the employee-organization relationship rests upon employees' unspecified obligations to reciprocate the benefits of the organization due to the fair and beneficiary treatment they experience from the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The fundamental rationale for the relevance of social exchange variables in explaining employee OID is that employees tend to have an

obligation to reciprocate the organization with their socioemotional attachment to it when the organization has benefitted the employees with fulfilment of some socioemotional needs. For example, according to the group engagement model (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler & Blader, 2003), employees are more likely to have stronger OID, and hence engage in various types of pro-organizational behavior (e.g., voice, helping, discretionary behaviors, etc.), when they perceive higher procedural justice in the organization (i.e., being fairly treated by the organization procedurally). It has also been shown that leader-member exchange, which refers to how leaders develop meaningful and long lasting personal relationships with subordinates, is an important antecedent of OID (Tangirala, Green, & Ramanujam, 2007). Finally, perceived organizational support – defined as the perceived extent to which the organization values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being and socioemotional needs – tends to have a positive effect on employee OID (Edwards, 2009; Edwards & Peccei, 2010; Gibney, Zagenczyk, Fuller, Hester, & Caner, 2010; Sluss, Klimchak, & Holmes, 2008). Examining the social exchange antecedents of employee OID has profound implications for research on the employee-organization relationship because prior research seems to adopt one of the two fundamental relationship perspectives (social exchange vs. social identification). This line of inquiry seems to suggest that social identity and social exchange perspectives are not completely separate. Instead, they may be integrated to explain the employee-organization relationship, and hence also employee outcomes.

OID in non-traditional contexts

OID in Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A). Organizations are not static. The changing nature of organizations creates new opportunities to study employee OID. M&A is a cause of fundamental change in an organization that has implications for employee OID (Ullrich, Wieseke, & Dick, 2005; van Dick, Ullrich, & Tissington, 2006; van Knippenberg, Martin, &

Tyler, 2006). M&A often puts employees' emotional attachment (such as OID) at stake, especially for employees from the lower status partner (Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001). It has been shown that a sense of continuity is the key to post-merger identification (Ullrich, et al., 2005; Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, Monden, & de Lima, 2002). By contrast, uncertainty about the organization's future and job insecurity due to M&A tend to be negatively related to employee OID (Ullrich, et al., 2005). For the employees of the dominant party in a merger, OID tends to be relatively more stable, as shown by the stronger correlation between the pre-merger OID and post-merger OID for employees of the dominant organization (Van Knippenberg, et al., 2002). Yet this strong pre- and post-merger OID relationship dissipates over time (Gleibs, Mummendey, & Noack, 2008). The difference between the two merging organizations may negatively relate to post-merger organization, especially for employees of the dominated organization (Van Knippenberg, et al., 2002). However, more recent research suggests that the perceived necessity of M&A may offset the negative effect of a sense of discontinuity on post-merger OID because it reduces uncertainty (Giessner, 2011). Research has also examined how employee OID affects the focus of employees' concerns regarding organizational change. It has been shown that employees with higher OID are more likely to care about the change process, while employees with lower OID are more likely to care about the change outcomes (van Knippenberg, et al., 2006).

OID in virtual contexts. The revolution of information technology and its application to work and organizational design, has created another unique context for understanding employee OID: the virtual work environment (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005). Research suggests that there are some distinctive important antecedents of employee OID in the virtual context (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001), and that OID is particularly important for organizational effectiveness in such a context (Bartel, Wrzesniewski, & Wiesenfeld, 2012). For virtual workers (individuals working from home, "on the road," or otherwise outside

traditional centralized offices), their need for affiliation and perceived work-based social support are positively related to their OID, but these two factors tend to compensate each other in predicting OID (Wiesenfeld, et al., 2001). Social capital formation has also been shown to be important for members' OID in virtual organizations (Davenport & Daellenbach, 2011). Recent research has evidenced that physical isolation explains low OID among virtual workers, because physical isolation reduces their perceived respect from the organization (Bartel, et al., 2012).

A glance into the future

Although recent developments in OID should continue to be investigated in future research, some under-researched areas of OID deserve special attention. We focus on a number of issues here, including the conditioning effects of OID on employee performance, the relationship between leadership and OID, the impact of personal factors on OID, the interplay between OID and other employee identities, and connections between OID and self-related motives.

OID and employee performance.   The relatively moderate impact of OID on employee performance suggests that some salient boundary conditions may exist for this relationship. Research examining the moderating factors on this relationship is still almost non-existent. The potential moderators may be person-related or context-related. OID impacts on employee performance because employees with higher OID are more "willing" to put more effort into their work but do not necessarily have the "ability" to do so. Hence potential salient moderators may be related to (a) the extent to which employees believe that their own performance may make a difference to the overall performance of the organization, and (b) the extent to which they are (or think they are) able or empowered to deliver better job performance. Accordingly, we expect that psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, core

self-evaluation, or similar psychological states may enhance the effect of OID on employee performance. Contextual factors may also moderate the effect of OID on employee performance. For example, how do the job design/characteristics, the presence of extrinsic rewards, and justice climate affect the way in which employees' OID affects their performance? In regard to the effect of OID on employee creative performance, creativity requires not only will but also ability and appropriate job environments. The literature on creativity contains a vast amount of evidence in support of the important roles performed by these ability- and job environment-related factors (Amabile, et al., 1996; Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Tierney & Farmer, 2002; Tierney & Farmer, 2011). We argue that future research on the relationship between OID and employee creativity should focus on how OID interacts with these additional factors in predicting employee creativity. For example, does employee OID give rise to higher employee creativity even when the work environment is not conducive to creativity, or when the employees' creative self-efficacy is low?

Leadership and OID. Despite the increasing number of studies examining the impact of leadership on employee OID, this body of literature is still thin and has many unaddressed issues. For example, it is not clear how individual differences or situational factors may affect the impact of leadership on employee OID. Employees with an intrinsic need for affiliation, such as those with a stronger need for OID (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Wiesenfeld, et al., 2001), may develop stronger OID regardless of leadership behaviors. Similarly, those who are more receptive to social influence (e.g., agreeable and submissive) are more likely to be influenced by leadership in developing OID. Second, the impact of leadership styles on employee OID has been examined with reference to only a limited number of leadership styles (predominantly transformational leadership). Future research should examine the impacts of other leadership styles, such as ethical leadership, servant leadership, paternalistic leadership, shared leadership, directive leadership, and so on. Third, prior research on

leadership and OID has focused mainly on immediate supervisors or team leaders. Future research should examine how leadership at different levels may differently affect employee OID at different levels of the hierarchy of the organization.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and OID. Previous research has found that employees' perception of the status and identity of the organization influences employee OID, in that when an organization is perceived to be more attractive, employees are more likely to develop stronger OID. This construed organizational attractiveness can be related to the emerging agenda of CSR, and hence to its impacts on employees' OID. CSR has occupied a central position in strategic management research and consumer research. However, although research on how CSR affects employee attitudes and behaviors – especially employee OID – is growing, it is still rather meager (Brammer, Millington, & Rayton, 2007; Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011; Humphreys & Brown, 2008; Peterson, 2004; Preuss, Haunschild, & Matten, 2009; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008; Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, & Williams, 2006; Vlachos, Theotokis, & Panagopoulos, 2010). More research is needed to understand how CSR affects employee OID, and how OID may play a role in how CSR affects employees' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace.

Employee personality and OID. In terms of the antecedents of OID, most prior research has focused on top-down processes, with much less consideration of those which are bottom-up (Ashforth, et al., 2008). Research on top-down process stresses the roles of the organization, the context, and the interaction between the organization and the members in employee OID development. Yet, employees may have personal dispositional differences in their propensities for OID. For example, employees with greater needs for affiliation (Wiesenfeld, et al., 2001) or for OID (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) are more likely to develop stronger OID, other things being constant. Research in this area is limited. In particular, it is surprising to find a lack of research on the impact of employees' personality traits on their

OID. Employees with higher agreeableness may be more likely to have higher OID because they are more likely to agree with the practices, procedures, and policies of the organization and the behaviors of their leaders. Neurotic employees may be less likely to identify with their organizations because they are more likely to experience negative emotions in their workplaces. Are introvert or extrovert employees more or less likely to identify with their work organization? It may depend on the nature of the organization and the job in terms of the fit between the organizational personality and individual personality. Are people with entity or incremental theories of human nature or the world more or less likely to identify with their organizations? Entity theorists, in comparison with incremental theorists, are persons who believe that human nature or the social world is more fixed than malleable (Chiu, Dweck, Tong, & Fu, 1997; Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).Thus entity theorists may see more stability in an organization's identity or status in the future, which may suggest that they are more likely to identify with their work organization than incremental theorists. All the above possible relationships should be subjected to appropriate empirical testing and further theoretical development. Future research should also examine other unmentioned personal factors on employee OID.

OID and other employee identities. Employees have many personal and social identities that are not derived from being a member of a work organization. For example, professional identity is not organization-specific. Based on the notion of multiple identities, a person has a network of identities that can be categorized at personal, interpersonal and social/collective levels (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000b), or at personal, social and material levels (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Skitka, 2003). What is insufficiently known is how OID interacts with other employee identities in regulating employee behaviors. Future research should aim to address this issue. Identities at different levels may be competing or simultaneously salient in motivating the same behaviors, depending on their motivational

compatibility (Scott, 1997, p. 248). Two competing identities may not be persistently salient in motivating the same behavior at the same time because they may give rise to potential motivational conflict (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hekman, Steensma, Bigley, & Hereford, 2009). Indeed, recent research sheds some light on this issue by exploring the interaction between OID and professional identification in explaining professional workers' behaviors. For example, it has been found that professional identification and OID jointly influence the extent to which professional workers (medical doctors) are receptive to the social influence of their administrators (i.e., whether the doctors think that the administrators think they should adopt a new behavior) in adopting a new workplace technology. For instance, in the case of adopting secure messaging, Hekman et al. (2009) find that administrators' social influence has a markedly stronger effect on doctors' adoption of secure messaging for those with higher OID but lower professional identification.

To take another employee identity, moral identity (MI), as an example, how may employee MI interact with OID in predicting employee performance and pro-organizational behavior? MI refers to people's cognitive schemata organized around a set of moral traits associations in terms of moral characteristics (e.g., being kind, honest, and loving), moral feelings (e.g., showing concern or sympathy for others), and moral behaviors (e.g., helping strangers, and engaging in charitable behavior) (Aquino & Reed, 2002). MI centrality refers to the degree to which being a moral person is central to and essential for an individual's sense of self. Employee MI centrality tends to be positively related to employee altruistic behaviors, such as helping colleagues (McFerran, Aquino, & Duffy, 2010). A key question is then how employee MI and OID interact to affect employee pro-organizational behaviors and performance. They may compensate each other in that when one identity is high, the other tends to matter less in driving the relevant behaviors because of the potential over-justification effect (Deci, 1972; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Tang & Hall, 1995) or

because of the potential incompatibility of behavioral motives derived from different identities. Or they may reinforce each other in driving certain behaviors because they offer each other additional necessary motivation. Or maybe what really matter are the motives of the pro-organizational behaviors, including pro-social, organizational concern, and impression management motives (Grant & Mayer, 2009; Rioux & Penner, 2001), in that OID and MI may jointly affect different motives in different ways. These are all important questions that future research should address.

Self-concept orientations and OID motives. Traditionally, OID research has assumed that employees identify with an organization for two self-concept motives: self-consistence/continuity and self-enhancement. However, very little empirical research has examined explicitly how the two different motives may affect employee OID development or how OID affects employee attitudes and behaviors. Recent theoretical developments suggest that employees have a wide range of motives for OID, including self-consistency and self-enhancement, but also uncertainty reduction and personalized belongingness (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). They also suggest that employees with different identity orientations—employees' tendencies to think of themselves as individuals in terms of others or in terms of groups (Brickson, 2000a; Brickson, 2012; Flynn, 2005)— may develop OID for different motives (see Cooper & Thatcher, 2010 for detailed explanation). It has also been recently theorized that employees' identity orientations affect how employees engage in social comparison between the identity of an organization and their actual and expected identities, which in turn affects their OID. However, little empirical research exists to support the above theoretical frameworks. Future research can empirically test these new frameworks.

Papers in the Special Issue

Papers in this special issue address cutting-edge issues in the field, including leadership and OID, OID and organizational change, social exchange and OID, and OID development processes. Datasets used in the papers are drawn from different cultural contexts, including China, the UK, Belgium, and Pakistan. What is really impressive is that employee identification has been shown to be functional across all these different cultures.

Zhu, Wang, Zheng, Liu, and Miao's (this issue) study examine the pivotal role of relational identification with leadership in the relationships between transformational leadership and follower outcomes, including innovativeness, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. They collected survey data from a large garment manufacturing firm in the Southwest of China. Their analyses of a sample of 318 employees from this firm showed that (a) transformational leadership has a positive effect on follower relational identification and (b) relationship identification has significant positive impact on supervisor-rated employee innovativeness, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. Moreover, they found that relational identification significantly mediates the effects of transformational leadership on follower organizational commitment and turnover intention. This research contributes new evidence on the relationship between leadership and employee identification within an organization, with particular reference to relational identification with leaders. It also supports the general framework of leadership—identification—outcomes.

Marique, Stinglhamber, Desmette, Caesens' (this issue) paper, based on two empirical studies, advances our understanding, from a social identification perspective, of the relationships between perceived organizational support, affective commitment, and employees' performance at work. In study 1 with a sample of 253 employees from an engineering company in Belgium, they found that (a) perceived organizational support positively relates to OID, particularly when perceived organizational prestige is lower; and (b) OID mediates the effect of perceived organizational support and affective organizational

commitment. In Study 2 with a sample of 179 postal employees in Belgium, they further found that the effect of OID on employee extra-role behaviors is mediated by affective organizational commitment. This research makes a number of contributions to the OID literature. First, it advances our understanding of the social exchange antecedents (i.e., perceived organizational support in this case) of employee OID by finding that perceived organizational support's positive effect on OID is conditional on perceived organizational prestige. Second, their research also contributes to the literature on the relationship between OID and employee extra-role behaviors by identifying the mediation role of affective organizational commitment.

Hameed, Roques, and Arain's (this issue) paper, using a sample (n=356) of employees from R&D organizations in both public and private sectors in Pakistan, investigated (a) how employee organizational tenure moderates the effects of perceived organizational respect and organizational prestige on employee OID, and (b) how OID affects employee readiness for organizational change. Prior research has confirmed that perceived organizational status, such as prestige and respect, is an important OI-related antecedent of employee OID. This research advances our understanding of this relationship by finding that employee organizational tenure moderates it. Specifically, they find that in general organizational tenure enhances the effect of organizational status on employee OID. However, this enhancing effect of tenure exists up to a certain point of organizational tenure when the driving force of organizational status on employee OID declines along with those employees with even longer organizational tenure. In addition, this research also supports that employee OID is conducive for organizational change as employees with higher OID tend to be more ready for organizational change. This finding should be taken with caution, as employees with higher OID may be resistant to certain types of organizational change, such as those changes that may threaten the existing identity of the organization.

Peters, Haslam, Ryan, and Fonseca's (this issue) paper addresses an important under-researched issue of OID: effectiveness of management intervention on employee OID development. As noted by the authors, although vast research exists on the perceptual and psychological antecedents of OID, there is little guidance on how organizations may intervene to foster employee OID. Their research drew on the ASPIRe model — a model that specifies a sequence of structured activities designed to use subgroup identities as a platform for building organizational identification —to provide initial evidence on how external intervention (e.g., via workshops) may enhance employee OID among senior military health services personnel in the UK and support for the organization's strategy. This research for the first time has put the ASPIRe model to empirical test. It is a rare and valuable piece of research supporting the idea that employee OID can be managed[ii].

Concluding remarks

OI and OID have attracted considerable academic attention over the last few decades. In this paper, we presented an overview of the fields of OI and OID, reviewed some of the most recent work, and introduced the papers that appear in this special issue. The OI literature is particularly rich, with multiple perspectives which we labeled functionalist, social constructionist, psychodynamic, and postmodern. In the OID literature the functionalist perspective is dominant, and most research focuses on the antecedents and outcomes of OID at both individual and group levels. Recent research has highlighted the important role of leadership and social exchange factors on employee OID, as well as the performance-related outcomes of OID. In addition, we noted that OID in non-traditional organizational contexts (e.g., M&A and virtual organizations) has been increasingly investigated. In this special issue, we are fortunate to include four papers that address important and cutting-edge issues (e.g., leadership and OID, OID and organizational change, social exchange and OID, and OID

development process) in the field. Yet, a wide range of important issues await further examination. These include, for example, the relevance of emotions for OI and OID, personal factors on OI perception and OID, social capital and OI/OID, corporate social responsibility and OI/OID.

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Notes

[i] Note, however, a growing counter tendency to conceive of identification as a process or series of processes (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Humphreys & Brown, 2002).
[ii] Though note that there is a substantial critical management studies literature that has investigated the issue of identification management.