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What is This?

Identification in Organizations: An Examination of Four Fundamental Questions†

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The literature on identification in organizations is surprisingly diverse and large. This article reviews the literature in terms of four fundamental questions. First, under "What is identification?," it outlines a continuum from narrow to broad formulations and differentiates situated identification from deep identification and organizational identification from organizational commitment. Second, in answer to "Why does identification matter?," it discusses individual and organizational outcomes as well as several links to mainstream organizational behavior topics. Third, regarding "How does identification occur?," it describes a process model that involves cycles of sensebreaking and sensegiving, enacting identity and sensemaking, and constructing identity narratives. Finally, under "One or many?," it discusses team, workgroup, and subunit; relational; occupational and career identifications; and how multiple identifications may conflict, converge, and combine.

Keywords: *identification; identity; commitment; sensemaking; narratives*

I changed job [sic] over the summer. . . . As the newness wore off after a couple of months, I've been experiencing a sense of loss. The loss of some of the things I've been doing over the last seven years. . . . The relationships I had built. The feeling of being needed by the students I was working with. Many of the parts of that role fitted with who I am and gave me expression of those gifts, skills and abilities. The time was right for a change but I loved what I was involved

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in. Perhaps my identity became wrapped up in my role, so as I changed role, as a new season in life comes, I have begun to question who I am. Had I become what I was doing?

—S. Moore (2007: para. 2)

The nature of the relationship between the self—that ineffable source of subjective experience—and the social context within which it arises is, perhaps, the most enduring problem of social theory.

—Kunda (1992: 161)

Glimmers of the construct now known as *organizational identification* (OI) appear very early in the development of organizational science. For example, Chester Barnard (1938/1968: 281) discussed the "coalescence" between the individual and the organization that generates a sense of individual conviction and a willingness to devote increased effort to the organization. Perhaps surprisingly, even Frederick Taylor (1911: 10, 26) argued that the interests of individuals and organizations should become "identical" through the "close, intimate, personal cooperation between the management and the men." Simon (1947) appears to have been the first management scholar to give the construct some theoretical teeth, and later he and March (March & Simon, 1958) formalized the construct, articulating among other things its multilevel nature, antecedents, and outcomes. However, the construct gained traction and became more mainstream over the last 20 years with the publications of Albert and Whetten (1985); Ashforth and Mael (1989); and Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994).

Following Albert, Ashforth, and Dutton (2000: 13), we view identity and identification as "root constructs" in organizational studies in that every entity needs to have a sense of who or what it is, who or what other entities are, and how the entities are associated. Identities situate entities such that individuals have a sense of the social landscape, and identification embeds the individual in the relevant identities. Ironically, as societies and organizations become more turbulent and individual–organization relationships become more tenuous, individuals' desire for some kind of work-based identification is likely to increase—precisely because traditional moorings are increasingly unreliable (van Dick, 2004; e.g., see research on identification as the "critical glue" in virtual environments, Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999: 777; see also Fiol & O'Connor, 2005; Pratt, 2001).

Our review focuses on identification with collectives (e.g., organization, team) and roles (e.g., occupation, network) rather than just organizations per se. Although the literature on identification is large and diverse, we draw primarily on research in organizational studies, social psychology, and communication. The discussion is framed around four fundamental questions. First we ask, "What is identification?" We define both identity and identification and discuss how the latter differs from organizational commitment. Second, under "Why does identification matter?," we consider the relationship between identity and identification, the individual and organizational outcomes of identification, and connections with other mainstream organizational behavior (OB) topics. Third, in "How does identification occur?," we offer a process model that includes cycles of sensebreaking and sensegiving, enacting identity and sensemaking, and constructing identity narratives. Finally, under "One or many? Multiple identifications," we discuss at length various loci of identification in organizations and how the self is both differentiated and integrated in organizational contexts.[1]

What Is Identification?

Identity

To understand identification, one must first understand identity. Identity is a self-referential description that provides contextually appropriate answers to the question "Who am I?" or "Who are we?" In organizational and occupational studies, three conceptualizations of identity have proven particularly influential over the past 20 or so years. First, and by far the most influential at the micro level, is the conceptualization from social identity theory and its sister approach, self-categorization theory (SIT/SCT; see Haslam & Ellemers, 2005, for a particularly lucid overview). Tajfel (1978: 63) famously defined *social identity* as "that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." In contrast, *personal identity* is defined as "a person's unique sense of self" (Postmes & Jetten, 2006b: 260)—the gestalt of idiosyncratic attributes, such as traits, abilities, and interests. What distinguishes social and personal identities is not so much their respective attributes (e.g., a team and an individual can each be described as open and creative) but their respective levels of self: Social identities are shared by members and distinguish between groups, whereas personal identities are unique to the individual and distinguish between individuals (often ingroup members) (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).[2] Given our interest in identification with collectives and roles, we will not consider personal identities (nor demographic attributes) in this paper. Tajfel and Turner (1986: 16) added that social identities (henceforth, identities) are "relational and comparative," as group members gain both a descriptive sense of their identity (who are we?) and an evaluative sense (how good are we?) by contrasting the ingroup with a salient outgroup(s).

Second, identity theory (an overarching term for structural identity theory and identity control theory) holds that identity is those "parts of a self composed of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies" (Stryker & Burke, 2000: 284). Whereas the identities envisioned by SIT/SCT inhere in collectives such as organizations and teams, the identities envisioned in identity theory inhere in roles—including, for our purposes, occupations, careers, and relational networks. Although one could argue that "group member" is also a role, identity theorists have focused on discrete roles such as worker and parent and how they link with complementary roles (e.g., parent–child). Individuals occupy multiple roles, and identity theory is concerned with how the social embeddedness of roles in valued relational networks increases their likelihood of being activated and performed well in a given situation. The more valued the relationships, the more important the role identity, and the more likely the person will strive to affirm the identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991).

Whereas SIT/SCT and identity theory tie the individual's self-concept to a collective or role, the third conceptualization focuses on the identity of the organization. According to Albert and Whetten (1985; Whetten, 2006), identity is the central, distinctive, and enduring characteristic of an organization[3]: It is how the collective answers the question "who are we as an organization?" Although there are obvious similarities between identity at the individual and collective

levels, there are also some key differences in terms of identity development and maintenance processes, how radical change can be undertaken, and how multiple identities can be expressed simultaneously (Corley, Gioia, & Fabbri, 2000; Gioia, 1998; Pratt, 2003). Research on organizational identity has progressed over the past 20 years to show strong linkages with organizational images, strategic decision making, and even many key organizational variables at the individual level (Corley et al., 2006).

Loosely combining these three conceptualizations, we view an individual's identities inside an organization as emerging from the central, distinctive, and more or less enduring aspects—in short, the essences—of the collectives and roles in which he or she is a member. However, individuals will often vary in what they perceive to be those essences. The more identity perceptions are widely shared and densely articulated by members of the collective or role, the *stronger* is the identity (cf. Cole & Bruch, 2006; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) and, therefore, the stronger the potential for identification—and disidentification (i.e., "This is *not* me"; Elsbach, 1999). Furthermore, given the notion that identities are relational and comparative, what is seen as distinctive can change with the comparison situation. For example, when psychology students compared themselves to art students, they viewed intelligence-related traits as more characteristic of their group, but when they compared themselves to physics students, they viewed creativity-related traits as more characteristic of their group (Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997, Study 1; see also Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Identities are usually an amalgam of the perceived characteristics of the collective or role (e.g., values, goals, beliefs) and the perceived prototypical characteristics of its members (cf. Postmes, Baray, Haslam, Morton, & Swaab, 2006).

Identification

OI has been formulated in various ways, ranging from quite narrow to quite broad (see Edwards, 2005, for an excellent review of the history and conceptualizations of the construct). The relatively narrow formulations tend to follow SIT/SCT (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dutton et al., 1994; cf. Kelman, 1961) and view OI as self-definition in terms of organizational membership. Tajfel (1982: 2) stated that

> in order to achieve the stage of "identification," two components are necessary, and one is frequently associated with them. The two necessary components are: a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness of membership; and an evaluative one, in the sense that this awareness is related to some value connotations. The third component consists of an emotional investment in the awareness and evaluations.

The focus, then, is on cognition (I am A) and the high value one places on membership. The relatively broad formulations are more eclectic in origin and may include value congruence, goal congruence, other shared characteristics, an identity-related ideology, and identity-consistent behaviors (e.g., M. E. Brown, 1969; Lee, 1971; Patchen, 1970; Schneider, Hall, & Nygren, 1971; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, Christ, & Tissington, 2005).

Figure 1 depicts the narrow and broad formulations as a continuum. We view the narrow end, anchored by "I am A, I value A (it's important to me), and I feel about A," as the heart

or core attributes of identification. Identification is viewing a collective's or role's defining essence as self-defining. Thus, identification has been referred to as "the perception of one-ness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 21), "when a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity" (Dutton et al., 1994: 239). Pratt (1998: 172-174) added that identification is either "self-referential" (i.e., occurring through "affinity," where one recognizes a collective or role "deemed similar to one's self") or "self-defining" (i.e., occurring through "emulation," where one changes "to become more similar" to the collective or role). In these definitions and in related formulations (e.g., Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Rousseau, 1998), identification is cognitive.[4] J. W. Jackson (2002: 12) posited, "Given the results of numerous minimal group [laboratory] studies involving purely cognitive groups, it may be concluded that this is the only theoretically necessary dimension." As noted, however, Tajfel (1978: 63) argued that a social identity also includes "the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." For a visceral connection to form, the individual must value the identity in question, which suggests that the identity arouses affect as well.[5] David Whetten (in Albert, Ashforth, Gioia, Godfrey, Reger, & Whetten, 1998) likened identities to onions where, as one peels back the layers, one eventually elicits tears (strong emotions), signifying the vital core of identity that is the basis for identification. Indeed, the "tears" can reveal to oneself and oth-ers what one in fact identifies with. In short, as Harquail (1998: 225) argued, identification "engages more than our cognitive self-categorization and our brains, it engages our hearts." Thought without feeling is sterile.

However, scholars need to be wary of which emotions they include as necessary concomi-tants of identification. Whether the affect actually experienced is positive (e.g., pride, excite-ment, joy, love) or negative (e.g., shame, sadness, disgust, guilt) depends largely on how the collective or role actually fares or whether its identity is maligned (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Dutton et al., 1994). For example, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) found that when the media publicly attacked the Port Authority's image as a compassionate and humane organi-zation, members felt anger, frustration, and disappointment. Thus, Herrbach (2006) found that OI, unlike organizational commitment, was associated with *negative* emotional experiences.[6] Furthermore, Heise (1977: 164) contended that "people operate to confirm the fundamental sentiments about self and others that are evoked by definitions of situations." A given identity may connote certain affect (e.g., the dour librarian) such that actually experiencing the affect helps facilitate identification. Our point, then, is that although identification involves affect, the specific form depends on the situation and the identity and often varies with the vicissi-tudes of organizational life. That said, a case can be made for including positive affect in the formulation of identification—if it is couched as generally applicable (e.g., "In general, I'm glad to be a(n) (ingroup member)," Cameron, 2004: 244). Why? Because individuals who can say "I am A and it's important to me" want to feel positively about their membership, often find sources of pride in even the most stigmatized of collectives and roles, may act to make the collective or role an ongoing source of positive affect, and thus may generally feel an abid-ing sense of positiveness. Moreover, individuals who generally feel positively about the col-lective or role are more likely to conclude, "I am A and it's important to me." In short, one can think or feel one's way into identification (Ashforth, 2001), and cognition and affect rec-iprocally reinforce identification (e.g., Kessler & Hollbach, 2005).

Figure 1
Identification: A Fuzzy Set
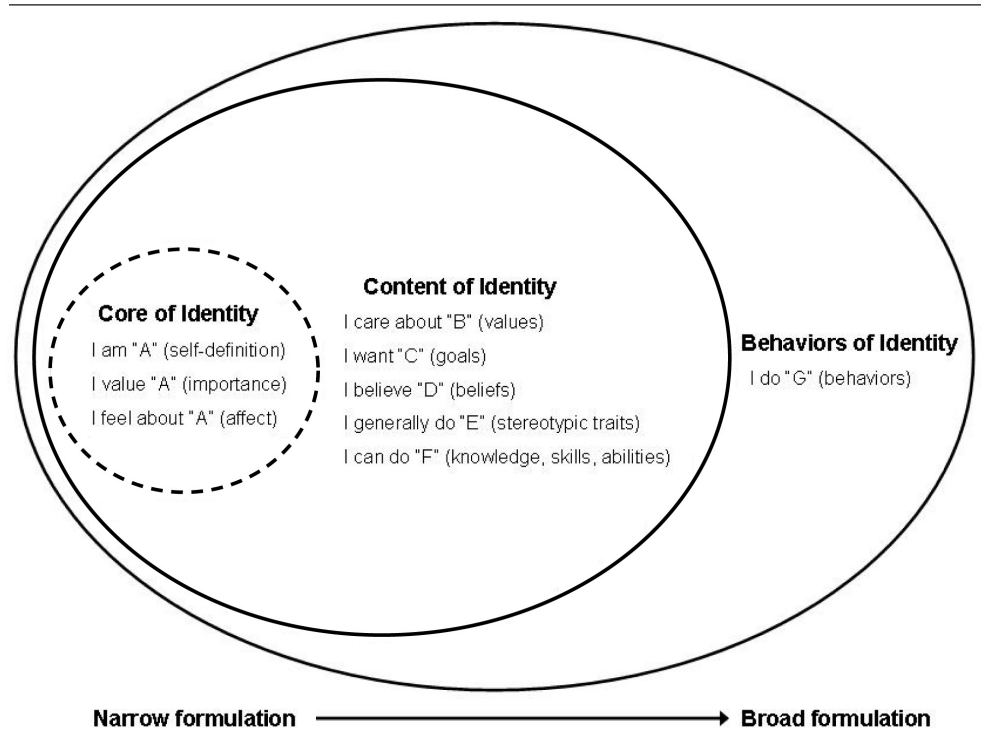
As we broaden the formulation of identification, the next concentric ring in Figure 1 includes the major content of the identity—namely, values (I care about B); goals (I want C); beliefs (I believe D); stereotypic traits (I generally do E); and knowledge, skills, and abilities (I can do F).[7] These are the central, distinctive, and more or less enduring attributes that constitute identities in organizational contexts—what it means to be A—such that identification implies an acceptance of those attributes as one's own. The more an individual actually embodies those attributes, the more *prototypical* he or she is said to be (e.g., Elsbach, 2004). Identification thus renders the individual into a prototype of the collective or role: "I, as a member of Google, am bold and innovative." The clause, "as a member of Google," is significant: Identification only influences thought, feeling, and action when the associated identity is *salient*, that is, situationally relevant and subjectively important (Ashforth, 2001; cf. Blanz, 1999).

The ring between "I am" and "I care about/want/believe/generally do/can do" is dotted to signify that organizationally based identities—and, therefore, identifications—typically but not necessarily include each of the content attributes. Why not necessarily? The attributes may not be densely articulated or they may be unclear, emergent, in flux, conflicted, tacit, espoused but not enacted, and so on such that in identifying with the collective or role (I am)

one does not necessarily accept certain values; goals; beliefs; traits; and knowledge, skills, and abilities as one's own. Conversely, the stronger the identity, the more that identification involves not only the elements in the first ring (I am, it's important, I feel) but I care about, I want, I believe, I generally do, and I can do. Furthermore, whereas the elements in the first ring are tightly intertwined, the elements in the second ring are more independent in the sense that an identity need not contain each element.

The broadest formulations of identification also include the final ring, behavior (I specifically do G; e.g., Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004).[8] As discussed later under "Why does identification matter?," nonbehaviorist operationalizations of identification have found that the construct is positively associated with behaviors that are supportive of the entity in question, including organizational citizenship behaviors and ingroup bias (i.e., ingroup favoritism and outgroup discrimination). However, as indicated by copious research on the attitude–behavior relationship (see Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Webb & Sheeran, 2006), various factors may attenuate the link between cognitive and affective identification (i.e., the elements in the first two rings) and behavior, such as situational constraints, competing identifications, impression management concerns, and so on. For example, strong pressure from a manager may induce an accountant to cook the books, thereby acting counter to her ethical principles. Thus, we argue that behavior should be regarded as a probabilistic *outcome* of identification, not as a necessary component. That said, we argue later that behaviors are very important for the self- and social-construction of identification such that one may not only think and feel one's way into identification but one may act one's way into it as well (Ashforth, 2001).

Situated versus deep identification. Mayhew (2007: 47) argued that, in SIT/SCT, "identification is conceptualised as a transient, situation-specific cognition with little stability over time or between contexts." A typical laboratory study may induce an individual, in seclusion, to think of an arbitrary group and observe the impact of contextual manipulations on attitudes and behavior. How are we to reconcile this notion of transient, situation-specific identification with the notion that identification represents self-definition in terms of a more or less enduring identity?

Rousseau (1998; Riketta, van Dick, & Rousseau, 2006) distinguished between situated identification and deep structure identification. The former involves a sense of belongingness to the collective triggered by situational cues (and thus is more temporary and unstable), whereas the latter involves a more fundamental connection between individual and collective, including altered self-schemas and a sense of "congruence between self-at-work and one's broader self-concept" (Rousseau, 1998: 218; see also C. R. Scott, Corman, & Cheney's, 1998: 319-321, discussion of stable vs. fleeting identification). Situated identification necessarily precedes deep identification in the sense that one must first be aware of social categories and then self-categorize before more fundamental connections can form (Meyer, Becker, & van Dick, 2006; Riketta et al., 2006; Rousseau, 1998). As Ashmore et al. (2004: 81) stated, "Identification is first and foremost a statement about categorical membership." Situated identification is what is most commonly captured in lab settings that foster temporary identification based on situational cues of self- and social categories. As soon as the experiment ends, the identification dissipates. OB researchers witnessing identification in

the field are more likely to capture something more fundamental, more deeply rooted in the self-schemas of those they are observing. As Sluss and Ashforth (in press) put it, OI "is more than just considering oneself a member of an organization [situated identification], it is the extent to which one includes the organization in his/her self-concept." The distinction between situated and deep identification is very important because it suggests that, contrary to the implicit view in SIT/SCT, identification can be regarded as a more or less stable quality that transcends specific situations. For instance, when an employee answers the questionnaire item, "I am a person who identifies with the X group" (R. Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, & Williams, 1986: 276), he is likely generalizing from myriad grounded experiences to offer an abstracted take on what the group is along with his affinity for it. It is identification in this deeper, more existential sense that this article focuses on precisely because it more fully implicates the self in the experience of organizational life.

Identity cues. Part of the confusion between situated versus deep identification stems from the role of identity cues. Identity cues spur the potential enactment of organizationally relevant identities by (a) priming or rendering salient an identity and (b) providing descriptive and normative information about the identity (what the prototypical member thinks, feels, and does). The second function pertains to learning about the identity and is thus more relevant to deep identification and sensegiving (see "How does identification occur?"). The first function is relevant to both situated and deep identification, as cues provide a conscious or nonconscious impetus to enact a given identity. The typical lab study mentioned above primes a temporary identity such that the participant self-categorizes as a group member— that is, experiences situated identification—for purposes of the experiment. In field settings, identity cues such as punching a time clock, entering one's office building, and greeting a client similarly prime relevant work-related identities (Ashforth, 2001). Indeed, identity cues can momentarily heighten otherwise deep and stable identifications. For instance, compared with a control group, school teachers who thought their survey results would be compared with kindergarten educators identified more strongly with their occupational group, whereas school teachers who thought they would be compared with school teachers from other school types identified more strongly with their organization (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005; see also Mayhew, 2007, Study 3). In sum, whereas identity cues as descriptive and normative information are more relevant to deep identification than situated identification, identity cues as primes are very relevant to both.

Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

The construct of OI overlaps more or less with the constructs of organizational commitment, organizational loyalty, person–organization fit, psychological ownership, and job embeddedness in that all involve a sense of attachment to or resonance with the organization. Given space limitations, we focus on the construct that is arguably most easily (and often) confused with OI, namely organizational commitment. Commitment has been variously defined, but the two most widely used formulations are those of Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979: 226), who defined it as "the relative strength of an individual's identification

with and involvement in a particular organization,"[9] and Allen and Meyer (1990: 1), who defined the affective component of commitment in their three-component model as "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization." Despite the apparent redundancy between commitment and OI, neither Mowday et al.'s nor Allen and Meyer's conception of identification is rooted in SIT/SCT with its emphasis on self-definition via organizational membership (Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Pratt, 1998; van Dick, 2004; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Commitment represents a positive attitude toward the organization: The self and the organization remain separate entities. In contrast, OI as defined here is a perceived oneness with the organization, necessarily implicating one's self-concept. As Pratt (1998: 178) put it, "Organizational commitment is often associated with, 'How happy or satisfied am I with my organization?' . . . Organizational identification, by contrast, is concerned with the question, 'How do I perceive myself in relation to my organization?'" OI is organization specific ("I am a member of Nike and it's important to me"), whereas commitment may be more readily transferred to other organizations that inspire a similar positive attitude. Indeed, in OI, as the individual's identity and fate become intertwined with those of the organization, he or she becomes a microcosm of the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006).

Given these conceptual differences, research indicates that popular measures of OI and organizational commitment, although often strongly correlated (Riketta, 2005), are empirically discriminable (Bedeian, 2007; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Cole & Bruch, 2006; Gautam, van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Herrbach, 2006; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006), although some commitment items sound very much like OI as defined here (e.g., "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own," Allen & Meyer, 1990: 6). Furthermore, research suggests that commitment is more strongly associated with attitudinal variables such as job satisfaction (Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006; cf. Cole & Bruch, 2006).[10] In contrast, we would expect OI to be more strongly related to variables that suggest an attractive, distinctive, and internally consistent organizational identity, shared fate with the organization, salient rival organizations, and self-sacrifice on behalf of the organization (Dutton et al., 1994; Edwards, 2005; Gautam et al., 2004; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Pratt, 1998; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). For example, regarding self-sacrifice, Riketta's (2005) meta-analysis revealed that OI was more strongly related to extra-role performance than was organizational commitment. Furthermore, we noted that Herrbach (2006) found that OI, unlike commitment, was associated with negative emotional experiences. Because OI involves defining oneself in terms of the organization's identity, as the organization goes, so goes the individual; conversely, because commitment lacks this very visceral connection, the individual may be somewhat insulated from the organization's fate. Finally, consistent with the notion that identity and identification are root constructs, Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2004; see also Bedeian, 2007; Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Herrbach, 2006; Sass & Canary, 1991) proposed that OI actually *fosters* (affective) commitment—which we suspect may, in turn, reinforce OI.

Despite these various differences between commitment and identification, we were struck by the frequent parallels between their respective literatures. Examples include the similar set of outcomes that are typically assessed (Riketta & van Dick, 2005), multiple commitments

(Cohen, 2003) and multiple identifications (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001), and commitment profiles (Sinclair, Tucker, Cullen, & Wright, 2005) and identification profiles (Lipponen, Helkama, Olkkonen, & Juslin, 2005). And yet relatively few articles in either literature incorporate findings from both literatures. Perhaps authors are creatures of habit and often fail to venture into allied fields—and if they do, they sense the conceptual and empirical confusion between commitment and identification and often opt for the tidier and safer path of wearing disciplinary blinkers. Clearly, however, commitment and identification scholars can make more progress working in concert than independently (Riketta, 2005; cf. Meyer et al., 2006).

Why Does Identification Matter?

Although it is fairly simple to find answers to the question of why identification in organizations matters, it is actually a rather complex aspect to the study of identification. We split our answer into four parts: (a) identification's relationship with identity, (b) individual outcomes of identification via the motives underlying why people identify, (c) organizational outcomes of identification, and (d) connections with other mainstream OB topics.

Identification and Identity

The most straightforward answer to why identification matters is because, by definition, it relates to identity. Haslam and Ellemers (2005) explained that to identify with the organization one must have an identity as a member of the organization. Identity situates the person in a given context, delimiting a set of cognitions, affect, and behaviors (outcomes discussed at length below). In the study of human cognition and behavior, identity is one of the key foundational concepts helping to explain why people think about their environments the way they do and why people do what they do in those environments. The concept of identity helps capture the essence of who people are and, thus, why they do what they do—it is at the core of why people join organizations and why they voluntarily leave, why they approach their work the way they do and why they interact with others the way they do during that work. Identification matters because it is the process by which people come to define themselves, communicate that definition to others, and use that definition to navigate their lives, work-wise or other.

Individual Outcomes of Identification

Why do individuals identify in organizations? Because much of what has been written about identification in organizations is based on SIT/SCT, our discussion begins with the motive of self-enhancement. We then broaden our discussion to include other motives, such as self-consistency. But perhaps more important than these previously documented motives is the idea that it is an essential human desire to expand the self-concept to include connections with others and to feel a sense of belonging with a larger group. This fundamental notion of "I as part of we," or the feeling of "being part of something greater," is often neglected in the identification literature (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Cotting, 1999)—despite

the implicit emphasis on deep identification—and is a motive we feel needs to re-emerge as an important component of understanding why identification matters.

Self-enhancement. According to SIT/SCT, the basic motive for identifying with a group is the enhancement of one's sense of collective self-esteem; in other words, people identify to provide the basis for thinking of themselves in a positive light. For example, Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) found that OI was associated with organization-based self-esteem. Ashforth (2001: 62) noted that the self-enhancement motive seems to have two components: experiencing an identity in a positive manner and experiencing growth toward "becoming a truer exemplar of a valued identity." A person may identify with her alma mater because the prestige associated with the school is reflected onto her as an alumnus (cf. Cialdini et al., 1976) and thinks more highly of herself because of it. But we would also expect this individual to seek to become more representative of her school by envisioning what a good alumnus is and striving to become that ideal. In both ways, the individual is striving "to systematically promote the perception that they are worthwhile persons" (Swann, 1990: 410).

SIT/SCT posits that this desire for self-enhancement is so strong that after "having *defined themselves* in terms of that social categorization, individuals seek to achieve or maintain positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison outgroup on some valued dimension" (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005: 43). Thus, under certain conditions, bias can form against outgroup members as a way to maintain a positive view of self. As a result, intergroup conflict can occur even in the absence of normal triggers of conflict, such as resource scarcity and incompatible goals. Haslam and Ellemers (2005) cautioned, though, that Tajfel and Turner (1979) stressed that outgroup bias is not guaranteed, occurring only where (a) identification with the ingroup is strong, (b) comparison and competition with the outgroup exist, and (c) the outgroup is salient to the ingroup's status.

Other self-related motives. Ashforth (2001) identified five additional self-related motives for identification, including self-knowledge (locating the self within a context so as to define the self), self-expression (enacting valued identities), self-coherence (maintaining a sense of wholeness across a set of identities), self-continuity (maintaining a sense of wholeness across time), and self-distinctiveness (valuing a sense of uniqueness) (cf. Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006). Interestingly, research by Swann (1990) and others (e.g., Shamir, 1990; Steele, 1988) demonstrates that the desire to see oneself as being consistent over time (also known as self-verification or self-affirmation) is as powerful as, if not more so than, the desire for self-enhancement. Self-verification is triggered by a perceived threat to the integrity of the self when inconsistencies or change force individuals to realize that they are not who they thought they were. Instead of striving to see the self in the best light possible (self-enhancement), self-verification involves seeking confirmation of who one thought one was, even to the point of seeking negative feedback to verify a negative self-view. Thus, for those individuals with a positive self-perception, self-enhancement and self-verification are very similar—both lead to seeking positive feedback; however, for individuals with a negative self-perception, self-verification is likely to lead to different outcomes than self-enhancement (Swann, 1990). Research indicates that individuals seek information that allows for a picture of stability in the self across identities (Stets & Harrod, 2004) as well as over time, even going so far as to manipulate the immediate

environment to support a sense of consistency in the self (e.g., Steele, 1988; Swann & Hill, 1982). This can be undertaken by selecting interaction partners that provide self-confirming feedback (an employee with a negative self-view seeking out managers that provide negative feedback about their performance) and by interacting with others in a way that induces self-verifying responses from them (Swann, 1990).

Basic human needs. It is interesting to note, as Pratt (1998) did, that many of these motivations cited by researchers as reasons for individuals to identify actually touch on fairly basic human needs beyond the self needs above, most prominently the needs for safety, affiliation, and uncertainty reduction. For example, many authors invoke SIT/SCT to posit that threats from noningroup members may increase identification with one's ingroup (see Haslam & Ellemers, 2005, for a thorough overview); Erez and Earley (1993) pointed out that psychological safety and trust are at the heart of self-consistency and self-efficacy motives; and Bullis and Bach (1989) noted that identification often changes or emerges during key points in the socialization process depending on the individual's improving or declining fit with the group. Likewise, satisfying a need for belonging or affiliation underlies much of the identification literature (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cheney, 1983a), even if only implicitly.

Finally, as Weick (1995) reminded us, humans are meaning seekers and the process of identifying with collectives and roles helps reduce the uncertainty associated with interacting in new environments or with changes in familiar environments. This is especially true in organizational contexts where uncertainty and ambiguity are often seen as negative conditions and many of the rituals and routines experienced in day-to-day organizational life are expressly meant to provide meaning (Hermanowicz & Morgan, 1999; Trice & Beyer, 1984). Through the identification process, an individual creates a sense of order in their world, not only by establishing ingroups and outgroups (á la SIT/SCT) but by reducing uncertainty through the deeper meanings provided by the collectives they associate with (Hogg, 2000a, 2000b, 2003; Hogg & Mullin, 1999). These deeper meanings help provide a sense of connection as well as a source for defining, refining, and committing to deeply held values.

Organizational Outcomes of Identification

Part of the attraction of identification for organizational researchers has been the broad array of organizational outcomes associated with identification with organizationally relevant targets. Albert et al. (2000) argued that, unlike other individual level variables relevant to the study of organizational contexts, identification, as a root construct, has a natural connection with collective-level outcomes because of its social nature (see also Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). It is not surprising, then, that a quick review of the literature reveals that OI has been associated with a variety of organizationally relevant outcomes (see meta-analyses by Riketta, 2005, and Riketta & van Dick, 2005, and reviews by Haslam, 2004, Haslam & Ellemers, 2005, and van Dick, 2004).

Perhaps the most referenced organizational outcomes involve cooperation, effort, participation, and organizationally beneficial decision making (Bartel, 2001; Kramer, 2006; Simon,

1976; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), intrinsic motivation (e.g., Kogut & Zander, 1996; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), task performance (e.g., van Knippenberg, 2000; Yurchisin, 2007), and information sharing and coordinated action (e.g., Cheney, 1983a; Grice, Gallois, Jones, Paulsen, & Callan, 2006; Tyler, 1999). As DiSanza and Bullis (1999: 349-350) explained, "individuals understand, accept, and employ organizational premises" in their decision making and other actions, in effect becoming a microcosm of the organization such that acting on behalf of the organization is tantamount to acting on behalf of themselves.

Other organizationally relevant outcomes include turnover and turnover intentions (e.g., Mael & Ashforth, 1995; van Dick, Christ, et al., 2004), job satisfaction and work adjustment (e.g., Carmeli, Gilat, & Waldman, 2007; Efraty & Wolfe, 1988), organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006), improved processes in virtual teams (e.g., Fiol & O'Connor, 2005; Sivunen, 2006), creative behavior (Carmeli, Cohen-Meitar, & Elizur, 2007), increased social support and helping behavior in times of work stress (e.g., Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005), customer orientation (S. A. Johnson & Ashforth, in press; Thakor & Joshi, 2005), positive evaluations of the organization (Cheney, 1983a, 1983b), better control by the organization (e.g., Barker & Tompkins, 1994; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005), and defense of the organization (e.g., Edwards, 2005; Tyler, 1999).

This long list of outcomes is a bit misleading, however, when considering two important factors. First, we believe that many of the outcomes attributed to OI are actually quite distal. Indeed, as more and more outcomes become associated with identification, there is a danger of the construct becoming diluted and losing the value gained from its status as a root construct. For example, many studies use OI as if it were no more than commitment or job satisfaction, rather than recognizing its unique properties. To help ensure the continued viability of the construct, we advocate that researchers focus on dependent variables that are particularly related to identification as an outcome or a process (for the latter, see "How does identification occur?"). For example, Riketta's (2005) meta-analysis of the OI and affective organizational commitment literatures revealed that OI has relatively higher correlations with job involvement, in-role performance, and extra-role performance. Particularly promising are outcomes that suggest the individual is acting as a microcosm of the organization, such as self-sacrifice (e.g., personally costly organizational citizenship behaviors) and enacting the organization's identity (e.g., attempting to live up to the ideals embodied in the organization's mission and values).

The second factor is that researchers are recognizing the potentially negative implications of identification for organizations. Rotondi (1975) provided an early preview with his curious finding that OI in a research-and-development setting was inversely related to effectiveness and creativity. Other negative implications that have been identified include continued commitment to a failing organizational project (Haslam et al., 2006), resistance to organizational change (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003), antisocial behaviors arising from threats to an employee's identity (Aquino & Douglas, 2003; H. S. Schwartz, 1987), and the hindrance of shared cognition to the detriment of group performance (Michel & Jehn, 2003). Gossett's (2002) study of temporary workers also raises the possibility that organizations might not want all of their members to be highly identified because of the costs involved in achieving

that identification and the difficulty in releasing them from the organization when their use-fulness has been exhausted. Finally, Dukerich, Kramer, and McLean Parks (1998) suggested various problems arising from overidentification: developing an automatic trust in other members that could lead to less creativity, less perceived need for intervening in questionable behavior, suppressing dissent when doubt is called for, impeded organizational learning and adaptation, an inability to question the ethicality of organizational behavior, and behaving unethically on behalf of the organization. Defining oneself in terms of a collective or role encourages one to enact the values, beliefs, and norms of that collective or role (the second ring of identification depicted in Figure 1). Thus, if the organization encourages discrimination against minorities, covering up group mistakes, or unethical practices, then OI can foster behaviors detrimental to the long-term interests of the organization. Overidentification is par-ticularly problematic for "greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974), where demands are open-ended and often escalate, and for highly visible, high status, and intrinsically motivating roles, which offer highly seductive identities for their incumbents. For example, Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2006) found that overidentification was a widespread concern among Episcopal priests, as it threatened their personal identities. Said one, "It is as though there isn't a living, growing person behind the collar" (p. 1041).

Identification's Link With Other OB Topics: The Rise of the Ampersand

Identification also matters because of its connection with other key constructs and topics in the growing understanding of organizational behavior. In fact, the phenomenon of "identi-fication & . . ." may eclipse more traditional applications of the construct (e.g., Haslam, 2004; Haslam, van Knippenberg, Platow, & Ellemers, 2003; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Several examples will suffice. First, interest in the connection between identification and leadership has burgeoned, from the perspective of both leaders (cf. van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003) and followers (cf. Lord & Brown, 2004). This interest has covered much conceptual ground, including notions of followership and follower attitudes and behaviors based on shared iden-tification with the leader (Haslam & Platow, 2001a, 2001b; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; van Dick, Hirst, Grojean, & Wieseke, 2007), examinations of leader–member exchange from a social identity perspective (Hogg et al., 2005), the effects of transformational and transactional leadership perceptions on OI (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), the role played by shared identification in the relationship between leader self-sacrifice and follower self-esteem (De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Dijke, & Bos, 2006), and the effect OI has on employees' implicit leadership theories and perceptions of leader behaviors (Martin & Epitropaki, 2001).

Perhaps the most significant development in the identification and leadership literature, how-ever, emerges from Hogg's (2001) theoretical exploration of group prototypicality as a key vari-able in perceptions of leadership. Building on SIT/SCT, Hogg argued that as the salience of an ingroup increases, individuals are more likely to judge people (themselves and others) based on perceptions of how prototypical they are of the group. This translates into "more prototypical group members emerging as leaders and being more effective as leaders" (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003: 251) as well as leader prototypicality influencing followers' perceptions of leader charisma (Platow, van Knippenberg, Haslam, van Knippenberg, & Spears, 2006).

Another growing body of research examines the relationship between identification and perceptions of justice as well as psychological contracts. Tyler and Blader (2000, 2003) argued that being treated in a fair manner affirms one's acceptance and worth as a group member, thereby increasing one's engagement with the group. Blader (2007a, 2007b) extends this line of reasoning by demonstrating the reciprocal relationship—that identification can also influence perceptions of procedural justice—as well as a mediating relationship—that identification with a union-organizing group mediated the relationship between procedural justice and positions regarding union certification. Similarly, psychological contract breach has been found to undermine OI among bank employees in Greece (Epitropaki, 2003) and to foster disidentification among a diverse sample of employed alumni (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

Finally, research has begun to provide more insights into the relationships between identification and the meaning of work. Rousseau (1998) captured the essence of this relationship in her discussion of how deep structure identification helps employees overcome the forces acting against organizational attachment in today's workplace. The meaning of work literature has long seen the self as a key factor in finding meaningfulness through work, from initial suggestions by Hackman and Oldham (1976) to more explicit references by Cartwright and Holmes (2006) and Pratt (1998), to Pratt and Ashforth's (2003) explicit use of a social identity perspective to distinguish between meaningfulness at work (derived from identifying with a collective) and meaningfulness in work (derived from alignment between identity and work roles). Finally, Vough and Corley (2006) provided an empirically derived framework for examining the relationships between the meaning employees find in their work and identification with various loci within an organization. Despite this increased attention, however, there is still much to learn about the relationship between identification and meaning of work, especially its reciprocal nature (indeed, identification can represent one type of meaningfulness).

How Does Identification Occur?

Researchers use *identification* as both a noun and a verb, the former capturing a state of being, a sense of stability, and the latter depicting the process of becoming, denoting variation (Ashforth, 2001; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). In this section, we focus on becoming, on the process of identification. We focus on identification with the organization for exposition purposes, but the process is applicable to any organizational collective or role. Becoming emphasizes *how* individuals bring attributes of the organization's identity into their own identities, whereas SIT/SCT focuses more on *why*. Examining how individuals bring the organization in necessitates a focus on how identities might steadily evolve, momentarily fluctuate, or drastically change—"identification is the process of emerging identity" (C. R. Scott et al., 1998: 304). It is fitting that researchers describe the process of identification as dynamic (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999) and turbulent (Albert et al., 2000; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000), incorporating both day-to-day activities with the whole of life experience (Abrams, 1996), full of "successive disequilibrations" (Marcia, 2002: 14), turning points (Bullis & Bach, 1989), and "continuities and discontinuities" that provide stability but also

entail change (Grotevant, 1987: 203). A process model of identification should account for this dynamism, explicating the intense episodes that require conscious, deliberate decisions that serve to either solidify or transform identities, followed by periods of largely offline identity processing and stability.

Yet surprisingly little research has attempted to capture these dynamics. The rich descriptors in the paragraph above belie the static models guiding research. Authors have suggested that this state of affairs stems from research designs that promote snapshot images of identification. In this vein, Demo (1992: 306) argued that a degree of methodological myopia has "prevented the processual perspective from being systematically applied in empirical research, and consequently little is known about the emergent, dynamic, changing qualities of human self-images." Several authors have similarly observed that most research "has focused on outcomes" not process (Kerpelman, Pittman, & Lamke, 1997: 327; see also Grotevant, 1987; Lavoie, 1994). This focus on outcomes has likely obscured questions that are quite fundamental. In his seminal review, Pratt (1998: 192) observed that of "all of the central questions of organizational identification, the one that has probably received the least attention by organizational scholars has been, 'How does organizational identification occur?'" Pratt recently reiterated this observation while noting that the literature on the processes of identity work "remains a loosely affiliated body of research" (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006: 238; see also Ibarra, 1999; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

Given the state of the field, in this section we eschew a straightforward cataloging of the loosely affiliated literature on the process of identification within organizations. Instead, we focus on a set of convergent constructs that emerge from the literature, providing a sketch of the general dynamics undergirding the process (see Figure 2). Our hope is that this general model will provide a point of theoretical convergence and thereby facilitate future research. We characterize the process of identification as an interplay between individuals and organizations. Individuals begin to incorporate elements of the collective into their sense of self by enacting identities and then interpreting responses to these enactments. Organizations encourage enactment and provide feedback through sensebreaking and sensegiving. These individual and organizational processes work together as a cycle—a common feature of several identification process models (Grotevant, 1987; Kerpelman et al., 1997; Marcia, 2002; Pratt et al., 2006; Stets & Burke, 2005)—that captures the moment-by-moment attempts to become prototypical members of the organization. Individuals construct an identity narrative as a way of linking these moments over time, generating a story that integrates "who I am now" with "who I have been," while suggesting "who I might become." Before reviewing each of these constructs, we briefly touch on the interplay between the individual and organization. We conclude with a brief discussion regarding how this model might account for Pratt's (1998) distinction between affinity identification and identification through emulation.

Researchers often focus on identification as either a top-down process (Bartels, Pruyn, de Jong, & Joustra, 2007), assessing how organizations influence individuals (Cardador & Pratt, 2006), or a bottom-up process, addressing the thoughts, feelings, and actions an individual uses to negotiate the boundaries between the self and organization (Harquail, 1998). Researchers have sought antecedents for each perspective. The top-down research includes predictors derived from SIT/SCT formulations of identification, particularly organizational prestige and distinctiveness (e.g., Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smidts, Pruyn,

Figure 2
A Process Model of Identification
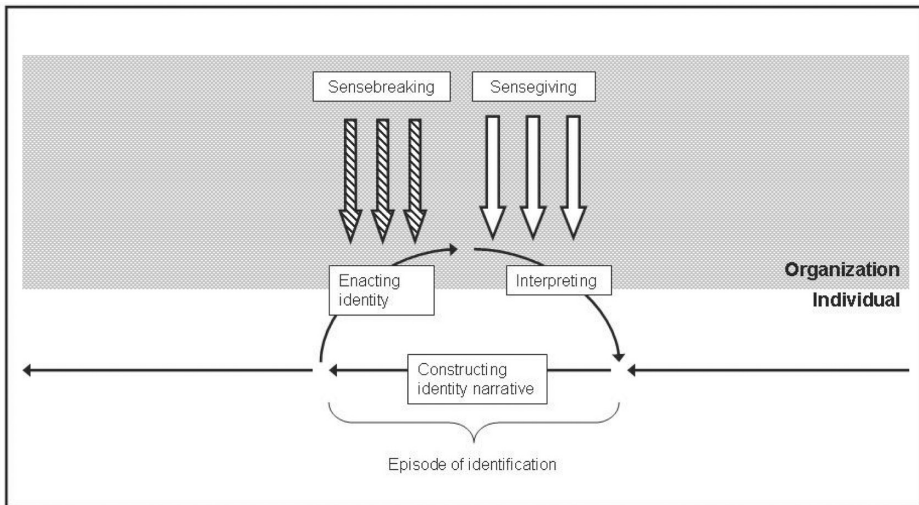
& van Riel, 2001; Wan-Huggins, Riordan, & Griffeth, 1998) and predictors that are germane to various forms of organizational attachment, such as autonomy (Russo, 1998) and support (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001).[11] Although SIT/SCT essentially defines individual differences away (by arguing that self-categorization is triggered by situational cues and that the individual is enacting a depersonalized social identity and by implicitly regarding identification as situated rather than deep; see Mayhew's, 2007, critique), research has shown that need for identification (Glynn, 1998; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Mayhew, 2007), need for affiliation (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001), sentimentality (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), psychological ownership (M. D. Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, & Lloyd, 2006), collectivism (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006), gender (Lucas, 1997), biodata (Mael & Ashforth, 1995), organizational tenure (Riketta, 2005), and person–organization fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002) may predict bottom-up identification.

Although instructive, these variables capture relatively static predictors and not process; that is, they provide pictures of the surface of an ocean wave, not the undercurrents that formed it. In contrast, some studies have sought to capture these undercurrents. For example, Pratt's (2000) study of Amway reveals how organizations can use sensebreaking and sensegiving to strip away individuals' old identities and establish new ones. Similarly, at the individual level, Ibarra's (1999) study of consultants and investment bankers illustrates how professionals develop new identities by trying on possible selves and seeing how they fit in much the same way one tries on clothing. Here, our discussion of sensebreaking and sensegiving highlights top-down processes that organizations use to manage OI, whereas our discussion of enacting identity, sensemaking, and constructing an identity narrative emphasizes bottom-up processes individuals use to negotiate OI.

Sensebreaking and Sensegiving

Sensebreaking and sensegiving are rooted in identity construction (Pratt, 2001; Weick, 1995). We briefly discuss each and then examine how they work together. Sensebreaking "involves a fundamental questioning of who one is when one's sense of self is challenged . . . [creating] a meaning void that must be filled" (Pratt, 2000: 464). Although the term *sensebreaking* is relatively new, evidence of this phenomenon is prominent in the identification literature. For example, in a study examining the upheaval of Bell, a participant lamented, "I find myself asking, 'Who are we?' 'Who am I?'" (Tunstall, 1985: 59). Similarly, S. J. Schwartz (2001: 7) began his review of neo-Eriksonian identity theory by listing a slew of sensebreaking questions: "Who am I? What are my values and goals? What is my life purpose? What makes me different from other people? Am I really the same person from one year to the next?" And George and Chattopadhyay (2005: 72) argued that when individuals sense identity incongruence they begin to ask questions "about the relevance of this organization for the purposes of self-categorization."

In contrast to sensemaking, which serves to reduce knowledge gaps, sensebreaking accentuates them. These gaps motivate further identity exploration. For example, divestiture—the deliberate stripping away of an incoming identity so as to rebuild the individual in the organization's image (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979)—motivates newcomers to learn about and assimilate the desired identity so as to resolve their liminality (Ashforth, 2001). The more distinctive the organization's identity and practices (e.g., military boot camps, commercial fishing), the more pronounced the divestiture tends to be (e.g., Bourassa & Ashforth, 1998). Divestiture and related processes tend to elicit "oppositional statements" (Josephs & Valsiner, 1998). A new military recruit, having failed a physical test, might sense "I'm not strong enough to be in the army" while simultaneously thinking "but I want to be stronger." This tension feeds into the emerging identity narrative because it causes individuals to question who they have been and who they are attempting to be. These tensions also create a state in which individuals are searching for meaning, increasing the chances of favorable responses to sensegiving.

Sensegiving refers to attempts to guide the "meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). Although rarely explicitly referring to sensegiving, the literature on organizational communication strategies is well developed regarding the link between sensegiving and identification (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Carroll, 1995; Cheney, 1983b; Chreim, 2002; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999; Pratt, 2003; Vaughn, 1997). Indeed, some of the more common antecedents to OI listed above (prestige, distinctiveness, fairness, etc.) may be proxies for the effectiveness of internal and external communication tactics (Fuller et al., 2006). Researchers examining the link between organizational communication and identification have inductively cataloged the tactics organizations use to encourage identification. In this vein, DiSanza and Bullis (1999) discussed 14 different identification tactics, including bragging, highlighting outsider praise, saying "we," expressing concern for the individual, and uniting against a common enemy, to name a few. Each represents a form of sensegiving. For example, bragging and outsider praise serve a normative purpose: highlighting desirable identity attributes that should be adopted. In contrast, expressing concern signals a degree of flexibility—allowing individuals to bring their individuality in. Viewed as a gestalt, these tactics evoke what it

means to be a prototypical member of the organization. In essence, sensegiving provides much of the organizationally sanctioned raw material that individuals use to craft their organization-based identities while signaling the degree to which individuals can incorporate their past experiences into their present selves.

Given our focus on *social* identities, social validation is usually necessary for new identities to take root and grow (Ashforth, 2001; e.g., Ibarra, 1999; cf. Kerpelman et al., 1997; Swann, 1999). Sensegiving often provides this validation, providing the social momentum that encourages continued identity exploration and deepening one's commitment to new identity features. In this way, sensegiving may act as a sort of identity echo: the reverberations of projecting a new self, sensed in the form of colleague and customer facial expressions, off-hand comments, and the like. The more incipient and insecure one's identity enactment and identification ("Is this really me?"), the more sensitive one is to such feedback, perhaps to the point where one reads more meaning than is warranted.

Sensebreaking and sensegiving often work in tandem—sensegiving serves as a response to sensebreaking, providing the organizationally sanctioned answers to the questions associated with identity deficits. For example, Pratt (2000) illustrated how Amway uses both sensebreaking and sensegiving in the "dream building" process. Individuals experience sensebreaking when they compare their current self with their ideal self—this generates a sense of dissatisfaction. Amway mentors then provide sense, working with individuals to develop "acceptable dreams" (Pratt, 2000: 466). These new dreams fill the identity gap. Although at Amway sensebreaking and sensegiving are often tightly coupled, this need not be the case. For instance, many organizations focus on becoming centers of meaning and exert ideological control, downplaying sensebreaking relative to sensegiving (e.g., Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004). Finally, both sensebreaking and sensegiving promote identity enactment and sensemaking, which we discuss below, because each can serve as an impetus for the social construction and adoption of identities.

Enacting Identity and Sensemaking

Enactment and sensemaking are inextricably linked (Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993). Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 626) argued that "much if not all activity involves active identity work: people are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, and strengthening or revising." This resonates with C. R. Scott et al.'s (1998: 322) observation that "activity is a central characteristic of contexts that situate expressions of identity." Much like scientists studying quantum physics by accelerating atoms and then analyzing the patterns that result from the colliding particles, "people learn their identities by projecting them into an environment and observing the consequences" (Weick, 1995: 23). In the preceding quote, "projecting" depicts enactment; it is the social performance of identity. Similarly, "observing" concerns sensemaking or reflecting on the reactions to identity enactment and deriving meaning from the experience. Because the link between sensemaking and identity construction is fairly well established, in this section we skew our discussion to emphasize identity enactment while assuming that sensemaking is a necessary consequence of most enactments.

Ashforth (2001) classified observable indicators of identity enactment into three categories: (a) identity markers, such as dress (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997) and office décor (Elsbach,

2004); (b) performance outcomes, such as the quality and quantity of output; and (c) behavior itself, including task behaviors, conformity to identity norms, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Consistent with our earlier argument that individuals can think or feel—as well as act—their way into identification, it should be noted that cognition and affect can serve as "first movers" (Ashforth, 2001: 210). Harquail (1998) argued that individuals often identify by following their hearts—by seeking to experience a sense of pride, warmth, or affirmation—and that these thoughts and emotions can drive behavior. And identities typically involve not only expressive norms but ways of thinking and feeling that may serve as points of entry for the individual. Furthermore, a person can recognize their affinity (Pratt, 1998) for an organization's identity and thereby identify without having actually acted out the identity or interacted with organizational members. For instance, Mael and Ashforth (1995) found that many U.S. Army recruits *entered* the Army with relatively high OI. Finally, because behavioral enactment necessarily implicates thought and feeling (except under extreme alienation where one goes through the motions), the three rapidly become intertwined. Thus, we use the term *enactment* broadly to capture a confluence of behavior, cognition, and affect.

Although we don't want to overstate the agency of the individual, the discussion above implies a degree of individual choice, which is significant for two reasons. First, according to Tompkins and Cheney (1985: 194), an individual identifies with the organization when he or she "desires to choose the alternative that best promotes the perceived interests of that organization." A sense of choice is a critical precursor for changing identity (McCarthy, 1984). Enactment serves as a litmus test, as an indicator of the strength of identification. Given the fundamental attribution error (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), perceivers assume that the individual chose the specific enactment and respond by assessing its congruence with the actions of prototypical organizational members. Indeed, individuals may also use their enactments as data from which to infer their own attitudes toward the emerging identity (e.g., "I must have defended iPods because being an Apple employee is important to me"; Bem, 1972).

Second, "choosing" suggests an array of options, the possibility of portraying one of several potential identities, which suggests an element of bricolage. Although sensebreaking and sensegiving provide trajectories for action, individuals are still left with an array of potential actions. In fact, the variety of options in a given situation may invoke anxiety. For instance, a junior consultant, discussing experimentation with a provisional identity, observed "60 percent is mustering the courage to try it yourself" (Ibarra, 1999: 776). At least a portion of this courage and perhaps a greater percentage of the actual raw material for enacting a new identity comes from past experience (Bandura, 1977). Even enacting an identity that is relatively novel involves drawing somewhat on an accumulated repertoire of knowledge, skills, and abilities, however clumsily. Pratt et al. (2006) showed that individuals use a variety of methods—enriching, patching, and splinting—to repair and enact identities as residents and doctors. Beyer and Hannah (2002) noted that experienced newcomers combine elements of their diverse past experiences with elements from their new environments to enact identities appropriate for their new contexts.

Yet even though individuals draw from their past, these initial enactments are likely somewhat tentative; they are forms of exploration, play, and improvisation (Ashforth, 1998) that help individuals make sense of who they are and who they should be in a particular situation.

The transition to an authentic expression of self necessitates that individuals receive positive social feedback and are able to integrate the new identity into their identity narratives.

Constructing Identity Narratives

If Bruner is correct (1991: 4) and humans organize their interactions "mainly in the form of narrative," then Boje's (1995) conclusion that organizations are storytelling systems is a natural corollary (see also Humphreys & Brown, 2002). Here we focus on individual identity narratives, although organizational identity narratives undoubtedly feed into the communication strategies reviewed in our discussion of sensegiving (see also Czarniawska, 1997).

The process of responding to sensebreaking and sensegiving, enacting a potential identity, and struggling to interpret feedback encourages individuals to tie their emerging identity into their overall identity narrative(s). Constructing a narrative is always retrospective (hence, the right-to-left direction of the arrows in our model), as individuals draw on remembered experiences. However, narratives are generally constructed from socially validated archetypes that suggest familiar plots, characters, and actions (Barbulescu & Ibarra, 2007); hence, narratives also project into the future, containing identity aspirations. The retrospective–prospective nature of narratives enables individuals to simultaneously accomplish change and consistency. They accomplish change by adapting the narrative to accommodate the new episode—by introducing new aspects of themselves and affirming desires to change or deepen identities. They generate consistency by looking back at past episodes to generate a plot line that naturally suggests their current station. In other words, narratives are constantly being rewritten to incorporate evolving perceptions of self, but where a new self is a natural outgrowth of past selves, promoting a sense of continuity. These narratives then serve as a foundation from which individuals enact themselves during future episodes (Browning, 1991). Such enactments may include incremental refinements to identity or drastic narrative shifts that explain radical changes such as switching careers. In sum, "The story we tell of ourselves . . . is the essence of identification" (C. R. Scott et al., 1998: 305).

Affinity and Emulation

Our model captures the turbulent, intense moments during which individuals are engaged in identity work as well as how individuals create continuity by linking these episodes together through narrative. Each episode may consist of one or several iterations of the cycle, depending on the intensity of the identity work being done. Recall Pratt's (1998) distinction between affinity (where one recognizes congruence with the organization's identity) and emulation (where one changes to become more congruent). Identification through affinity is most likely a smooth, aligned, and less intense process because individuals have already incorporated a substantial portion of the organization's identity into their individual identities. As depicted in Figure 3, because of this pre-existing identity overlap, affinity does not require sensebreaking and instead relies on sensegiving. Enacting the identity tends to feel natural and elicits additional sensegiving that serves to fine tune the identity. Sensemaking

Figure 3
Episodes of Emulation and Affinity
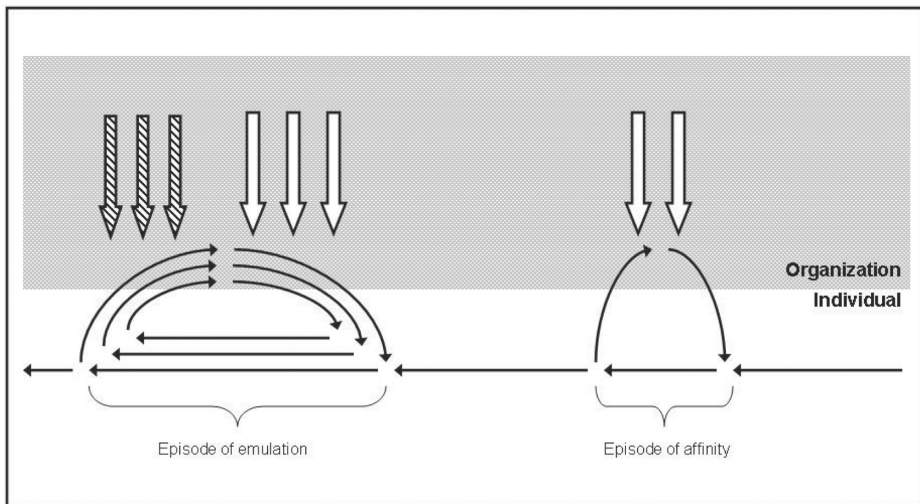
is relatively straightforward because the situation likely reinforces rather than revises exist-ing narratives. The result is that the individual feels affirmed and the episode is readily folded into his or her identity narrative.

However, episodes of affinity are likely preceded by episodes of emulation: At some point in the past, the individual adapted his or her identity to include the central, distinctive, and more or less enduring facets of the collective or role. These early episodes of emulation likely account for anticipatory identification (Ashforth, 2001). In contrast to affinity, emula-tion likely necessitates sensebreaking and sensegiving, imparting a greater amount of infor-mation regarding expectations of how to think, feel, and act as an organizational member. The resulting enactment requires a greater level of bricolage because the individual must combine information gathered from sensebreaking and sensegiving with existing identities that have little overlap with the organization's identity. Hence, initial enactments tend to be flawed and tentative, inducing more sensebreaking and sensegiving. Making sense of this sit-uation is difficult, resulting in reflection that highlights narrative discontinuities (even though the individual had likely already developed a prospective narrative to embrace changes necessitated by the organization). As shown in Figure 3, emulation likely induces multiple iterations of this cycle within one episode or over successive episodes, ultimately resulting in revisions to the identity narrative.

Earlier we noted the relative dearth of research explicitly focusing on the process of iden-tification and using research designs that capture identity-change dynamics. In our view, research on the process of identification is a low-hanging fruit for future research. Although our model represents a synthesis of the state of the field and attempts to sketch the under-currents of identification, we hope that the model provides more questions than answers. For

example, how do narratives of organizational identity interact with narratives of individual identity and what role might sensebreaking and sensegiving play in this interaction? What are the different configurations of sensebreaking and sensemaking and what are their effects on identification? Under what circumstances might organizations actively encourage individuals to *dis*identify with organizational loci (e.g., during change)? And although questions such as these are intriguing, perhaps more pressing for the field are larger questions (and commensurate research designs) that attempt to capture the ebb and flow of multiple identification episodes while simultaneously assessing the impact of the context. We encourage researchers to do more in this area.

One or Many? Multiple Identifications

Organizations, particularly large ones, are highly differentiated systems. A person may be a member of an occupation, department, task force, lunch group, and so on, each of which has its own, more or less distinct identity. Some identities are embedded or *nested* within others in a means-ends chain, such as those associated with a job → workgroup → department → division → organization; other identities *cross-cut* this nesting, such as a cross-functional team, union local, and friendship clique (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ellemers & Rink, 2005; Hennessy & West, 1999; Hernes, 1997; Mueller & Lawler, 1999). The more nested and cross-cutting identities that the individual views as self-defining, the more multiple identifications he or she is said to have.

For years, social psychologists cast identity—and thereby identification—in dualistic or dichotomous terms as either personal or social (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), individual or collective (e.g., Triandis, 1989), or independent and interdependent (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Personal, individual, independent identities focus on idiosyncratic attributes of the person; social, collective, interdependent identities focus on the person's connections to others through shared memberships, such as the nested and cross-cutting identities noted above, as well as common social categories, such as gender and ethnicity, and relationships, such as between coworkers. More recently, the distinction between shared memberships and relationships has been highlighted (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000), as expanded on below in "Levels of Self." As we argue, it appears that casting identity (and identification) in dualistic terms is simplistic; individuals appear capable of simultaneously and even holistically defining themselves in terms of multiple identities, whether personal-social (Postmes & Jetten, 2006a) or social-social.

In this section, we focus on identification with work-specific collective and role (including relational) identities rather than with personal identities, social categories, or nonwork-related identities, such as parent or rock climber. We discuss (a) levels of self and (b) differentiating and integrating levels of self.

Levels of Self

The notion of nested identities suggests that individuals have levels of self in organizations, ranging from lower level identities such as one's workgroup and department to higher

level identities such as one's organization and industry. Cross-cutting identities can be oriented to any level, from a steering committee comprised of representatives from various workgroups to a lobbying group comprised of industry representatives (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Research has focused largely on the organizational level of self, overshadowing several particularly important loci of lower level identification: (a) team, workgroup, and subunit; (b) relationships; and (c) occupation and career.[12]

Team, workgroup, and subunit identification. Earlier, we described the salutary effects of OI. Similar effects have been found for identification with a team, workgroup, or subunit (henceforth, group or workgroup). Given that groups are more exclusive, concrete, and proximal than organizations (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Kramer, 1991), group identification has been found to affect various group dynamics, from conformity to group norms to striving to view the ambiguous actions of group members in a positive light, and from the development of trust to evincing more concern for interpersonal treatment (e.g., Ellemers & Rink, 2005; Kramer, Hanna, Su, & Wei, 2001; Tyler & Blader, 2000). Thus, a meta-analysis by Riketta and van Dick (2005) found that workgroup attachment (an amalgam of workgroup identification and commitment) was positively associated with group satisfaction, group extrarole behavior, and group climate. S. G. Scott (1997) reported that identification with development teams predicted managerial ratings of project performance one year later. Van der Vegt and Bunderson (2005) found that expertise diversity was negatively related to team learning and team performance when team identification was low, but it was positively related to both when identification was high. Furthermore, in yoking one's identity to the workgroup, group identification is also likely to reduce individual behaviors that hurt the group, such as social loafing and tardiness (Ellemers, de Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; van Dick, 2001). Finally, high identifiers, when confronted by a group threat, are more likely to fight on behalf of the group and to police the group for signs of disloyalty (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Spears, Jetten, & Doosje, 2001).

However, it bears repeating that the specific behaviors enacted by high identifiers depend on the values, beliefs, and norms enshrined in the identity (Ellemers & Rink, 2005; van Dick, 2001). A group identity that frowns on innovation, hard work, or citizenship behavior is apt to prove self-fulfilling. Moreover, there are numerous cases where group members have actively resisted organizationally beneficial actions that threatened a cherished group identity (e.g., Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ashforth & Mael, 1998; Collinson, 2003). For example, Humphreys and Brown (2002) reported that faculty at an institute of higher education resisted a management-led initiative to attain university status partly because the espoused emphasis on research threatened their existing identities as teachers. And although we noted above that high identifiers are inclined to defend the group during threat, this defense can easily tip into a rigid adherence to the group's identity (A. D. Brown & Starkey, 2000).

In addition to the dark side of otherwise functional intragroup dynamics, identification may also foster discrimination against other groups within the organization, thereby impairing intergroup cooperation. Indeed, SIT/SCT was originally created to help explain intergroup dynamics. In the original formulation, group members were argued to "strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity" so as to maintain or enhance their collective self-esteem, and this is accomplished by "favorable comparisons" between the ingroup and

salient outgroup(s) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986: 16). These comparisons render intergroup differences more apparent and intragroup differences less so. However, given the self-esteem motive, SIT/SCT argues that the description and evaluation of the identity in question may not be impartial: Identification may foster ingroup bias under certain conditions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1999). The upshot is that "hostility erupts more readily between [groups] than between individuals" (Horwitz & Rabbie, 1982: 269).

However, although laboratory studies have generally supported this contention, it should be noted that field research in organizations has been inconsistent (see Hennessy & West, 1999; Lipponen, Helkama, & Juslin, 2003). This inconsistency has been attributed to task interdependencies, goal interdependencies, and unclear boundaries between groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989); unmeasured moderators such as group values, beliefs, and norms (R. Brown, 1988; Turner, 1999); individuals viewing identification with their ingroup as synonymous or blurred with identification with the organization (R. Brown & Williams, 1984; Oaker & Brown, 1986); a focus on organizations where the groups have a common identity rather than differentiated identities (Richter, West, van Dick, & Dawson, 2006); and the operationalization of key variables (Lipponen et al., 2003; Turner, 1999). Putting these attributions together, workgroup identification is more likely to predict ingroup bias if the ingroup and outgroup are viewed as relatively distinct, task independent, and goal independent and if the ingroup culture does not discourage such bias.

That said, according to the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), a strong superordinate identity mitigates ingroup bias by uniting groups under a common banner. In a study of shipyard subcontractors that measured both group and superordinate identification, Lipponen et al. (2003) found that identification with one's particular subcontractor was positively associated with ingroup bias (i.e., rating the ingroup more positively than the shipyard's own workers), whereas identification with the shipyard was negatively related to ingroup bias (however, see Hennessy & West, 1999). Lipponen et al. thus endorsed the common ingroup identity model but with the proviso that the identity must be viewed as truly inclusive. (However, we argue later under "Identity conflicts" that a more complex version—the dual-identity model—may be more realistic in organizational settings, albeit at the possible expense of greater intergroup conflict.)

This thumbnail sketch of group identification suggests promising research questions. For example, how inevitable is the dark side of group identification? Can identification be fostered in such a way that the positive outcomes are enhanced while mitigating the negative outcomes? Also, there are many groups in organizations, from a department to a coffee klatch to a project team: To what extent does identification vary with the purpose, size, duration, formality, diversity, and so on—as well as the identity itself—of a group?

Relational identification. According to SIT/SCT, when individuals identify with a shared membership, they essentially become interchangeable prototypes of the collective identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The salience of their individuality fades in favor of the superordinate identity. Research on relationships, however, suggests that individuality tends to remain quite salient when individuals identify with a relationship, such as mentor–protégé or coworker–coworker (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Individuals essentially extend their sense of self to include how they interact with the other (Aron & Aron, 2000). For instance, a supervisor's

relational identity with her subordinate may include her personal propensity to be supportive and fair. Relational identities thus integrate three levels of self—not only the personal and interpersonal but the collective as well via the roles one enacts (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Furthermore, relational identities (and thus identifications) can be nested within other collective identities (e.g., coworkers within a workgroup) or be cross-cutting (e.g., a friendship with a person from a different department). A unique feature of relational identities and identifications is that they are simultaneously particularized (a salesperson has a specific relationship with Jim, the client) and generalized (the salesperson has an abstract sense of relationships with clients in general).

It should be noted that relational identification differs from what Kelman (1961: 63) referred to as "classical identification," where one identifies with another person "to be like or actually to *be* the other person." In becoming another person, one's own individuality is downplayed; whereas relational identification, as noted, involves an extension rather than a suppression of self. Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) found that the transformational leadership behaviors of midlevel bank managers predicted employees' identification with their manager, which in turn predicted their dependence on their manager. However, Kark et al. cautioned that dependence may have salutary outcomes, such as encouraging newcomers to learn from their manager. Furthermore, transformational leadership also predicted employees' identification with their subunit, which instead predicted employees' self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and organization-based self-esteem. Other potential benefits of identifying with transformational or charismatic leaders include enhanced self-esteem and meaningfulness for followers (Sinha & Jackson, 2006) and the leader (Howell & Shamir, 2005).

In relational identification, the attributes of individualization (one's unique sense of self remains psychologically present) and particularization/generalization suggest provocative research questions. For example, what personal attributes are likely to be implicated in a given relational identity? How does a given relational identification, in turn, affect the nature of the person? How big an influence does an initial particularized relationship have on later, generalized, relational identities? How might relational identifications interact (e.g., how might identification with the mentor–protégé relationship affect identification with a coworker relationship)?

Finally, the notion of relational identification suggests that network theories may have much to say about the dynamics of multiple identifications (cf. Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Milton & Westphal, 2005). Because organizations are essentially networks of roles, relational identifications are likely to form along network lines and—given the identification convergence processes described below—galvanize broader attachments within the organization.[13] For example, in a study of a municipal government organization, Kuhn and Nelson (2002) found that individuals in more central network roles tended to identify in a similar manner with their workgroup, division, organization, and occupation. Identification with a network or specific network members may facilitate knowledge transfer and other forms of cooperative behavior, enhancing the performance of nested and cross-cutting identities.

Occupational and career identification. Individuals are hired to enact specific occupations, such as programmer and architect. Thus, occupations serve as major identity badges for situating individuals in the organization, and occupational incumbents frequently define themselves in terms of their occupation (e.g., Thatcher, Doucet, & Tuncel, 2003). As a journalist

put it, "It's something more important and spiritual than a job. It's who I am" (Russo, 1998: 88). Despite the apparent prevalence of occupational identification—or *professional identification* as it is often termed when applied to professions—research on the construct has been sporadic (e.g., H. S. Becker & Carper, 1956; Hebden, 1975; Witt, 1993), although more frequent of late (Ibarra, 1999; Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006; Kreiner, Hollensbe, et al., 2006; Loi, Ngo, & Foley, 2004; Lui, Ngo, & Tsang, 2003; Pratt et al., 2006; Sargent, 2003; Vough, 2007).[14] (Also, a rich tradition of occupational ethnographies implicates identification, even if only indirectly; Barley, 1989; Trice, 1993). This historical inconsistency may reflect the benign neglect of occupations generally in organizational behavior research, and that research on OI is usually couched in terms of SIT/SCT (which focuses on collectives), whereas occupational identification may be more consistent with identity theory (which focuses on roles).

As mentioned, occupations transcend any given organization. This observation fueled the argument that identification with one's occupation (a "cosmopolitan") and one's organization (a "local") may at times conflict, such as when a lawyer places adherence to professional standards above her employer's financial interests (Gouldner, 1957; e.g., Bamber & Iyer, 2002). Accordingly, these two loci were argued to exist on a continuum such that individuals tend to identify with one more than the other. However, as discussed later, research on multiple identifications indicates that individuals may identify with multiple loci—including the occupation and organization—and cope with considerable latent conflict between identities.

What "career" adds to the identification literature is a focus on time and, at least implicitly, change.[15] As noted, the process of identification has been largely overlooked. The notion of career identification raises questions about how one conceives of oneself over the course of one's work history and how that conception forms and evolves and perhaps radically changes (e.g., Ashforth, 2001; Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Ibarra, 2003; Turnbull, 2004). Indeed, the more idiosyncratic one's career, the more that it resembles a personal identity rather than a social identity (van Dick, 2001). Consistent with our process model, a promising avenue for future research is how career identities are retrospectively and prospectively constructed. As one example, research on turning points suggests that successes and failures, job interviews, chance and surprise, career development workshops, performance evaluations, awards, anniversaries, and so on may serve as critical incidents and spurs to personal reflection, thereby galvanizing, crystallizing, and socially validating identity change (e.g., Bullis & Bach, 1989; Hill, 1992). Hill (1992) described how new sales and marketing managers clumsily and gradually felt their way—through trial and error, surprise, and reflection—into their new identity over their 1st year. As another example from our process model, research on identity narratives suggests that individuals may socially construct and understand their careers partly via storytelling conventions, complete with plots and subplots, cause and effect, protagonists and antagonists, metaphors, foreground and background, tension and resolution, redemption, and revealed morals (cf. Law, Meijers, & Wijers, 2002; Young & Collin, 1992). And research on career anchors (Schein, 1990), career insight and resilience (London & Noe, 1997), applications of Erikson's theory of identity development to occupations and careers (e.g., Danielsen, Lorem, & Kroger, 2000; Vondracek, 1992), possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), employability (Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007), and social cognitive careers theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) suggests that individuals draw on their perceived aptitudes and aspirations and the

examples and expectations of significant others to formulate career-related identity goals and plans, work to overcome obstacles to realizing them, and adapt to changing circumstances over time.

Of the many possible bases of identification in one's work life, occupational and career identification may become more important to individuals as environmental turbulence continues to erode long-term relationships with organizations and the various bases nested within them. At the same time, research suggests that the more strongly and exclusively one defines oneself in terms of a particular identity, the more difficult it is to exit that identity and the greater the risk of deleterious consequences such as anomie and depression (Ashforth, 2001; e.g., Baillie & Danish, 1992). In the case of occupations and careers, however, two factors may mitigate these issues. First, an occupation and career can be framed at a fairly abstract level, like entrepreneur, which can be instantiated in diverse ways, such as realtor, bar owner, and landscaper (C. D. Moore & Robinson, 2006). This potential for abstraction provides more flexibility for realizing a valued identity. Second, rather than frame an occupation or career as a role or a series of roles—however abstract—one can focus on change, growth, flexibility, openness, and learning as an identity in itself (Ashforth, 2007). Concepts such as the protean self (Lifton, 1993), meta-competencies (Hall, 2004), and ongoing vocational exploration (Flum & Blustein, 2000) refer to a willingness and ability to explore, to learn how to learn, to develop a repertoire of possible selves and identity narratives, and to embrace novelty and change—in short, to view oneself as an adaptive individual. Given the increasing pace of change, proteanism may well become more necessary and normative. Lifton (1993: 9) cautioned, however, that proteanism "is a balancing act between responsible shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other."

Differentiating and Integrating Levels of Self

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) argued that when faced with heterogeneous environments, organizations tend to differentiate their structure, which creates a commensurate need for integrative practices to foster coordination—to knit the structure back together. Analogously, individuals have differentiated identities and identifications in organizations precisely because they are required to wear many hats. The differentiation-integration conundrum raises several questions: (a) Should scholars actively distinguish between levels of self? (b) What about conflicts between differentiated identities? (c) To what extent does identity integration actually occur? (The last question is broached under two subheadings, "Convergence processes" and "Combining identifications.")

Why distinguish between levels of self? There are two major reasons why the distinctions among various loci of identification are worth preserving. First, the distinctions appear to be meaningful to organizational members themselves. Factor analyses indicate that individuals tend to distinguish between the loci of identification (Bamber & Iyer, 2002; T. E. Becker, 1992; Christ, van Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher, 2003; Jetten, O'Brien, & Trindall, 2002; S. A. Johnson & Ashforth, in press; Mayhew, 2007; Millward, Haslam, & Postmes, 2007; Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & Nienaber, 2007; van Dick, Wagner, et al., 2004; van

Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Moreover, according to Riketta and Nienaber (2007: s61), "Perhaps the most important finding to emerge from [multiple identification] research is that identification with a particular focus correlates more strongly with those potential outcomes . . . directed at the same focus." For example, Riketta and van Dick's (2005) meta-analysis indicates that workgroup attachment is more strongly related than organizational attachment to various workgroup-related outcomes, whereas organizational attachment is more strongly related than workgroup attachment to the organization-related outcome of intent to leave (but not significantly to organizational satisfaction and organizational extra-role behavior). Riketta and van Dick attributed this "identity-matching principle" (Ullrich, Wieseke, Christ, Schulze, & van Dick, 2007) or "identity-behavior match" (Ellemers & Rink, 2005) to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1974) notion of attitude–behavior compatibility; that is, that attitudes toward an object will most strongly affect behaviors toward that same object.

It seems likely that the identity-matching principle would also apply to antecedents of identification, namely that variables associated with a given level of self will predict identification at that level (Ellemers & Rink, 2005). For instance, in a study of a multinational company (MNC), Reade (2001a, 2003) found that support and appreciation from one's immediate boss and career opportunity at the local company predicted identification with the local company but not with the MNC, whereas support from superiors at MNC headquarters and career opportunity with the MNC predicted identification with the MNC but not with the local company. Other recent examples of the identity-matching principle for antecedents or outcomes include Bartels et al. (2007); Christ et al. (2003); George and Chattopadhyay (2005); Olkkonen and Lipponen (2006); Ullrich et al. (2007); and van Dick, Wagner, et al. (2004). However, given the convergence processes described below, it seems likely that there will generally be cross-level effects as well. Continuing with Reade's (2001a, 2003) MNC study, she also found that the prestige and distinctiveness of the local company was associated with both local and MNC identification.

The second reason why distinctions among identification loci are worth preserving is that research indicates that individuals tend to identify more strongly with lower order identities than higher order identities (Apker & Fox, 2002; Barker & Tompkins, 1994; Bartels, Douwes, de Jong, & Pruyn, 2006; T. E. Becker, 1992; Hennessy & West, 1999; M. D. Johnson et al., 2006; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Lipponen et al., 2005; Mayhew, 2007; Reade, 2001b; Richter et al., 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; C. R. Scott, 1999; Ullrich et al., 2007; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Vough, 2007; however, see Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Millward et al., 2007; van Dick, Wagner, et al., 2004), suggesting that lower order identities tend to be more salient and, therefore, more likely to have a greater impact on cognition, affect, and behavior. Various reasons have been advanced (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; M. E. Brown, 1969; Kramer, 1991; Lawler, 1992; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Vough, 2007): (a) Lower order identities are more likely to constitute one's primary group, that is, the major basis for task interdependence and interaction; (b) Lower order identities are more exclusive, concrete, and proximal, such that individuals will perceive that they have more in common with other members; (c) Individuals are more likely to have a significant impact on—and be more knowledgeable about—the loci associated with lower order identities, thereby reinforcing their psychological engagement; (d) Following optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991), individuals attempt to balance opposing desires for

assimilation and uniqueness by identifying with more exclusive, relatively localized collectives (rather than being psychologically lost in large, abstract ones); (e) Following SIT/SCT, a given identity becomes more salient when a comparison identity is salient; because individuals are more likely to encounter other occupations and work groups in a given day than other business units and organizations, lower order identities are more likely to be salient; and (f) The shift from bureaucratic to more organic structures has eroded top-down control in favor of teamwork, occupational empowerment, and lateral communication. That said, a higher order identity—particularly the organization's identity—may remain more chronically salient than lower order identities under certain conditions: if it is of very high status; if it is under perpetual threat (as in the case of abortion clinics); if it is more or less unique in some critical respect (as in a city's professional sports teams); if it is holographic rather than ideographic (that is, where subunits share a common identity, as in bank branches; Albert & Whetten, 1985); if the organization is highly centralized such that members are oriented to look vertically for direction and resources; if the organization uses a flexible, open-plan design rather than a group-oriented one; or if a given individual is an owner, senior executive, or boundary spanner (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Johnson et al., 2006; Millward et al., 2007; Vora & Kostova, 2007).

Organizational scholars have generally been careful about clearly specifying the locus of identification. However, scholars also need to be careful to specify the theoretically *appropriate* locus to control for possibly confounding loci. For example, because individuals typically know all the members of their team and have closer relationships with some than with others, measuring team identification but not relational identification may cause a researcher to spuriously attribute correlated outcomes to the former that are in fact attributable to the latter. Similarly, because most identification research has only included a measure of OI, it is very likely that outcomes associated with lower levels of self have been mistakenly attributed to the organizational level.

Identity conflicts. An identity conflict is an inconsistency between the contents of two or more identities, such as a clash of values, goals, or norms (the second ring of Figure 1). Our focus is on multiple identities held by a single individual. For example, Wiesenfeld and Hewlin (2003) described how boundary spanners are responsible for bridging groups that may have conflicting agendas. Our focus is thus analogous to interrole conflict, except that the latter often keys on an inability to satisfy role requirements because of time and resource constraints. We do not focus on identity conflicts that occur when a given identity contains inconsistent attributes (analogous to intrarole conflicts) nor that occur between individuals or groups holding inconsistent identities (interpersonal or intergroup conflict).

Because identities emerge to address individual and collective needs in localized contexts, they often conflict in many small and perhaps a few large ways with other identities. Thus, identity conflict is endemic to organizational life. However, many of these conflicts are either latent or minor, such that individuals routinely live with considerable identity conflict (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For instance, Kondo (1990) described how employees in a Japanese candy factory saw themselves as both employees and pseudo–family members, creating a low-grade tension that occasionally flared in intensity and salience. Identity conflict only becomes problematic for the individual and the collective when (a) a latent conflict

becomes manifest, and (b) is nontrivial, and (c) the individual identifies sufficiently with each identity that dissonance is experienced (cf. Burke, 2003). The literature on interrole conflict (e.g., S. E. Jackson & Schuler, 1985) suggests that the experience of identity conflict is likely to be unpleasant and may ultimately impair identification with one or both loci.

Research suggests various ways that individuals cope with identity conflict (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Breakwell, 1986; Kreiner, Hollensbe, et al., 2006; Pratt & Doucet, 2000; cf. Collinson, 2003; Kondo, 1990; Kunda, 1992). Identity demands may be renegotiated; identities may be cognitively decoupled or buffered such that conflicts are less apparent; identities may be enacted sequentially so that one responds to the needs of the moment; and identities may be ordered in importance such that conflicts are "resolved" by deferring to the most important identity. Furthermore, one may defer to that identity exerting the most pressure and cognitively minimize or rationalize the dissonance; one may compromise between the identity demands or fulfill them in a perfunctory manner; and one may do nothing, perhaps pleading helplessness. A particularly intriguing tactic may be termed *identicide*, where one suppresses and even kills an identity that is seen to impede other valued identities (cf. identity deletion, Pratt & Foreman, 2000; identity inhibition, Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2004). For example, research on role transitions indicates that individuals often actively forget old role identities as a means of facilitating entry into their new role identity (Ashforth, 2001).

At the collective level, we noted earlier that, following the common ingroup identity model, a superordinate identity—usually the organizational identity—tends to mitigate ingroup bias by uniting groups under a single banner. Similarly, a strong organizational identity can mitigate various identity conflicts. However, a strong organizational identity does not address the various reasons described above regarding why individuals tend to identify more strongly with lower order identities. Indeed, one of those reasons—that individuals attempt to balance opposing desires for assimilation and uniqueness—suggests that the stronger the organizational identity, the *greater* the need for an offsetting lower order identity (Brewer, 1991; cf. Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). Moreover, because organizational identities are inclusive, they are often couched in relatively abstract and holistic terms, necessitating lower order identities that are more specific and differentiated according to the localized context (e.g., function-specific departments, geographically dispersed plants, client-specific project teams). Returning to Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), structural differentiation is a necessity and, with it, differentiation in identity and, thereby, identification.

A more complex solution is the dual identity model, where both the lower order and superordinate identities are affirmed as well as the essential complementarity of multiple lower order identities (González & Brown, 2003; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Huo, Smith, Tyler, & Lind, 1996; cf. Eggins, Reynolds, & Haslam, 2003).[16] Similarly, Haslam and Ellemers (2005: 90) wrote of "organically pluralistic" organizations whose superordinate identity "*incorporates group difference as an identity-defining feature*." Thus, as Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner (2000: 153) noted in the context of racial and ethnic conflict, "The development of a common ingroup identity [does] *not* require people to forsake their [other] identities." In a study of health care organizations, Richter et al. (2006) found that boundary spanners' ingroup identification had a negative impact on intergroup productivity if their OI was low but had a positive impact if their OI was high (see also Ellemers & Rink, 2005;

Fisher, Maltz, & Jaworski, 1997). Research on mergers suggests that identification with a premerger organization is likely to positively predict identification with the postmerger organization if the latter respects and incorporates the identity of the former (e.g., Bartels et al., 2006; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003). Conversely, a merger that threatens the valued identity of a premerger organization is likely to provoke resistance.

In short, "Social harmony is most likely to be achieved by maintaining, not weakening, subgroup [lower order] identities, provided they are nested within a coherent superordinate identity" (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000: 143). In organizational contexts, the dual identity model is indeed most applicable to nested identities because the lower and higher order identities exist in a means-end chain and jointly address the opposing desires for assimilation and uniqueness. However, where conflicts do arise, the greater the dual identification, the greater the experience of identity conflict. For example, Li, Xin, and Pillutla (2002) focused on managers assigned to international joint ventures, and argued that, given the wariness that venture partners often display toward each other, identification with both the joint venture and one's parent company may foster the experience of conflict when both identities are salient. Furthermore, Gaertner and Dovidio (2000: 167-168) cautioned that the salience of each identity "may alternate as quickly as figure-ground perceptions when viewing reversible figures," such that conflicts between subgroups—while tempered—may nonetheless continue to flare up. However, identity conflict may not be entirely dysfunctional. The experience of conflict may help crystallize what identities matter most to the individual, may motivate problem-focused behavior to resolve the conflict, and may motivate positive deviant behavior. Because most research focuses on negative outcomes, the functional aspects of identity conflict present a fruitful avenue for future research.

Identity integration: Convergence processes. Despite the distinctions noted earlier regarding the various loci of identification, research indicates that multiple identifications in organizational contexts tend to be positively correlated (Apker & Fox, 2002; Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Barker & Tompkins, 1994 [personal communications with the authors, February-March 1995]; T. E. Becker, 1992; Blader, 2007b [personal communication with the authors, November 2007]; Christ et al., 2003; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Hennessy & West, 1999; M. D. Johnson et al., 2006; S. A. Johnson & Ashforth, in press; Lipponen et al., 2005; Lui, Ngo, & Tsang, 2001; Mayhew, 2007; Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta, 2005; Riketta & Nienaber, 2007; Russo, 1998; C. R. Scott, 1997; C. R. Scott et al., 1999; C. R. Scott & Timmerman, 1999; Ullrich et al., 2007; van Dick, Wagner, et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; however, see Jetten et al., 2002; Millward et al., 2007)— and the closer the levels of self, the stronger the correlation (Bartels et al., 2007). Undoubtedly, part of the reason for these associations is common method variance because the usual procedure is to have respondents complete parallel scales (changing only the loci) in one sitting. However, a major part of the reason is likely conceptual. Sluss and Ashforth (in press) described five cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes through which identification with one locus may converge with or generalize to another (given identity compatibility):

1. As an individual identifies with a given locus, he or she becomes more susceptible to *social influence* from the locus's members, and given that individuals tend to have (and want) positive views

of various loci, this influence tends to be salutary. For example, Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, and Popper (1998) found that when military unit leaders emphasized their unit's identity, the soldiers and staff identified with the unit (and leader).

2. To make sense of abstract higher order identities, individuals often project or ascribe the more grounded qualities of their lower order identities—particularly relational ones—upon them, thus *anthropomorphizing* the higher order identities. Pratt (2000) reported that Amway sales representatives often viewed the organization through the prism of their relationship with their managers.

3. Sharing a higher order identification with other individuals provides the basis, motivation, and trust for interpersonal self-disclosure. Given that individuals want to like their peers, the resulting *personalization* of one's ingroup members may facilitate relational identification. Also, just as individuals may make sense of higher order identities by projecting lower order identities upon them, so too may they make sense of lower order identities (e.g., a new work group) by projecting higher order identities upon them.

4. Pairing two objects tends to result in *affect transfer*, where the affect experienced in connection with one object transfers more or less nonconsciously to the other. Thus, if identities are yoked such that one identity primes another, as through nesting (e.g., department-organization) and crossing (e.g., cross-functional team), one may have a similar affective experience of each.

5. Given nested identities, behaviors that enact one tend to enact the others. For instance, "An engineer . . . may feel that his or her work is personally rewarding, central to the project group's goals, consistent with the organization's mission, and very much aligned with what the engineering profession is all about" (C. R. Scott et al., 1998: 325). As Burke (2003: 203) noted, "Identities with common meanings will tend to be activated together." *Behavioral sensemaking* occurs where the individual infers, through self-perception and self-consistency processes, that he or she must therefore be more or less identified with the implicated loci.

If research confirms that identification convergence is common, then two key implications follow. First, on the conceptual side, rather than developing parallel models of identification at various levels of self, scholars can develop more inclusive and therefore parsimonious models (cf. identification profiles, e.g., Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Lipponen et al., 2005). For example, Vignoles et al. (2006, Study 2) found that self-esteem, continuity, and distinctiveness motives predicted identification ("identity centrality") across the individual, relational, and group levels of self in various social domains (e.g., work, family). Second, on the practical side, the notion of convergence suggests that promoting one locus of identification will promote others. In particular, given our earlier contention that lower order identities tend to be more salient, fostering identification with one's workgroup, occupation, and relationships may be a particularly promising—albeit indirect—road for fostering identification with one's department, division, organization, and even industry.

Identity integration: Combining identifications. Related to the notion of converging identifications is that of *combining* identifications. Identity scholars place great importance on differentiating the loci of identification. However, what is important to the theorist may not be so important to organizational members. To be sure, when prompted, survey respondents are generally able and willing to respond to items about how much they identify with, for example, their occupation and their workgroup. But this does not mean that they would *spontaneously* differentiate between identifying with their occupation and workgroup. For example, Russo (1998) found that some journalists did not make a big distinction between their

occupational and organizational identities: Given nested identities, the meanings attributed to being a journalist and being a member of a newspaper tended to blur. In short, "in many contexts *multiple* bases for social categorization can be salient, combined and used simultaneously" (Crisp & Hewstone, 2006: 4).

Roccas and Brewer's (2002) model of social identity complexity helps explain how and when individuals combine their identities and, thus, their identifications. Social identity complexity is the degree to which individuals view their multiple identities as similar in terms of prototypic characteristics or overlapping in terms of members (cf. faultlines; Lau & Murnighan, 1998). The criterion of similar characteristics is less straightforward than that of overlapping members. Examples of low complexity using the former criterion include where an individual sees his or her salient identities as highly similar (e.g., a female nurse who defines both identities in terms of nurturing), focuses on the intersection of otherwise differentiated identities (e.g., a female nurse who focuses on the combination of gender and occupation, an identity shared only with other female nurses), or allows one identity to dominate (e.g., a female nurse who sees being a nurse as highly salient relative to gender). However, chronic dominance is more likely if the identities are nested (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) or if, as noted earlier, one identity is markedly higher in status or distinctiveness, faces ongoing threat, and so on. Examples of higher complexity include where an individual compartmentalizes his or her identities (e.g., a female nurse who sees the identities as very different and cued independently) or focuses on the totality of the identities rather than on just their intersection (e.g., a female nurse who sees both "female" and "nurse" as highly salient, despite their differences). In compartmentalizing identities, the individual does not strive to reconcile their differences; or in focusing on the totality, he or she "preserves both differentiation and integration" (Roccas & Brewer, 2002: 92). In the latter, the integration or overlap between the identities means that one identity may prime or activate the other, akin to the behavioral sensemaking process described earlier (cf. holistic identities, Ashforth, 2007; Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Deaux & Perkins, 2001; Wiesenfeld & Hewlin, 2003).

Roccas and Brewer (2002) argued that stable personal attributes (e.g., tolerance of ambiguity) and experiential factors (e.g., encounters with different groups) affect chronic perceived complexity, whereas situational factors (e.g., cognitive load, identity threat) affect temporary perceived complexity. These authors also noted that social identity complexity is domain specific, as one may be more inclined or less inclined to integrate identities in other social domains such as family and community. As these examples suggest, perceived or subjective identity complexity often differs from actual or objective complexity.

In today's organizational world of turbulence, ambiguity, and frequent role transitions, social identity complexity is probably functional for both the individual and organization. To be sure, high complexity can be cognitively taxing as one strives to simultaneously differentiate and integrate one's most salient identities. For example, Vora and Kostova (2007) argued that subsidiary managers are more likely to experience identity conflict if they view their subsidiary's identity as distinct from—rather than nested within—the organization's identity. However, complexity provides the "requisite variety" (Ashby, 1960) for dealing with variegated challenges over time. Beyer and Hannah (2002) studied engineers and other professionals in the semiconductor industry who joined a consortium, and they found that individuals with diverse experiences had more identity hooks with which to connect to the

consortium, fostering their adjustment. Furthermore, social identity complexity may facilitate synergies among the identities such that one engages in more integrative thinking (Ramarajan, 2007). And by not putting all of one's valued identities in one cognitive basket, one is better able to cope if a particular identity is threatened by negative events (Linville, 1985; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). Finally, having diverse identities increases one's tolerance of others by increasing the breadth of one's ingroups and decreasing the importance of any single identity (and thereby the motivation to engage in outgroup discrimination; Brewer & Pierce, 2005).

In sum, individuals can and do vest their identities in multiple loci in the organization. Although most research has focused on OI, promising work has also been done under the rubrics of team, workgroup, and subunit; relational; and occupation and career identification. Indeed, identification with these more localized loci tends to be greater than with the organization and better predicts outcomes at the localized level, suggesting that scholars may be misspecifying the level of self in some analyses. That said, the positive correlations among multiple identifications suggest the possibility of converging and combining processes such that it may be possible to develop parsimonious models of multiple identification rather than independent models for each form of identification. Thus, in answer to our question "One or many?," although individuals may have many identities and thus potential identifications in an organization, these identities and identifications are likely to both converge and combine to some degree such that they become a loose gestalt: not one, perhaps, but a set.

Conclusion

What makes identification a compelling construct is that it roots the individual in the organization. In defining oneself in terms of the identity of the relevant collective or role, one becomes a microcosm of the collective or role, ready and willing to enact its identity and act in its best interests even at the expense of oneself. Identification reflects a fundamental and visceral connection that other attachment constructs lack and that traditional SIT/SCT research often underplays. Accordingly, research indicates that identification addresses various self-related needs and is associated with a variety of salutary individual and organizational outcomes. However, we advocate that researchers focus particularly on those outcomes that are more directly related to identification's unique contribution to the attachment literature; that is, that the highly identified person views the collective or role as tantamount to the self. Also, identification is only as functional as the identity that fuels it—and even seemingly effective identities can be enacted too literally and zealously. Thus, we also advocate research that focuses on the dynamics that may tip functional identification into dysfunctional overidentification.

Despite the plethora of research on identification in organizations, most models of antecedents have a static, boxes-and-arrows feel. Building on the provocative works of Ibarra (1999), Pratt (2000), and others and drawing from disparate literatures, we offered a more process-oriented model of how identification may unfold. We view the process as a cycle that iterates between organizational sensebreaking and sensegiving and individual identity enactment, sensemaking, and identity narrative construction. We argue that individuals think, feel,

or act their way into identification but that enactment and social validation are required to firmly embed the identity in one's self-definition and to establish one's legitimacy as a pro-totypical holder of the identity. Clearly, our model is speculative and requires future research.

Finally, because complex organizations contain nested and cross-cutting identities, individuals typically identify with multiple loci. Identification with the organization has garnered the lion's share of attention but other loci—particularly the team, workgroup, and subunit; role relationships; and the occupation and career—offer tremendous potential. We encourage researchers to take the identity-matching principle (Ullrich et al., 2007) to heart, that is, to peg their antecedents and outcomes to the level of self of interest. At the same time, given the positive correlations among multiple identifications, we encourage researchers to develop more parsimonious models of identification that incorporate multiple loci.

In closing, it may seem odd to speak of identification in a time of turbulence and eroding individual–organization relationships. However, it is precisely because individuals seek situated moorings in each of their social domains that it is important to understand the dynamics, risks, and potential of identification in today's organizations.

Notes

1. For discussions of identification measures, see Edwards (2005), Haslam (2004), and Riketta (2005).

2. That said, a personal identity can become a social identity if a collective exists that is predicated on the attribute in question (e.g., an association of model train enthusiasts). Demographic attributes provide an interesting case because individuals in organizations often informally associate with others based on similarities in age, gender, race, and so on such that a discernible collective may exist; even if individuals do not actually associate with others based on shared demography, some attributes are sufficiently significant in society that individuals still frequently identify with the social category per se, however inchoate. Further, concerns with demographic diversity and representation have helped institutionalize certain attributes. Thus, demographic attributes are often treated as social identities in organizational scholarship (e.g., Nkomo, 1995; Thompson & Carter, 1997).

3. There is some controversy over whether identities are indeed enduring (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). The point for our purposes here is that identities tend to be perceived by individuals as more or less enduring. Indeed, even when organizations change their identity, they often reframe the meaning of existing identity labels so as to preserve a sense of connection with the past (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Corley, Harquail, Pratt, Glynn, Fiol, & Hatch, 2006; Gioia et al., 2000). As Rousseau (1998: 227) put it, "Sameness is not a required feature of identity; rather, what is required is a sense of continuity."

4. Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) nonetheless followed Tajfel's (1978) lead in regarding social *identity* as cognitive, evaluative, and affective.

5. van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, and Christ (2004: 173; Christ, van Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher, 2003) took Tajfel's notion of valuing to mean "the value connotation assigned to that group from inside and/or outside" and included a positive external evaluation as a dimension of identification. However, research suggests that individuals are capable of identifying with collectives and roles that are deeply stigmatized by society (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Crocker & Major, 1989). Furthermore, because identification entails experiencing the successes and failures of the collective or role as one's own, identification may persist—and even be renewed—in the face of failure, loss, and suffering (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, we argue that a positive external evaluation should not be considered a necessary component of identification.

6. Organizational identification (OI) was also associated with positive emotional experiences, but this association disappeared once commitment was entered into the model.

7. Although no measures of OI, to our knowledge, include knowledge, skills, and abilities, they are nonetheless quite relevant to the organizational context, particularly to the occupational and career identities (and thus identifications) discussed later.

8. A behavior is an observable act, whereas a trait is a general predisposition to behave in certain ways. We view stereotypic traits as closer to the core of identification because they describe general tendencies over time and across situations rather than specific acts.

9. However, Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979: 226) went on to operationalize commitment as "(1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (3) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization."

10. Turnover intentions provide an intriguing paradox. If OI is necessarily organization specific, whereas commitment is more easily generalized to other organizations, then one would expect OI to be superior in predicting turnover intentions. However, Riketta's (2005) meta-analysis indicates just the opposite. Why might this be? The answer, we contend, is that the most popular measures of commitment are somewhat confounded with turnover intentions (Riketta, 2005). Mowday et al.'s (1979: 228) 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire includes several turnover-related items (e.g., "It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization" (R)); Allen and Meyer's (1990: 6-7) 8-item Affective Commitment scale includes the item, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization," and their 8-item Continuance Commitment scale is entirely turnover related (e.g., "I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization").

11. Indeed, just as we argued earlier that research should focus more on outcomes that are directly relevant to identification rather than to attachment in general, so research should focus more on antecedents that are directly relevant to substantive and symbolic expressions of convergence between the organization and individual (e.g., promotions, social inclusion, celebrations of collective achievement, access to proprietary information, opportunities to mentor; cf. particularistic rewards, Rousseau, 1998). Research on fairness provides a good example because it betokens respect for the individual (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, Relyea, & Beu, 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Wiesenfeld & Hewlin, 2003).

12. Occupations transcend any given organization—one can be, for example, a credit analyst for many firms—such that they are only partially nested within an organization. Although we refer to one's occupation as a lower order identity because of its localized enactment, it may not be seen as such by a given incumbent (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001).

13. Indeed, identity theory argues that commitment to a role is a function of the number of people to which one is tied via the role and one's emotional attachments to those people (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

14. A related concept is vocational identity, which is typically applied to the initial occupational interests of adolescents and young adults. Most empirical research draws on Holland's work (Holland, Daiger, & Power, 1980; Holland, Johnston, & Asama, 1993), which defines *vocational identity* as "the possession of a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, and talents" (Holland et al., 1993: 1). As such, the concept is somewhat outside the scope of identification and will not be considered here.

15. Although it is usually referred to as *career identity* and often viewed as a facet of career commitment and motivation, the conceptualization and operationalization of career identity tend to be consistent with career identification (e.g., Carson & Bedeian, 1994; London & Noe, 1997; Meijers, 1998). For example, one of Carson and Bedeian's (1994: 251) items is "My line of work/career field is an important part of who I am."

16. Indeed, given the multiple possible levels of self in organizations, the model can be extended to more than dual identities, although the psychological dynamics become progressively more complex.

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