COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE IDENTIFICATION
IN ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

In three studies, we develop new measures of cognitive and affective identification, establish their psychometric adequacy, and examine their relationships with various antecedents, attitudes, and outcomes. We find that cognitive and affective identification are predicted by different individual differences, and provide independent predictive validity of commitment, involvement, and citizenship behaviors.

INTRODUCTION

Original conceptualizations of social identity included both cognitive and affective dimensions. Tajfel (1972: 292) 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." Cognitively, social identities provide a way for individuals to place themselves and others in society such that individuals define themselves as organization members. Affectively, social identities provide a sense of pride in and belongingness to the group, and reflect the value of that identity to the group member (Albert et al., 1998).

Turner (1982), however, redefined social groupings as an exclusively *cognitive* process of self-categorization. For Turner, social identities (along with personal identity) are an integral part of the cognitive structure of the self-concept. Social behavior, then, is a matter of switching the individual's locus of control from the personal identity to the relevant social identity. Yet Deaux (1996) suggested that emotion played a more central role in social identity theory for Tajfel than it did in other versions of the theory, and that identity operates affectively through self-esteem.

Unfortunately, Tajfel's concerns about affective issues have been largely ignored (Deaux, 1996). It may be that the strong emphasis on cognition in organizational identity theory and research merely reflected the "cognitive revolution" in psychological research. Nine key identity researchers, however, "agreed that one pressing next step was to integrate emotions and behaviors into our definitions and models" (Albert et al., 1998: 223). Therefore, the purpose of this series of studies was to develop a measure of social identification that explicitly separates cognitive and affective identification, and then examine their differential relationships with a

number of antecedents, related attitudes, and behavioral outcomes.

STUDY 1: DEVELOPING A MEASURE OF COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

Defining Identification

Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994: 239) proposed, "When a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity, we define this cognitive connection as organizational identification." We suggest that this represents the cognitive process that is part of the individual's self-definition where the personal identity overlaps with the identity of the organization. Thus, cognitive identification can be defined as *the thoughts or beliefs regarding the extent to which individuals define themselves on the basis of a social referent.*

Affective identification, on the other hand, is associated with positive feelings about one's membership, including pride, enthusiasm, and a sense of affiliation or "belongingness" with others (Albert et al., 1998). This emotional experience of identification also reflects the "value significance" of the social identity, in the sense that individuals evaluate their membership positively or negatively (Tajfel, 1978). Both the direct experience of emotions and the personal value of one's identity make up affective identification, defined here as *the feelings individuals experience about themselves in relation to the social referent and the value they place on that social identity.*

Measuring Identification

At least five measures of organizational identification have been published in the past fifteen years. Yet no research has assessed the convergent or discriminant validity between measures that appear to tap into the cognitive and affective dimensions of identification. Although we expect that there will generally be moderate correlations between thoughts of identifying with an organization and the feelings that individuals have toward their organization, we suggest that these are conceptually distinct and will be empirically distinct.

A further limitation of existing identification measures is that some are target-specific. That is, they were designed with a specific target in mind and are not easily adapted to social referents that are larger or smaller in size. Although these measures work well assessing identification with the targets for which they were written, social identity theory holds that individuals identify with multiple targets (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1982), and recent empirical research has begun to examine this notion (Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, & Lloyd, in press; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). In order to empirically examine identification with multiple targets, measures must be easily adapted to various types of social referents.

Method

As part of a larger study, 112 undergraduates at a Midwestern university participated in exchange for course credit. Based on our definitions of the dimensions outlined earlier, each of the two investigators independently wrote or revised items for each dimension. This resulted in an initial item pool of 35 cognitive and affective identification items. We then held a consensus

discussion to pick the items that best reflected cognitive and affective identification, ending up with 22 items (eleven items per dimension). In this study, we used the university as the target of identification.

Results and Discussion

We conducted a principal components analysis with varimax rotation on the responses to these items. Kaiser's criterion indicated a four-component solution with eigenvalues greater than one, but examination of the scree plot and the variance explained by each component appeared to support a two-component solution. Therefore, we forced a two-factor solution and through an iterative process, removed items that either had low loadings on their primary component or high cross-loadings on the other component. This process resulted in a clean two-component solution with four items each representing the two dimensions. The components correlated .40 ($p < .01$); this moderate correlation provides evidence for discriminant validity and supports the idea of separate dimensions of identification.

STUDY 2: ANTECEDENTS, RELATED ATTITUDES, AND OUTCOMES

The purpose of Study 2 was to establish the construct and predictive validity of the new measures, in addition to confirming their dimensionality. To do this, we administered the measure to a new sample and conducted confirmatory factor analyses, as well as examining the relationship of the new identification measure with individual differences, organizational prestige, commitment, satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and two involvement behaviors. This allowed us to place cognitive and affective identification within a nomological network of related constructs.

Antecedents

Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) proposed that the members' perceptions of the organization's identity and image affect members' organizational identification. Empirically, the positive relationship between organizational prestige and identification has been supported in numerous studies. For our purposes, we simply expected that perceptions of organizational prestige would predict both cognitive and affective identification.

Less studied has been the impact of individual differences on identification; this is unfortunate for two reasons. First, it has been suggested that people may differ in their "propensity to identify" (Albert et al., 1998: 238). Some individuals may simply be more likely than others to identify with any social group. Second, individual differences have been shown to predict many attitudinal variables.

Personality. The "Big Five" model of personality factors has been a particularly fruitful avenue for assessing the effects of individual differences on various outcomes. No published study, however, has examined the possibility that one or more of these personality factors may contribute to social identification. We suggest, however, that two of the five personality factors are likely to predict levels of identification. Extraverted people enjoy working in groups and like to be in the presence of other people (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This enjoyment appears to make Extraversion a likely candidate for predicting affective identification. Similarly, we expect that

extraversion is related to cognitive identification; extraverts' preference for being in groups is likely to increase this self-definition as well.

Neuroticism is associated with an individual's tendency to experience anxiety and insecurity (Judge et al., 2002). People with high levels of Neuroticism feel unsure of themselves and often worry about their behavior in social situations. Social identification should provide a sense of security for these people, as they may perceive that there is "safety in groups." This leads us to expect that Neuroticism is positively related to cognitive identification. Neuroticism has also been shown to be related to affect (Judge & Ilies, 2002), and we expect that Neuroticism is negatively related to affective identification because affective identification involves feelings of belongingness to the group. Although people high in Neuroticism should be more likely to define themselves on the basis of the social group with which they identify, they are likely to worry that they don't quite fit in, or are not completely accepted by the other group members.

Cognitive Ability. Based on "basking in reflected glory" research, we expect that cognitive ability is negatively related to cognitive identification. People engage in image maintenance processes by increasing their association with people or groups that are successful, but decreasing their association with people or groups that are unsuccessful (Cialdini et al., 1976; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980). People will identify more with groups that are better than themselves as long as they will not be compared to others in the group. Conversely, people choose "downward" targets when they will be compared to others in the group, but not when the comparison emphasizes identification with the group or being similar to others in the group.

Related Attitudes

Organizational commitment is a related but conceptually distinct construct from social identification. Ashforth and Mael (1989) emphasize that unlike organizational identification, internalization and commitment need not be organizationally-specific, as an organization's goals and values may be shared by other organizations. Satisfaction with the organization and job satisfaction have been shown to significantly correlate with organizational identification in various settings. For our purposes, we simply expected that cognitive and affective identification are positively related to, and independently predict, both commitment and satisfaction.

Outcomes

Dutton and Dukerich (1991: 550) proposed that members who "have a stake in directing organizational action" will act in ways that are consistent with what they believe to be the essence of the organization, and act in ways that support the organization. Several empirical studies have supported this proposition (Bartel, 2001; Bergami &Bagozzi, 2000; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002) Thus, we expected that cognitive and affective identification are positively related to, and independently predict, organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational involvement behaviors.

A final issue that we raise as a research question rather than a hypothesis is whether the new measures predict as well or better than the most commonly used identification measure in the organizational literature (Riketta, 2005). Mael's measure (1989) has been used in numerous studies, and has been shown to be a valid predictor of commitment, satisfaction, citizenship

behaviors, and involvement. Thus, this study provides a direct test of the predictive validity of the new measures compared to the Mael measure.

Method

749 upper-level undergraduates (juniors and seniors) enrolled in the College of Business at a Midwestern university participated voluntarily. The two identification dimensions were measured with the two four-item measures developed in Study 1. In this study we asked the participants to consider their identification with the College of Business.

Results and Discussion

We first ran a confirmatory factor analysis on the identification items to examine whether the new measures showed discriminant validity in this sample. The hypothesized two-factor solution showed excellent fit ($\chi^2_{19} = 43.51$, NNFI = .99, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .03). This fit much better than a one-factor solution ($\chi^2_{20} = 888.15$, NNFI = .58, CFI = .70, RMSEA = .24). The identification dimensions showed a similar correlation ($r = .43$, $p < .01$) to Study 1.

Organizational prestige showed a small but significant correlation with cognitive identification ($r = .15$, $p < .01$), and a much larger correlation with affective identification ($r = .41$, $p < .01$). Extraversion correlated only .08 (ns) with cognitive identification but correlated .21 ($p < .01$) with affective identification. Neuroticism correlated .15 ($p < .01$) with cognitive but only -.05 (ns) with affective identification. Cognitive ability correlated -.19 ($p < .01$) with cognitive but only -.07 (ns) with affective identification. In multivariate regression analyses, cognitive identification was predicted by prestige, Neuroticism and cognitive ability; affective identification, was predicted by prestige and Extraversion.

Simultaneous regression analyses showed that commitment, OCB, organizational involvement, and professional development were independently predicted by both cognitive and affective identification, accounting for as much as 53% of the variance. Regarding satisfaction, only affective identification was significant, accounting for 30% of the variance. The new measures far exceeded the Mael measure in the prediction of other job attitudes, and were comparable in their prediction of the various behaviors.

STUDY 3: FIELD VALIDATION

Both Study 1 and Study 2 were conducted on relatively homogeneous samples of undergraduate students. Thus, questions arise regarding the external validity of our findings, and specifically whether they will generalize to employees in work settings. Therefore, in Study 3, we examined the new identification measures in a field sample of full-time workers by investigating the relationship between cognitive and affective identification and a reduced set of antecedents and outcomes.

Method

One hundred fifty-six employees of a large Midwestern university participated in the study. They were recruited through an e-mail request sent to a randomly selected group of members of two university unions, and were compensated $10 each for their participation. The

identification dimensions were measured using the measures developed in Study 1. In this study, we asked the participants to consider both their membership in their department and with the university as a whole.

Results and Discussion

The correlation between the two identification dimensions varied depending upon the target. With the department as the target of identification, the dimensions correlated at only .24 ($p < .01$), but with the university as the target, they correlated at .44 ($p < .01$). This may suggest that as the referent becomes more proximal, cognitive and affective identification become more distinct from each other.

Extraversion was positively correlated with affective identification with both the department and the university, but was not significantly correlated with cognitive identification with either target. With both the department and the university as the target of identification, Neuroticism showed not only a significant positive correlation with cognitive identification, but also, as hypothesized, a significant *negative* correlation with affective identification. In multivariate regression, Neuroticism and Extraversion both significantly predicted cognitive identification with the department and the university. For affective identification with the department, only Neuroticism remained a significant predictor; for affective identification with the university, only Extraversion was a significant predictor.

We then regressed job satisfaction on all four identification measures, and as in Study 2, only the affective measures predicted job satisfaction. Affective identification with the department was the best predictor ($\beta = .61$, $p < .01$), followed by affective identification with the university ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), accounting for 43.9% of the variance in job satisfaction.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research makes at least two contributions to social identification research. First, this research is the first to explicitly separate cognitive and affective forms of identification. Consistent with past identification theorizing, we found that this was a meaningful distinction and that individuals could reliably differentiate between these different forms of identification. The second contribution of this research is that we were able to place cognitive and affective identification into a broader nomological network of constructs. Although a number of constructs we investigated have been investigated before (e.g., satisfaction, prestige), some have not been studied before (i.e., personality and cognitive ability). Our focus on individual differences not only adds a non-method bound set of constructs to our investigation, it also suggests that social identification research might profit from a movement into new directions.

Conceptually, social identities are not merely cognitive constructions; people also attach varying levels of emotional significance to their social identities. Yet most research on social identification—particularly in organizational settings—has ignored the affective dimension of social identification. We hope that our research, and in particular our development of reliable and valid measures of cognitive and affective identification, will spur further research that examines both dimensions of social identification.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE FROM THE AUTHOR(S)