**University of Alberta**

# Conceptualization, Antecedents and Outcomes of Individual Work Identity: An Examination from the Social Identity Perspective

by

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## Dedication

When I told my mom about my plan to pursue a PhD in Business and asked her for some feedback on my initial ideas for research, she replied, “Luanne, do something that matters!” After pondering her words, my paradigm began to shift as I considered deviating from my path in accounting to something that was perhaps more connected to my heart. After 23 years in leadership roles, I knew that I was fascinated with why people behave the way they do in organizations. When I began to look into research in this area, the world felt like it opened up to me. It has been quite the journey! Despite an overwhelming sense of fulfillment as I moved through the program, there were many times when I felt the way forward was insurmountable. It was during these times that my husband and my two beautiful daughters encouraged me with the message that I was capable, intelligent, and tenacious and reminded me that I was, indeed, doing something that really mattered. All along, it has been my family that “matters” – I dedicate this dissertation to them.

## Abstract

Despite an expanding body of research aimed at understanding the role of work in self-definition, individual work identity research is fragmented due to inconsistent and incongruent application and interpretation of a range of identity theories as they apply to the study of organizations (Pratt et al., 2000). Chapter 1 introduces the concept of social identity and situates it within the organizational research agenda.

Chapter 2 addresses concept clarification and theoretical integration. Through the process of concept clarification, concepts that have typically been analyzed "without a clear, shared, and conscious agreement on the properties or meanings attributed to them" (A. I. Meleis, 2011, p. 374) are refined. Second, a meta-theory of individual work identity (IWI) is developed; specifically connections and distinctions between various approaches are highlighted, a taxonomy of the theoretical dimensions of the concept of work identity is outlined, and a central theoretical approach is identified and positioned within the broader context of such established theories of motivation as social exchange theory (SET) and self-determination theory (SDT).

In chapter 3, the target-similarity model from current social exchange research is applied. The proposition that social identification assumes distinct forms depending upon the target of identification (i.e., workgroup or organization) and the idea that target-specific forms of social identification have target-similar outcomes (i.e., workgroup turnover and organizational turnover) moderated by target-similar variables (leader-group prototypicality and perceived

organizational support) are tested. For the most part, results supported proposed hypotheses.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship between dimensions of high performance work systems (HPWSs), satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and target-specific social identification in organizational settings. The main hypothesis tested is that target-specific forms of social identification have specific antecedents (i.e., dimensions of HPWSs) that influence identification processes in unique ways, depending upon the target of identification. The influence of HPWS dimensions on target-specific social identification, mediated by satisfaction of basic human needs as outlined in self-determination theory, is also tested. Support for mediation hypotheses and partial support for main effects hypotheses was found.

Chapter 5 summarizes the main ideas, provides recommendations for future research and discusses the practical implications of central findings for organizations.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

> "The Beatles exist apart from my Self. . . I am not really 'Beatle George.' 'Beatle George' is like a suit or shirt that I once wore on occasion and until the end of my life people may see that shirt and mistake it for me."
>
> ~ George Harrison (Giles & Chang, 1995, p. 60)

## Introduction

When and why individuals choose, or choose not, to define themselves in terms of the groups that they are members of has significant, and some would say profound, effects on individual behaviour. Still, individual identity research in organizational settings is fraught with challenges, and the magnitude of attitudinal and behavioural outcomes associated with self-definition processes are only beginning to be discovered. Researchers continue to uncover evidence that *who* we say we are influences *what* we think, feel, and do; indeed, organizational performance may be significantly influenced by a process that begins with a mere cognition. It is the influence that group membership plays in self-definition and how this influences individual behavioural intentions in the workplace that is the focus of this dissertation.

The primary theory of group influence on self-definition is social identity theory (SIT) (1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). SIT can be traced to the early work of Muzafer Sherif who conducted a series of experiments (i.e., the Robbers Cave Experiment) in which boys were divided into two groups to study the development of discrimination and stereotyping as they competed for scarce resources over time. (Sherif & Sherif, 1969). The results of these experiments

suggested that competition between groups increased in-group morale, cohesion, and cooperation, and led to a heightened sense of group identification. SIT was developed as an extension of this work, to explore and explain the processes through which individuals develop group-centric definitions of self.

Henri Tajfel's motivation to develop SIT arose from critiques of American social psychology research that, to him, neglected the social context (Dumont & Louw, 2007) and from his own personal history. As a young man, Tajfel had been a prisoner in the Second World War. When he returned to his home in Paris after the war, he found few of his friends or family alive. Tajfel, himself, escaped death in a prisoner of war camp only because his captors did not discover his identity as a European Jew. Motivated by memories of what he described as a raging storm that, at the time, seemed as if it would never stop, Tajfel became intent upon finding the motivation behind the appalling behaviours associated with such atrocities as the holocaust. In his own words, his interest in understanding the complexities of prejudice and social stereotyping led him to become an academic, "almost in a fit of absent-mindedness" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 1). In the early 1970s, Tajfel and his colleagues conducted several experiments, known as the "minimal group" studies. Through these studies, they discovered that the mere act of categorizing individuals was enough to trigger in-group favouritism and intergroup discrimination. Categorization based upon even trivial matters such as preference for paintings generated a sense of distinctiveness within each group and motivated behaviours that favoured one's own group, or the in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986).

Tajfel noted that one of the earliest problems faced by individuals in society was a "complex network of groupings" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 67) that presented a "network of relationships" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 67) into which one must fit. In other words, individual identity must constantly evolve to meet the need to create and define one's place in social networks. He argued that a sense of social identity was derived from categorization processes associated with memberships in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). He further claimed that through their capacity to provide an individual with a sense of positive distinctness and continuity of self-concept, social identities assisted individuals in situating themselves within their social world (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986).

It was unquestioningly the seminal work of Ashforth and Mael (1989) that triggered a heightened awareness among organizational researchers about the potential applications of SIT in organizational settings. Although substantial research followed, significant issues in the SIT research dialogue remain. First, concept clarification is greatly needed. The boundaries between specific conceptualizations of individual identity have been blurred to the point where, "identity in organizations can and does mean almost anything" (Pratt, 2003, p. 162). Second, how social identification influences attitudes, behaviours, and intentions needs to be examined in the context of target-specific group memberships. For example, individuals in organizations are likely to be more than organizational members alone; they are also likely to be members of departments or workgroups. The specific influence of identity derived from target memberships needs to be examined. Finally, we know little about how

organizational processes like those found in high performance work systems (HPWSs) influence strength of target-specific social identification or the mechanisms through which they operate. Accordingly, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine and clarify concepts associated with individual work identity and to propose a test a series of hypotheses about antecedents and outcomes of social identification processes within the context of specific group memberships.

Chapter 2 is a conceptual discussion examining current research and specifying a number of propositions designed to integrate understanding of individual work identity from the perspective of current identity research. In chapter 3, an empirical study will examine and test hypotheses about how target-specific forms of social identification relate to important work outcomes at target-similar levels of analysis. In chapter 4, an additional empirical study based upon the same data will consider target congruency of variables in tests of hypotheses about how organizational practices influence the development of work-based social identity. An overview of each of these studies is now outlined.

## Overview of Chapter 2: Paradigms of Individual Work Identity: Concept Clarification and Theoretical Integration

Developing and understanding one's own identity is an essential component of the human journey. Despite an expanding body of research aimed at understanding the role of work in self-definition, individual work identity research is characterized by fragmentation resulting from inconsistent and incongruent application and interpretation of a range of identity theories as they

apply to the study of organizations (Pratt et al., 2000). It has been suggested that much of the confusion stemming from this research is due to inadequate specification of identity concepts, a tendency to define divergent constructs synonymously, the generalized application of concepts across different levels of analysis, and a failure to define the specific relationships, or lack thereof, between various conceptualizations of identity (Owens, 2003). The need for consistent, theoretically sound approaches to the study of identity (e.g., social identity) has been noted as a weakness in organizational identity literature (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Pratt et al., 2000; Riketta, 2005). Little has been done to integrate various identity research streams; indeed, there is no single meta-approach to the myriad forms that identity can take in the workplace. While some attempt has been made to define individual work identity from a meta-theoretical perspective (Walsh & Gordon, 2008), serious issues in conceptualization are evident.

If there is a sense of urgency in dealing with these issues, it is because the continued development and relevance of identity research in organizational settings depends upon the ability of researchers to approach such research with order and precision (Pratt et al., 2000). At the moment, for example, little distinction is made in the research between target-specific identities; even less attention is paid to the need to propose and test target-similar antecedents and consequences of identity. Sources of individual work identity are numerous, and resultant identities may conflict in cases, for example, where the influence from one form of identity overpowers another. Yet, little progress has been made to

understand how multiple target-specific identities develop or how they influence attitudes, intentions, and behaviours in the workplace.

Accordingly, the focus of Chapter 2 is concept clarification and theoretical integration. First, there is much to be gained from concept clarification based upon an understanding of the various similarities and differences between core theories. Through the process of concept clarification, concepts that have typically been analyzed "without a clear, shared, and conscious agreement on the properties or meanings attributed to them" (Meleis, 2011, p. 374) are refined. Second, a meta-theoretical approach to individual work identity is required. Such a theory should highlight connections and distinctions between various approaches, outline a taxonomy of the theoretical dimensions of an overall individual work identity construct, propose a central theoretical approach (i.e., SIT), and position this approach within the broader context of established theories of motivation (e.g., SET, self-determination theory (SDT)).

An overarching goal of this chapter is to serve as a guide for future organizational identity research. Through concept clarification and theoretical integration, and by outlining the need to consider target-specific approaches to identity research, the guiding ideas in this chapter will help to ensure that theories of individual identity are applied consistently, specifically, and appropriately to research in work settings. Diligence in these matters will enhance the explanatory power of self-definition processes and improve our understanding of the potential effects of such processes in organizational settings.

## Overview of Chapter 3: A Target-similarity Approach to Social Identity and Turnover: Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support as Unique Moderators of Target-specific Social Identification

Research increasingly demonstrates the influence of social identification on organizationally important individual attitudes and behaviours (e.g., turnover intentions, effects of stress, job satisfaction, and extra-role behaviour) (e.g., Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, & Wagner, 2004). Despite all the progress in SIT research to date, persistent gaps in the literature remain. For example, in the extant SIT research, individual attitudes and outcomes have primarily been linked to identification with the organization as a whole; however, individuals also derive aspects of individual identity from memberships in other organizational groups (e.g., departments, unions, cross-functional project teams, etc.). Very few studies have tested the idea that when an individual holds multiple group memberships in an organization, each membership may form the basis for an empirically distinct form of identity (e.g., Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Dick & Wagner, 2002; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Even fewer studies examine the idea that distinct purposes mean each form of identification will have unique, target-similar antecedents and outcomes (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006).

It makes sense to consider the relationship between the individual and their organization when analyzing the relationship between social identity and organizational level phenomena (e.g., defending the organization; engaging in

organizational citizenship behaviours directed towards the organization); however, scholars have proposed that considering additional targets of social identification will lead to greater precision in articulating the relationship between target-specific identification and target-similar work outcomes (van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003).

In this chapter, the target-similarity model found in current social exchange theory (SET) research is applied to the study of SIT in organizational settings. SET focuses upon social exchanges between parties in a relationship (Blau, 1964). Unlike economic exchange, a social exchange occurs when an entity conveys a social benefit (e.g., trust, information, status) to another party who then perceives an obligation to reciprocate (Emerson, 1976; Gouldner, 1960). Indeed, more recent conceptualizations of social exchange argue for a *target-similarity* model, an approach that suggests that individual attitudes and behaviour will vary along target-similar lines (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007).

According to SIT, individuals may develop social identities for each group in which they consider themselves to be a member (e.g., their workgroup, the organization as a whole); similarly, SET holds that individuals may form distinct social exchange relationships with their colleagues, the organization as a whole, etc. (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to both SIT and SET, the specific target of identification or exchange holds significant implications for behaviour. In the case of multiple social identities, SIT argues that each identity will have a unique purpose (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). According to SET,

individuals will reciprocate benefits to the target-similar party in the social exchange relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Drawing upon the commonalities found between SET and SIT, this chapter extrapolates the ideas of target-similarity from SET to SIT to assist in predicting the behavioural intentions associated with two distinct workplace identities. Specifically, the study in this chapter tests the proposition that social identification assumes empirically distinct forms depending upon the target group (i.e., workgroup vs. organization) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Second, this study will test the proposition that target-specific social identifications (i.e., workgroup and organization) relate differently to target-specific behavioural intentions (i.e., workgroup turnover intentions vs. organization turnover intentions). Third, the idea that target-specific social identification is moderated by target-similar agents will be examined. Two potential moderators are considered: leader-group prototypicality (LGP) (i.e., the extent to which the leader is perceived to be a prototypical member of the group) (Hogg, 2001) and perceived organizational support (POS; i.e., individual perceptions about the extent to which the organization values both the individual and their work; (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Lastly, points of integration between SIT and SET are examined with the goal of deepening current understanding about the links between these two important theories and how, considered together, they may explain more than either theory is able to on its own.

## Overview of Chapter 4: Antecedents of Social Identity: The Role of High Performance Work Systems and Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction

Group memberships in the workplace are considered an important target of individual identity, yet little is known about the processes leading to self-definition in terms of organizational group memberships. Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) claims that social identification processes are governed by the ability of the social identity in question to provide the individual with a sense of positive distinctness (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005) and continuity of self-concept (van Knippenberg, van Dick, & Tavares, 2007). Precisely how positive distinctness and continuity of self-concept evolve in the workplace is unclear. To address this significant gap, this chapter analyzes and integrates tenets from three theoretical realms: SIT, strategic human resource management (SHRM), and self-determination theory (SDT).

SHRM may be defined as "...the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable the organization to achieve its goals" (Wright & McMahan, 1992, p. 298). This definition implies that HRM practices or systems of such practices will convey information to employees that signals those attitudes and behaviours believed necessary for organizational success (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). One well researched avenue through which firms may achieve their goals is through the adoption of high performance work systems (HPWSs) which are believed to lead to positive organizational performance by forging strong psychological links between the individual and their organization (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007). Although the

causal connection between HPWSs and organizational performance is widely acknowledged (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006), very little empirical research addresses the *black box* in which the processes and mechanisms inherent in this causal chain operate (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Some researchers argue that the employee-centric and empowering nature of HPWSs satisfy employee needs such that employees, in return, demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours towards their employer that also enhance the overall performance of the organization (Ramsay, Scholarios, & Harley, 2000). Others claim that in addition to empowering employees, HPWPs enhance employee satisfaction and commitment thus prompting employees to respond by performing above and beyond the requirements of their employment contracts (Messersmith, Patel, & Lepak, 2011). A common theme across this research is that when employees are empowered and their needs are met, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes and helpful behaviours.

The process of reciprocation is a central tenet in social exchange theory (SET); more specifically, SET argues that when social benefits are provided to individuals (e.g., empowerment, positive feedback), they feel an obligation to reciprocate (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Gouldner, 1960). Social exchange relationships with individuals and groups are believed to be an influential source of identification for individuals (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002) and may engender a sense of relational obligation that encourages individuals to choose behaviours that support and advance the target entity (Lavelle et al., 2007). Indeed, the extent to which an individual identifies with a target group is thought by some to be a

suitable indication of the quality of social exchange between the individual and that target group (Lavelle et al., 2007).

An important yet under-researched implication of the application of SET to the SHRM literature is that HPWSs are designed to satisfy the basic needs of the employees that work within them. In this chapter, I draw upon SDT to establish this connection. SDT states that individuals possess three basic psychological needs: first, they need opportunities to contribute and feel competent; second, they need to be genuinely connected to others; and, third, and most importantly, they need to feel that they are able to exercise choice when it comes to making their own decisions (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). When these needs for competence, relatedness, and especially autonomy are met, individual motivational states are characterized as internal or self-determined rather than external. Thus, to the extent that HPWSs are characterized as empowering rather than controlling they should foster a more internalized form of motivation encouraging employees to act in the best interests of the organization. When individuals perceive these needs as being met, they will be more likely to identify themselves in terms of the entity or group that they perceive to be the source of needs satisfaction.

Taken together, the argument can be made that HPWSs foster social identification by acting through the mechanism of basic psychological needs satisfaction. In fact, identification with a target entity may in and of itself be viewed as a form of reciprocation that speaks to the quality of the exchange relationship. What is less clear, however, is the target-specific social identity that

the HPWS may influence. There is some evidence that multiple social identities are linked to specific target groups (e.g., workgroup membership or organizational membership) (e.g., Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Dick & Wagner, 2002; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). A relevant parallel has also emerged in the SET research; namely, according to the target-similarity model, individuals develop unique perceptions and attitudes about multiple foci in organizations (Lavelle et al., 2007).

Accordingly, this chapter examines the idea that target-specific forms of social identity (i.e. workgroup and organization) will be fostered through mechanisms (i.e. satisfaction of basic psychological needs) and practises (HPWSs) that operate at a target-similar level. Specifically examined is the idea that social identification assumes distinct forms depending upon the target of identification (i.e., workgroup or organization). The main hypothesis tested is that target-specific forms of social identification have specific antecedents (i.e., dimensions of HPWSs) that influence identification processes in unique ways, depending upon the target of identification. An additional premise is that the influence of specific dimensions of a HPWS on target-specific social identification will be mediated by perceived satisfaction of basic psychological needs as outlined in SDT. Implications are discussed and suggestions for multifocal social identity research are noted.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides a summary of developments in knowledge gained from this research. Suggestions for future research are provided and implications for organizations and management based upon the research as a

whole are outlined. A table of abbreviations used throughout this dissertation is found in Apprendix D.

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## Chapter 2: Paradigms of Individual Work Identity: Concept Clarification and Theoretical Integration

### Introduction

Developing and understanding one's own identity is an essential component of the human journey, a certainty that is being recognized as more and more worthy of examination by organizational research scholars. There is no doubt that work feeds considerably into self-definition and that it often provides meaning and purpose in life. Yet, despite an expanding body of research aimed at understanding the role that work plays in the process of self-definition and how such self-definition influences individual attitudes and behaviours, individual work identity (IWI) research remains fragmented. Conceptualizations of individual identity are numerous; application and interpretation of various identity theories as they apply to the study of organizations is inconsistent (Pratt et al., 2000). Overall, little has been done to integrate or examine distinctions in explanatory power of various theories of individual work identity. Social identity theory (SIT), for example, concerns the influence of group membership on individual identity perceptions. Still, even though "the psychology of people in organizations is shaped by group forces," (Haslam, 2000, p. 17), the role of SIT as potentially the primary theory of individual identity in organizational contexts has not been considered.

Moreover, the explanatory utility of SIT has suffered because of inconsistent interpretations and applications across organizational behaviour research. When concepts are not clearly defined, they provide little guidance (Brief & Umphress, 2007). Indeed, the state of the identity research has led some

to conclude that, "identity in organizations can and does mean almost anything" (Pratt, 2003, p. 162). Clearly, there is a pressing need to disentangle matters of conceptualization and to integrate and position individual work identity theory within the broader context of established theories of individual behaviour, particularly social exchange theory (SET) which is arguably one of the most promising theoretical frameworks for understanding workplace phenomena (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Accordingly, the goal of this paper is concept clarification and theoretical integration. First, there is much to be gained from concept clarification based upon an understanding of the various similarities and differences between core theories. Through the process of concept clarification, concepts that have typically been analyzed "without a clear, shared, and conscious agreement on the properties or meanings attributed to them" (Meleis, 2011, p. 374) are refined. Second, a meta-theory of individual work identity is required. Such a theory should highlight connections and distinctions between various approaches, outline a taxonomy of the theoretical dimensions of an overall individual work identity construct, propose a central theoretical approach, and position this approach within the broader context of established theories of motivation.

As a predominant theory of motivation, SET addresses the interdependency of relationships by arguing that individuals are motivated to reciprocate when they receive valuable social rewards (e.g., approval, prestige, affirmation). Current SET research focuses upon the interdependent nature of social exchange relationships rather than upon the exchange. Further, where

relationships are characterized by social rather than economic exchange, individuals report stronger social identification with the target of exchange (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). Still, virtually nothing is known about points of integration between social exchange and social identification processes. How they jointly influence important work behaviours such as intentions to remain in one's job or organization is effectively unexplored.

Similarly, how individuals come to socially identify as members of specific groups in organizations is dependent upon the purpose that the membership serves. Self-determination theory (SDT) posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs including: the need to feel that one is in control of one's own choices, the need to connect to others in a genuine manner, and the need for opportunities to contribute and demonstrate competence (Deci & Ryan, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2003). When these needs are fulfilled through group membership, it would make sense to argue that social identification would be strong. In fact, some research argues that the three basic psychological needs outlined in SDT may be considered higher order goals that link to purposeful goal striving behaviour, in this case, choosing which group to identify most strongly with (Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013). Still, these ideas have not been empirically tested in the research. Positioning SIT within the context of the tenets of both SET and SDT is an important contribution of this research.

## Background

Perhaps gaps and inconsistencies in the research are, in part, due to the fact that the concept of identity is challenging. Individually, people recollect

experiences from the past, ponder elements in the present, and envision the future in attempts to develop an identity that is reflective of their life story (McAdams, 2003). This process of reflection and imagination ensures that identity provides individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose intimately enmeshed in self-knowledge. It has been argued that the failure to adequately sort out one's identity during critical formative adolescent years may lead to significant negative personal outcomes associated with what is commonly known as an identity crisis (Erikson, 1970). It is not surprising then, that individuals direct both deliberate and subconscious energy to the search for answers to the question, "Who am I?" Answers to such questions have profound implications for behaviour; in fact, research from diverse disciplines contends that individual identity is, in and of itself, a fundamental force inextricably connected to human attitudes, values and behaviours. Indeed, identity research is growing in many fields of inquiry including psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational behaviour. Common to each of these streams are questions about how to best conceptualize identity, how identity influences behaviour and attitudes, and what factors influence and lead to the formation of identity.

Still, even though identity researchers seek answers to many of the same important research questions, notable disconnections exist in the identity research dialogue. For example, some argue that identity develops either independently (i.e., individuals determine their own identity independent from the ideas and views of others) or interdependently (i.e., individuals determine their identity relative to their relationships with others and in the context of group

memberships) (Marcus & Kitiyama, 1991). Others argue that identity includes both perceptions of oneself solely as an individual as well as perceptions of oneself in relation to others (Jenkins, 2008). Individual perceptions of one's own identity are thought to operate both consciously and unconsciously (Erikson, 1970). Over time, individual identity is likely to represent an amalgamation of self-conceptions derived from numerous sources including, among others, personality traits, personal experiences, and roles; still, social group memberships are a powerful source of identity, especially in organizations.

Several theories have been advanced that address the development and outcomes of individual identity. In general, most theories argue that individuals construct their identity from autobiographical perceptions and personal experiences in a way that allows them to make sense of and derive meaning from their lives (McAdams, 2003). Perceptions and experiences are foundational elements of two key theories of identity: identity theory (IT) and SIT. IT (Burke & Stets, 2009; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968) posits that identity is a product of dyadic interaction with reciprocal others, guided by the roles one plays. SIT claims that individuals derive a sense of identity from personal experiences associated with membership in various social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Of particular interest to this research is the relationship between workplace perceptions and experiences and the development of individual identity. It is expected that the nature of the workgroups to which one belongs (i.e., according to SIT) and the roles that one plays within these groups (i.e. according to IT) are both likely to influence work-related aspects of identity. Consider, for example,

how quickly work becomes a topic of conversation when meeting someone new. Answers to such questions as "where do you work?" and "what do you do?" provide a means for discovering how individuals perceive their own identity relative to the groups they belong to (e.g., organization) and the roles that they play at work.

Functionally, categorizing oneself in terms of workgroup memberships helps individuals relate to one other. Ashforth and Mael (1989) maintain that work-based categorizations provide a way for individuals to define their work environment and to understand their place within this environment. Owens (2003) contends that cognitions about self-categorization are developed through self-reflection; in turn, self-categorization enables individuals to claim and present aspects of their identity to others. When interacting with others, individuals may describe the company they work for or the team that they belong to (e.g., "I work in the eye clinic at a large city hospital"); additionally, they may describe work roles and responsibilities (e.g., "I am a nurse responsible for post-operative patient care"). Tajfel (1974) argues that self-definition is a continual process of sorting out and understanding one's place relative to a complex and wide network of groups and relationships. This suggests that work has the potential to provide meaningful evidence of status or social placement. According to SIT, when work-based social identity is cognitively prominent (i.e., salient), valued, and associated with positive emotional experiences, work experiences play an important role in enhancing positive self-esteem. Because individuals may be members in many groups in the workplace, there is a need in the research to recognize and conduct

individual identity analyses according to the target group of interest (e.g., workgroup, profession, organization, association, etc.). While there has been some progress in this regard (see Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Dick, Becker, & Meyer, 2006; van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, & Wieseke, 2008 for examples), more work is needed.

The relationship between individuals and their work is often pervasive in that individual work identity is likely to influence one's personal life. Ashforth and Mael (1989) describe this phenomenon as being psychologically intertwined with one's job, at least to the extent that elements of the work experience have the capacity to influence one's overall self-concept. In this way, identification processes associated with workgroups and roles may result in an overall individual identity that is strongly informed by work experiences.

If one accepts the proposition that self-definition is inextricably linked to work, the implications for organizational research are considerable. In fact, the assumption that work is an important resource in the construction of individual identity increasingly propels both theoretical identity research in organizational contexts as well as empirical research linking work-related identity to work-related attitudes, intentions and behaviours. Based upon the existing research, individual work identity can be defined as a multi-dimensional construct that includes both role and social identities. These identity dimensions will be connected to specific target groups or dyadic others. Also, individual work identity may be temporary or more enduring, and in the case of the role identity dimension it may include component characteristics of role relationships.

Although understanding the implications of identity for a range of phenomena in organizational environments is an area of growing research interest (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008), much of the extant research is fractured and disorganized (Riketta, 2005) and construct validity is a persistent issue (Edwards and Peccei, 2007). A significant, persistent and particularly troublesome issue is the inconsistent application of construct terminology. The need for consistent approaches to the study of social identity, in particular, has been labelled a weakness in organizational identity literature (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Pratt et al., 2000; Riketta, 2005). Furthermore, theoretical foundations of identity constructs being analyzed in the literature are not always clear and there are serious problems associated with the continued proliferation of identity measurement scales; indeed, excessive numbers of measurement instruments undermine our ability to comparatively interpret the results of important identity research studies and to replicate findings, both of which are critical to further growth of the field.

The overarching purposes of this paper are to advance SIT as the central theory within a meta-theory of work identity, clarify individual work identity concepts, develop a taxonomy of theoretical approaches, and formulate testable propositions about the relationships between the concepts within these theoretical approaches. Points of synergy between two important theories of individual motivation – SET and SDT – will also be explored. Identity research requires consistency in the specification, interpretation and application of identity constructs in work settings. Accordingly, this paper will serve as a guide for

future individual work identity research and help to ensure that meaningful applications of identity theories in work settings address the important theoretical and conceptual issues necessary to inform our understanding about the implications of identification in organizations.

## Analysis

### Towards a Meta-Theory of Individual Work Identity: The Pivotal Role of Groups

SIT argues that groups have a direct influence on the development of individual identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Groups are universal in organizations, as such, it is expected that social identification will be a key process in the development of individual work identity. Identification processes commence when group placement occurs and although they are likely reciprocal over time, initially, identification should precede behaviour. According to SIT, social identity refers to those components of one's self-concept that are derived from memberships in personally relevant social groups (Brown, 1978). In organizations, individuals are members of the organization as a whole which, in and of itself, is a form of social group. Additionally, individuals may be members of other organizational groups including departments, project teams, and divisions. In a post-secondary educational institution, for example, faculty members are likely to also be members of a staff association, a department and other organizational groups. In many organizations, work-based social groups transcend the structure of sub-groups; for example, staff association membership

may only be held by select individuals in a workgroup or, in the case of professional memberships, memberships stretch beyond organizational boundaries (e.g., professional engineer, registered nurse, etc.).

One of the goals of SIT is to explain how perceptions of oneself relative to one or more groups are linked to behaviours relative to the group in question. Indeed, SIT is considered by some to be a grand theory that is widely applicable in various contexts and to a broad array of questions inherent in the study of groups (Ellemers, Haslam, Platow, & van Knippenberg, 2003). How and when identification in groups occurs and what behaviours such identification prompts are core theoretical questions of SIT. An exhaustive analysis of all theories of identity in organizational research is beyond the scope of this paper; nonetheless, an analysis of SIT as the central theory within a meta-theory of individual work identity relative to the predominant claims of other identity theories will be conducted.

**Theoretical Background: Social Identity Theory**

Social identity is formally defined by SIT as the "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" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). According to the seminal work of Tajfel (1978; 1974; 1979; 1981; 1982a; 1982b) and Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986), social identity refers *only* to aspects of one's sense of self that are derived from social group categorization. SIT argues that social identity is a product of self-reflection; that is, individuals must recognize that they themselves belong to the

social group in question (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). In this way, social identities are claimed rather than assigned. Social identification develops cognitively through the process of one's own assessment of self in relation to an aggregate or a group. One of the key assumptions of SIT is that when people categorize themselves as members of groups, resulting categorizations are thought to inform the definition of self in a way that influences attitudes, intentions and behaviours.

Because placement in a group marks the commencement of the employment experience, the foundational starting point for a meta-theory of individual work identity should be how group experiences inform self-definition. According to SIT, individuals look to their group experiences to establish or reinforce a personal sense of positive self-esteem, to enhance or expand their self-definition, and, to achieve positive distinctness (i.e., a sense of personal unique self-regard associated with a belief that one's group holds unique status) in comparison to members of groups in which they are not members (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; 1986). Strength of social identification has consequences for behaviour; namely, behaviour can be classified as either interpersonal (i.e., motivated by weak social identification and guided by individual needs and goals only) or intergroup (i.e., motivated by strong social identification and guided by consideration of the goals and needs of one's group) (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Whether or not individual behaviour is self-motivated or motivated by group membership is proposed to be dependent upon both strength of identification and level of salience (i.e., level of cognitive

prominence) associated with group membership (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005).

It is notable that social identification may commence the moment an individual psychologically joins a group. In other words, accepting a job offer may trigger the commencement of social identification, even before an individual sets foot in the organization. Extensive research by Tajfel (1978; 1974; 1979; 1981; 1982a; 1982b) provides insight on this matter. Together with his colleagues, he conducted a series of experiments investigating the influence of social categorization on discriminatory behaviour between groups (1978; Tajfel, 1974; 1981). Known as the minimal group studies, findings supported the argument that the mere act of assigning individuals to a category was enough to trigger identification processes. In these experiments, categorization was based upon trivial matters such as preference for paintings or counting dots. Once assigned to a group, individuals tended to behave in a manner that favoured the group to which they were assigned while discriminating against other groups. Participants had no interaction outside of their own group and often, the other group did not actually exist. From these studies, Tajfel concluded that the process of identification begins the moment cognitive acceptance of group membership occurs (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Notably, these findings have been replicated in a wide variety of contexts (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005).

The link between identification and in-group favoritism has been demonstrated in working environments as well. For example, a key goal of wage

negotiations is often to not just attain a high wage for oneself, but also to secure higher wage differentials for one's own group relative to other groups (Brown, 1978). SIT advances the notion that the mere act of grouping individuals together is sufficient to stimulate cognitive, evaluative and emotional processes associated with self-definition relative to the aggregate. While IT argues that role identities are the product of interaction with others in the social environment, SIT claims that identities can be the product of a mere thought. In this way, social identification is the first identification process experienced in the workplace and is a reflection of the fundamental link between groups and the individual. According to Ashmore et al. (2004), "[i]dentification is first and foremost a statement about categorical membership" (p. 81).

**SIT: Gaps in the Research**

In a meta-analysis of social identity based organizational identity research, Riketta (2005) notes serious limitations in nearly 100 organizational identity studies: first, while organizational level social identity appears to correlate with a wide range of behaviours and attitudes, there is little evidence in existing research that allows for causal conclusions; second, insufficient research has been conducted to ascertain whether or not social identification plays a moderating role; and third, comparability of results is fragmented by the use of multiple measurement scales.

Additionally, SIT theorizes that individuals may identify with multiple target groups and each of these identities is likely to have a different purpose (Tajfel, 1982b). This would suggest that researchers should examine specific sub-

group target identities in addition to organizational identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) yet most extant research in SIT continues to employ the organization as the sole identity referent. The usefulness of research findings in the domain of individual work identity depends directly upon the ability of researchers to approach such research with order and precision (Pratt et al., 2000); at present, little research distinguishes between target-specific identities, even less tests relationships between target-similar antecedents and outcomes of these identities.

In addition to examining target-specific forms of identity, there is also a need to address gaps in the literature about the mechanisms that underpin identification processes in work environments. Several tenets of SIT provide insight into this important process. SIT claims that group membership serves important functions including ordering, simplifying, and systematizing the social world, that evaluation of group membership will positively or negatively inform self-definition, and that individuals invest, in varying degrees, emotionally in group memberships (Tajfel, 1982b). In general, individuals who experience group life positively will be more likely to derive aspects of their own identity from group membership than those who do not. SIT also argues that the pursuit of positive self-definition may be realized through memberships in groups that provide positive experiences and that are viewed favourably by others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Turner et al., 1979). More specifically, SIT posits that individuals will be motivated to identify with groups when group memberships are perceived to be self-enhancing and when they reduce uncertainty (i.e., when group membership provides a sense of continuity in self-definition) (Hogg, 2006).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) also mention a preponderance of experimental research relative to field studies and the need for longitudinal testing to facilitate a greater understanding of antecedents and outcomes of social identification processes. Social identity research has, for the most part, been conducted in experimental settings rather than extra-experimental (i.e., real life) settings; however, a trend towards the study of social identity in real group contexts has been noted (Dumont & Louw, 2007). The ability to generalize findings is also a persistent issue. For example, studies dealing with such outcomes as organizational citizenship behaviour, withdrawal intentions, absence, and job satisfaction are often couched within the context of significant organizational change (mergers, restructuring, outsourcing, etc.) (for a review see van Dick, 2004); as such, results are contingent upon these unique contextual circumstances.

In sum, it appears that the vast majority of research is characterized by a paucity of evidence about unique effects associated with multiple identities (e.g., social identities derived from multiple group memberships). There is a pressing need to clarify concepts associated with target-specific forms of social identification and to test relationships between antecedents and outcomes of social identification at target-similar levels. Beyond the basic tenets of SIT, there is also an opportunity to link and integrate fundamental arguments about what motivates the development of target-specific forms of SIT with existing theories of motivation. For example, the differences between SET and SIT have been marginally explored (van Knippenberg, van Dick, & Tavares, 2007), however, synergistic overlap has not. Minimal theoretical work explores social

identification within the context of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2003), yet no empirical research tests the linkages between the two.

**Social identification: Concept clarification issues**

Ashforth and Mael's (1989) seminal paper, "Social Identity Theory and the Organization," based upon Mael's (1988) doctoral dissertation, marked a turning point in approaches to individual identity research in organizations. Until this time, little distinction had been made between identity and related concepts like internalization or commitment. Ashforth and Mael (1989) were among the first to distinguish identity as a state (i.e., *who* I am), separate from behaviours (e.g., internalization - *what* I believe) and attitudes (e.g., commitment – the course of action I am *bound* to). Much of the work that followed Ashforth and Mael (1989) focused upon demonstrating the uniqueness of social identity as a construct by examining distinctions between organizational identification and organizational commitment (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Gautam, van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Herrbach, 2006; Johnson & Chang, 2006; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Meyer et al., 2006; Meyer, Becker, & van Dick, 2006; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Organizational commitment scales incorporated measures thought to be more reflective of identification and organizational identification scales (Brown, 1969; March & Simon, 1958; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) have similarly included items more accurately thought to measure commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Indeed, factor and principle components analyses have repeatedly found commitment and identity to be separate dimensions of early scales thought to measure identity alone. Most of the work that has been conducted to establish the

empirical uniqueness of social identity has occurred in the last decade (Riketta, 2005); yet, the persistence of significant disagreement about the nature of identity versus other constructs like commitment has been noted as recently as 2006 (van Dick et al., 2006). Edwards and Peccei (2007) argue that "a rigorous conceptualization that helps to clarify the boundaries between these two important constructs" is needed (p. 28).

The lack of consensus surrounding the definition of identity is also propelled by the fact that attempts to understand identity in organizations reflect different theoretical approaches (e.g., sociology, psychology, social psychology, institutional theory). Rooting research in divergent streams is not necessarily undesirable; however, it becomes a problem when a myriad of theoretically varied research treats dissimilar iterations of identity as interchangeable constructs. For example, the theoretical underpinnings of role identity are not the same as those of social identity; role identity, as a construct, is tied to behaviour and is grounded in symbolic interactionism (i.e., the idea that the social world is the product of interaction; in this case, identity is considered a product of dyadic interaction between individuals and others (Mead, 1934)) and IT, while social identity, as a construct, is a reflection of individual perceptions and is based upon SIT. These two theories are quite different; reflecting constructs should be similarly so. An increasing proliferation of terminology (e.g., individual identity, identification strength, personal identity, role identity, relational identity, collective identity, social identity, organizational identity, professional identity, etc.) also adds to the confusion. For example, the term *organizational identity* describes both individual

perceptions about self in relation to organizational membership as well as characteristics of the core identity of the organization itself; however, the distinction is not always clear. As a remedy, some scholars have suggested that the primary definition of organizational identitys refer to the organization's identity while the secondary definition refers to the identity of an individual in relation to their organizational group (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007).

The practise of generalizing theory from one level to another also presents challenges. For example, while Dukerich, Golden, and Shortell (2002) argue that perceived attractiveness of the organization's identity predicts strength of individual social identification with the organization, the reverse is also advanced as true in the same study. Other cross-sectional research has found this relationship to be mediated by perceptions of organizational trustworthiness (Tuzun & Caglar, 2009). Whetten (2006) suggests that organizational identity is an analogue of individual identity and that personified organizations are, like individuals, characterized by personal, relational and social identity structures (Whetten, 2006). Yet, organizations, unlike individuals, are products of social construction (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). They are incapable of independent cognition and they do not experience emotion. As such, theory aimed at individuals is unlikely to yield the same results when applied to organizations. Indeed, vertical (i.e., cross-level) borrowing of theory tends to disregard important elements inherent in the social environment and to generalize without acknowledging the precise differences between different units of analysis (Whetten, Felin, & King, 2009).

Identity theories aimed at understanding the individual must, nevertheless, consider how individual experiences within various contexts of the organization inform identification processes. At present, little research addresses the idea that individual identity is connected to multiple sources. For example, Ashforth and Mael (1989) note the need to conduct research into social identity as it connects to not only the organization, but to sub-groupings within the organization. In fact, they stress the influence of the workgroup as the primary source of identity for newcomers. Other researchers have similarly argued that there is much to be learned by focusing on sub-group identification processes as these identification processes appear to have a stronger influence on attitudes and behaviours than identification with the organization as a whole (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Of particular importance to this research is the argument that relationships between antecedents and outcomes of identification should be tested along focally similar lines. Riketta and van Dick (2005) propose, for example, that organizational attachment will be a significant predictor when the target of the outcome of attachment is the organization (e.g., staying with the organization), and that workgroup attachment will be a significant predictor when the target of the outcome is the workgroup (e.g., staying with the workgroup). The SET literature applies a *target-similarity* approach (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007), noting that multiple social exchange relationships are likely to exist and that each will be unique depending upon the target (e.g., workgroup, organization). Similarly, various target-specific sources of identification (i.e., work or

organization) are unlikely to have equivalent influence on the development of various forms of identification (i.e., workgroup social identification vs. organizational social identification). It makes more sense to suggest that just as social exchange relationships will vary along target-specific lines, so too will identification will be predicted by target-similar antecedents and lead to target-similar outcomes, especially since strength of identification is a probable reflection of the health of the particular social exchange relationship. Nonetheless, to date, little research has examined target-similar relationships between antecedents and outcomes of work-derived individual identity.

> *Proposition 1: Relationships between individual work identity and its antecedents and outcomes will be stronger when antecedents, outcomes and individual work identity are target-similar.*

**Social Identity: Measurement Issues**

Just as identity conceptualization is characterized by inconsistency, so too are identity measurement practises. As noted, construct overlap is a significant issue with some identity measurement instruments; indeed, in some cases, instruments designed to tap other constructs (e.g., affective commitment scales) have been used as proxy measurements for identity (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000). In a meta-analysis of organizational identity research, Riketta (2005) observed that ad-hoc identity measurement instruments were constructed for over half the analyzed study sample (i.e., more than 48 distinct identity scales were observed). Riketta (2005) also cautions researchers about assuming interchangeable applicability of the two most frequently used identity scales: the Mael and

Ashforth scale (MAS) (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ) (Mowday et al., 1979), noting that in correlational studies, these two scales do not produce the same results. Of note, the OIQ has been demonstrated to be almost empirically interchangeable with scales measuring affective commitment while the MAS, the most frequently used scale, has been found to be distinct from affective commitment measurement instruments and to produce the most consistent results (Riketta, 2005). This means that interpretation of past studies purported to examine social identification using the OIQ are likely to be inaccurate unless researchers also acknowledge the overlapping measurement of affective commitment. Moreover, direct comparison between studies using the OIQ and the MAS is not prudent, as they do not measure exactly the same phenomena.

A distinct lack of integration is present in the extant individual work identity literature; therefore, an overarching meta-approach to the study and understanding of work aspects of individual identity is required. To advance our understanding of why individual work identity matters, care must be taken to ensure that identity concepts are clearly derived from their corresponding core foundational theories (Pratt et al., 2000); common measurement instruments must be employed, and the presence of target-specific forms of identity must be considered in future research.

**SIT: The central theory in a taxonomy of individual work identity**

The term *identity* is used extensively in sociology, psychology, social psychology, and increasingly, in organizational research literatures. Although

some of the confusion in identity research is semantic (e.g., organizational identity as it applies to the organization vs. the individual), identity research has also been complicated by assumptions that underlying identity theories are portable and, therefore, applicable to various conceptualizations of identity. It has been suggested, for example, that considerable progress could be made in social identity research by adhering to the core theoretical assumptions of SIT and to the research agenda proposed by Ashforth and Mael (1989) (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). While similarities between core theories exist - for example, it has been claimed that identity, at all levels of analysis, is cognitive, relational, involves sense making, and attempts to answer "who" questions (Pratt, 2003) - significant differences are also apparent. A meta-theory of individual work identity must clarify concepts and specify where conceptualizations of identity agree and where they differ along theoretical, conceptual and empirical lines. Therefore, and based upon the recommendations of Haslam and Ellemers (2005), the following analysis assumes SIT as the central theory in a meta-theory of individual work identity.

This analysis will also address important recommendations in the research about how identity research should be conducted. Pratt and Foreman (2000) make a number of suggestions to stem increasing confusion associated with identity research. Specifically, they state that researchers must clearly specify the research field and the corresponding theoretical origins; stipulate to whom or to what the identity construct is attached to (i.e., an individual or a group?); be clear about what the identity describes (i.e., does it describe oneself, others, an organization or a group?); and, from whose perceptions is the identity measured (e.g., is the

individual the audience for their own identity or does the research refer to individuals as the audience of the organization's identity?). To clearly articulate the similarities and differences between the most commonly used identity theories in organizational research; I use these recommendations as the foundational framework to develop a taxonomy of organizational identity research (for a summary see Table 2-1). An analysis of identity conceptualizations using SIT as the central theory follows and forms the basis for the framework of a meta-theory of individual work identity (IWI).

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Insert Table 2-1 about here

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**Social Identity as the central theory of Individual Work Identity**

According to SIT, the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as prototypical representatives of a group depends, to some extent, upon their experience in the group. Positive experiences associated with membership may strengthen identification by evoking positive emotion that reinforces positive perceptions about the value of membership; yet, evaluation need not be positive for cognitive identification to be strong (Tajfel, 1982). Tajfel argues that one can be keenly aware of membership in a social group while neither valuing nor enjoying such membership (e.g., prisoners). It is also possible to value membership as an extension of valuing external rewards that accrue with membership (e.g., pay, benefits, etc.), despite negative emotional experiences (e.g., individuals may be part of a workgroup that provides excellent rewards yet little job satisfaction). Strength of identification is highest when cognitive,

evaluative and emotional experiences associated with group membership converge (see Haslam & Ellemers, 2005 for an extensive review).

The cognitive element of SIT is expanded upon in self-categorization theory (SCT) (Turner et al., 1987). SCT proposes that individuals self-categorize on three levels: first, as unique individuals (personal level); second, as members of specified groups (group level); and, finally, as human beings (super-ordinate level) (Turner et al., 1987). SCT outlines the social cognitive framework for how and when individuals define themselves in either personal or group terms, noting that levels of self-categorization are fundamentally context dependent. A core argument of SCT is that strength of social identification is a result of the depersonalization process wherein individuals self-stereotype and come to perceive themselves more as "interchangeable exemplars of a social category" than as "unique personalities defined by their individual differences from others" (Turner et al., 1987, p. 50). SCT further asserts that the process of depersonalization is the main driver of group phenomena (e.g., group cohesiveness, altruism, collective action, shared norms, etc.) (Turner et al., 1987). Ultimately, self-categorization is the process of depersonalization.

In organizational contexts, individuals who self-categorize as members of and identify with multiple work-related groups are likely to evaluate each membership differently and to experience distinct emotions in relation to each group (Oldmeadow, Platow, & Foddy, 2005). The social identity approach supports the notion that individuals may take aspects of several memberships into consideration in the process of self-definition, yet it offers no explanation for how

multiple identities are reconciled within the individual. According to SIT, each membership has a specific purpose and a unique impact. Indeed, Haslam and Ellemers (2005) state that "merely to establish that a person has a strong or weak sense of organizational identity is not necessarily very informative" (p. 58); and further, that organizational identification is of little use in relation to outcomes connected to non-organizational level identification. Because group values may differ from group to group, behavioural norms are likely to differ depending upon the group in question; as such, the purpose of identity will also vary from group to group (Brown, 2000).

As noted, according to SET, the target-similarity model argues that exchange relationships will vary depending upon the target of the exchange. A parallel argument can be made for the social identification process. For instance, individuals may identify strongly with their workgroup but not with their organization; as a result, behaviour may favour the workgroup yet be detrimental to the organization as a whole. An example of this type of behaviour is found in absence cultures where groups collude to provide opportunities for maximum absence taking within the group with little regard for the effects of these absences on the organization as a whole (Gellatly & Luchak, 1998). Therefore, a key proposition of a meta-theory of individual work identity is that individuals perceive identity in a multidimensional manner; therefore, each target of identification is associated with a distinct form of identity.

*Proposition 2: Individuals claim multiple social identities associated with self-categorization as a member of multiple organizational groups. Each social identity will be empirically distinct and strength of social identification will vary according to the target of identity.*

## Additional Identity Concepts

### Role Identity

Role identity, rooted in IT, is an additional dimension of individual work identity. According to IT (Burke, 1980; Burke & Stets, 2009; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968), identities are a reflection of meanings associated with roles, traits and categories (Stets & Burke, 2003). As noted, IT is rooted in the theory of symbolic interaction (Mead, 1934), an approach based upon the assumption that behaviour is a consequence of reciprocal relations between self and society (Stets & Burke, 2003). According to this perspective, social structures, like groups, are the product of patterns of individual action over time; more importantly, individuals are at once the source and product of the social structures in which they reside (Stets & Burke, 2003). Within the IT literature there is some disagreement about whether social structures are in a continual state of flux due to the actions of individuals within these structures (i.e., situated symbolic interactionism) or in a state of relative stability owing to patterns of individual behaviour that are seen as stable over time (i.e., structural symbolic interactionism). Identity is correspondingly seen as either dynamic or stable depending upon which approach is assumed to be at play.

Because role identities are usually established through interaction within a dyad, role identities are viewed as an outcome of behaviour (e.g., I care for a child, therefore, I am a parent) that also imply future behaviour (e.g., I care for a child, I am a parent, therefore, I will care for my child). When identity is construed as the manifestation of purpose, the role itself infers a set of expectations that prescribe behaviour that is considered appropriate by others. Like SIT, self-categorization is an important component of IT. According to IT, individuals categorize themselves as the occupant of a role while, according to SIT, individuals categorize themselves as members of a group. Each role identity is linked to an identity standard that refers to individual perceptions about what it means to be defined by a specific role (Burke & Stets, 2009). Similarly, social identities are linked to a normative prototype; in fact, according to SIT, the more strongly one identifies with a social group, the more one's behaviour becomes similar to that of the prototype associated with that group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). IT claims that behaviour is influenced by an understanding of role norms while SIT argues that behaviour is driven by social category norms.

Some research suggests that social identities are best seen as a special case of IT (Stets & Burke, 2000). Yet, role identities are the outcome of what one does and do not require group membership (e.g., One may engage in long distance running, however, one does not need to hold membership in a running group to define oneself as a long distance runner). Social identities, on the other hand, are a reflection of self-definition independent from behaviour (e.g., One may see oneself as a member of the post-secondary institution they have graduated from;

however, one need not be involved behaviourally after graduation to define oneself in these terms). Role identities are also seen as mediators of the influence of society on behaviour while social identities are viewed as antecedents of behaviours that favour the in-group. Finally, role identity often takes the form of a dyadic one-to-one relationship while social identity is a one-to-many association.

Similar to social identities, individuals may have role identities associated with multiple targets. Specific roles will be distinct depending upon the dyad or group in question; for example, an individual may be both a supervisor of subordinates as well a subordinate to their own manager. Role identities may, therefore, take more than one form depending upon the source, or target, of identification. Therefore, within the context of a meta-theory of individual work identity, individual role identities are likely to vary by target.

> *Proposition 3: Individuals assume multiple role identities associated with particular dyads and groups. Each role identity will be empirically distinct and strength of role identification will vary according to the target of identity.*

**Relational Identity**

Closely related to role identity, relational identity is a reflection of perceptions about the one-to-one relationship underlying role identity. As a special case of role identity, relational identity describes specific aspects of identity that arises from dyadic relationships with others, for example, supervisor-employee, coworker-coworker, or, customer-sales representative. Relational identity researchers argue that individuals operate on different levels including,

personal, relational and collective; as such, dyadic role relationships are the focus of an individual's relational self (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). More specifically, relational identity has been formally defined as "the goals, values, norms, and so on of the respective roles as well as the more or less unique ways in which the individuals enact the roles" (Ashforth & Sluss, 2006, p. 9). It describes the nature of a dyadic relationship. Also, individuals may *identify* with the dyadic relationship, and characteristics of the relationship have the capacity to inform their individual identity. For instance, an individual may describe their relationship with their supervisor as high in trust; therefore, they may see themselves as highly trustworthy.

It is the degree to which an individual incorporates aspects of a dyadic role identity into aspects of self-definition that defines one's *relational* identity (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). Like social and role identities, the role category is important, and also like social identity, aspects of role membership may inform self-definition. However, defined in this manner, relational identity points to internalization of values, norms and goals and holds significant implications for behaviour. As an identity construct, relational identity is broad while social identity in its most minimal form requires only the perception and evaluation of category membership. Still, both relational identity and social identity are linked to positively biased behaviours; for example, satisfaction with relational identity is, in part, predicted by the degree of implicit agreement between the parties about the nature of the relationship (Ashforth & Sluss, 2006). To date, relational identity

research is primarily theoretical while SIT research is supported by significant empirical evidence.

*Proposition 4: Individuals will be more likely to incorporate aspects of a relational identity into self-definition when perceptions about the one-to-one dyadic relationship are positive and valued.*

**Situated/Deep Structure Identity**

Early ideas about situated identity are derived primarily from the field of social psychology and lean heavily upon symbolic interactionism theory (Mead, 1934). According to situated identity theory (SITH), situated identity flows from situated activity and, situated activity is defined as behaviour or activity that is external to the individual (Alexander Jr. & Wiley, 1981). More specifically, situated activity "is conceived as an ongoing process of establishing, affirming, modifying, and sometimes destroying situated identities" (Alexander Jr. & Wiley, 1981, p. 274). Like relational identity, as conceptualized by SITH, situated identities are presumed to be located in the relationship between the individual and the external environment; as such, they are not a characteristic property of an individual. The overall goal of SITH is to understand the perceptual evaluations of individuals about the choices (i.e., situated activity) of similar others in the face of a set of alternatives (Alexander Jr. & Wiley, 1981). SITH has a strong normative element in that it involves ongoing comparison of individual normative expectations with the actual choices made by others. For example, a manager who consistently chooses to ignore absence issues in his or her department may be considered a poor manager by other peer equivalent managers who engage in a

process of observation and speculation about what they would do given similar circumstances.

In more recent organizational research, situated identification has been characterized as an indicator of the strength, or *tenure*, of social identity. More precisely, when contextual cues (e.g., minimal group experiments, labour unrest, assignment to a special task force, etc.) trigger perceptions of oneself as a member of a particular group, situated social identification is said to occur (Rousseau, 1998). For example, in situations of labour unrest, employees who normally identify only weakly as union members may now strongly identify as union members as perceptions about the value of membership increase. Once labour unrest passes, social identification as a union member may decrease once again. At the heart of situated identification is a cognitive response by the individual to some stimuli in the immediate environment.

The foundation of situated identification as it applies to current organizational research is realistic conflict theory (RCT) which argues that conflict will arise when there is competition for scarce resources (Sherif & Sherif, 1969). Situated identification triggered by conflict is expected to weaken when environmental cues decrease or disappear (e.g., the experiment ends, labour unrest resolves, a task force winds up its work, etc.). The main similarities between situational identification according to SITH and situational identification according to RCT and Rousseau (1998) are that these approaches claim identification to be prompted by contextual triggers and both suggest that this contextually dependent nature of situated identification cause it to be transient.

However, there are also differences. According to SITH, changing circumstances mean that situated identification is in a state of constant flux; situated identification as defined by Rousseau (1989) though temporary, is stable for the term of its existence. Also, as defined by Rousseau (1989) a situated identity describes that component of self-construal that is derived from group membership. In this way, it is a specific (i.e., non-enduring) form of social identity.

Rousseau (1989) also proposes a stronger form of identification known as deep-structure identification. While situated identification is considered elemental, deep-structure identification is thought to operate on a higher level. The main difference between the two is that while situated identification invokes a sense of membership necessary for collaboration, deep-structure identification is thought to reflect "more fundamental and enduring changes in the individual's conceptualization of himself" (Rousseau, 1998, p. 221). Some of the proposed antecedents of this form of identity include tenure, organizational stability, strong positive social exchange (e.g., perceived organizational support, organizational citizenship behaviours), employment status (e.g., full-time permanent vs. part-time temporary), long-term management practises (e.g., communication of vision, employee participation), reward structures – particularly those that are awarded on a person by person basis - and socialization (Riketta, van Dick, & Rousseau, 2006; Rousseau, 1998)

Rousseau (1998) and others (Riketta et al., 2006) have proposed the circumstances under which either situated or deep-structure identification are

most likely to occur. However, researchers have yet to empirically distinguish between the antecedents of situated and deep-structure identity or to develop an instrument for empirically measuring each of these constructs in a distinct manner. Preliminary theorizing suggests that situated identity may be correlated with cognitive awareness of membership (Rousseau, 1998) and short-term managerial practises (i.e. dress codes, universal rewards, benchmarking and company branding exercises) (Riketta et al., 2006) while deep-structured identity requires stronger evaluative and affective involvement (Tanis & Beukeboom, 2011). Meyer et al. (2006) propose that situated identities arise from a desire to maintain positive interpersonal relationships and are interest based while deep-structure identities are value-based and powerful in that they reflect the internalization of group values and goals.

It may very well be the case that the difference between situated and deep-structure identity is one of degree; that is, situated identity may be an instance of what Tajfel (1982b) referred to as the minimal condition for identification while deep-structure identity may reflect a more powerful combination of membership cognition, evaluation and affective response. In this way, strength of identification may be a reflection of whether social identification with the group is situated or deep-structure.

*Proposition 5: Deep structure social identification with a target-similar group will increase strength of social identification with that group more than a situated social identification and will be accompanied by*

*perceptions that the social identity in question is stable rather than dynamic.*

**Collective Identity**

One of the more perplexing conceptualizations of identity in organizations is collective identity. In some research, collective identity describes the identity referent; for example, collective identity has been used to describe individual identity derived from membership in a collective (i.e., social identity) (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Additionally, collective identity has been used to describe social identity as well as normative expectations. For example, in addition to self-categorization and evaluation of group memberships, collective identity may include the assumption of a set of common cognitive beliefs, affective commitment and behavioural implications (Ashmore et al., 2004). A similar hypothesis argues for dividing collective identity into three main parts: core identity (i.e., self-categorization, evaluation and affect), identity content (i.e., values, goals, beliefs, stereotypical traits, knowledge, skills and abilities associated with the identity) and identity behaviours (e.g., behaviours that favour the group or category in questions, for example, organizational citizenship behaviours) (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). In other research, the term *collective* rather than *social* is used in relation to both dyadic and group-centric forms of identity, the idea being that, in some respects, all aspects of self are socially influenced; hence, even role identities can be considered social in nature (Simon, 2004). Other schemas employ the term collective identity to describe the collective itself; for instance, collective identity refers to perceptions about the

organization or group rather than to socially-derived components of individual identity (Brown, 2006; Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006).

Clear articulation of when and where to use the term *collective* is needed. For example, using the term *collective* as an additional descriptor rather than a substitute for identity definitions derived from core identity theories is preferable. It may be more useful to define, for example, the social identity of a group as *collective* social identity; or, to consider group-level identity associated with roles as *collective* role identity. Used this way, the term *collective* signals that the construct in question is a group-level measure rather than an assessment of an individual attribute. Finally, consequences of identity (e.g., values and behaviours) are more aptly defined as outcome constructs distinct from the *process* of identification and the *state* of identity.

## Related Concepts

Constructs often associated with and, indeed, confused with individual work identity include affective commitment, personal identity, collective self-esteem, and organizational identity. An important step in concept clarification is specifying the boundaries in the nomological network of SIT, particularly as they apply to these related concepts. A summary of these concepts is found in Table 2-2. How each of these concepts connects with individual work identity is an important area for social and role identity researchers. An analysis of each of these concepts is now conducted and propositions describing relationships with dimensions of individual work identity are advanced.

Insert Table 2-2 about here

**Affective Commitment**

Identification and affective commitment have been construed as one and the same as reflected in measurement overlaps between affective commitment and the OIQ. At the heart of the debate about the distinction, or lack thereof, between affective commitment and identity is the difference between the affective aspects of commitment and the emotional experiences tied to identification. In Tajfel's (1978) definition of social identity, he makes specific reference to the *emotional significance* attached to group membership. Mowday, Steers, and Porter broadly refer to commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's *identification with* and involvement in a particular organization" (1979, p. 226). They also argue that commitment is characterized by belief and acceptance of organizational values and goals, readiness to exert effort to benefit the organization and a considerable desire to stay with the organization. More recent research by Meyer and Allen (1991) defines commitment as a psychological state that reflects the relationship between the individual and the organization and that poses significant implications for the individual's intentions to remain as a member of the organization. Also according to Meyer and Allen (1991), commitment has three dimensions; first, affective commitment refers to "emotional attachment to, *identification with*, and involvement in the organization" (p. 67); second, normative commitment is a "feeling of obligation to continue employment" (p.

67); and, third, continuance commitment is "an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization" (p. 67).

However, significant differences between affective commitment and social identity exist. Affective commitment compels an individual towards a course of action (e.g., "I am committed to achieving the goals of the Information Technology Department"). Social identity does not necessarily commit an individual to a particular action; rather, it is a reflection of how individuals view themselves in relation to the collective (e.g., "I am a member of the Information Technology Department) (Meyer et al., 2006). The emphasis of social identity is on depersonalization and understanding oneself. Individuals with a strong social identity see themselves as one with their organization or group; by implication, their fate and that of the collective as intertwined (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Social identification stresses similarities between members while affective commitment is associated with a sense of belonging or inclusion rather than depersonalized similarity. Affective commitment assumes persistence towards some type of behaviour while social identification is the outcome of a process of self-definition.

Debate about the differences between affective commitment and social identity persists (Marique & Stinglhamber, 2011); however, several studies support the empirical distinctness of these two constructs. Tests of measurement instruments designed to assess commitment according to Mowday, Steers and Porter's (1979) conceptualization consistently find that items related to identification comprise a distinct construct, separate from commitment (Bergami

& Bagozzi, 2000; Riketta, 2005). Studies testing the relationship between items that assess affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and social identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), similarly, find evidence that affective commitment and social identity are definitionally distinct constructs (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Gautam et al., 2004; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). While affective commitment and social identity may be highly correlated concepts, they are nevertheless concepts that measure unique mindsets. Current research suggests that it is through the evolution of social identification that affective commitment emerges, in other words, social identification is an antecedent of affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2006; Meyer et al., 2006)

*Proposition 6: Affective commitment is an outcome of individual work identity. Theoretical dimensions of individual work identity (e.g., social identification, role identification) will be positive predictors of affective commitment.*

**Collective Self-Esteem**

As a tool used to assess the level of positive impact associated with social identity, collective self-esteem refers to evaluations of self that are connected to memberships in various social groups (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). As with commitment, there are multiple dimensions to collective self-esteem including: membership (i.e., individual assessments about themselves as group members), private collective self-esteem (i.e., individual assessments about the value of the group itself); public collective self-esteem (i.e., individual assessments about outsiders' views of one's group), and identity (i.e., the value of

group membership as a source of self-definition) (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Of these dimensions, only the latter is a measure of the strength of identification. Identity is merely one component of the overall measure of self-esteem derived from group membership. The key difference between collective self-esteem and identity is that identity is self-conception (i.e., *who* am I?); esteem is self-evaluation (i.e., *how* do I feel about who I am?) (Gecas, 1982).

*Proposition 7: Dimensions of individual work identity (e.g., social identification, role identification) will be positive predictors of collective self-esteem.*

**Organization Identity**

Organizational identity is defined as a set of beliefs about what is, what has always been, and what is expected to be in the future, most core, enduring, and distinctive about an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Additionally, these core, enduring, and, distinctive features must differentiate the organization from other organizations (i.e., make the organization both different and better than other organizations) (Whetten, 2006). Pratt (2003) questions the notion that organizational identity is enduring noting that organizations tend to construct new identities when faced with crisis. He further notes that identity is a cognitive construct and that identification is a self-reflective process that is targeted inward within an entity. Much organizational identity research is rooted in the theory of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) which suggests that identity is constructed through interaction between stakeholders, members of the organization and managers (Scott & Lane, 2000).

Institutional theory also plays a role in understanding organizational identity. According to institutional theory, the formation of organizations follows socially accepted formulas based upon organizational forms (i.e., organizing routines or logics) (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). In selecting an organizational form, the organization is also categorized (e.g., profit vs. not for profit organization; educational institution vs. health care organization, etc.).

Pratt et al. (2000) note that organizational identity is considered by some to be theoretically and empirically distinct from individual identity and that organizational identity is more than the aggregation of perceptions of individual identity. Others interpret organizational identity to be an analogue to individual identity (Whetten, 2006). With regard to the latter, however, some researchers argue that applying individual level theory to the organization as a whole fails to consider the unique characteristics of organizational identity (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000). Indeed, individuals and organizations are vastly different entities. Although organizations may be ascribed powers and responsibilities similar to those held by individuals (Whetten, 2006) organizations, nevertheless, do not possess a mind, they do not feel emotion and individual motivational theories do not always apply (Sherman, 1978). Moreover, outcomes are often unique for individuals when compared to organizations. For example, individuals may quit their jobs; organizations may wind up operations; however, individuals persist, organizations do not. As independent entities, or social actors, organizational cognitive categorization processes are exercised not through the entity, but through its agents. Organizations are not capable of independent self-reflection, a

key process in the development of, for example, individual social identity. There is significant debate about where, exactly, organization level identity resides; for example, does it reside within organizational relationships or within the collective cognitions of relevant individuals? (Pratt, 2003).

It has been argued that organizations may also possess a social identity (Whetten, 2006). However, a core assumption of SIT is that one's social identity will result in behaviour that favours the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The idea that organizations will favour other organizations in the same *social* category is somewhat difficult to reconcile. Even though strategic alliances exist, for many organizations, members of their in-group are also their competitors. Returning to Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal definition, organizational identity focuses on what makes the organization distinct, or different; social identity, in contract, focuses on what makes an individual similar to a prototypical member of the group. What is needed at the organizational level of analysis is "a conception of organizational identity that is unique to identity and uniquely organizational" (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 395).

Some contend that organizational identity may be a source of individual social identity (i.e., individuals may define themselves in terms of the characteristic features of the organization) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cole & Bruch, 2006); however, empirical evidence is scant and conflicting (Dukerich et al., 2002; Tuzun & Caglar, 2009). Theoretically, individual identity may be socially informed even in organizations that do not have an articulated or assumed identity and, individuals may socially identify with organizational groups at the

same time as they choose not to internalize organizational values or goals (i.e., individuals may value the relationship with the group even though they do not perceive the values and goals of the group to be congruent with their own).

Some insight into how organizational identity influences individual social identity may be gleaned from SDT. According to SDT, individuals experience their own behaviour as more autonomous (i.e., self-determined) when the values underpinning the behaviour are integrated or congruent with the individual's own values and when the goals of the behaviour are seen as meaningful and worthwhile (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Accordingly, when the values and goals of an organization are accepted or congruent with those of its members, social identification with the organization should be stronger.

*Proposition 8: Individual social identification with the organization will be stronger when the values and goals of the organization are valued and accepted by its members.*

## Dimensions of Individual Work Identity

A final step in the process of individual work identity concept clarification is to organize relevant concepts in a taxonomy. Based upon the previous discussion, within the meta-concept of individual work identity, there are two secondary concepts – social identity and role identity - stemming from two core theories (i.e., SIT and IT). Within each of these secondary concepts are target dimensions (e.g., group, organization, dyadic other). Additional sub-dimensions of these secondary concepts include situated, deep-structure, and relational

identity. A summary of the proposed taxonomy for concepts, target dimensions of identity, and additional dimensions of individual work identity is found in Table 2-3.

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Insert Table 2-3 about here

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According to this taxonomy, each of the secondary concepts within the meta-concept of individual work identity will be associated with a specific target, may be temporary or deep-routed and, where role identity is concerned, may also incorporate aspects of the nature of a dyadic relationship. In some cases, the nature of these sub-dimensions may seem obvious; for example, a social identity that is associated with a profession as the target is more likely to be deep-structured as professional identities tend to represent longer term commitments than identities associated with a particular workgroup. However, much work is required to establish the exact nature of social and role identities, their targets, and aspects associated with additional sub-dimensions.

**Positioning the Social Identity Approach**

To enhance our understanding of how the core construct of individual work identity, social identity, develops and how it influences organizational outcomes, the role that social identification plays visa vie existing theories of motivation and how it is influenced by organizational processes must be examined. For example, according to proposition 8, SDT may help explain how the identity of the organization nurtures the development of social identification with the organization; more specifically, SDT suggests that the more self-

determined an individual perceives their behaviour relative to a group to be, the more likely they are to strongly identify with the group. In other words, if individuals ascribe to the values and goals associated with the identity of the organization, they are more likely to define themselves in terms of membership in the organization.

More specifically, according to SDT, individual motivational states are closely tied to three basic needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2003). SDT argues that when a person feels they have the opportunity to contribute (i.e., competence), when they feel genuinely connected to others (i.e., relatedness), and when they perceive their own behaviour to be governed by their own choices (i.e., autonomy), they experience higher levels of well-being and characterize their motivational state as autonomous instead of controlled (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). SDT further asserts that the more intrinsically (i.e., autonomously) motivated individuals are, the more likely it is that they will have supportive attitudes and engage in behaviour that furthers group goals. According to SDT, individuals acquire identities gradually and experience in social groups informs the meanings they associate with each identity (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Strength of identification is driven by the degree to which individuals view their choices and actions as self-determined. Therefore, when values and goals of the organization are internalized, perceived levels of self-determination and strength of social identification with the organization are both likely to be high.

To understand how individuals come to integrate values and goals of organizational groups in schemas of self-definition, we need to analyze the influence of organizational processes, such as those inherent in high performance work systems (HPWSs), on the fulfilment of basic psychological needs and, in turn, the development of target-specific social identity. For instance, we may expect that where HPWSs facilitate the fulfilment of these three basic psychological needs, social identification will be strengthened relative to the target group through which the HPWS operates. Considerable research has been devoted to the idea that organizations endeavor to foster healthy social exchange relationships between employees and target others through the delivery of HPWSs (see Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005 for a review). In the same way that the social exchange process has been found to influence trust, social exchange processes inherent in such mechanisms as HPWSs are also likely to influence identification.

Social exchange theorists argue that when employees experience valued social or economic outcomes such as those offered by HPWSs in their relationship with their employer, they will feel the obligation to reciprocate (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Such reciprocation may take the form of strengthened social identification. According to Whitener (2001), human resource management practices intended to augment employee commitment (i.e., HPWSs designed to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities; increase motivation; and, empower individual employees) are more effective than systems designed to control employees because they increase employee trust in the organization and therefore boost individual desire to contribute to

organizational goals. More specifically, such systems are also likely to meet the three basic needs advanced by SDT. For example, dimensions of a HPWS that facilitate the development of knowledge, skills and abilities may fulfill the need for competence, while motivational systems such as performance feedback contribute to a sense of connection, or relatedness. The empowering dimension of HPWSs should similarly foster a sense that needs for autonomy are being met. All of these dimensions are enacted within the context of organizational group memberships; as such, the fulfillment of basic psychological needs should strengthen social identification with the relevant target group. In turn, individuals may be more inclined to purposely strive for organizationally supported goals where basic psychological needs are satisfied (Barrick et al., 2013).

To further understand these processes in light of multiple social identities, we turn to SET and specifically to the target-similarity model. While the focus of SET has traditionally been the actual exchange, more current conceptualizations emphasize characteristics of target-specific relationships rather than the exchange itself. "Relative to those in economic exchange relationships, individuals in social exchange relationships tend to more strongly identify with the person or entity with which they are engaged" (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002, pp. 34-35). Extrapolating arguments from the target-similarity model to SIT, strength of social identification can be considered to be an indicator of the health of the social exchange relationship between the individual and the target group. In turn, the perceived quality of the social exchange relationship and strength of social identification both have implications for target-similar outcomes. For example,

when individuals perceive the well-being of the target group to be intertwined with their own, relational obligation is likely to influence them to behave in ways that support and advance that particular target group (Lavelle et al., 2007). Similarly, social identification with an organization, in particular, has been found to influence employee behaviour towards the organization (i.e., strong identification with the organization has a positive influence upon intent to remain with the organization (van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, & Wagner, 2004)). To summarize, the basic tenets of SET suggest that the process of reciprocation may extend to reinforcement of one`s own social identity; that is, where the organizational develops strong social exchange relationships within target groups through HPWSs, individuals will be more motivated to engage in behaviours that reinforce their sense of social identity as a stereotypical member of the target group.

Moreover, if satisfaction of basic psychological needs is a precursor to identification as suggested by SDT, it is also likely that target-similar variables will influence the satisfaction of these needs and the resulting formation of target-specific identification. For social identity specifically, this model is absolutely logical. Indeed, the degrees of self-determined motivation and the resulting strength of identification may just be the missing links in processes that underlie SET. In the case of HPWSs, for example, HPWSs that satisfy employee needs for genuine connection with others are also likely to strengthen identification with the target group in question. A target-similarity approach would then suggest that such identification would result in higher levels of commitment to the target

group and stronger intentions to remain a member of it. In other words, organizational processes like HPWSs may satisfy basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy; satisfaction of these three key needs leads to social identification. The stronger the identification, the stronger the resulting self-determined (i.e., internal or intrinsic) motivation to act in the best interests of the target group due to a felt obligation to reciprocate. Overall, internalized motivation leads to more purposeful striving on behalf of relevant target group (Barrick et al., 2013).

In summary, dimensions of HPWSs should encourage the development of target-specific social identification through their influence on satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs as outlined in SDT. Target-specific social identification will, in turn, influence target-similar outcomes. Both satisfaction of basic psychological needs and strength of social identification can be viewed as mechanisms through which the social exchange process operates. A process model summarizing points of integration between SET, SDT and SIT is shown in Figure 2-1. I am unaware of any empirical research that addresses the relationships inherent in this process model.

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Insert Figure 2-1 about here

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## Discussion and Implications

The idea that identity may hold significant explanatory power in organizational research is still relatively new; yet, to ensure meaningful progress, there is a need for an organized synthesis of identity research streams. Dilution of

core theories and the assumption that identity constructs are, regardless of theoretical origin, interchangeable, have much to do with disconnects evident in the literature. While there are significant similarities between various paradigms of identity research, the differences are substantial enough to warrant careful attention to theory and specification when conducting research. With respect to social identity in particular, assumptions about conceptual synonymy have the potential to significantly impede the development of important research discovery.

In addition to these important theoretical issues, significant empirical work in the field is required. Notably, the idea that individuals possess multiple identities is increasingly seen as an important factor in the study of attitudes and behaviour, however, evidence as to how target-specific identities form is virtually nonexistent in the extant literature. Most SIT research, for instance, focuses on the organization as the target of identification yet individuals derive their identity from multiple targets of identification including groups and dyadic others. More importantly, research that connects identification processes with target-similar antecedent variables and behavioural outcomes while also addressing points of integration with important theories such as SET and SDT is urgently needed and a gap this research aims to fill. In the SIT research literature, very few studies test the proposition that multiple social identities may coexist, each tied to a specific social group within an organization, and even fewer consider that target-specific forms of social identification are likely to be linked to target-similar antecedents and outcomes.

A process model outlining points of synergy between SET, SDT, and SIT has been advanced in this discussion (Figure 2-1). Empirical research is needed to determine exactly how identification processes are related to motivational states associated with basic human needs and to determine how workplace practises such as those found in HPWSs influence these motivational states. As the central theory within a meta-theory of individual work identity, it is essential that future research contemplate the fundamental tenets of SIT as they relate to both individual (e.g., aspects of motivation) and work-related (e.g., workplace practises) contextual variables as predictors of target-specific (i.e., workgroup and organizational) work identity. Empirical tests of the process model proposed in Figure 2-1 will be conducted in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

Further work is also needed to understand how individual work identity develops in organizational environments. For example, research into the antecedents of SIT based identity should consider the core arguments concerning the purposes that social identity serves. Recent developments in the theory of purposeful work behaviour (TPWB) could be applied to draw out testable propositions. For example, according to the TPWB, motivation to achieve goals is derived from personality traits. When job characteristics align with goal motivation, individuals experience psychological meaningfulness that prompts them to engage in behaviours that lead to positive work outcomes (Barrick et al., 2013). In terms of social identification, where individuals are motivated to achieve positive distinctness and when job characteristics (i.e., characteristics and experiences associated with group membership) align with this goal,

psychological meaningfulness is more likely to be experienced through strong social identification.

SIT argues that social identity aids in ordering, simplifying, and systematizing the social world (Tajfel, 1982b); in turn, it seems likely that elements in the work environment that create order and understanding are likely to influence the development of social identity. However, empirical research examining these elements is scant. Along similar lines, future research may also uncover new insights by considering how sensemaking plays a role in the development of social identities. Sensemaking as a concept describes the process of attributing meaning to circumstances, situations, and events (Weick, 1995). Indeed, at its core, self-definition is a sensemaking process.

Finally, it can be argued that each of the conceptualizations of identity covered in this overview has a social element. Separating the various threads of social influence on individual work identity, whether based upon relationships, roles, or groups is a daunting task. It may also be argued that all socially influenced forms of identity can be viewed as either situated (i.e., temporary or dependent upon the continuation of a specific context) or deep-structured (i.e., internalized self-definitions that inform self-concept in an enduring manner). Nevertheless, it is critical to the progress of our understanding of self-definition in work settings that theoretical foundations and core assumptions of identity theories be articulated and carefully followed. With particular reference to SIT, questions associated with targets of identification (e.g., group or organization) should be incorporated into all future research in light of growing evidence about

the empirical distinctiveness of each form. In line with the propositions in this research, future research should consider how social and role identities, as primary dimensions of overall individual work identity, operate independently and interdependently to inform individual schemas of self-definition. Ultimately, the articulation of an empirical measure that reflects the temporal nature and level of influence of identity (i.e., situated vs. deep-structure) will assist in moving this important conversation beyond the theoretical realm.

Table 2-1

*Theoretical Dimensions of Individual Work Identity*

| Form of Work Identity | Research Field | Theoretical Origins | Who or what is the construct attached to? | What is the identity construct describing? | From whose perspective are perceptions measured? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Identity | Social Psychology<br><br>Organizational Behaviour | Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986)<br><br>Self-Categorization Theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987)<br><br>Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) | Individual | Cognition, evaluation and emotion associated with categorization as a member of one or more groups (e.g., workgroup or organization) | Individual |
| Role Identity | Sociology | Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968)<br><br>Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1962) | Individual | Meaning attached to individual roles (supervisor, colleague, subordinate, assistant, etc.) | Individual and reciprocal others |

(Table 2-1 continued)

| Form of Work Identity | Research Field | Theoretical Origins | Who or what is the construct attached to? | What is the identity construct describing? | From whose perspective are perceptions measured? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relational Identity | Organizational Behaviour | Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968) | Individual | Degree to which individual includes a dyadic role relationship in their self-concept (e.g., relationship between an individual and their leader) | Individual and corresponding dyadic other |
| Situated Identity<br><br>Situated Identification<br><br>Deep-structure Identification | Psychology<br><br>Sociology<br><br>Social Psychology<br><br>Organizational Behaviour | Situated Identity Theory (Alexander & Wiley, 1981; Rousseau, 1998)<br><br>Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, 1934)<br><br>Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) | Individual (Rousseau, 1998)<br><br>Relationship between the actor and the environment at any given time (Alexander & Wiley, 1981) | Situated identity describes reactive perceptions about oneself and others.<br><br>Situated identity is temporally short; triggered by situational cues. Lower level identification.<br><br>Deep-structure identity reflects altered mental schema. Higher level identification. Associated with longer tenure. | Individual and others<br><br>Individual |

(Table 2-1 continued)

| Form of Work Identity | Research Field | Theoretical Origins | Who or what is the construct attached to? | What is the identity construct describing? | From whose perspective are perceptions measured? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Collective Identity | Psychology<br><br>Social Psychology<br><br>Political Psychology | Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986)<br><br>Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 2009; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968)<br><br>Organizational Theory | Psychological concept referring to the individual<br><br>Group level construct referring to the group | Shared categorical membership (demographic, occupation, union membership)<br><br>Shared roles<br><br>Defining aspects of a collective | Individual<br><br>Individuals<br><br>Perceptions of group members about identity of the group |

Table 2-2

*Related Constructs*

| Concept | Theoretical Origins | Who or what is the construct attached to? | What is the construct describing? | From whose perspective are perceptions measured? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Affective Commitment | Equity Theory<br><br>Social Exchange Theory<br><br>Expectancy Theory | Individual | Psychological state (desire), attachment, and behavioural persistence (Meyer & Allen, 1991) (e.g., intention to remain working in an organization). | Individual |
| Collective Self-Esteem | Social Identity Theory | Individual | Level of positive impact associated with social identity<br><br>Evaluations of self that are connected to memberships in various social groups<br><br>Collective self-esteem is an outcome of social identification processes | Individual |

(Table 2-2 continued)

| Concept | Theoretical Origins | Who or what is the construct attached to? | What is the construct describing? | From whose perspective are perceptions measured? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational Identity | Organizational Theory<br><br>Institutional Theory<br><br>Identity Theory | Agents of the organization (individuals or groups)<br><br>The organization as a social actor (Whetton & Mackey, 2002) | Identity claims made by the organization about what is most core, ensuring, and distinctive about the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetton & Mackey, 2002) | Members of the organization |

Table 2-3

*Dimensions of Individual Work Identity*

| Primary Dimensions | Targets of Dimensions | Secondary Dimensions |
|---|---|---|
| Social Identity | Social Identity - Group<br>Social Identity - Organization<br>Social Identity - Profession, Association, Union<br>Social Identity - Occupation | Situated<br>Deep Structure |
| Role Identity | Role Identity - Group<br>Role Identity - Dyadic | Relational<br>Situated<br>Deep Structure |

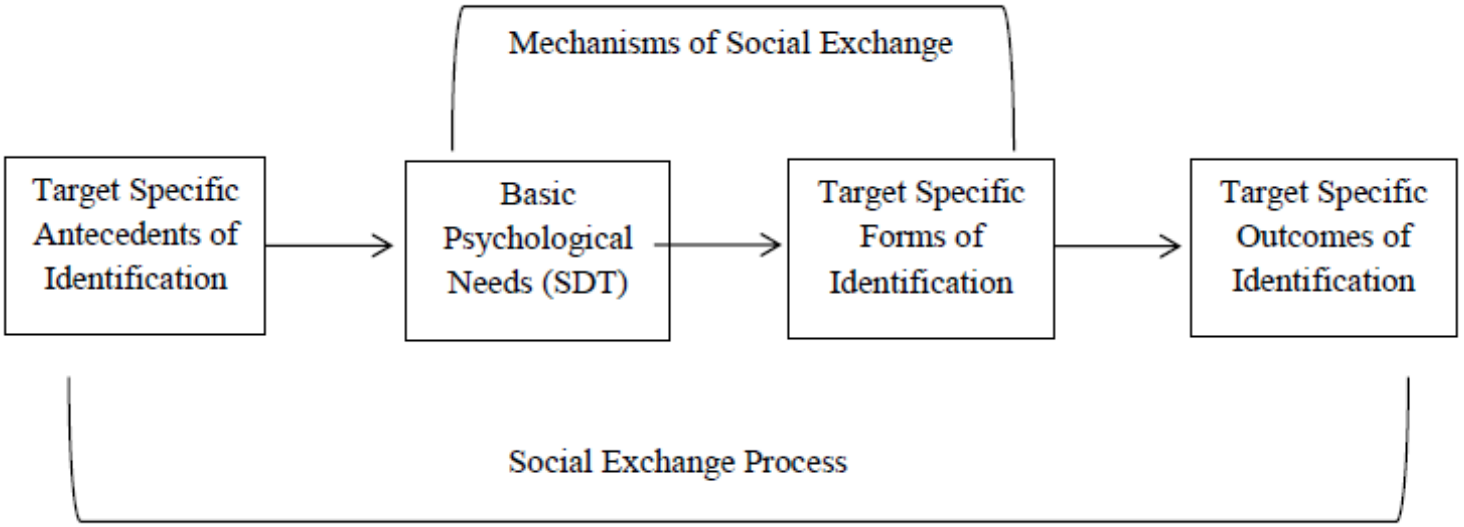


Figure 2-1: SET, SDT and SIT – An integrated model

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## Chapter 3: A Target Similarity Approach to Social Identity and Turnover: Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support as Unique Moderators of Target-Specific Social Identification

### Introduction

In the last few years, social identity theory (SIT) has assumed an important place in the organizational research agenda. According to early SIT research, groups are likened to social categories in which individuals locate themselves through the process of social identification (Tajfel, 1982a). Individuals incorporate these social categories into their schemas of self-definition by internalizing cognitions, evaluations and emotions associated with group membership. As a concept, social identity holds considerable explanatory potential, particularly at the micro level. Indeed, research increasingly demonstrates the influence of social identification on organizationally important individual attitudes and behaviours (e.g., turnover intentions, effects of stress, job satisfaction, and extra-role behaviour) (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, & Wagner, 2004; van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, & Wieseke, 2008).

This research will address some of the gaps that, despite significant progress, continue to persist in organizational SIT research. For example, in the extant SIT research, individual attitudes and outcomes have primarily been linked to identification with the organization as a whole; however, individuals also derive aspects of individual identity from memberships in other organization groups (e.g., departments, unions, cross-functional project teams, etc.). Very few studies have tested the idea that when an individual holds multiple group memberships in an organization, each membership may form the basis for an

empirically distinct form of identity (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; Riketta & Nienaber, 2007; van Dick & Wagner, 2002; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Even fewer studies examine the idea that distinct purposes mean each form of identification will have unique, target-similar antecedents and outcomes (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006). Although it makes sense to consider the relationship between the individual and the organization when analyzing the relationship between social identity and organizationally directed behaviours (e.g., defending the organization; engaging in organizational citizenship behaviours), scholars have proposed that considering additional targets of social identification will lead to greater precision in articulating the relationship between target-specific identification and target-similar work outcomes (van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003).

An additional contribution of this study is the analysis of points of intersection between social exchange theory (SET) and SIT. SET focuses upon social exchanges between parties in a relationship. Unlike economic exchange, a social exchange occurs when an entity conveys a social benefit (e.g., trust, information, status) to another party who then perceives an obligation to reciprocate (Emerson, 1976; Gouldner, 1960). According to the target-similarity model found in current SET research, individual attitudes and behaviour associated with exchanges will vary along target-similar lines (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). According to SIT, individuals may develop social identities for each group in which they consider themselves to be a member (e.g., their

workgroup, the organization as a whole); similarly, SET holds that individuals may form distinct social exchange relationships with their colleagues, the organization as a whole, etc. (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Both SIT and SET assert that the specific target of identification or exchange holds significant implications for behaviour. In the case of multiple social identities, SIT argues that each identity will have a unique purpose (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1982b; 1986). SET correspondingly claims that individuals will reciprocate benefits to the target-similar party in the social exchange relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Drawing upon the commonalities between SET and SIT, this study extrapolates arguments from the target-similarity model found in SET and applies them to SIT to leverage predictions about how behavioural intentions are influenced by two target-specific forms of social identity. Specifically, this study tests the proposition that social identification assumes empirically distinct forms depending upon the target group (i.e., workgroup vs. organization) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Second, this study tests the proposition that target-specific social identification (i.e., workgroup and organization) relates differentially to target-specific behavioural intentions (i.e., workgroup vs. organization staying intentions). Third, the idea that target-specific social identification is moderated by target-similar agents will be examined. Two potential moderators are considered: leader-group prototypicality (LGP) (i.e., the extent to which the leader is perceived to be a prototypical member of the group) (Hogg, 2001) and perceived organizational support (POS) (i.e., individual perceptions about the

extent to which the organization values both the individual and their work) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Throughout, points of integration between SIT and SET are examined with the goal of deepening current understanding about the links between these two important theories and how, considered together, they may explain more than either theory is able to on its own.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Social Identity Theory: On the Co-Existence of Unique Social Identities

According to SIT, individuals define themselves by the company they keep. SIT was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986) to help explain the circumstances in which individuals choose group supportive over purely self-serving behaviours. Unlike personal identity which is derived from individual unique traits and characteristics, social identity is driven by categorization processes associated with membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Personal identity seeks to differentiate individuals from one another (Turner, 1982); socially derived identities de-emphasize individuality in favour of a common set of group attributes or characteristics. Formally defined, social identity is "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" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255).

As it applies to organizations, Ashforth and Mael (1989) define social identification "as the perception of oneness with or belonging to" (p. 21) a group.

Accordingly, social identity is considered a cognitive state that acts as a tool to assist individuals in shaping, organizing and sensing their place in the surrounding environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Owens, 2003). Tajfel (1982a) argues that group identification commences with cognition (i.e., an awareness of group membership) followed by evaluation (i.e., an assessment of the value of group membership to the individual). Positive emotional experiences associated with membership strengthen and reinforce perceptions of the value of membership (Tajfel, 1982b). Throughout this process, individuals also assess the degree to which they are similar to prototypical others in the group.

The process of identification is also closely determined by the extent to which group membership is perceived to afford the individual a source of positive self-esteem (Ashforth , Harrison, & Corley, 2008). SIT argues that individuals who derive an enhanced sense of self-esteem from a particular group membership are more likely to identify with the group and to incorporate aspects of membership in mental schemas of self-definition. In this way, positive evaluations about membership can be seen as a tangible manifestation of the nature of the social exchange relationship between self and group. Indeed, identification with one's group has been proposed as a proxy measure of the quality of social exchange between an individual and another entity at work (Lavelle et al., 2007). Strong social identification (i.e. with one's workgroup) may reflect and reinforce a high quality social exchange relationship with one group (e.g., the workgroup) while low social identification (i.e., with the organization) may simultaneously

indicate a low quality social exchange relationship with another (e.g., organization).

The implications of social identification for behaviour are significant. Specifically, SIT argues that behaviour of weak identifiers will be interpersonal (i.e., motivated by a desire for individual rather than group benefit) while behaviour of strong identifiers will be intergroup (i.e., motivated by a desire to do what is best for the group) (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). When behaviour is interpersonal, the individual is acting as a sole agent – behaviour that may, for example, reflect a relationship involving more economic than social exchange. Conversely, when behaviour is intergroup, the individual is acting as a prototypical member, or agent, for the group and behaviour is based upon social intergroup is thought to be dependent upon the level of salience (i.e., the degree to which, at any given time, an individual is cognitively aware of a particular membership) attached to group membership. Strength of identification varies, as do the quality of social exchange relationships, depending upon the group in question (Oldmeadow, Platow, & Foddy, 2005).

SIT argues that, in the context of multiple social identities, which social identity is primarily salient at any given time will depend upon the context (Oldmeadow et al., 2005). Employees will value some identities, and by proxy, some social exchange relationships more than others and each identity will be associated with unique emotional experiences. For instance, where an individual's socio-emotional needs are met primarily through a specific group membership, perceptions about the quality of the social exchange relationship between the

group and the individual are likely to be favourable. In turn, when group membership reinforces a positive sense of self, identification with the group is likely to be strong. Why individuals identify more strongly as members of some groups than others is an area where SET may also lend insight. Just as assessment of exchange relationships varies by group, so too then, will strength of various target-specific identifications as the emotional aspect of identification may be closely connected to and reinforced by perceptions of the exchange relationship.

Self-categorization theory (SCT) posits that self-categorizations (i.e., the perception that one is grouped either physically or psychologically with others) exist at different levels of abstraction. Along these lines, Ashforth et al. (2008) describe identification with teams, workgroups, and other subgroups as an expression of levels of self within the organization. Taken together, SET claims that individuals can experience dissimilar socio-emotional relationships with various groups, SCT argues that each membership represents a unique category, and SIT asserts that various targets of identification are tied to specific and differing purposes. In the present study, it is expected then, that workgroup social identification and organizational social identification will each be unique.

*Hypothesis 1. Workgroup social identity (SID-W) and organizational social identity (SID-O) are empirically distinct.*

**Applying the Target-Similarity approach to SIT**

According to Riketta and Nienaber, (2007) "identification with a particular focus correlates more strongly with those potential outcomes . . . directed at the same focus" (p. 61). The theory of planned behaviour similarly argues that behaviours connected to a particular focus are more likely to be more influenced by attitudes associated with that same focus (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Correspondingly, the target-similarity model argues that social exchange attitudes and behaviours follow a target-specific pattern (Lavelle et al., 2007). Applying this reasoning to SIT, it may be the case that the purpose of workgroup identification differs from that of organizational identification and that behaviours associated with each of these purposes will be unique. Indeed, strength of social identification depends upon the degree to which the individual identifies as a member of a particular category (i.e. their awareness of membership), the value placed upon category membership (i.e., their evaluation of membership), and the relative centrality of the identity to individual self-concept (i.e., the affective experience of membership) (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). When individuals are aware of and value membership, and when membership provides positive emotional experiences, a key purpose of social identification is fulfilled, that is, individuals will experience a sense of positive meaning.

Notably, recent conceptualizations of social exchange have the potential to aid in understanding the unique relationships found between target-similar identification, antecedents, and outcomes. According to target-similarly model research, "[r]elative to those in economic exchange relationships, individuals in

social exchange relationships tend to more strongly identify with the person or entity with which they are engaged" (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002, pp. 34-35). This suggests that individuals who identify strongly with an entity such as the workgroup or the organization will be more likely to engage in reciprocal behaviours that are beneficial to the group as the target entity of exchange. Also, when employees perceive the well-being of the target group to be comingled with their own, a sense of relational obligation will prompt them to behave in ways that support and advance the group (Lavelle et al., 2007). It seems then, that social identification processes play an important role in social exchange relationships where obligation and reciprocation perpetuate and reinforce target-specific forms of identification.

A persistent gap in the research is that there tends to be little to no distinction between targets of identity in the literature. To date, workgroup identity has been found to correlate more strongly than organizationally-focused identity with work-related attitudes (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Similarly, research into foci of identity for school teachers found significant differences between career, school, team and occupational identity (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005). The present paper extends current understanding of the nature of target-specific social identification and in particular, how it influences outcomes at a target-similar level.

**Linking Target-Similar Identities to Turnover**

In terms of behavioural intentions, when a specific social identity does not contribute to positive self-definition, where possible, individuals may develop

intentions to relinquish group membership and join a group more likely to enhance their sense of self (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Intentions to remain or leave a group are connected to two SIT claims: first, SIT claims that individuals strive to reduce uncertainly in their lives and seek continuity over time. As such, leaving one's job marks a break in the stability that staying in one's job might otherwise provide. Second, SIT argues that individuals will identify with and favour groups that provide them with a sense of positive self-esteem. According to SET, as feelings of belonging and self-esteem are enhanced, individuals will similarly seek to continue the social exchange relationship.

SIT argues that individuals who identify with a particular group will behave in ways that favor the group. While exceptions no doubt exist, leaving one's job is not typically considered favourable in-group behaviour. Research supports the proposition that organizational social identification is negatively related to organizational withdrawal intentions in general (e.g., absence, lateness, turnover or retirement intentions) (Abrams, Ando, & Hinkle, 1998; van Dick et al., 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006; van Knippenberg, van Dick, & Tavares, 2007), to turnover intentions in particular (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Mael & Ashforth, 1995) and positively related to intentions to remain with the organization (Wan-Huggins, Riordan, & Griffeth, 1998).

Because target-specific forms of identity are infused with unique purposes and because the quality of exchange relationships is likely to vary depending upon the target, multiple target-specific forms of social identification are unlikely to

have equal influence on individual behavioural intentions. Despite this, research linking social identification to turnover has exclusively considered turnover as an organizational phenomena despite the fact that workgroup turnover also presents challenges for organizations, even when the individual remains a member of the organization as a whole (e.g., nursing, teachers). For example, strong identification with one's workgroup should prompt positive exchange intentions (i.e. stronger intentions to remain a group member) directed at the workgroup. The same pattern can be expected where the organization is the target of identification.

*Hypothesis 2a. Workgroup social identification (SID-W) will be a positive predictor of workgroup staying intentions (WSI).*

*Hypothesis 2b. Organizational social identification (SID-O) will be a positive predictor of organizational staying intentions (OSI).*

While target-specific identification is expected to influence target-similar outcomes, when identities are nested, as is the case for workgroups within organizations, cross-target effects are also expected. Nested, or lower order identities (e.g., workgroup), are proximal, concrete, and exclusive while higher order identities (e.g., organization) are more distal, abstract, and inclusive (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Lower order identities are more likely than higher order identities to represent one's primary group; as such, members of lower order groups interact with group members more frequently, perceive more common ground between members, and share high levels of task interdependence (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Opportunities for frequent interaction also provide

stronger indications about the meaning and value of group identity as well as cues about normative behaviour (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Individuals also experience more familiarity and cohesion within their workgroup than within the organization as a whole (Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Social exchange relationships at this level are also likely to be perceived as high quality.

However, higher order and nested identities fulfil different purposes. For example, higher order memberships satisfy individual needs for inclusion while the exclusive nature of lower order memberships provides individuals with a sense of distinctness within the organization (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Moreover, through substantive (e.g., human resource management processes pertaining to such issues as hiring, motivating, providing feedback, etc.) and symbolic practises (e.g., mission articulation, storytelling, and promotion of the organization's identity), organizations may potentially influence strength of higher order identities (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001) as well as perceptions about the quality of employee social exchange relationships with the organization as a whole.

Accordingly, it seems that workgroup social identification will have the strongest influence on workgroup staying intentions, yet, by virtue of the nested nature of this identity, it should also influence organizational staying intentions. Simply put, because high quality social exchange relationships demonstrated through strong workgroup social identification influence workgroup staying intentions, they should also contribute to stronger organizational staying intentions. It is a fact, for instance, that in order to remain in the workgroup, one

must remain, by default, a member of the organization. It is expected, therefore, that strength of workgroup identification will predict organizational staying intentions. Applying the target-similarity approach, strength of the relationship should be strongest between target-similar phenomena.

*Hypothesis 3. Workgroup social identification will be a positive predictor of organizational staying intentions (OSI). SID-O will be a stronger positive predictor of OSI than will SID-W.*

Perceptions about one's relationships with organization may also influence actions at the workgroup level. While organizational social identification should influence organizational staying intentions, it is likely to also predict workgroup staying intentions, but to a lesser degree. In this case, an individual need not remain a member of the workgroup to remain a member of the organization; however, organizational practises that encourage identification with the organization (e.g., HR practises that motivate and empower) are often manifest at the workgroup level. The resulting overlap means that employees who see themselves as part of the overarching organizational group may extrapolate this perception to include behaviour that favors the workgroup (i.e., workgroup staying intentions) as simultaneously beneficial to the aggregate organizational group. It is expected, therefore, that strength of organizational identification will predict workgroup staying intentions. Applying the target-similarity approach, I expect strength of the relationship to be strongest between target-similar phenomena.

*Hypothesis 4. Organizational social identification (SID-O) will be a positive predictor of workgroup staying intentions (WSI). SID-W will be a stronger positive predictor of WSI than will SID-O.*

**Applying the Target-Similarity Model in Moderated Relationships**

Target-specific behavioural intentions that influence target-similar outcomes may also be tempered by target-similar phenomena. In the few studies that examine the notion of target-similar moderation, social support has been found to moderate the effect of social identification on stress reduction (Haslam et al., 2005); gender and tenure have been found to moderate the effects of professional social identification on job satisfaction, commitment and overall career satisfaction (Loi, Hang-yue, & Foley, 2004) and, aspirational motivation and leadership have been found to moderate the relationship between team social identification and employee creativity (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009).

Here, I argue that the relationship between identification and intent to stay may be moderated by perceptions of support from the organization or perceptions about one's workgroup leader. Where, for example, an employee feels high levels of support from the organization but feels their workgroup is not a valuable source of positive self-definition, they may decide to change jobs within the organization to continue to satisfy the purpose of organizational membership (e.g. positive self-definition derived from membership in an organization that also supports them) and that of workgroup membership (e.g. positive self-definition

derived from membership in a new workgroup that has a more group prototypical leader).

**The Social Identity Model of Leadership**

At the workgroup level, the social identity model of leadership (SIMOL) expands upon limited extant research examining the question of how leadership influences relationships between identification and relevant outcomes (Hogg & Knippenberg, 2003). The central argument of the SIMOL is that individuals are more likely to follow, endorse and support leaders who are seen as highly prototypical members of the group as a whole (Hogg, 2001). Recent research contemplating the effects of leader prototypicality upon the attitudes and behaviours of followers has found, for instance, that when leaders are highly prototypical of the group, the relationship between team based social identification and employee creative behaviour is strengthened (Hirst et al., 2009). Other research supports the proposition that leaders are perceived to be more effective when group identification and leader group prototypicality (LGP) are both high and group identification has been found to interact with LGP in predicting individual work effort (Cicero, Bonaiuto, Pierro, & Knippenberg, 2008). Additionally, LGP has been found to interact with promotion focus in predicting employee satisfaction (Pierro, Cicero, & Higgins, 2009).

The connection between social identity and leadership is an area of considerable emergent interest (Ashforth et al., 2008), yet little work has been done in this area. Traditional leadership theories emphasize personal characteristics (e.g., Great Man theory (Carlyle, 1842), traits (Judge & Bono,

2000)), and context (i.e., leadership style depends upon the situation). In contrast, the central argument of the SIMOL is that leaders are assessed not in terms of their own unique personality, traits or behaviours; rather, leaders are assessed in terms of the extent to which they represent the unique shared identity of the group that they lead (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004). According to the SIMOL, individuals who identify strongly with a particular group are more likely to endorse and perceive to be effective group leaders only when such leaders reflect the prototype of the group (Hogg, Martin, & Weeden, 2003). SIMOL argues that when an individual believes their leader has much in common with team members, is a good example of the kind of people in the workgroup, is similar to group members, and represents the prototypical characteristics of the average group member, the quality of the social exchange relationship is likely to be positively influenced. In this way, LGP may also reflect perceptions about the quality of social exchange relationships. Certainly, the idea that LGP predicts the degree to which team members follow and support a leader, suggests LGP may also be a mechanism in the social exchange process triggering positive reciprocal behaviour towards one's leader.

Just as SIT argues that strong social identification prompts positive behaviour towards one's in-group, so too does SET argue that in strong social exchange relationships, individuals are motivated to make sacrifices for each other and to afford one another recognition and respect (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). Taken together, support and endorsement of group leaders is an example of both positive social exchange and in-group favoritism. Further research suggests

that individuals support and endorse leaders who are perceived as prototypical because they interpret the behaviour of leaders more favorably when they also believe the leader to be highly prototypical of the group (Ellemers et al., 2004). Indeed, a leader who is seen by the group as "one of us" tends to have more unconditional relationships with followers than leaders who are not perceived to be prototypical of the team (Ellemers et al., 2004). This suggests that perceptions about leader-group prototypicality may be more influential than actual leadership behaviour

Human resource management literature similarly suggests that the ability of leaders to adjust to the characteristics of the group in a way that meets group psychological needs is a key factor in their success as a leader (Liu, Lepak, Takeuchi, & Sims, 2003). Others argue that leaders play the role of *entrepreneurs of identity*; that is, they are responsible for catalyzing a sense of shared vision within the group (Haslam, Postmes, & Ellemers, 2003; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). In light of these propositions, it is expected that perceptions of group leaders as prototypical group members will strengthen relationships between workgroup identity and desirable workplace behaviours.

> *Hypothesis 5. Perceptions of Leader-Group Protypicality (LGP) will moderate the relationship between workgroup social identification (SID-W) and workgroup staying intentions (WSI) such that higher levels of LGP will be associated with higher levels of WSI.*

**Perceived Organizational Support**

A central tenet of organizational support theory (OST) is that employees develop perceptions about the degree to which the organization values them and their work (perceived organizational support: POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Notably, researchers have recommended expanding the foundations of OST to include SIT in order to enhance our understanding of the manner in which POS operates (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, & Relyea, 2003). According to OST, employees experience support from the organization as discretionary, thus, obligations to return supportive actions are likely to be similarly discretionary. For example, it has been proposed that employees exchange commitment (e.g., organizational staying intentions) for POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

In general, POS is thought to reflect perceptions about the quality of the social exchange relationship between the individual and the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Research has also found that POS predicts behaviour directed towards the organization more strongly than that directed towards individuals (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). However, how social identification and POS contribute jointly to such outcomes as staying intentions is poorly understood. One possible answer is that the influence of organizational social identification on intentions to remain in the organization depends upon perceptions of POS. For example, when individuals are keenly aware of, value, and generally have positive emotional experiences associated with organizational membership (i.e., when social identification with the

organization is strong), believing that the organization values both them and their work is likely to strengthen the relationship between SID-O and OSI.

*Hypothesis 6. Perceptions of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) will moderate the relationship between organizational social identification (SID-O) and organizational staying intentions (OSI) such that higher levels of POS will be associated with higher levels of OSI.*

Hypothesized relationships are represented in Figure 3-1.

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Insert Figure 3-1 about here

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## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Participants for this study were permanent, non-unionized, non-supervisory employees between the ages of 25 and 65 who had been employed in a service-industry organization for minimally one year. Participants were recruited by Cint (www.cint.com), an international software organization that provides access to over 7 million panel participants who are modestly compensated for survey participation. At Time 1, 10,613 email invitations were distributed. 6,219 responded (58.6% response rate). 1,979 opted out prior to visiting the survey site; 2,335 opted out after visiting the survey site. Eligibility criteria eliminated 1,238 participants and 238 participants did not complete the survey. In total, 628 participants completed the survey at Time 1 (74.0% completion rate). Three months later, the 628 Time 1 participants were asked to complete a second survey. 389 participants responded. After excluding

respondents who changed organizations or jobs between time periods and removing those with missing data, the total number of matched respondents was 302 (match response rate of 45.5%).

**Measures: Time 1**

For all items at Time 1, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Workgroup Social Identification (SID-W).*** 4 items from the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale were selected to fit the context of the study. Sample items include "I am very interested in what others think about this workgroup" and "When I talk about this workgroup, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they.'"

***Organizational Social Identification (SID-O).*** Organizational social identification was measured using the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale. Items were identical to those used for workgroup social identification; however, the word "organization" was substituted for "workgroup" in each of the four items.

***Leader-Group Prototypicality (LGP).*** Leader-group prototypicality was measured using items developed by van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005). Sample items include "My supervisor is a good example of the kind of people that are members of my workgroup" and "My supervisor represents what is characteristic of my workgroup."

***Perceived Organizational Support (POS).*** Perceived organizational support was measured using seven items (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Sample items include "The organization really cares

about my well-being" and "The organization strongly considers my goals and values."

**Measures: Time 2**

For all items at Time 2, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Workgroup Staying Intentions (WSI).*** Intentions to remain with one's workgroup were assessed using three items (Colarelli, 1984). A sample item is "I rarely think of leaving this workgroup."

***Organizational Staying Intentions (OSI).*** Organizational staying intentions were assessed using the same three items used to assess workgroup staying intentions; however, the word "organization" was substituted for "workgroup" in each of the three items.

Items used to measure each construct are listed in Appendix A.

**Statistical Analysis**

Empirical validity of latent constructs was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); causal hypotheses were tested through structural equation modelling (SEM) and path analysis (PA) using MPLUS (version 5.21; (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). A robust maximum likelihood estimator (i.e., MLM – maximum likelihood mean adjusted) was used in all CFAs and SEMs. MLM estimation produces a scaling correction factor that reflects the degree of non-normality in the distribution and provides for analysis without the need to transform variable indicators by computing a solution that takes non-normality into account (Satorra

& Bentler, 1994). For example, the scaling correction factor in the CFA of SID-W and SID-O was 1.84 indicating skewness in measurement indicators.

Although full structural equation modelling (SEM) measuring both latent constructs and structural causal paths is the ideal approach to testing the conditional model (i.e., interaction hypotheses), the presence of multiple moderation hypotheses in SEM is problematic due to the processing power required to address a high number of integration points (i.e., > 50,000). Also, conditional SEM does not allow for the use of robust estimation techniques (i.e., MLM estimation), and does not provide fit indices to assess the suitability of the model. Nonetheless, a full SEM was initially used to test measurement, structural relationships and interactions; however, when compared to a PA model (a special case of SEM modelling causal relationships among observed latent constructs (Lei & Wu, 2007), there was no substantive difference in loading patterns, significance or coefficient sizes. Because PA provides more opportunity for diagnostic analysis and requires less computer processor power, final results were assessed using PA. In the PAs, after averaging item scores to create scales, construct distributions were, for the most part, multivariate normal. Also, a comparison of results using ML and MLM revealed no substantive difference in loading patterns, coefficient sizes or significance levels. Therefore, ML was used in PAs. One advantage of ML estimation over MLM estimation is the ability to readily interpret the value and significance of the chi-square statistic ($X^2$). The $X^2$ is not valid for interpretation using robust estimation techniques such as MLM,

due to the need to scale the fit indices. When using ML estimation, a p-value greater than .05 for $X^2$ is an indicator of good fit to the data.

Model fit for the CFA was assessed using the CFI (i.e., comparative fit index) statistic, the RMSEA (i.e., root mean squared error of approximation) and the SRMR (i.e., Standardized Root Mean Square Residual). CFI values greater than .90 (Kelloway, 1998), RMSEA levels less than .10 (Kelloway, 1998), and SRMR values less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) are generally considered to be indications of acceptable model fit.

For all PAs, predictor indicators were centered to minimize nonessential multicollinearity (i.e., multicollinearity due to the scaling), however, essential multicollinearity (i.e., multicollinearity resulting from nonnormality in distributions of the predictor variables (Dalal & Zickar, 2011; Moosbrugger, Schermelleh-Engel, Kelava, & Klein, 2009) was present in variables SID-W and SID-O. The correlation between SID-W and SID-O was .64 which would not, in and of itself, necessarily suggest potential issues with multicollinearity. However, just as predictor variables can be highly correlated and not present multicollinearity problems, so too can predictor variable correlations be within acceptable levels and still present multicollinearity challenges. Multicollinearity is suggested by symptoms in model results; more specifically, when one or more of the predictor variable regression coefficients are contrary to accepted theoretical properties of these variables, multicollinearity is the likely suspect (Mansfield & Helms, 1982).

In the present study, when both SID-W and SID-O are present as predictors in the same regression equation, the regression coefficient for SID-W becomes negative. In cases such as these, it has been forcefully argued in the SEM literature that the role of causal reasoning is paramount in determining how to best model data to reflect theoretical and empirical knowledge (Arah, 2008). It is extremely unlikely, for example, that SID-W would be a positive predictor of intentions to leave either one's group or one's organization. In addition to being counterintuitive, it is contrary to the extant literature. Because essential multicollinearity cannot be eliminated through statistical analytical techniques (e.g., transformation or centering of variables), experts advocate the removal of one of the offending predictors from the regression equation (Moosbrugger et al., 2009). While collinear variables cannot be modelled as predictors in the same regression equation, in SEM they can be modelled in separate regression equations within the same model. They can also exist as covariates in the regression equation. In this study, the PA model was designed to test the effects of SID-W and LGP on WSI and the effects of SID-O and POS on OSI. To rule out spurious effects due to multicollinearity, effects of SID-W and SID-O on WSI and OSI were tested in two simplified models, an approach advocated to reduce the likelihood of misspecification (Hayduk, 1988).

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Insert Table 3-1 about here

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Several alternate models were also tested to rule out other explanations for the phenomena under study.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics and analysis

Means, standard deviations, correlations between model variables, and cronbach's alpha coefficients for PAs (on the diagonal) are presented in Table 3-1. Results of the CFA of SID-W and SID-O are presented in Table 3-2. In the CFA of SID-W and SID-O, the two-factor model fit the data significantly better than the one factor model providing support for hypothesis 1. For the two-factor model, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06, and SRMR = .04 compared to the one-factor model which produced a CFI = .88, RMSEA = .14, and SRMR = .08. Factor loadings on each corresponding factor were significant with unstandardized loadings greater than .68 in all cases. An additional four-factor model for all predictors (i.e., SID-W, SID-O, POS and LGP) also fit the data well with all indicators loading (unstandardized) on their corresponding factors at greater than .68, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .05, and SRMR = .04.

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Insert Table 3-2 about here

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For path analysis models, fit was assessed using CFI, RMSEA, SRMR, and the Chi-Square statistic ($X^2$). Model 1 tested the effects of SID-W on WSI and OSI. Model 1 fit the data well with CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04; scaling correction factor = 1.26. The effect of SID-W on WSI and OSI was

positive and significant providing support for hypotheses 2a and 3. Also in support of hypothesis 3, SID-O was a stronger predictor than SID-W of OSI. Model 2 tested the effects of SID-O on WSI and OSI. Model 2 fit the data equally well, with CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04; scaling correction factor = 1.26. Again, results were positive and significant, providing support for hypothesis 2b. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. Specifically SID-O was a positive predictor of WSI; however, SID-O was found to be a stronger positive predictor of WSI than SID-W, which was contrary to what was expected. Both Models 1 and 2 were tested using a robust ML estimator (i.e., MLM). Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) results are shown in Figure 3-2.

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Insert Figure 3-2 about here

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For Model 3, tested using a standard ML estimator, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .02, and $X^2[2] = 3.52$, p = .32) indicating excellent fit to the dataset. Hypothesized interactions were both statistically significant and the direction of the relationships shown in the plots in Figures 3-3 and 3-4 were in the anticipated direction, thus providing support for hypotheses 5 and 6. Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients for the interaction terms are shown in Figure 3-3.

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Insert Figure 3-3 about here

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Interaction results are presented in Figures 3-4 and 3-5.

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Insert Figures 3-4 and 3-5
about here

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## Discussion

The goal of this study was to apply the logic of the target-similarly model found in current SET research to the study of social identification in organizational settings. Specifically, this study tested the hypothesis that social identification assumes distinct forms depending upon the target of identification (i.e., workgroup or organization), examined the proposition that target-specific forms of social identification are uniquely related to target-similar outcomes (i.e., workgroup and organizational staying intentions) and that these relationships are moderated by a target-similar variables. SET was integrated throughout to expand the current boundaries of both SIT and SET and enable a greater understanding of points of synergy between these two important theories.

Several contributions are now addressed. The conceptual model proposed aligns target-similar identities, moderators, and outcomes in a framework for SIT researchers that will facilitate understanding of how multiple identities interact with other variables to influence work outcomes. Social identity research has traditionally been preoccupied with the organization as the sole source of identification; to my knowledge, this is one of the few studies to link target-specific identification to target-similar behavioural intentions (for others, see: van Dick & Wagner, 2002; van Dick, Wagner, & Lemmer, 2004). To provide for

comparability across studies, recommendations in the research (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Riketta, 2005) were followed in choosing a scale (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) with a record of empirical validity to measure perceptions about identity across two separate target groups. This research also answers the call to examine social identity moderation hypotheses (Riketta, 2005) and extends the analysis by using a target-similarity approach to simultaneously examine links between more than one target-specific form of identification and relevant outcomes. Finally, while some research examines the differences between SIT and SET (van Knippenberg et al., 2007), to my knowledge, this is the first study to examine the synergistic explanatory power of these theories together. Implications of the main findings are now discussed.

First, statistical sample results suggest a difference in strength of workgroup vs. organizational social identification. For instance, the mean for workgroup identification ($M=5.45$) is statistically significantly different than the mean for organizational identification ($M=5.03$, $p < .01$). This suggests that individuals identify more strongly with memberships when group members are present and the form of the membership is less abstract. In other words, respondents in this study appear to experience a stronger sense of oneness with their workgroups than they do with their organizations. This follows the SIT claim that levels of proximity, exclusiveness and abstraction are important components of identity when the structure of the organization includes nested units (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). The difference in average strength of these target-specific social identities also lends credence to the argument that

individuals view each source of self-categorization as a distinct membership group. It also supports a central tenet of SCT (Turner et al., 1987); specifically, it is through the cognitive process of categorizing oneself, along with others in the group, as a distinct unit, that social identity is developed and, in all contexts, one categorization will be perceived as most salient (Oldmeadow et al., 2005). In this sample, the predominant social identity target appears to be the workgroup. As expected, workgroup identification was also demonstrated to be empirically distinct from organizational identification.

Moreover, when it comes to staying intentions, the target of identification makes a difference. At both target levels, stronger identity was associated with stronger staying intentions. Overall, organizational identification was a stronger predictor of intentions to remain both with one's workgroup and within the organization as a whole. These findings support the principles advanced by both SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) and SCT (Turner et al, 1987). According to SIT, the influence of the group on social identification will depend upon individual awareness and evaluation of membership and, to some degree, upon the emotion associated with self-definition as a member of the collective (Tajfel & Fraser, 1978). Evidence from this study suggests that when group membership is not valued or emotionally constructive or, when it does not contribute in a positive way to individual self-definition, leaving the workgroup and/or the organization is one possible resolution.

Further to this, the results of this study suggest that poor quality workgroup exchange relationships may be more easily remedied than poor quality

organizational exchange relationships. For example, an individual may change workgroups yet retain organizational membership. They may experience a more positive social exchange relationship with the new workgroup while leaving organizational identification and its related outcomes undisturbed. Influence of workgroup social identity on organizational staying intentions is symbolic in that workgroup membership tends to shift more frequently and proximally relative to overall organizational membership. The result is that individuals may view workgroup membership as more situated (i.e., contingent upon the continuation of current circumstances, including those associated with prototypicality of the current leader) (Riketta, van Dick, & Rousseau, 2006). Organizational identification, especially where long term employment is a goal, is more deep-structure in nature (i.e., likely to influence self-definition in ensuring ways) (Riketta et al., 2006) and therefore more powerful as a predictor of both organizational and workgroup staying intentions. Although individuals tend to be committed to their workgroups, perceived changes in organizational identification seem to exert a powerful and far-reaching influence on intentions to remain committed to not only the organization, but the workgroup.

An overarching goal of this study was to apply the target-similarity approach from SET (Lavelle et al., 2007) to SIT to address the gap in the literature concerning multiple target-specific forms of identity. According to both SET and SIT, individuals see the organization, individuals in the organization, and groups within the organization as distinct targets; therefore, behaviour targeted towards the organization may be distinctly motivated when compared to

that directed towards the group. The results of this study support the proposition that the relationship between target-specific group identification and similarly targeted staying intentions is moderated by target-similar variables. As illustrated in Figure 3-4, when individuals perceive their leader to be similar to prototypical group members, they are more likely to intend to remain in their workgroup, regardless of the extent to which they derive a sense of identity from group membership. However, the effect is most pronounced for those who derive a strong sense of who they are from workgroup membership and also see their group leader as "one of them." In this way, the influence of workgroup social identification is strengthened when employees also perceive their group leader to be a prototypical representative of the group.

As illustrated in Figure 3-5, for both low and high identifiers, perceptions that the organization values the individual and their work made a significant difference in whether or not that individual intends to stay with the organization, and the effects of POS are stronger for those who derive a strong sense of identity from their organizational membership than for those who do not. Here, the influence of organizational social identification is magnified when employees are part of an organization that cares about them as a person while also valuing the contributions that they make to the organization. OST suggests that POS magnifies felt obligation to reciprocate (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In the present study, organizational social identification conveys the obligation to remain with the organization while POS strengthens and reinforces this obligation.

**Limitations**

A few limitations are now addressed. First, although the longitudinal design of this study supports a causal link between identification and staying intentions, collection of data at several points in time would provide stronger evidence of causation. For example, one could collect data on moderators (POS, LGP) at time 2 and outcome variables (OSI, WSI) at time 3. Additionally, the use of self-report measures may be perceived as problematic (e.g., Podsakoff & Organ, 1986); however, with the exception of measuring actual turnover, self-report measures are likely the only way to assess these particular concepts. Also, self-reported intentions have had a long history of predicting actual behaviour across studies and situations (e.g., Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Mobley, 1977; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978). A concern related to single-source measures is common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To address this, a test for the presence of a single factor for identification in the confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Had common method variance been a serious problem, inflated and uniform correlations across the matrix would also have been observed. Finally, revisiting the manner in which the questions appear in future survey studies (i.e., ordering of items, proximity of workgroup and organizational items, etc.) may improve results.

I am unaware of any analysis of the hypotheses in this study that has utilized a random sample of respondents across organizations and in a wide geographic setting. Most research in social identity in organizations has sampled from a few specific organizations with clearly defined sub-groupings of work

teams. While the sample used in this study contributes to the generalizability of findings, it also presents some challenges. For instance, one approach to testing alternate models for this study was to consider only respondents working in organizations where they would be likely to see their workgroup as distinct from their organization as opposed to respondents working in organizations where organization and workgroup might be perceived as one and the same (e.g., someone working in a flower shop with only two or three colleagues). In the present study, alternate models controlling for organizational size did not affect the results. It is expected that the results of future research will produce similar findings.

**Future Research**

The findings of this study suggest that target-specific social identification, prototypicality of workgroup leaders, and perceptions of organizational support are all important predictors of staying intentions in both workgroups and the organization. In the future, researchers should apply more precision to uncovering the role and place of social identification processes in perceptions about the quality of social exchange relationships and in determining how organizational practises and processes either contribute to or erode the tendency of employees to define themselves in terms of their workgroup and/or their organization. Of particular interest in this regard is the question of how human resource management practises influence both workgroup and organizational social identification.

**Implications**

While this study measures staying intentions, most conventional research assesses its corollary, turnover intentions. When it comes to turnover, the focus of the research has been organizational, as opposed to workgroup, turnover. Price (1977), for example, conceptualized turnover as "the degree of movement across the membership boundary of the organization" (p. 4). However, there are also membership boundaries within the organization. There may be advantages to internal turnover (e.g., individuals may progress to new levels of responsibility and contribute more to the organization as a result) yet, not all internal turnover is desirable. For instance, when specialized members leave work teams, individuals moving into positions from within the organization may still require training. In fact, many of the arguments associated with the disadvantages of organizational turnover apply to internal turnover, especially when low workgroup identifiers shift around within an organization to escape low quality social exchange relationships. Key findings in this study suggest that fostering identification at both the workgroup and organizational levels, ensuring optimal levels of organizational support, and promoting leaders likely to be perceived as prototypical examples of group members may be a key to minimizing social and economic costs associated with turnover.

Finally, extending the boundaries of SIT to consider how identification processes represent a mechanism in social exchange has significant implications for identifying points of synergy across these two important theoretical domains. For instance, the positive relationship between identification and staying

intentions suggests that identification may be an important device that leads to the desire and potentially, a sense of obligation, to reciprocate. In this way, assessments of the quality of social exchange relationships can be viewed as tangible manifestations of the value and emotional experiences attached to group membership. In this case, a synergistic approach to these two typically detached theories suggests that identification may be a key process in uncovering and understanding the *black box* within social exchange processes (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997).

Table 3-1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Correlations*[a]

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. OSI | 4.39 | 1.82 | *0.86* | | | | | |
| 2. WSI | 4.51 | 1.91 | 0.83 | *0.90* | | | | |
| 3. SID-O | 5.03 | 1.32 | 0.48 | 0.45 | *0.91* | | | |
| 4. SID-W | 5.45 | 0.97 | 0.23 | 0.21 | 0.64 | *0.82* | | |
| 5. POS | 4.76 | 1.31 | 0.59 | 0.51 | 0.70 | 0.43 | *0.93* | |
| 6. LGP | 4.70 | 1.51 | 0.40 | 0.36 | 0.48 | 0.28 | 0.53 | *0.97* |

*Note*. Coefficient alpha scale reliabilities appear along the diagonal. OSI = organizational staying intentions, WSI = workgroup staying intentions, SID-O = organizational social identification, SID-W = workgroup social identification, POS = perceived organizational support, LGP = leader-group prototypicality.

[a] $n = 302$.

All correlations significant at $p < .001$

Table 3-2

*Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

| Items | SID-O | SID-W |
|---|---|---|
| I am very interested in what others think about my organization | 0.69 | |
| When I talk about this organization, I usually say "we" rather than "they" | 0.84 | |
| This organization's successes are my successes | 1.00 | |
| When someone praises this organization, it feels like a personal compliment | 0.99 | |
| I am very interested in what others think about my workgroup | | 0.80 |
| When I talk about this workgroup, I usually say "we" rather than "they" | | 0.84 |
| This workgroup's successes are my successes | | 1.00 |
| When someone praises this workgroup, it feels like a personal compliment | | 0.94 |

*Note.* CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06

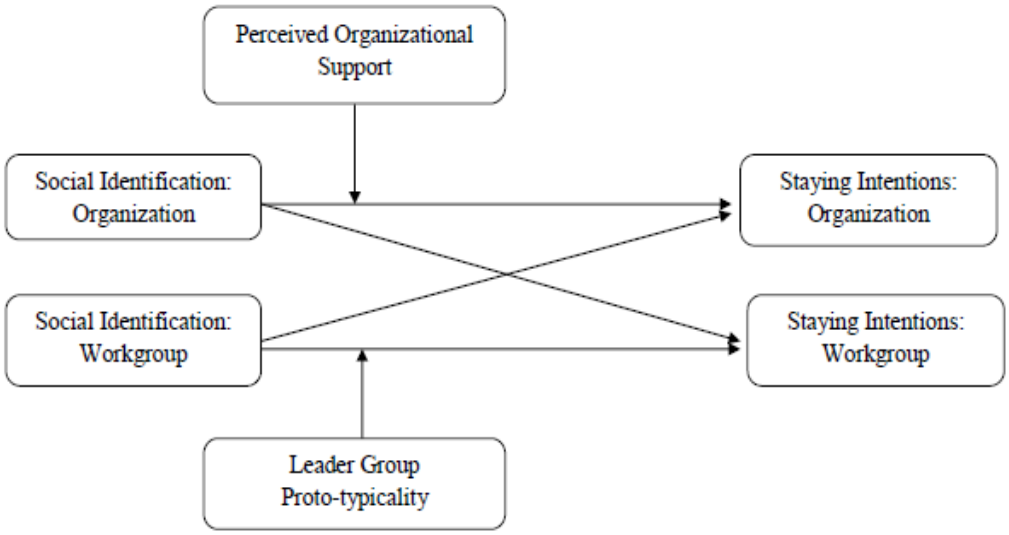


*Figure 3-1:* Summary of study hypotheses

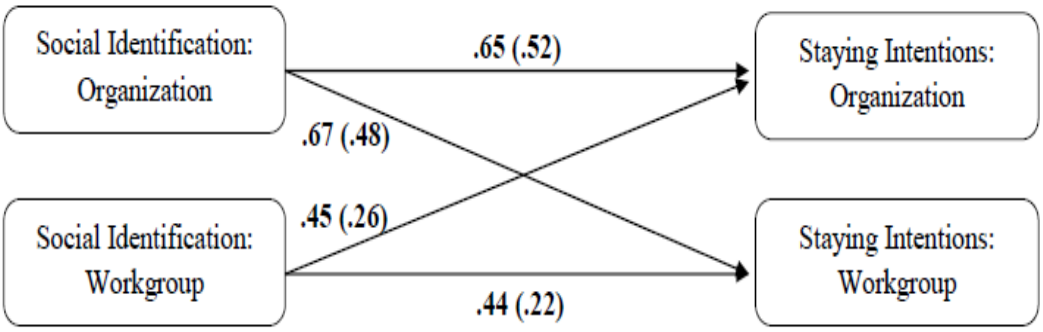


*Figure 3-2:* Unstandardized (standardized) coefficients - models 1 and 2. All coefficients were significant at $p < .01$.

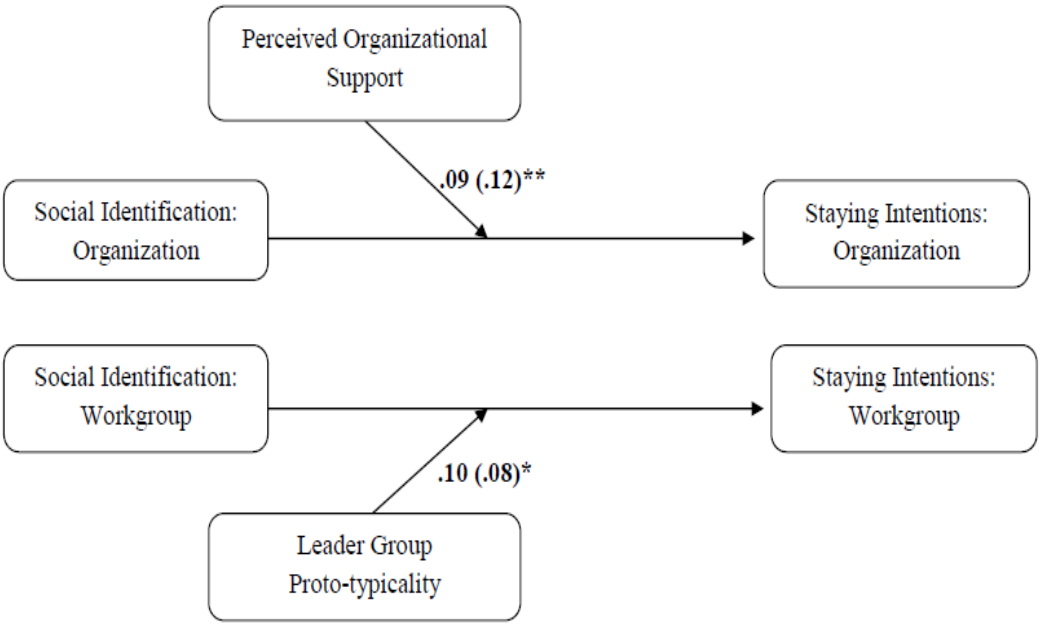


*Figure 3-3:* Unstandardized (standardized) coefficients - model 3. **Interaction between POS and SID-O significant at $p < .01$. *Interaction between LGP and SID-W significant at $p < .05$.

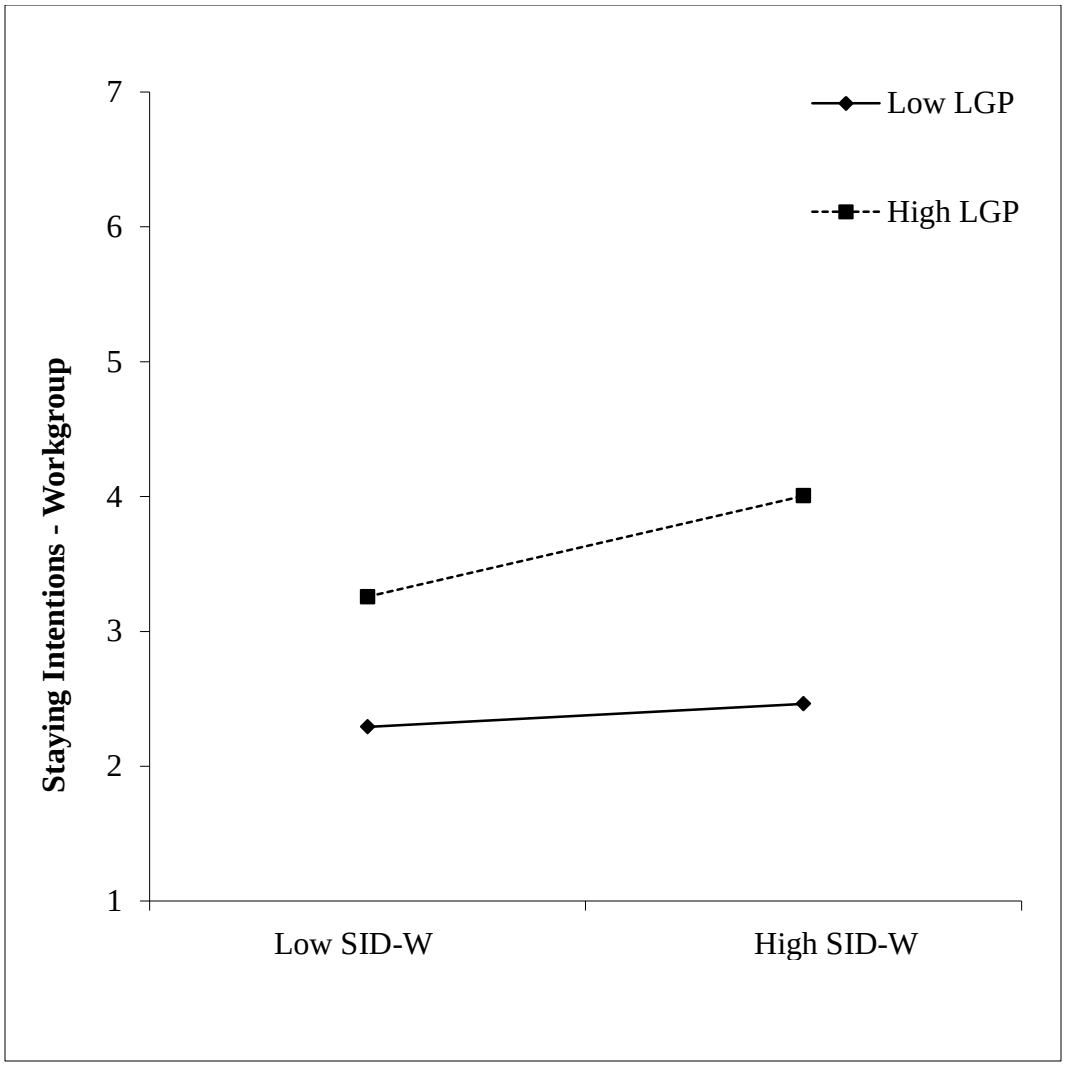


*Figure 3-4:* Effects of SID-W and LGP on workgroup staying intentions

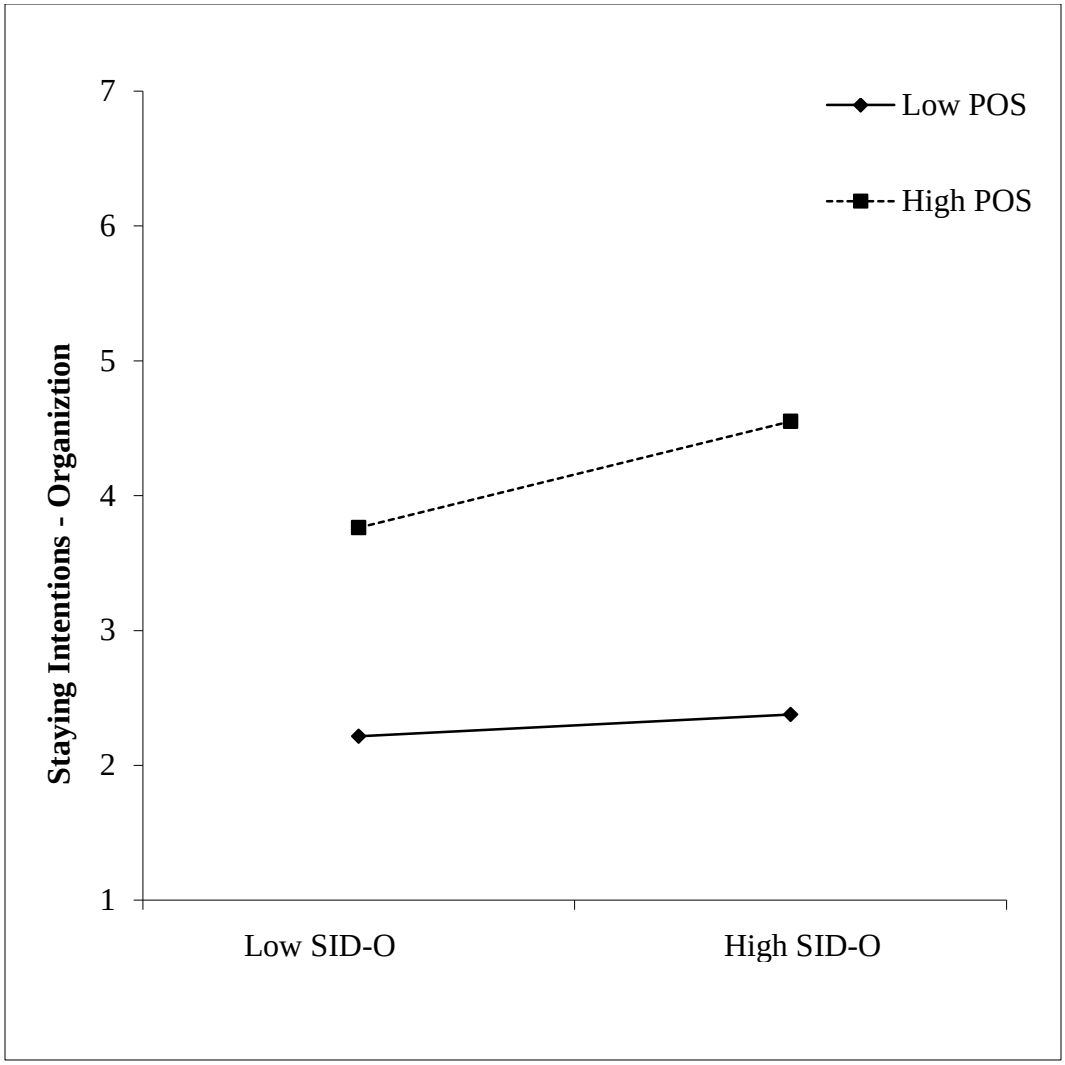


*Figure 3-5:* Effects of SID-O and POS on organizational staying intentions

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## Chapter 4: Antecedents of Social Identity: The Role of High Performance Work Systems and Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction

### Introduction

Contemporary organizational research points increasingly to the influence of self-definition on attitudes, intentions, and behaviour at work. An important discovery is that awareness and evaluation of memberships in organizational groups and the emotional experiences tied to them have important implications for a variety of organizational outcomes including turnover intentions, behavioural responses to the effects of stress, job satisfaction, and extra-role behaviour (S. A. Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, & Wagner, 2004; van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, & Wieseke, 2008). Clearly, work is an important target source of individual identity, yet little is known about the processes leading to self-definition in terms of organizational group memberships.

Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) claims that social identification processes are governed by the degree to which group memberships provide the individual with a sense of positive distinctness (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005) and continuity of self-concept (van Knippenberg, van Dick, & Tavares, 2007). Precisely how positive distinctness develops and how continuity of self-concept is maintained in the workplace is unclear, a gap this paper endeavours to fill. Through integration of strategic human resource management (SHRM) theory, self-determination theory (SDT), and SIT, this research proposes and tests a number of new hypotheses about how

target-specific social identities develop in the workplace. A central objective is to examine how dimensions of SHRM fulfills individual needs and how satisfaction of these needs subsequently fosters self-definition in either workgroup or organizational terms, questions that remain unaddressed in extant research.

SHRM may be defined as "...the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable the organization to achieve its goals" (Wright & McMahan, 1992, p. 298). An important implication of this definition is that HRM practices or systems of such practices help employees understand and adopt attitudes and behaviours necessary for organizational success (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). High performance work systems (HPWSs) are one example of SHRM believed to lead to positive organizational performance by forging strong psychological links between the individual and their organization (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007). Although the causal connection between HPWSs and organizational performance is widely acknowledged (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006), very little empirical research addresses the *black box* in which the processes and mechanisms inherent in this causal chain operate (Boxall & Macky, 2009).

Some *black box* researchers argue that HPWSs satisfy employee needs such that employees, in return, demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours towards their employer that also enhance the overall performance of the organization (Ramsay, Scholarios, & Harley, 2000). Others claim that

in addition to empowering employees, HPWSs enhance employee satisfaction and commitment thus prompting employees to respond by performing above and beyond the requirements of their employment contracts (Messersmith, Patel, & Lepak, 2011). A common theme across this research is that when employees are empowered and their needs are met, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes and helpful behaviours.

The process of reciprocation is a central tenet in social exchange theory (SET). According to SET, when social benefits are provided to individuals (e.g., empowerment, positive feedback), they feel an obligation to reciprocate (Emerson, 1976; Gouldner, 1960). Social exchange relationships are believed to be an influential source of identification for individuals (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002) and when employees believe that the welfare of the group in question is intertwined with their own, a sense of relational obligation encourages them to choose behaviours that support and advance the group (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). Thus, the extent to which an individual identifies with a target group is believed to also reflect an assessment of the quality of social exchange between the individual and that target group (Lavelle et al., 2007).

An under-researched implication of the application of SET to the SHRM research dialogue is that HPWSs may facilitate the development of healthy social exchange relationships by satisfying their individual psychological needs. In this paper, I draw upon SDT to establish this connection. SDT states that individual psychological needs follow three

categories: first, people need opportunities to contribute and feel competent; second, they need to be genuinely connected to others; and, third, and most importantly, they need to feel that they are able to exercise choice when it comes to making their own decisions (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). When these needs for competence, relatedness, and especially autonomy are met, individual motivational states are characterized as more internal or self-determined rather than externally driven. Thus, to the extent that HPWSs are characterized as empowering rather than controlling they should foster a more internalized form of motivation encouraging employees to act in the best interests of the organization. When a HPWS leads to psychological needs satisfaction, employees will define themselves in terms of the target entity or group (e.g., their workgroup or the organization as a whole) through which they perceive needs satisfaction to be manifest.

Taken together, the argument can be made that HPWSs foster social identification through the mechanism of basic psychological needs satisfaction. In fact, identification with a target entity may in and of itself be viewed as a form of reciprocation that speaks to the quality of the exchange relationship. What is less clear, however, is the extent to which dimensions of HPWSs influence target-specific identification processes. For instance, the idea that multiple social identities are linked to specific target groups (e.g., workgroup or organizational membership) (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; Riketta & Nienaber, 2007; van Dick & Wagner, 2002; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004; van Knippenberg &

van Schie, 2000) has a relevant parallel in emergent SET research. Namely, according to the target-similarity model, individuals develop unique perceptions and attitudes about multiple foci in organizations (Lavelle et al., 2007).

Specifically then, this paper examines the idea that target-specific forms of social identity (i.e. workgroup and organization) will be fostered by mechanisms (i.e. satisfaction of basic psychological needs) and practises (HPWSs) that operate at a target-similar level. This study tests the proposition that social identification assumes distinct forms depending upon the target of identification (i.e., workgroup or organization). An additional proposition tested is that target-specific forms of social identification have specific antecedents (i.e., dimensions of HPWSs) that influence identification processes in unique ways, depending upon the target of identification. Finally, the notion that the influence of specific dimensions of a HPWS on target-specific social identification will be mediated by perceived satisfaction of basic psychological needs as outlined in SDT is also examined.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Social Identity Theory

Social identity is formally defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership [in] a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). As such, social identity refers to aspects of self-definition that are derived from categorization of oneself in

terms of group memberships (1978; Tajfel, 1974; 1979; 1981; 1982a; 1982b; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). SIT was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986) to explain circumstances in which individuals choose to behave as either distinct individuals (i.e., behaviour is aligned with individual values and traits) or as similar group members (i.e., behaviour is considered to be prototypical for members of the group). The central arguments of SIT address when and in what circumstances individuals put aside their own unique personal identity to claim a stronger group-derived social identity.

In their seminal paper, "Social Identity Theory and the Organization," Ashforth and Mael apply the tenets of SIT to organizational settings, defining social identification as "the perception of oneness with or belonging to" (1989, p. 21) a group. Tajfel (1982b) theorized that group identification involves cognition (i.e., an awareness of group membership), evaluation (i.e., an assessment of the value of group membership to the individual), and emotional experiences associated with membership. SIT argues that individuals who derive an enhanced sense of self-esteem from a particular group membership are more likely to identify with the group and to incorporate this membership in their mental model of self-definition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Whether or not individual behaviour is congruent with prototypical group behaviour is proposed to depend on strength of identification.

Because individuals are often members of multiple groups in organizations, they are likely to have more than one social identity. SIT researchers have argued that groups are resources for distinct forms of identification; as such, each group membership is likely to trigger a unique, empirically distinct identity (Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005; van Dick & Wagner, 2002; van Dick et al., 2004; van Dick et al., 2008). Target-specific social identities also assume varying degrees of salience or awareness (i.e., individuals are more or less aware of each identity at any given time) depending upon circumstances and context (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For example, to the extent that they heighten awareness of workgroup membership, empowering HR practises are likely to make workgroup membership salient.

The idea that strength of social identification is specific to the group in question is one of the most promising, yet empirically untested, areas in organizational social identity research. Social identity research continues to focus almost exclusively on organizational membership; as a result, research testing other targets of social identification is lacking. Limited research suggests that workgroup identity correlates more strongly than organizationally-focused identity with work-related attitudes (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Also, research into foci of identity for school teachers found significant differences between career, school, team and occupational identity (van Dick et al., 2005).

Given that social identification is tied to groups and social identity salience varies across contextual circumstances (Oldmeadow, Platow, & Foddy, 2005), we expect that for individuals, each group membership will be associated with an empirically distinct identity. SIT supports this assertion. Indeed, according to SIT, each social identity is also likely to be instilled with a unique purpose (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). SET literature also claims "that people can have distinct social exchange relationships with the organization as a whole, and with … specific groups within the organization" (Lavelle et al., 2007, p. 842). SET researchers also call for researchers to consider antecedents and outcomes of phenomena along focally, or target-similar lines. In the present study it is expected that strength of social identification will vary empirically according to identity target.

*Hypothesis 1. Workgroup (SID-W) and organizational social identification (SID-O) are empirically distinct forms of identity.*

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If social identity assumes different forms depending upon the group in question, it stands to reason that developmental processes associated with target-specific forms of social identity will also be unique. Nevertheless, how something like a HPWS may differentially influence the strength of target-specific identification is a question that is unaddressed in the organizational research dialogue. According to SHRM, a HPWS describes a set of HR practises implemented in a manner that maximizes the fit between employee

needs and organizational goals (Delery & Doty, 1996; Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1999). By satisfying employee needs, a HPWS is thought to influence employee mindsets (e.g. attitudes, levels of trust and commitment, etc.) and behaviours associated with positive organizational performance (Arthur, 1994; Ferris et al., 1999; Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997). Indeed, Huselid (1995) found that HPWSs were associated with lower turnover, higher productivity and better financial performance across a study of 968 organizations. Recent research suggests that HRM practises do, indeed, have a positive effect on both employee and organizational outcomes. For example, research findings suggest that HPWSs enacted at the workgroup level encourage employee commitment, job satisfaction and perceptions of empowerment; in turn, these attitudes were found to influence department performance and individual extra-role behaviours (Messersmith et al., 2011).

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) argue that the degree to which organizational outcomes are affected by HRM practises depends upon the extent to which employees share common perceptions about what is important, expected and rewarded. Edwards (2009) argues for HPWSs that encourage workers to feel supported and valued by the organization. Others tout the capacity for HPWSs to improve employee knowledge and skills, enhance motivation, and provide opportunities necessary for peak employee performance (Combs et al., 2006). Empirical research supports the assertion that HR practises encourage positive outcomes by building employee

motivation and developing knowledge and skills (Chuang & Liao, 2010). If HRM practises have the potential to shape employee attitudes and behaviours while also engendering behaviours that further the goals of the organization (Ostroff & Bowen, 2000), it is highly probable that HRM practises will have implications for social identity processes (Edwards, 2009).

There is limited empirical evidence supporting the alleged connection between organizational practises and organizationally targeted social identification. While perceptions that one is valued by the organization both as an individual and for one's work have been found, in some cases, to mediate the relationship between various HRM practises and organizational social identification, direct relationships between specific HRM practises (i.e., perceptions about decisive action, procedural justice, opportunities for advancement, open team meetings, and autonomy) have also been found (Edwards, 2009). Other research confirms a direct relationship between open communication, procedural justice and social identification (van Dick, Ullrich, & Tissington, 2006).

It has been argued that when membership in the employing organization satisfies important individual needs for affirmation and approval (i.e., when membership contributes to positive self-definition), individuals will be more likely to incorporate organizational social identity into their definition of self than when membership does not satisfy these needs (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Enacting HRM practises within the organization and at the workgroup level is one such way

in which membership may satisfy individual needs. Delery and Shaw (2001) argue that HRM practises influence three important workforce characteristics: first, they encourage the development of KSAs (i.e., knowledge, skills, and abilities); second, they influence motivation; and third, they enhance employees' sense of empowerment. In other words, HPWSs "lead to a high KSA workforce that is motivated and empowered to do its job" (Delery & Shaw, 2001, p. 175).

The impact of these dimensions on both workgroup social identification and organizational social identification is unlikely to be equivalent. This is because, from the perspective of SET, social exchange relationships between individuals and the organization as a whole will be different than those between individuals and their workgroup (Lavelle et al., 2007). From the perspective of SIT, identity derived from the workgroup and from the organization will have distinct purposes (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; 1986). As such, to the extent that HPWSs meet the needs associated with the distinct purposes of each form of identity, the impact of the HPWS on organizational and workgroup social identity is expected to vary. For example, those dimensions of a HPWS that are perceived to primarily promote and enhance the interests the organization as a whole (i.e., KSA enhancement) will be stronger predictors of SID-O than of SID-W while those dimensions that are perceived to primarily stimulate and reinforce the interests of the workgroup (i.e., empowerment practises) will be stronger predictors of SID-W than SID-O. In contrast, perceptions about motivation

are likely to be associated with both the organization (e.g., organizational pay practises) and the workgroup, where direct performance feedback occurs.

With regard to SID-O, employee development practises are designed to enrich an organization's workforce such that individual employees develop organization-specific skills (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012) and are able to fulfill positions organization-wide that require high levels of personal development and skill. As such, employees compare KSA enhancing practises in terms of how they line up across organizations, the degree to which they prepare the employee for promotion, and the extent to which they develop competencies unique to an organization's culture.

Similarly, selection processes are designed to ensure that the organization's workforce has the capacity to achieve superordinate, organizational goals. In the person-environment (PE) fit literature, for example, it is argued that complementary fit occurs when a person is *made whole* through interaction with the work environment; moreover, PE fit researchers claim that organizations promote the experience of individual fit with the organization as a whole through selection processes that target individuals who share characteristics of current organization members (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). SIT can be similarly interpreted; that is, individuals seek out employment in organizations where opportunities for positive self-definition are perceived to be possible. In this way, KSA enhancement feeds into perceptions about quality of the social exchange

relationship with the organization as a whole and, in turn, influences the development of SID-O.

*Hypothesis 2. The KSA enhancing dimension of a HPWS will be a positive predictor of SID-O.*

While the KSA enhancing dimension of a HPWS influences the development of SID-O, HPWSs that motivate employees (i.e., reward systems and performance feedback) are likely to influence both SID-O and SID-W. There are several reasons for this. Like KSA enhancing practises, reward systems are assessed as comparative across organizations and with reference to organizational financial performance. Moreover, organizations often have a structured system linking pay practises to market evaluations, collective agreements, performance appraisal systems, and the like; hence, employees are likely to recognize the limits of a pay system in relation to the organization in general. It remains the case, however, that employees experience rewards (e.g., supervisor recommendation for pay increases, bonuses, benefits, supplements, etc.) primarily within the context of the workgroup.

Proximity of interaction is important when considering the relative impact of HPWSs. For instance, in a review of the literature, Lavelle et al (2007) find that the quality of the relationship between an employee and his or her workgroup is more influential than the quality of the relationship between the employee and the organization. Ashforth and Johnson (2001) also assert that the impact of proximal identities (i.e., workgroup) is

immediate and direct, while that of distal identities (i.e., organizational) is more delayed and indirect. Kristof-Brown and Guay (2011) argue that when an employee is recognized through pay reward systems, it is an indication that they are a good fit in that particular environment. Accordingly, it is expected that since the motivational dimension of HPWSs represent elements within the social exchange relationship between the employee and both the workgroup and the organization, it will influence both SID-W and SID-O; however, the proximal nature of motivational processes at the workgroup level means that it will have a stronger influence on SID-W than on SID-O.

*Hypothesis 3. The motivational dimension of a HPWS will be a stronger positive predictor of SID-W than of SID-O.*

At the organizational level, group membership is distal, owing in large part to the fact that individuals rarely have the opportunity to interact with the entirety of individuals who are members of the organization. Because of this, organizational membership may provide employees with the sense that they have "the freedom to behave in accordance with one's sense of self" (Sheldon, Turban, Brown, Barrick, & Judge, 2003, p. 366). In this way, empowering HRM practises may foster a healthy sense of individual distinction within the organization as a whole by conveying a sense of freedom of choice to the employee.

However, it is in the workgroup that individuals interact most frequently with supervisors, peers and subordinates. Job involvement (i.e., employee involvement in decision making and perceptions about the level of

discretion employees may exercise with regard to decisions (Chuang & Liao, 2010)) is a prime vehicle for such interaction and tends to occur primarily at the workgroup level. According to Delery and Shaw (2001), empowerment is defined as "providing the necessary resources . . . and allowing [employees] the freedom to make decisions that affect the way they do their jobs" (p. 173). They argue job design (i.e., job involvement) is a primary contributor to an empowered workforce. PE fit researchers also claim that the experience of fit is made apparent to employees through socialization and, in particular, through interactions with members of the organization. Job involvement is part of such socialization processes and is made salient in the immediate and proximal functioning of one's workgroup. Therefore, although empowerment is expected to influence both SID-O and SID-W, it will have the greatest influence on proximal forms of identification, in this case, SID-W.

*Hypothesis 4. The empowering dimension of a HPWS will be a stronger positive predictor of SID-W than of SID-O.*

**Self-Determination Theory**

If HPWSs operate by satisfying individual needs, as noted in the SHRM literature, the effects of HPWSs on target-specific identification will be mediated by the degree to which HPWSs are perceived to satisfy basic needs. We turn to SDT for further insight. According to Deci, Connell and Ryan (1989), "to be self-determined means to experience a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions" (p. 580). SDT also asserts that people are naturally inclined towards growth and that attainment of essential

levels of well-being depends upon the degree to which an individual perceives satisfaction of three basic needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. More specifically, SDT states that when individuals believe they have the opportunity to contribute and to move towards mastery of challenges (i.e., competence), when they feel connected to others (i.e., relatedness) and when they believe their behaviour is a product of their own choices (i.e., autonomy), wellbeing is enhanced and motivation is internalized (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). A note about autonomy as conceptualized in SDT is in order. Not to be confused with independence or detachment, autonomy in this context refers to individual perceptions that group or social goals have been claimed as one's own; thus, behaviour that focuses upon attaining these goals is said to be autonomously motivated to the extent that the individual believes they have the freedom to choose whether or not to engage in behaviour associated with collective values and goals (Deci & Ryan, 2004).

SDT also points towards linkages between SIT and self-determined motivation. For example, according to SDT, individuals acquire identities over time and the distinct purpose associated with each of these identities is a consequence of individual experiences in associated social groups and organizations (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Whether or not individuals reach optimal levels of well-being by engaging in specific behaviour depends upon the level at which they internalize and identify with the behaviour. In other words, the extent to which individuals claim identities as their own

corresponds with the degree to which they perceive their choices and actions to be self-determined.

Internal, or intrinsically motivated behaviour is undertaken purely for its own sake (i.e., the activity itself is enjoyable) and reflects "the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). Extrinsically motivated behaviour refers to "the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71). A central tenet of SDT is that extrinsic motivation can take different forms depending on the perceived source of inducement. Specifically, extrinsically motivated behaviour falls on a continuum ranging from externally regulated (i.e., behaviour is associated with feelings of being controlled from a source outside the individual) to internally regulated (i.e., the values guiding the behaviour are fully accepted and integrated with other needs and values representing one's self-concept such that behaviour is experienced as entirely volitional and autonomous).

In organizations, the existence of pay systems means that behaviour is never truly intrinsic; rather, it is characterized as extrinsic, with the level of internalization dependent upon how well the system satisfies the individual's needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy. Thus, in organizations, individuals who experience high levels of satisfaction in these three areas of need will assimilate social group goals into their own self-concept. In this way, satisfaction of these needs leads to attitudes and behaviours triggered by

the most internalized form of extrinsic motivation (i.e., internally regulated extrinsic motivation) (Ryan & Deci, 2003).

SIT also addresses the significant role that needs satisfaction plays in fostering social identification. According to SIT, elements in the working environment that are individually affirming and that contribute to a sense of positive self-worth as well as feeling of competence are those that are most likely to enhance individual perceptions of identity relative to the group (van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006). SIT also asserts that individuals look to their group to provide them with a sense of positive distinctness (Tajfel, 1982b; 1986). Optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) expands upon this point arguing that individuals have a need for optimal levels of both *inclusion* (i.e., assimilation and a sense of connection and belonging with others) and *distinction* (i.e., differentiation of self) (Brewer, 1991). For example, in organizations, workgroups not only provide for belonging and inclusion, they delineate boundaries between the workgroup and others in the organization to satisfy needs for distinctness. In short, they provide a vehicle for individuals to feel distinct from others in a positive way yet included at the same time.

Points of convergence between the motivational elements of SDT, SIT and ODT can be seen when we consider the impact of HPWSs on individual motivation. Specifically, dimensions of HPWSs are expected to contribute differentially to perceptions of inclusion (i.e., relatedness) and distinctness (i.e., autonomy and competence) and, in turn, to influence target-

specific social identification. As such, perceptions that basic psychological needs have been fulfilled will, in most cases, mediate relationships between dimensions of HPWSs and social identity. However, while employees experience all three dimensions, the impact of each is not necessarily equivalent (Jiang et al., 2012).

With regard to the need for autonomy, the empowering dimension of a HPWS is a reflection of the organization's views about job involvement and the level to which it encourages and expects individuals to exercise volition and participate in decision making. SDT holds that individuals experience autonomy when behaviour is congruent with personal values and goals; therefore, individuals who internalize organizational values and culture will experience a form of autonomous collectivism (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Additionally, there is support in the literature for the connection between job involvement, participative decision-making and autonomy (Breaugh, 1985; Gagné, 2009). Indeed, individuals may be more likely to internalize the mission and values of the organization where the culture of the organization supports autonomous motivation. Thus, when the need for autonomy is met, perceptions about the quality of the social exchange relationship with the organization are expected to be positive. It is expected then, that the empowering dimension of a HPWS will, to some degree, satisfy individual need for autonomy which will, in turn, positively influence the development of SID-O.

*Hypothesis 5. Satisfaction of the need for autonomy (SDT-A) will mediate the relationship between the empowering dimension of a HPWS and SID-O.*

To understand how the need for competence is satisfied by HPWSs and how it contributes to social identification, we look first to the KSA enhancement dimension of HPWSs. While empowerment practices may provide employees with permission and confidence to contribute in a distinct manner by encouraging participation in decision making, KSA practises provide employees with the knowledge, skills and abilities to demonstrate mastery and competence when they do contribute. According to Jiang and colleagues (2012), KSA enhancing HR practises include employee development and training as well as broad recruitment and selection strategies. Training and development, in particular, are fundamental practises that contribute to employee performance by providing employees with organization-specific skills (Jiang et al., 2012). At the organizational level, employee development practises that foster individual growth beyond acquiring basic skills to perform a job will also foster competence (SDT-C). When selection is a careful and deliberate undertaking, new hires are more likely to have organizationally relevant knowledge and to fit better within the organization itself, both of which contribute to the ability of all employees to achieve a sense of mastery in their organizational roles (Sheldon et al., 2003).

SDT-C will also be influenced by motivational aspects of a HPWS. Well-designed performance feedback and reward systems are vehicles

through which the organization and the workgroup validate a sense of capability in the employee. When feedback is positive, employees feel competent (Gagné, 2009). The need for SDT-C is most likely to be met when rewards follow positive performance feedback; that is, positive performance reviews backed up with compensation are a signal to the employee that the organization and the workgroup recognize and respect the competence of the employee. Performance feedback is more likely to enhance perceptions about the quality of the social exchange relationship between the employee and their workgroup as it is at this level that most daily interaction that informs the performance review process takes place. Economic rewards, which tend to follow organizational policies, have both economic and symbolic value. The more symbolic these rewards are perceived to be, the more they are likely to influence perceptions about the quality of the social exchange relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As such, when an employee experiences these systems is a positive manner, they are more likely to see their social exchange relationship with the overall organization as positive.

The capacity for performance feedback to influence one's sense of competence within a workgroup is undeniable. Yet, the question of how reward systems influence perceptions of self-determined motivation is one of significant debate. While some research suggests that rewards undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999), there is evidence that rewards have the opposite effect when perceived as fair and when administered in autonomy supporting ways. More specifically, Gagné and

Deci (2005) argue that it is only when rewards are used to control behaviour (i.e., to reduce perceptions of autonomy) that motivation is reduced. For all of these reasons, it is expected that the influence of KSA enhancing and motivating dimensions on SID-O and SID-W will be mediated, to some extent, by fulfillment of competence needs.

*Hypothesis 6. Satisfaction of the need for competence (SDT-C) will mediate both the relationship between the KSA enhancing dimension of a HPWS and SID-O as well as the relationship between the motivating dimension of a HPWS and both SID-O and SID-W.*

Finally, for individuals to experience relatedness (SDT-R), they require interaction with others, something most likely to occur consistently at the workgroup level. Within the context of SDT, SDT-R needs are met when individuals experience connectedness with others, believe they are cared for by others, and have the opportunity themselves to care for others (Deci & Ryan, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Looking at the empowering dimension of a HPWS, although job involvement is one important way to meet the need for SDT-A, participation in decision making is an interactive process which by default, should also help to meet the need for SDT-R. While job involvement nurtures a sense of distinctness through autonomy, it also encourages interaction, which deemphasizes differentials in status among employees; in this way, it encourages perceptions of similarity and/or perceptions of a shared fate.

The motivational dimension of a HPWS also has implications for satisfaction of relatedness needs. Performance feedback that incorporates more than supervisory input reinforces cohesion and connectedness in teams; moreover, performance appraisal systems commonly include assessments based upon dimensions of individual performance as well as performance as a member of the team. Indeed, the very act of communicating positive feedback is likely to promote a sense of relatedness (Gagné, 2009). In this way, both motivating and empowering dimensions of the HPWS are considered to be important elements in enhancing perceptions that relatedness needs are being met (Sheldon et al., 2003).

As noted, proximal memberships tend to have stronger influence on behavioural and cognitive outcomes than distal memberships where group members have little, if any, opportunity to interact and communicate (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). It stands to reason that where target group membership is perceived to meet the need for relatedness, individuals will be likely to identify with that target group. While motivational and empowering HRM practises cultivate connections and satisfy needs for relatedness, when SDT-R is satisfied, employee perceptions that they are cared about, connected to, and can care for others are also enhanced. To the extent that SDT-R is perceived to satisfy the need for inclusion in one`s workgroup, SDT-R will be a positive predictor of SID-W.

*Hypothesis 7. Relatedness needs (SDT-R) will mediate relationships between the motivating and empowering dimensions of a HPWS and SID-W.*

Study hypotheses are presented in Figure 4-1.

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Insert Figure 4-1 about here

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## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Participants for this study had been employed in the service-industry for at least one year and were permanent, non-unionized, non-supervisory employees between the ages of 25 and 65. Cint (www.cint.com), an international software organization that provides access to modestly compensated panel participants, recruited all participants for this study. At Time 1, 10,613 email invitations were distributed. 6,219 responded (58.6% response rate). 1,979 opted out prior to visiting the survey site; 2,335 opted out after visiting the survey site. Eligibility criteria eliminated 1,238 participants and 238 participants did not complete the survey. 628 participants completed the survey at Time 1 (74.0% completion rate). Three months later, 628 Time 1 participants were asked to complete a second survey. 389 participants responded. Respondents who changed organizations or jobs between time periods and those with incomplete responses were

excluded. 302 matched respondents remained (match response rate of 45.5%).

**Measures: Time 1**

***Dimensions of High Performance Work Systems.*** At present, there is no validated measure of the three dimensions of a HPWS advanced by Delery and Shaw (2001) and others. Moreover, a review of the literature also indicated that there was no well-established measure of employee perceptions about HPWS practises that fully captured the content domain of such key areas as job involvement, selection, training, performance feedback, and pay/rewards. Therefore, items were selected from studies of HPWSs in the extant literature and adapted for the purposes of this study (Chuang & Liao, 2010; Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin, 2009; Lepak & Snell, 2002; Mossholder, Richardson, & Settoon, 2011). Items measuring HR practises were grouped into three dimensions including: practises that enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities (i.e., training and selection practises); motivating practises (i.e., performance feedback and pay/reward practises); and, empowering practises (i.e., job involvement practises) (see Jiang et al (2012) and Jiang et al (2011) for an extensive review). To preserve degrees of freedom and adhere to the principle of parsimony in SEM, each dimension of the HPWS was measured using three indicators. For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***HPWS: KSA Enhancing Dimension.*** Three items were selected to measure the KSA enhancing dimension of a HPWS. Sample items included "When someone needs to be hired for this job emphasis is placed on identifying the best all-around candidate" and "The training I receive in connection with this job helps prepare me for future jobs I might want to do in this organization."

***HPWS: Motivational Dimension.*** Three items were selected to measure the motivational dimension of a HPWS. Sample items included "The performance feedback received in this job is tied into the pay/rewards I receive" and "The pay/rewards received in this job depend on how well I perform my job."

***HPWS: Empowering Dimension.*** Three items were selected to measure the empowering dimension of a HPWS. Sample items included, "People in my job are often asked to participate in work-related decisions" and "People in my job have discretion to make decisions without always reporting to a supervisor."

**Measures: Time 2**

***Workgroup Social Identification.*** Three items from the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale were selected and adapted to fit the context of the study. A sample item is, "When someone criticizes my workgroup, it feels like a personal insult." For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

***Organizational Social Identification.*** Organizational social identification was measured at Time 2 using the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale. Items were identical to those used to measure SID-W; however, the word "organization" was substituted for "workgroup" in each of the three items. For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 strongly agree).

***Basic Psychological Needs Fulfilment.*** Six items were selected from the Basic Psychological Needs at Work (BPNW) scale (Deci et al., 2001) to measure perceptions about fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs outlined in SDT at Time 2. The three components of the BPNW scale include: autonomy (SDT-A), relatedness (SDT-R), and competence (SDT-C). Sample items included "I make decisions about how my job gets done" (SDT-A), "People at work care about me" (SDT-R), and "I feel a sense of accomplishment from working" (SDT-C). For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Items used to measure each construct are listed in Appendix B.

## Analytic Strategy

### Statistical Analysis

Empirical validity of latent constructs was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); causal hypotheses were tested through structural equation modelling (SEM) using MPLUS (version 5.21; (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). For each construct under study, the three highest loading

indicators were chosen. In SEM, a minimum of three indicators per latent variable is recommended; however, in cases where each indicator loads on just one latent factor, two are acceptable (Wang & Wang, 2012). Models employing fewer indicators are preferred over models measuring the same phenomena with more indicators because more parsimonious models retain more degrees of freedom and therefore have a higher probability of rejection, leading to stronger models, overall (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000). Ordinary least squares SEM requires that multivariate data follow a normal distribution. The data in this study are not multivariate normally distributed. However, MPLUS provides robust maximum likelihood estimation techniques (i.e., MLM – maximum likelihood mean adjusted) that produce a scaling correction factor reflecting the degree of non-normality in the distribution thus allowing for analysis without the need to transform variable indicators (Satorra & Bentler, 1994). Scaling factors in excess of 1.00 are an indication of the degree of non-normality in the data set.

One disadvantage of MLM estimation is that the value and significance of the chi-square statistic ($X^2$) are not interpretable in the same manner as when using ordinary least squares, due to the need to scale the fit indices. Model fit for all CFAs and for the final SEM was assessed using the CFI (i.e., comparative fit index) statistic, the RMSEA (i.e., root mean squared error of approximation) and the SRMR (i.e., Standardized Root Mean Square Residual). CFI values greater than .90 (Kelloway, 1998), RMSEA levels less than .10 (Kelloway, 1998), and SRMR values less than

.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) are generally considered to be indications of acceptable model fit.

Although it is tempting to test the regression effects of each latent construct on all possible predictors, there are two important reasons why this is not wise. First, SEM is a confirmatory rather than an exploratory technique. Hypotheses under examination must be based upon causal reasoning and theory. Building a model that is the best reflection of theoretical analysis is the best way to test a model that reflects extant and emerging knowledge (Arah, 2008). Second, regressing latent constructs on multiple highly correlated latents constructs is likely to render results that reflect spurious coefficients due to multicollinearity rather than interpretable relationships based upon actual relationships between variables. Testing of several alternate models provided evidence to support this and also assisted in ruling out other possible explanations for the phenomena under study.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics and analysis

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between latent constructs estimated during SEM are presented in Table 4-1. Coefficient alphas are not presented. Cronbach's alpha, as a measure of inter-item reliability, is not the best approach when analyzing results from structural equation modelling. First, Cronbach's alpha assumes tau equivalence among measurement items; that is, it assumes that all items load equally on a single factor. By default, it then assumes that all items have equal variance, neither

or which hold true in latent construct measurement analyses such as SEM (Miller, 1995). In fact, SEM considers the unique loadings of each indicator on corresponding latent constructs. Cronbach's alpha is heavily dependent upon the number of test items (i.e., the more items, the higher the resulting Cronbach's alpha statistic) and sample size (i.e., larger samples yield results for Cronbach's alpha that are closer to 1.0). At best, Cronbach's alpha is a lower bound estimator of reliability and does not reflect unidimensionality or homogeneity among construct items (Miller, 1995).

Results of all CFAs are presented in Appendix C. CFA for social identification supported Hypothesis 1; that is, a two factor model reflecting the workgroup and the organization as distinct targets of identification, fit the data better than a one factor model. For the two factor model, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .03 and SRMS = .02; scaling correction factor = 1.65, compared with the one factor model where CFI = .82, RMSEA = .29, and SRMR = .08.

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Insert Table 4-1 about here

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Responses to reverse coded items were problematic in the current study. Factors structures assumed an unexpected pattern and mis-response (i.e., selecting answers on a similar side of the likert scale mid-point regardless of reverse coding) was apparent. In the research methods literature, this phenomenon is acknowledged as a potential problem in survey research (Swain, Weathers, & Niedrich, 2007). To ensure that mis-response did not affect the outcome of the study, SDT-A, SDT-C, and SDT-R were

each measured with two indicators rather than three. Items provided a satisfactory loading pattern (i.e., all items loaded at > .65 unstandardized) and were statistically significantly related to the resultant latent construct.

Main effects are shown in Table 4-2. Hypotheses 2 and 4 were supported whereas hypothesis 3 was partially supported. In this case, SID-O was significantly positively predicted by the KSA dimension but was not significantly predicted by either motivating or empowering dimensions. Both the motivating and empowering dimensions were significant positive predictors of SID-W. Fit for this model was CFI = .99, RMSEA = .03, and SRMR = .04; scaling correction factor = 1.32, indicating excellent fit to the data.

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Insert Table 4-2 about here

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Results of mediation hypotheses (hypotheses 5 through 7) are shown in Figure 4-2. Hypothesis 5 was partially supported. Autonomy was a significant positive predictor of SID-O; the influence of KSA practises directly on SID-O remained significant. Hypothesis 6 and 7 were both fully supported. Fit statistics for the overall SEM were CFI = .95, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06, and the scaling correction factor was 1.28.

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Insert Figure 4-2 about here

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## Discussion

The goal of this study was to explain how dimensions of HPWSs influence social identification with both workgroups and the organization through their ability to satisfy basic psychological needs as proposed by SDT. Using the approach advocated by Lepak and Snell (2002) and others (Jiang et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2012; Lepak, Liao, Chung, & Harden, 2006), HPWSs were conceptualized according to three important purposes: practises that developed the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the organization's employees; practises designed to motivate; and, those designed to provide a sense of personal empowerment. Each HPWS purpose was then aligned based upon the target-similarity paradigm, as a predictor of target-relevant forms of social identification (i.e., organization and workgroup) and as a precursor of target-relevant satisfaction of basic psychological needs as posited by SDT. Together, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs was proposed to mediate the effect of dimensions of HPWSs on two forms of social identification: SID-W and SID-O.

The overall contributions of this study are now addressed. First, this study empirically addresses the proposition that social identification in organizational settings takes different forms depending on the source of identification and the idea that social identification is precipitated by target-relevant influences. More specifically, it expands current research that demonstrates the unique perceptions that employees associate with their workgroup versus the organization as a whole (Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs,

2000). Second, social identity researchers (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Edwards, 2005; Riketta, 2005; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Dick, 2001) have called for the consistent use of social identity measurement instruments to maximize consistency and comparability across results. This study follows recommendations in the research (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Riketta, 2005) to choose a scale (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) with a record of empirical validity to measure perceptions about identity across two separate focal groups. Third, this study proposes and tests the idea that dimensions of HPWSs (i.e., KSA enhancement, motivation, and empowerment) are perceived to differentially satisfy basic psychological needs and to have unique influence on organizational and group phenomena. Theoretical arguments about relationships between target constructs are developed and tested; latent constructs measuring the three dimensions of HPWSs are designed and tested and the power of these constructs to predict both mediators and main social identification effects is tested. There is some recent research supporting the claim that perceptions about HPWSs create value through their ability to influence individual attitudes (e.g., see Kehoe & Wright, 2013), however, differential effects of HPWS dimensions are not tested, nor are the mediating effects of individual needs satisfaction.

While there is some support in the extant literature for the claim that identification assumes empirically distinct target-specific forms, there is no research that examines this important empirical question across a variety of organizational settings. Therefore, findings from this study are more

generalizable than those currently available in the extant research. Also, although I am aware of one study that examines the antecedent effects of HRM practises on SID-O, it employs a cross-sectional study design which limits the ability to draw conclusions about causality (Wang, Tseng, Yen, & Huang, 2011). The present study employs a longitudinal design; therefore, causation is more easily inferred.

The influence of HRM systems and practises on firm outcomes has been a subject of considerable debate. Most theories argue that it is through effective HRM that firms are able to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage. How HPWSs contribute to these outcomes is a matter of much contention. The present study argues that HPWSs influence individual attitudes by meeting the three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness; in turn, competent, motivated and empowered employees are more likely to define themselves in terms of membership in their workgroup and/or the organization. In other words, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and the resultant enhancement of social identity with the organization and its subgroups are mechanisms in support of the idea that HPWSs are the missing link in understanding the processes that drive positive results in organizations. The results of this study suggest that one of the ways that HPWSs may contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage for the organization is through meeting the basic psychological needs that prompt employees to incorporate organizational and workgroup memberships into schemas of self-definition.

Satisfaction of basic psychological needs is the foundation for self-determined motivation and behaviour; that is, the more individuals feel they are able to chart their own fate and choose how they respond to events and circumstances that occur around them, the more self-determined their motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2004; Deci et al., 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The present study supports the idea that each of the basic psychological needs is variously satisfied by different dimensions of a HPWS. The resulting internalization of motivation is likely to be complex as different social identities (i.e., workgroup, organizational) are nurtured to varying degrees of strength, depending upon what needs are met.

As expected, the findings of this study support those in the extant literature that suggest an empirical distinction between targets of social identification. Group and organizational social identification were found to have a unique structure and to be differentially predicted by both main and mediating antecedents. The three dimensions of HPWSs were also found to be positive predictors of both psychological needs satisfaction and social identification with the organization and the workgroup. With regard to the KSA enhancing dimension of HPWSs, and in line with PE fit literature arguments (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), selection practises are a quick way to engender SID-O as initial interactions often take place with representative of the organization. The view that an organization is conscientious in selecting new employees reinforces the idea that it values individuals who have the ability to contribute to the organization and to its

goals. Training and development programs may similarly present employees with the opportunity to connect with individuals from the broader organization. It is not surprising that practises designed to enhance the human capital of the organization (knowledge, skills, and abilities) (Lepak & Snell, 1999) also result in feelings of individual employee competence. Indeed, perceptions that the organization values a knowledgeable, skilled and able staff may be connected with comprehensive and thoughtful training and development programs. The relationship between SDT-C and SID-W was also expected. When employees feel competent and when they exercise their option to contribute, their contribution usually occurs at the workgroup level. Moreover, regular positive feedback is most likely to be received in the context of the workgroup.

The motivating and empowering dimensions of HPWSs were found to operate solely through their ability to satisfy the three basic psychological needs. In the case of SDT-A, the more individuals perceived themselves to be empowered, the more they believed their need for SDT-A was being met; in turn, SDT-A was a positive predictor of SID-O. Comparatively, autonomy may suggest a lack of connection while relatedness requires it. Organizational identification is distal, while workgroup identification is proximal. It makes sense that autonomy would be most predictive of SID-O; even though it fosters a sense of volition, or independence, around behavioural choices, the promotion of autonomy satisfaction conveys the message that the value of autonomous motivation is shared by the

organization as a whole and its members. While empowerment encourages autonomy, it also encourages connection (i.e., relatedness) and in this case, that connection is most likely fostered through job involvement that occurs through teamwork within the workgroup. In this way, the empowering dimension of HPWSs strengthen SID-O through their positive influence on perceptions of SDT-A, and strengthen SID-W by encouraging connection with others.

**Limitations**

A number of limitations in the present study warrant attention. While the longitudinal nature of this study strengthens the causal argument underlying the relationships between HRM practises and various forms of social identification, the analysis of the relationships between elements of self-determined motivation in the workplace, SID-W, and SID-O is based upon a cross-section of data collected at Time 2. As such, we cannot declare causal relationships among those variables collected at Time 2. Furthermore, despite previous research that validates the three component factor structure of the basic psychological needs scale (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010), participants experienced some difficulty with the reverse coded items in the current study. While the resulting latent constructs for each dimension of basic psychological needs were attached to sufficient item loadings and levels of statistical significance, some caution is, nevertheless, advised in interpreting the results with regard to these variables.

**Future Research**

A few suggestions are now provided for future research. Although notable progress has been made in understanding the implications of multiple social identities in organizational contexts, we are unaware of any empirical research that tests the idea that coexistent target-specific identities can be considered components of a broader, more inclusive, work identity. According to Walsh and Gordon (2008), work identity, or work self-concept, is informed by a collection of influences including, among others, memberships in organizations and occupations. It has also been argued that a more encompassing approach to understanding how individuals define themselves in work settings is critical to our understanding of the roles individuals assume and the behaviours they choose; this, in turn, has implications for the development and implementation of human resource practises (Walsh & Gordon, 2008). Accordingly, it is appropriate to suggest that individuals may possess a type of work social identity profile that, at any given time, is informed by strength of identification with a range of group memberships. Developing and testing a construct that reflects multiple social identities in a profile structure may be helpful in understanding how individuals gravitate towards particular combinations of social identification.

Indeed, it has been suggested that the potential for some identities to reinforce one another, while others work against each other, is likely to result in the emergence of defined identity sub-groupings of individuals in organizations (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Such sub-groupings may include

more than social identity - they may extend to role and relational identity. To appreciate the theoretical possibilities of such sub-groupings, an understanding of the characteristics of each type of identity (e.g., workgroup and organization, role, relational) is necessary to provide clues about how social, role and relational identities potentially work to reinforce or undermine one other. Further research is needed to define theoretically relevant patterns of target-specific identity groupings. Additionally, research addressing how relevant organizational and individual level variables operate as antecedents in relation to various social identity profiles would be useful.

**Implications**

The present study supports the idea that each of the three main dimensions of a HPWS (KSA enhancement, motivation, and empowerment) influence individuals somewhat distinctly. It appears that a single HPWS dimension effect is unlikely; indeed, as each dimension of a HPWS uniquely influences basic psychological needs satisfaction, the resulting coexisting forms of social identity may each align with employee behaviours that may or may not be complementary. SIT argues that individuals who strongly identify with a group will behave in ways that support and advance the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). As such, when employees strongly identify with workgroups and the organization as a whole, they are more likely to choose behaviours that will support the goals, priorities and health of these groups. When group membership meets the three basic needs for autonomy,

competence and relatedness, group members will be more likely to choose group supportive behaviours than when it does not.

"Every HR system works through its impacts on the skills and knowledge of individual employees, their willingness to exert effort, and their opportunities to express their talents in their work (Boxall & Macky, 2009, p. 7)." It seems clear that those organizations that implement complementary and mutually reinforcing HPWSs are more likely to experience positive operational results than those that do not.

Table 4-1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Estimated Correlation Matrix for Latent Constructs*[a]

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.KSA | 4.62 | 1.41 | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| 2.MOT | 4.50 | 1.52 | 0.51 | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 3.EMP | 4.23 | 1.42 | 0.66 | 0.48 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 4.SID-W | 3.78 | 0.78 | 0.46 | 0.27 | 0.35 | 1.00 | | | | |
| 5.SID-O | 3.56 | 0.91 | 0.46 | 0.31 | 0.43 | 0.70 | 1.00 | | | |
| 6.SDT-A | 4.71 | 1.22 | 0.38 | 0.38 | 0.58 | 0.22 | 0.36 | 1.00 | | |
| 7.SDT-R | 5.00 | 1.17 | 0.42 | 0.30 | 0.34 | 0.39 | 0.38 | 0.22 | 1.00 | |
| 8.SDT-C | 5.58 | 1.09 | 0.46 | 0.40 | 0.51 | 0.53 | 0.56 | 0.32 | 0.26 | 1.00 |

*Note.* KSA = HPWS: knowledge, skills, and abilities enhancing dimension, MOT = HPWS: motivating dimension, EMP = HPWS: empowering dimension, SID-W = workgroup social identification, SID-O = organizational social identification, SDT-A = autonomy, SDT-R = relatedness, SDT-C = competence. Reported means reflect mean of variable item scores. Estimated mean for all latent variables in SEM is set at zero.

[a] $n$ =302.

All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 4-2

*Unstandardized and (Standardized) Main Effects Model*[a]

| | KSA | MOT | EMP |
|---|---|---|---|
| SID-O | .206 (.311)** | .037 (.062) | .090 (.141) |
| SID-W | | .073 (.142)* | .134 (.241)** |

*Note.* KSA = HPWS: knowledge, skills, and abilities enhancing dimension, MOT = HPWS: motivating dimension, EMP = HPWS: empowering dimension, SID-W = workgroup social identification, SID-O = organizational social identification.

[a] $n$ =302.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .001$.

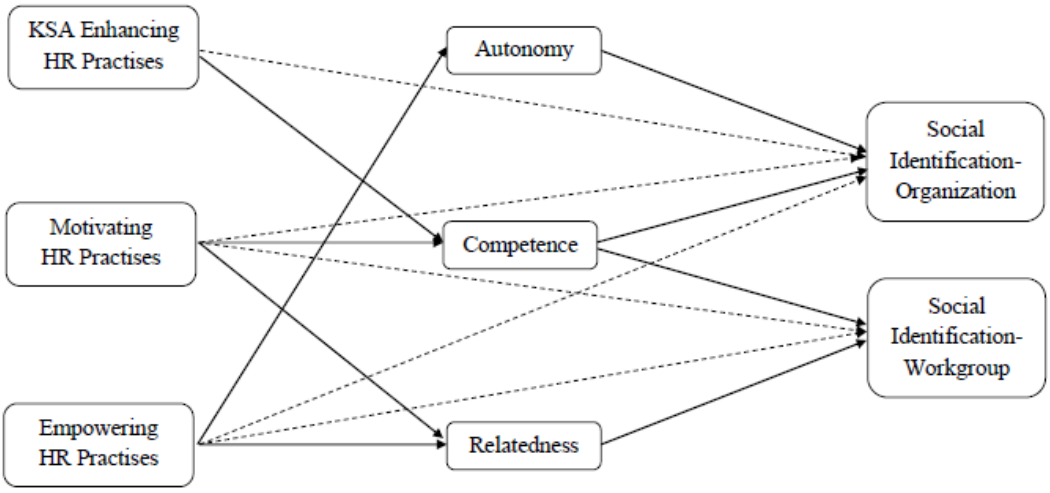


Figure 4-1: Summary of model hypothesis. Main effect relationships represented by dotted lines. Mediated effects relationships represented by solid lines.

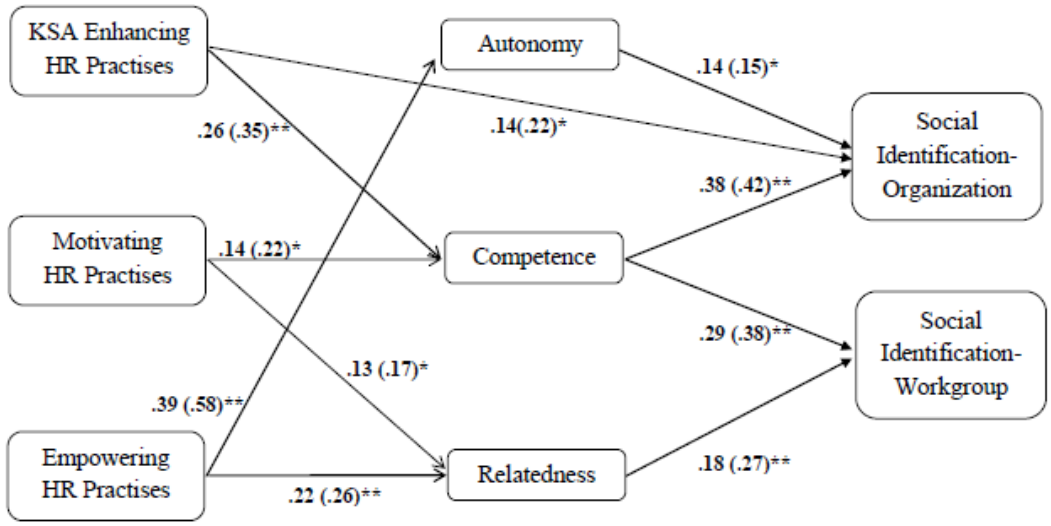


Figure 4-2: Fully mediated model results. Unstandardized and (standardized) regression coefficients.

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## Chapter 5: Summary, Suggestions for Future Research, and Implications for Organizations

### Summary

Organizational research continues to develop and test propositions based on the idea that *who* we believe we are influences *what* we think, feel, and do. In the present research, Chapter 2 outlined a pressing need to consider the dimensions of an overall concept of individual work identity and to disentangle individual identity from other related and highly correlated concepts. A taxonomy outlining the theoretical dimensions of individual work identity found in the extant research was established. Also, through the process of concept clarification, the main dimensions of individual work identity (social and role identity) were outlined and additional dimensions were noted (relational, situated, and deep structure identity).

One of the key reasons why SIT is argued to be the core theory in a meta-theory of individual work identity can be found in the minimal group experiments. In their earliest form, the minimal group studies suggested that simple assignment to a group was sufficient to trigger the social identification process wherein individuals began to see themselves as stereotypical representatives of the groups to which they were assigned (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). These studies also demonstrated the power of mere categorization to trigger group-centric behaviour among individuals, even in situations where categorizations were fictitious and temporary (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Because group membership need not always be tangible for social identification to occur (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the simple act of

applying for a position in an organization may activate the social identification process. Social identification may be psychological in nature while role identification occurs through interactions. Because social identification is the first defining experience individuals encounter when joining an organization, all other self-definition flows from within this central process.

SIT also points to the need for a multi-foci approach to the study of social identification. Tajfel highlighted the fact that individuals are faced with the challenge of self-definition in an environment where they identify with multiple groups (Tajfel, 1974). Each group provided, to varying degrees, a context in which individuals' needs for positive distinctness and stability of self-concept could be satisfied (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986) also argued that each group membership served a distinct purpose. Collectively, these propositions suggest that an individual's self-concept will incorporate multiple social identities. Organizations are a good example of a setting where individuals are likely to have more than one social identity. Much of organizational life is organized around the concept of teams; therefore, while individuals may socially identify with their organization, they are also likely to socially identify with their team or workgroup. Moreover, the impact of these social identities on continuity of self-concept and positive distinctness is unlikely to be equal.

For all these reasons, the impact of each target-specific form of social identity on target-similar relevant outcomes is likely to vary and relationships between target-specific forms of social identity and target-similar outcomes are

likely to be moderated by target-similar variables. Similarly, each target-specific form of social identity is likely to have target-relevant antecedents. To explore this argument more fully, theoretical integration is necessary. For instance, according to OST and SET, individuals are likely to reciprocate behaviour to the target from which they perceive support to emanate (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Moreover, the core arguments in SDT provide insight into how organizationally supportive behaviours, such as those fostered through HPWSs, trigger social identification through the mechanism of basic psychological needs fulfillment. Therefore, in Chapter 2, I argued that to fully understand how organizational processes like those found in HPWSs ultimately influence employee behaviour, points of synergy between SIT, SDT, and SET must be identified.

The proposition that social identification takes various forms depending upon the target group in question was examined first in Chapter 3. Evidence from empirical analysis of the data confirmed that individuals perceive workgroup social identity to be distinct from organizational social identity; moreover, as expected, individuals reported a stronger sense of social identification with their workgroup. This endorses the view that social identification will be stronger when membership is proximal than when it is distal (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Furthermore, incorporation of workgroup and organizational membership into self-definition was found to positively influence intentions to retain membership in both of these groups. In other words, the more strongly individuals identified

with these groups, the less likely they were to express intentions to leave either their workgroup or their organization. Overall, organizational social identification had a stronger direct effect than workgroup social identification on both forms of staying intentions. Also, as expected, target-specific forms of social identification were moderated by target-relevant variables. Perceptions of the workgroup leader as similar to prototypical group members enhanced intentions to remain in the workgroup while perceptions that the organization valued both the individual and their work strengthened intentions to remain in the organization, overall.

The link between social identification and behavioural intentions is a matter of continuing interest for researchers. This is not surprising, as such employee behavior as leaving the organization has significant implications for organizational performance. For instance, in a recent meta-analysis of 48 independent data sets, employee turnover was found to have an overall significant negative effect on financial firm performance, and this effect seems to be cultivated through the negative influence of turnover on individual productivity, quality, and safety practices (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013). Taken together, this implies that social identification will have a positive influence on organizational performance through its ability to influence intentions to retain organizational membership.

In Chapter 4, the idea that social identification assumes distinct forms was tested once again. Data was collected from the same respondents three months after the first data collection to measure perceptions of social identification relative to the workgroup and the organization at Time 2. Again, individuals

perceived social identification relative to the workgroup as distinct from that derived from organizational membership. The main focus of this chapter was on discovering more about the processes that lead to social identification in organizations. Following the model of theoretical integration advanced in Chapter 2 (i.e., Figure 2-1), data was collected and analyzed to trace the process of social identification back to HPWSs. The satisfaction of three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) as outlined in SDT was tested in a mediating role.

The results from this study suggest not only that HPWSs operate through three key dimensions (i.e., the ability of the HPWS to furnish the employee with knowledge, skills, and abilities; to motivate the employee; and, to empower them), each of which vary in their impact on the development of workgroup and organizational social identity, but that a key mechanism through which HPWSs operate is the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. This research found that social identification with the organization was fostered by the ability of all three dimensions of a HPWS to meet individual needs for autonomy and competence. Social identification with one's workgroup was similarly nurtured by the ability of all three dimensions to meet individual needs for competence and relatedness. Organizational social identification was also directly influenced by HPWS practices that enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Researchers have endeavored for some time to understand how HPWSs influence organizational performance (see Arthur, 1994; Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011; Huselid, 1995).

In fact, exactly what happens in the space between the enactment of HPWSs and organizational outcomes is often referred to as a *black box.* To make the case that HPWSs influence organizational performance, one "must have a persuasive story about what's in the black box. [One] must be able to throw back the cover of that box and reveal a plausible process of value creation from HRM to firm performance (Becker, Ulrich, Huselid, & Huselid, 2001, p. 111)." As an example of such value creation, if HPWSs that satisfy basic psychological needs subsequently lead to the development of social identification with important organizational groups and to perceptions that social exchange relationships with both the workgroup and the organization are healthy, individuals will be more likely to form intentions to remain in the organization and within their workgroups. The organization, as a result, avoids the costs associated with recruiting, training, motivating, and empowering staff to replace those who might, otherwise, leave.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

A few suggestions for future research are now outlined. First, future research on individual aspects of work identity should follow the proposed recommendations in Chapter 2. Most importantly, distinctions must be made when it comes to social identity and role identity. To extend the current work, which focuses exclusively on social identity, future research should consider both social and role identity simultaneously and test for empirical distinctness. Points of synergy between social and role identity should be considered and analyzed. Also, consideration should be given to a meta-construct of individual work

identity wherein social and role identities are captured in a profile of overall individual work identity. Congruence in identity targets between social and role identity should also be studied. For instance, it would be helpful to know how identity derived from one's workgroup membership differs from that derived from the role one plays vis-à-vis the workgroup. Finally, empirical tests of the process model proposed in Figure 2-1 should be conducted.

Future research into antecedents and outcomes of individual work identity should also take a target-similarity approach. The value creation process inherent in the three key dimensions of HPWSs should also be examined in relation to role identity. Similarly, researchers should also examine how the satisfaction of basic psychological needs connects with role identity to better understand how HPWSs contribute to all facets of individual work identity. Research exploring how social and role identification influence employee intentions, attitudes, and behaviours should be extended to include other possible moderators of target-similar relationships (e.g., at the workgroup level - perceived supervisor support, leader-member exchange; at the organizational level – perceptions of organizational identity, culture, etc.).

Beyond social and role identity, empirical work is needed to gain a deeper understanding of relational identity (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). I am similarly unaware of any empirical research in the area of situated or deep-structure identity. Future research should contemplate each of these additional dimensions of identity by, first, conducting a process of concept clarification, and second,

developing a process model to outline how each of these dimensions of identity reinforce or perpetuate individual work identity as a whole.

**Implications for Organizations**

The primary implications for organizations lie in the discovery of evidence that HPWSs do, indeed, contribute to organizational performance. If HPWSs lead to better outcomes as a result of reducing turnover, it is likely that they similarly lead to other positive organizational outcomes by virtue of the fact that, by satisfying basic psychological needs, they endear not only the organization, but other organizational groups through which they are implemented, to employees. Clearly, several mechanisms are at work. The SET literature repeatedly endorses the idea that employees will feel prompted to reciprocate when they feel supported and valued. This research argues that employees perceive that HPWSs designed to intellectually equip, skill, motivate, and empower them meet their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The resulting strength of social identification is a form of reciprocation; indeed, when basic psychological needs are satisfied, employees are more likely to incorporate the entity (i.e., organization or workgroup) into their framework of self-definition and in turn, to behave in ways that support and promote the welfare of the target group.

Considered collectively, these results suggest that organizations would do well to implement HPWSs as a way to nurture not only social identification, but also perceptions about the quality of social exchange relationships with both the organization and the workgroup. Additionally, organizations should pay attention

to the distinct influences of organizational practices on workgroups. To ensure that HPWSs are complementary rather than conflicting in influence, they must have a positive influence on the development of not only organizational identification, but of workgroup identification. Practices that promote one over the other run the risk of placing employees in a position where they feel they must choose one social identity over another; thus undermining the overall positive effect of HPWSs when implemented as a whole.

Organizations should also consider the intensifying effect that moderators such as POS and LGP have on existing relationships between target-specific social identification and target-similar attitudes, intentions, and behavioural outcomes. For example, if LGP strengthens the staying intentions of employees who strongly identify with their workgroup, this has implications for recruitment. In this case, the person-environment fit literature would suggest that the "compatibility that occurs when individual and work environment characteristics are well matched" (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011, p. 3) would best be achieved by hiring leaders who will be perceived to reflect the prototypical characteristics of group members. Similarly, if individuals who identify strongly with the organization are more likely to remain with the organization when they believe the organization values them and their work, organizations should ensure they implement practices, such as those found in HPWSs, to nurture this perception and indeed, to demonstrate that they do, indeed value members of the organization.

## Conclusion

The overarching goal of this research was to provide an overview of current issues in individual identity research in organizational settings, clarify concepts associated with identity research, organize and outline a taxonomy of the theoretical dimensions of identity research, shape and delineate the dimensions of an overall individual work identity concept, and to develop and test a number of propositions about the relationships between dimensions of individual identity, antecedents, and outcomes. A core argument in this research is that individual identity research should be conducted with due care and attention to the target source of identity. A further argument is that theoretical integration is needed to understand the place of SIT within and as it relates to such established theories of individual behaviour as SET and SDT, and organizational practices such as HPWSs. As a grand theory of individual behaviour in groups, SIT points us towards the idea that "it is the ability to think in terms of 'we' and 'us,' not just 'I' and 'me,' that enables people to engage in meaningful, integrated, and collaborative organizational behaviour" (Haslam, 2000, p. 26). Indeed, group membership has the power to transform self-definition in ways that have the potential to shape the organization itself.

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## Appendix A: Chapter 3 Measurement Items

### Measures: Time 1

***Workgroup Social Identification (SID-W).*** The following 4 items from the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale were selected to fit the context of the study: (a) I am very interested in what others think about this workgroup; (b) When I talk about this workgroup, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they;' (c) This workgroup's successes are my successes; and, (d) When someone praises this workgroup, it feels like a personal compliment. For each item statement at Time 1, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Organizational Social Identification (SID-O).*** Organizational social identification was measured using the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale. Items were identical to those used for workgroup social identification; however, the word "organization" was substituted for "workgroup" in each of the four items.

***Leader-Group Prototypicality (LGP).*** Leader-group prototypicality was measured using the following items (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005): (a) My supervisor is a good example of the kind of people that are members of my workgroup; (b) My supervisor has a lot in common with the members of my workgroup; (c) My supervisor represents what is characteristic of my workgroup; (d) My supervisor is very similar to the members of my workgroup; and, (e) My supervisor resembles the members of my workgroup. Respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Perceived Organizational Support (POS).*** Perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001) was measured using the following items: (a) The organization takes pride in my accomplishments; (b) The organization really cares about my well-being; (c) The organization values my contributions to its well-being; (d) The organization strongly considers my goals and values; (e) The organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor; (f) The organization would forgive an honest mistake on my part; and, (g) The organization shows little concern for me. Respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Measures: Time 2**

***Workgroup Staying Intentions (WSI).*** Intentions to remain with one's workgroup were assessed using the following three items (Colarelli, 1984): (a) I rarely think of leaving this workgroup; (b) I am not planning to voluntarily search for a job in a new workgroup during the next 12 months; and, (c) If it is up to me, I will be working in this workgroup one year from now. For each item statement, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Organizational Staying Intentions (OSI).*** Organizational staying intentions were assessed using the same three items used to assess workgroup staying intentions; however, the word "organization" was substituted for "workgroup" in each of the three items.

## Appendix B: Chapter 4 Measurement Items

**Measures: Time 1**

***HPWS: KSA Enhancing Dimension.*** Three items were selected to measure the KSA enhancing dimension of HPWS: (a) When someone needs to be hired for this job emphasis is placed on identifying the best all-around candidate; (b) When someone needs to be hired for this job emphasis is place on a candidate's potential to learn; and (c) The training I receive in connection with this job helps prepare me for future jobs I might want to do in this organization. For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***HPWS: Motivating Dimension.*** Three items were selected to measure the motivational dimension of HPWS: (a) The performance feedback received in this job is tied into the pay/rewards I receive; (b) The pay/rewards received in this job depend on how well I perform my job; and, (c) The performance feedback received in this job is based on a formal, regularly occurring process. For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***HPWS: Empowering Dimension.*** Three items were selected to measure the empowering dimension of HPWS: (a) People in my job are often asked to participate in work-related decisions; (b) people in my job are allowed to make necessary changes in the way they perform their work; and, (c) people in my job have discretion to make decisions without always reporting to a supervisor. For

each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Measures: Time 2**

***Workgroup Social Identification.*** The following 3 items from the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale were selected and adapted to fit the context of the study: (a) This workgroup's successes are my successes; (b) When I talk about this workgroup, I usually say "we" rather than "they;" and, (c) When someone praises this workgroup, it feels like a personal compliment. For each item statement at Time 2, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

***Organizational Social Identification.*** Organizational social identification was measured at Time 2 using the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale. Items were identical to those used to measure SID-W; however, the word "organization" was substituted for "workgroup" in each of the three items. For each item statement at Time 2, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

***Basic Psychological Needs Fulfilment.*** Six items were selected from the Basic Psychological Needs at Work (BPNW) scale (Deci et al., 2001) to measure perceptions fulfillment of the three basic psychological needs outlined in SDT at Time 2. The three components of the BPNW scale include: autonomy (SDT-A), relatedness (SDT-R), and competence (SDT-C). The following items were used to measure each component. Items for SDT-A included (a) I make decisions about how my job gets done; and, (b) There is not much opportunity for me to decide

how to go about my work. Items used for SDT-R included (a) People at work care about me; and (b) I consider the people I work with to be my friends. Items were used for SDT-C included (a) People at work tell me I am good at what I do; and, (b) I feel a sense of accomplishment from working. For each item, respondents expressed their agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

## Appendix C: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

**Table C-1**

***Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis: SID-W, SID-O***

| Items | SID-O | SID-W |
|---|---|---|
| This organization's successes are my successes | 1.00 | |
| When I talk about this organization, I usually say "we" rather than "they" | 0.87 | |
| When someone praises this organization, it feels like a personal compliment | 0.90 | |
| This workgroup's successes are my successes | | 1.00 |
| When I talk about this workgroup, I usually say "we" rather than "they" | | 0.76 |
| When someone praises this workgroup, it feels like a personal compliment | | 0.93 |

*Note.* CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .03

[a] $n$ =302.

**Table C-2**

***Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Dimensions of a HPWS***

| Items | KSA | MOT | EMP |
|---|---|---|---|
| When someone needs to be hired in this job, emphasis is placed on identifying the best all around candidate | 1.00 | | |
| When someone needs to be hired in this job, emphasis is placed on the candidate's potential to learn | 0.97 | | |
| The training I receive in this job helps prepare me for future jobs I might want to do in this organization | 0.81 | | |
| The performance feedback received in this job is tied into the pay/rewards I receive | | 1.00 | |
| The pay/rewards received in this job depend on how well I perform my job | | 0.90 | |
| The performance feedback received in this job is based on a formal, regularly occurring process | | 0.70 | |
| People in my job are allowed to make necessary changes in the way they perform their work | | | 1.00 |
| People in my job are often asked to participate in work-related decisions | | | 0.89 |
| People in my job have discretion to make decisions without always reporting to a supervisor | | | 0.75 |

*Note*. CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06

[a] $n$ =302.

**Table C-3**

***Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Basic Psychological Needs Fulfillment***

| Items | SDT-A | SDT-R | SDT-C |
|---|---|---|---|
| I make decisions about how my job gets done | 1.00 | | |
| There is not much opportunity for me to decide how to go about my work | 0.57 | | |
| People at work care about me | | 1.00 | |
| I consider the people I work with to be my friends | | 0.76 | |
| I feel a sense of accomplishment from working | | | 1.00 |
| People at work tell me I am good at what I do | | | 0.83 |

*Note.* CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00

[a] *n* =302.

## Appendix D: Table of Abbreviations

**Table D-1**

***Table of Abbreviations***

| Abbreviation | Term |
|---|---|
| CFA | Confirmatory Factor Analysis |
| CFI | Comparative Fit Index |
| HPWS | High Performance Work Systems |
| HR | Human Resource |
| HRM | Human Resource Management |
| IT | Identity Theory |
| IWI | Individual Work Identity |
| KSA | Knowledge, Skill, and Abilities |
| LGP | Leader-Group Prototypicality |
| MAS | Mael and Ashforth Social Identity Scale |
| ML | Maximum Likelihood |
| MLM | Maximum Likelihood Mean Adjusted |
| MPLUS | A statistical modelling program |
| ODT | Optimal Distinctness Theory |
| OIQ | Organizational Identification Questionnaire |
| OSI | Organizational Staying Intentions |
| OST | Organizational Support Theory |
| PA | Path Analysis |
| PE | Person-environment (fit) |
| POS | Perceived Organizational Support |
| RCT | Realistic Conflict Theory |
| RMSEA | Room Mean Squared Error of Approximation |
| SCT | Self-Categorization Theory |
| SDT | Self-Determination Theory |

| | |
|---|---|
| SDT-A | Autonomy |
| SDT-C | Competence |
| SDT-R | Relatedness |
| SEM | Structural Equation Modelling |
| SET | Social Exchange Theory |
| SHRM | Strategic Human Resource Management |
| SID-O | Social Identity – Organization |
| SID-W | Social Identity – Workgroup |
| SIMOL | Social Identity Model of Leadership |
| SIT | Social Identity Theory |
| SITH | Situated Identity Theory |
| SRMR | Standardized Root Mean Square Residual |
| TPB | Theory of Planned Behaviour |
| TPWB | Theory of Purposeful Work Behaviour |
| WSI | Workgroup Staying Intentions |