

Connection, Restructuring, and Buffering: How Groups Link Individuals and Organizations

Deborah Silva & Patricia M. Sias

Research examining the individual–organization relationship has largely ignored the linking role of groups. Grounded in Scott, Corman, and Cheney’s (1998) structural model of organizational identification, we analyzed data obtained from members of groups embedded in a large religious organization. Results revealed three primary ways groups link individual members and the organization via identification. The connection function provides members with local copresent linkages to the organization and an environment in which to express their connection/relationship to the organization. The restructuring function enables members to restructure conflicting individual and organizational identity structures. The buffering function enables members to disidentify with a portion of the organizational identity and still maintain a sense of organizational identification.

Keywords: Organizational Communication; Organizational Identification; Groups; Structuration Model

Much scholarship over the past two decades has focused on the relationship between individuals and organizations by examining the construct of organizational identification (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Morgan et al., 2004; Morrow, 1983). Organizational identification generally refers to the extent to which an organizational member shares and expresses the organization’s values and decision premises (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). The quality of the individual–organization relationship has a number of important implications for both individuals and the organizations to which they belong. Many studies, for example,

Deborah Silva is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Walla Walla University. Patricia M. Sias is Professor of Communication in the Edward R. Murrow College of Communication at Washington State University. This study represents a portion of Dr. Silva’s dissertation, directed by Dr. Sias. We thank the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments and suggestions. Correspondence to: Patricia Sias, Murrow College of Communication, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-2520, USA. E-mail: psias@wsu.edu

have found strong links between organizational identification and employee satisfaction, commitment and organizational control (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Scott et al., 1999). Accordingly, understanding the processes associated with the individual–organization relationship is of great importance.

Although many studies center on individual identity and organizational identification, they generally implicitly assume a direct link between the two and tend to ignore the role of groups in this relationship. However, as van Knippenberg and van Schie (2000) note, an organization is, in many ways, a network of groups. Given the global and abstract nature of the organization and the local and copresent nature of groups, groups are likely important links between the individual and the organization. Understanding the role groups play in the individual–organizational relationship can provide a number of important theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, such study could broaden our conceptualizations of groups beyond particular forms and functions (e.g., ad hoc, task force, team, brainstorming, decision making, etc.) to more nuanced and substantive understandings of the role of groups in broader organizing processes. Such knowledge would be of help to practitioners who seek to facilitate the positive outcomes for both individuals and organizations that can result from functional member–organization relationships. Toward this end, the present case study examines the role of groups in the individual–organizational relationship by centering on the concept of organizational identification.

Individual Identity and Organizational Identification

Broadly defined, identity refers to a sense of self. Selves are fundamentally subjects in social presentations and we encounter our sense of identity whenever we interact with others (Goffman, 1967). According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) individuals' social identities are central components of self-concept and people often join organizations in search of belonging or purpose in their identity formation (Macionis, 1992). As Scott (2007) noted, "One's organizational membership creates a very important social identity for many individuals" (p. 125). Identity is not static, however, but rather an "ongoing story we tell about ourselves" (Freud, 2001, p. 336). Consistent with this, scholars have encouraged research that acknowledges identity's dynamic nature (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). As detailed in the following sections, communication is central to this dynamism (Scott, 2007).

Weber (1978) argued that the "substance" of the individual–organizational relationship is *identification* or *verstehen*—a sense of shared understanding and connection. The concept of identification has evolved over the years from a perception of sameness and connection with others (Lasswell, 1935) to the more administratively-focused definition put forth by Cheney and Tompkins (1987): "A decision maker identifies with an organization when he or she desires to choose the alternative which best promotes the perceived interests of that organization" (p. 194).

Communication scholars highlight the negotiated and dynamic nature of identification, demonstrating how individuals continually, and communicatively, negotiate their identities (Cox, 1991; Gossett, 2002; Holmer-Nadesen, 1998; Scott,

2007; Witmer, 1997). Applying structuration theory specifically to organizational identification, Scott, Corman, and Cheney's (1998) model explicitly addresses the link between activity, identity, and the communication used to express identification. The present study is grounded in this communication-based framework.

Structuration Model of Identification

Scott et al. (1998) reconceptualized identity and its connection to identification in the organizational context. Grounded in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, the model provides a broad and comprehensive explanation of the structuration of identity and identification. In particular, their model highlights three primary components: *identity–identification duality*, *identity regionalization*, and *situated activity*.

Identity–Identification Duality

The structuration perspective provides a somewhat unique conceptualization of identity and identification. Whereas prior work conceptualized identity as core beliefs, assumptions, or philosophical frameworks including attitudes, preferences, and decisional premises (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987), Scott et al. (1998) conceptualize identity as a *structure*, or a set of rules and resources enacted by members in activity. This structure both enables and constrains human behavior or “agency.” Identity provides individuals with the rules and resources needed to interact with others, or a type of knowledge about portions of “selves,” that help to produce *and* reproduce behaviors in certain situations. For example, one's identity as a teacher functions as a structure that enables the individual's behavior (e.g., provides rules and resources that enable him/her to design and deliver a lecture, interact with students, etc.) and also constrains behavior (e.g., provides an understanding of behaviors that are inappropriate or inconsistent with the “teacher” identity). Identity structures derive from mutually understood norms and learning experiences. More specifically, identity is molded and expressed through discourse (Deetz, 1992; Scott et al., 1998). Thus, identity as a structure is both a dimension of communication practices and an outcome of those very practices (Carbaugh, 1996).

The structural view of *identification* is also somewhat unique. In prior work, identification typically referred to “the *perception* of belonging to group classification” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104, emphasis added). From a structuration perspective, identification *indicates or expresses* our perceived membership in a social collective or other object of attachment (Scott et al., 1998). Thus, identification refers to the dynamic social process by which identities are constructed, maintained, and transformed. Expressions of identification include, for example, statements, decision-making behaviors, actions taken considering various targets' interests, and continued membership in an organization.

This perspective emphasizes the flexible and fluid nature of identity, in contrast to relatively stable dimensions of identity and identification. The expression of

identification serves to reproduce, regionalize, and unify identities (Scott et al., 1998). Moreover, the *identity–identification duality* explains the reciprocal relationship between identity and identification—identity structures enable and constrain human behavior (i.e., identification), whereas human behavior (identification) *simultaneously* (re)produces identity (structure).

Regionalization of Identities

According to Scott et al.'s (1998) model, individuals ascribe to various social categories and, consequently, develop and maintain multiple identities. They note four relevant identities in organizational life: *individual* (personal interests above more social concerns), *group* (where the individual strongly considers the interests of an immediate group), *organizational* (consideration of the interests of the primary organization), and *occupational/professional* (consideration of an individual's impact on his/her industry, occupation, or profession). These do not represent all possible identities nor are these targets always distinctly defined. As Scott et al. note, however, they are useful for explaining how various identities are “regionalized” and how they relate to one another.

An individual's multiple identities vary in the degree to which they are compatible and overlap. Members' identities may be partially compatible and partially conflicting and an individual's identities likely have overlapping areas of attachment and areas of independence. For example, individuals might highly identify with an organization and its goals and feel confident in their individual identity as related to the organization. At the same time, they may personally disagree or “disidentify” with a particular organizational policy or action. The concept of *front and back regions* accounts for an individual's ability to draw from the same identity while expressing identification or *disidentification* with any particular target. These geographically metaphorical “regions” do not exist in any physical sense (although an individual may conceive of them in this manner), but rather allow for visualization of identities and how they interrelate from a perspective of spatial dimension.

The front regions are closely aligned with the “face” we offer to others, accommodate beliefs, values, or other premises in line with other socialized individuals, and are the source used when identifying with a particular target. The back regions allow individuals to create psychological distance between their interpretation of social processes and those enjoined by the norms of an identity target such as an organization (Giddens, 1984). The back regions allow for *disidentification*, or negative identification with a target, and may help relieve tension from more tightly controlled front regions. For example, if individuals disagree with an organizational policy or strategic direction, they may disidentify (complain, etc.) with the organization and diminish, yet retain, a portion of their organizational identity.

Situated Activity

Scott et al. (1998) incorporated the situated action perspective into their model of identification to “highlight the importance of social contexts for identity formation . . . and for expressions of identification” (p. 321). These contexts or *locales* are important

sites of identity negotiation. As Scott et al. explain, “it is one’s daily routines—and more precisely, one’s activities—in a given locale that provide the context for identifications” (p. 322). In particular, their model proposes that specific *locales* “trigger” or call up specific activities, routines, or identification behaviors (e.g., teachers lecture students in the classroom, but typically do not lecture friends over lunch at a restaurant).

Groups, Identity, and Organizational Identification

The Scott et al. (1998) model conceptualizes groups as one of many *identity targets* or *sources*; that is, entities with which an individual might (dis)identify. And much research grounded in the model has centered on comparison of various identity sources, including the group. Scott (1997), for example, studied a geographically dispersed organization and compared employees’ levels of identification with a similar set of identity sources (e.g., personal, group, organizational, and professional). Larson and Pepper (2003) and Pepper and Larson (2006) examined how individuals managed their identification with multiple targets as they experienced organizational change (e.g., the prechange organization and the postchange organization). Kuhn and Nelson (2002) examined employees’ varying levels of identification with different identity sources (e.g., group, division) over time as the organization implemented a new policy.

We examine a different role for groups in our study by focusing on the group as a *locale* for negotiating two specific identity sources—the *individual* and the *organization*. In particular, we position the group as a *locale* that links the individual and the larger organization. The organization is a relatively abstract schema (Weick, 1995) and individuals may identify with organizations in the absence of interpersonal contact (Glynn, 1998). Because the organization is a relatively abstract entity, the relationship between an individual and the larger organization is also relatively abstract. Consequently, the gap between an individual’s individual identity and his/her identification with the larger organization can be vast. In contrast, organizational groups are smaller social collectivities in which members typically enjoy physical proximity and engage in local, copresent interaction. As Poole (1998) noted, groups are “the locus for the construction of social reality, with its associated ways of thinking, evaluating, and acting” (p. 95)—in other words, for the negotiation of identity. Similarly, Scott et al. (1998) noted that “identification is expressed via narrative and other behaviors in varied contexts, or locales, of social interaction, *usually to those and with those who are copresent*” (p. 322, emphasis added).

Recent studies grounded in structuration theory indicate the importance of such social interaction for the (re)production of structures. Kirby and Krone (2002), for example, revealed how employees developed and reproduced particular structures regarding the organization’s work–family policies in their interaction with other coworkers and with their supervisors. As they noted, it was primarily these structures, rather than the policies themselves, that impacted whether and how employees actually used those policies. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) examined how different employee groups (administrators and technicians) experienced organizational change

and found the discourse within those groups resulted in different structures relevant to the organizational change and the transformed organization.

Other studies have examined links between groups and identification. As noted earlier, many of these conceptualize the group as a particular identity source and/or compare an individual's levels of identification among various sources such as the group, organization, or profession (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Larson & Pepper, 2003; Pepper & Larson, 2006; Scott et al., 1999). Similarly, Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright (2006) examined the group as an identity source, but also conceptualized it as a mechanism for aligning employees' personal and organizational identities. Their study focused on organizational social alliances (i.e., partnerships between corporations and external nonprofit groups/organizations targeted toward social issues such as youth services or the environment). Such alliances are typically formed for the purposes of social marketing and corporate advocacy. However, and of particular interest to the present study, their results indicated that such alliances also helped employees align their personal and organizational identities. In particular, participation in such alliances provided a strong and compelling point of common ground and focus that reduced "the mental space between how they identified themselves, how they identified with their fellow workers, and how they identified with the work undertaken by their organizations" (p. 132). Finally, a recent quantitative study found a significant relationship between perceptions that college forensic team meetings were functional (e.g., time was well used, enabled effective decision making, etc.) and member levels of organizational identification (Croucher, Long, Meredith, Oommen, & Steele, 2009). Interestingly, this relationship was negative. According to the authors, this may indicate that such group interaction may engender more identification with the group and lessen identification with the larger organization.

As these studies indicate, groups appear to provide particularly useful contexts in which individuals can express and negotiate structures and identities in an immediate and tangible forum. The studies are limited, however, in that they either examined how structures generally, but not specific to personal and organizational identities, are constituted in social interaction (e.g., Kirby & Krone, 2002; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002) or how *external* groups directed toward social issues help members align their personal and organizational identities (Berger et al., 2006). In addition, Croucher et al. (2009) found a relationship between group interaction in meetings and organizational identification, but the quantitative nature of their data provides little insight into the nature of this relationship and specific ways in which internal group interaction may link members to the larger organization. This study is designed to address these voids in understanding through the following research question:

RQ: How do groups link individuals and the organization via identification?

Method

Our research question required insights into individuals' perceptions of their identities and the identity of the larger organization, their relationship to the

organization, as well as insights into how members express organizational identification and/or disidentification in the group context. Thus we used a case study approach providing “thick description” of social life in a particular social setting (Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, the case study used the practical knowledge of the senior author who is a member of the subject organization and able to gain access into the groups and organization of interest.

Although studies of groups in controlled laboratory settings have provided a large body of knowledge about group processes, scholars have increasingly called for a shift toward focusing on natural or “bona fide” groups (Gouran, 1999; Putnam & Stohl, 1990). Such groups are defined with essential characteristics that serve as “preconditions of group identity,” that of having stable yet permeable boundaries that “center on the membership and survival of the group within the intergroup system” (Putnam & Stohl, 1990, p. 257). For this reason, we examined several “bona fide” groups in a large organization.

The Organization

The Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church officially organized in 1863 as a missionary organization and has a worldwide presence. Over the years the organization has responded to various environmental influences and undergone typical structural changes. One thing that has remained constant within the church is the strong presence of groups, namely adult Sabbath School Classes (SSC). SSCs are designed to disseminate theological knowledge, provide an environment of support with religious and social connections, while offering a venue for individual spiritual and personal growth within the mission of the organization. This process is conducted primarily through a combination of lecture, group discussion, and social events (e.g., potlucks, community service).

One particular church located in the Western United States has a membership of approximately 2500 members and offers several SSC group options. This church is housed on the campus of a private SDA university with a membership consisting of a unique socioeconomic blend including college students, retirees, families, and professionals—blue and white collar. The various groups meet weekly and are open to any who want to attend. A small percentage of members attend different classes depending on the topics or leaders on that given day. The group leaders range from professors, trained theologians, and professionals (church members) from the local area. The larger church organization provides a study guide disseminated to all SDA churches. Each leader or group decides to what degree they follow the study guide, if at all. Occasionally, leaders also provide self-designed handouts outlining the topic for the class period or offering supportive information. The groups (approximately 7–10 in number depending on the time of year) meet mostly in a small lecture halls or meeting rooms housed on the campus. Occasionally, a group member will facilitate a group discussion if one of the assigned facilitators is unable to attend.

We examined all seven SSC groups active at the time of this case study. Although each group meeting tends to follow a general organizational format (meet for approximately 50 minutes, has leader[s], etc.), each takes a unique approach depending on the focus of the individual group. Each meeting format centers on the “type” of class the originators intended for their perspective audience. Focusing on only one group would provide limited information that may be unique to that class. Examining all groups, in contrast, enabled identification of broad communication practices that were consistent across classes.

We focused on this organization for two primary reasons. First, the SDA is a large organization, yet it also is comprised of many identifiable bona fide group contexts (the SSCs). Second, the senior author was able to obtain access to these groups for observation and to group members who participated in the interviews. Thus, the organization was chosen because it fit the parameters of our study and because it was accessible.

The religious and nonprofit nature of the organization does introduce unique limitations (discussed later). However, like many other types of organizations, SDA members participate in the church and larger SDA organization because of a sense of shared values and beliefs, thus identity and identification are central and relevant to this and other religious organizations. Although SDA is rooted in Christianity, and the Bible, it has some unique features that distinguish it from other Christian organizations. The name Seventh Day Adventist speaks to two key beliefs of the church. First, “Adventist” refers to a people waiting for the second advent of Christ. The words “Seventh Day,” indicate a people who worship on the seventh day of the week according to both Old and New Testament scripture, versus the general Christian historical evolution toward Sunday worship. SDAs further seek to be seen as distinctive from the Jewish tradition that follows Sabbath as adherence only to the Old Testament. The SDA organization is grounded in 28 Fundamental Beliefs and Sabbath is one such belief. The original intent of the SDA founders was that SDA members would be known as “people of the bible” who knew and followed scripture above all else. For example, of the commandments, the fourth “Remember the Sabbath Day . . .” is key to living out of the faith of the SDA church. As seen in our analysis, notions about Sabbath observance are central to member identity negotiation.

Data Collection

We obtained data via in-depth interviews and observation. We conducted interviews with 33 members from the seven groups, each lasting from 40 minutes to one hour. We began with a representative sample of the seven groups and conducted successive interviews until information redundancy was achieved. Of the 33 interviewees, 19 were female and 14 male. They were between 19 and 76 years old. Three were high school graduates, 21 held an undergraduate degree, and nine had graduate degrees.

The interview protocol was designed for a broader study of individual, group, and organizational identification, including the issues specific to this report. Questions

relevant to this study solicited information regarding the members' perceptions of their relationship to the larger organization and communication practices in the group context that enabled (dis)identification with the organization. Participants also completed a brief demographic questionnaire. We also videotaped one weekly meeting of each of the seven selected groups. These observational data revealed organizational (dis)identification behaviors as they occurred in the group setting.

Data Analysis

Guided by the interpretive paradigm, data analysis focused on meanings and how individuals make sense of their situations (Putnam, 1983). Specifically, data were analyzed according to the stages outlined by Lofland and Lofland (1995). The initial coding placed all the responses of participants to the interview questions on lists according to common themes. For example, interview participants frequently referred to how groups fostered a sense of connection to the organization by helping them understand and negotiate their place in the organization and, consequently, feel connected to the organization (e.g., "It [the group] actually makes me feel good that I'm associated with this group of people and they are Adventist . . . it just makes me feel better about being an Adventist;" "My class is one of my ways of staying connected to the church"). In the next step, focused coding, the items on the lists were examined for similarity and collapsed into categories. All comments that centered on "connection" were put into one thematic category. Once major themes were identified, transcripts were reviewed for instances in which a particular theme emerged.

These categories informed analysis of the observational data obtained via the videotapes of the groups. The videos were viewed several times to identify behavioral patterns that indicated identity structures and identification practices reported by interview participants.

An independent coder coded 26 of the 33 interviews to assess coding reliability. Agreement between coders was 93%. After subsequent discussion of the coding categories, coders reached 95% agreement. In addition, we conducted member checks with five informants from the groups to assess the validity of the data analysis. Three member checks were conducted: one in the early phase of analysis, one later in the analysis, and one after data analysis was completed. The informants confirmed the validity of the emergent themes.

Results

Data analyses revealed three primary ways in which groups linked individual members and the larger organization—*connection, restructuring, and buffering*.

Connection

Interview and observational data indicated the groups provided individuals with an important *connection* to both the local church and the SDA organization. In particular, the groups helped members link their individual identity to that of the

larger organization, essentially helping them feel a part of the SDA organization. One participant explained that the class influenced his identity as an Adventist by providing a *place* to explore or a process of “finding out what I thought” about Adventism. The act of voicing his opinions became a vehicle for further connection with the church organization.

Interview participants also noted that the groups enabled them to get to know other organizational members on a personal level, which provided a sense of connection to the church otherwise unavailable. As one member noted, “I think as in any other group, the better you get to know the people the closer you feel to the group as a whole.” Participants often noted this group closeness provided a sense of community that was especially important in a large church organization where connecting with other people can be difficult.

Many interview participants referred to the group meetings as an important link to the church. One participant put it clearly, stating, “My class is one of my ways of *staying connected to the church*.” Another described the importance of the group for her identification with the larger organization, explaining, “It’s changed in that I see the church has now included the group that I am in” in contrast to how she saw herself prior to her group experience, as an outsider versus a part of the church. In a clear statement of organizational identification, one participant succinctly stated, “In very simplistic terms it actually makes me feel good that I’m associated with this group of people and they are Adventist . . . it just makes me feel better about being an Adventist.”

The connection theme was echoed in the group meetings. Videos revealed, for example, in each group session, members were made aware of various community needs and invited to share their resources or time. One class scheduled weekly attendance at the local food kitchen for members to donate their time. As one individual explained, this group practice constituted her individual identity as a practical, not intellectual individual. She explained, “I like the fact that I’m sitting around people who care enough to actually not just write a check but to get up and do. That is powerful to me because I’m not always the deep intellectual thinking type, I am more the practical—how do I apply this today?” With this statement, the member expressed both her personal identity as a practical individual and her identification with others in the group and with the organization as a whole which focuses on doing, rather than simply giving.

During another group discussion, a participant explained the connecting function of the group, by stating, “in[a] way this [is] my only participation in the church. Because it is a larger area and it is harder getting involved and stuff . . . I would say more than affecting my outside of my class, [the class] is one of my ways of staying connected to the church.” This statement exemplifies well the concept of identification in that the individual member expresses to others his sense of connection and identification with the organization. Moreover, this rather public statement of commitment and connection reproduces the member’s organizational identification; illustrating the identity/identification duality of structure—explicitly stating that she is “connected to the church” simultaneously expresses her identity as a church member and reproduces that identity structure.

Restructuring

When individuals' identities conflict with that of the organization, they often experience tension and uncertainty regarding continued membership in the organization. Group interaction in the SSCs helped individuals manage such tensions by providing opportunities for discussion and learning that functioned to restructure their organizational identity. In particular, group interaction exposed members to new and different ideas that played a pivotal role in identity negotiation and transformation and helped maintain consistency between an individual identity and an aspect of the organizational identity.

Interview participants noted how group discussion helped manage tensions members experienced between their individual identity and their identification with the organization. As one participant explained, being exposed to more ideas in the group "broadens my understanding of the church as a whole, more than just me" and "helped me to better understand . . . the church and how I fit into the church." Hearing a wide spectrum of thoughts, from "conservative to liberal" helped individuals determine how they fit into the overall organization. Such discussions were important to members' development and negotiation of organizational identification; as one participant explained, "It [group discussion] has really helped me to settle into being comfortable not with just being a Christian but being an Adventist." Another participant explained, "it [group discussion] spins my wheels and gets me thinking a little bit more than what I hear in the church service." These statements demonstrate how group interaction triggered or "called up" both the individual's and the organizational identity and, consistent with the structuration model, the connections and overlap between those identities. Moreover, the members articulated how such processes are enabled by the group setting (e.g., "[group interaction] gets me thinking a little bit more than what I hear in the church service.").

The restructuring theme was revealed in videotapes of group interaction and is exemplified in the following exchange regarding the observance of Sabbath. As mentioned earlier, the extent to which church members should abide by the Church's strict Sabbath observance requirements is a continual source of struggle and inconsistency for some members. Member 1 notes this struggle as he begins the conversation:

Member 1: We couldn't ride our bicycle on Sabbath but we could get in our car and go for a ride.

Member 2: The text says Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath. It is interesting that the spin in evangelical circles will take this to say that you can do your own thing or to break the Sabbath. . . . This text can [also] be used on the liberal side of Adventism to justify just about any activity on the Sabbath. . . .

Member 3: Is this whole thing situational ethics? . . . If your wife is sick and needs medicine is it ok to go to the drugstore? Where does situational ethics play since the Sabbath was made for man to benefit him/her? . . .

Member 5: There are those who say that Jesus kept the Sabbath because he was a Jew. But his example of keeping the Sabbath wasn't very good if it was patterned after the way the Pharisees followed the Sabbath. So there was a contradiction in the pattern. He was a Jew but he didn't follow the rabbinical customs of the Jews.

Member 4: Yes, probably far from it. Don't you think so in most cases? . . .

Member 6: There is a story in the bible that Jesus told where he separated the sheep from the goats. And they came back to him and said, "why am I a goat or sheep?" The answer wasn't how you kept the Sabbath, or didn't keep the Sabbath; it was how you treated those around you. I think the Sabbath is a reflection of our relationship with God. But it may not be the essential thing that creates that relationship, it's a reflection.

Member 5: I really agree with the sheep and the goat story. One of my personal struggles is remembering that God works with individuals differently.

This excerpt shows how via group interaction, members constructed an *organizational* identity accepting of multiple approaches to Sabbath observance. Member 1 starts by noting an inconsistency in Sabbath practices. The others join in noting contradictory forces in the Church with respect to Sabbath observance (e.g., evangelicals say "doing your own thing" means breaking the Sabbath and ultraliberals use the text to justify any deviation from Sabbath observance). As the members struggle with these inconsistencies, Member 6 brings up the sheep and goats story. The moral of this story, according to Member 6, is that what matters to the Church is not the Sabbath observance but how you treat others around you. This insight helps minimize the conflict by restructuring the personal and organizational identity structures, essentially drawing those identities closer together. Specifically, the organizational identity structure in question is resolved by introducing another structure (treating others well) with which members can readily identify. This excerpt illustrates the dynamic nature of identity and identification. When faced with dissonance between personal and organizational identity, members removed the dissonance by replacing the dissonant structure (observe the Sabbath) with another (treat people well) they perceived as consistent with the SDA organization. This structure then becomes a resource that enables organizational identification. Member 5 also demonstrates the duality of structure when he states, "I really agree with the sheep and the goat story . . .," reproducing identification with the Church and reminding himself ("One of my personal struggles is remembering . . .") of the overlap between his personal and organizational identities.

In an extended discussion in a different group, a member reported his struggles in dealing with a daughter who was interested in becoming a model. He explained,

Member 1: We had an experience yesterday. Mary saw an ad for a modeling job or something, we weren't sure. It said to meet at the mall at 7:30 pm and go through this 2 hour program about what the program was about. This put us in a quandary what to do about because this is going to go way past sunset and into the Sabbath. What do we do?

A lengthy discussion ensued during which several members provided their own perspectives. One member referred to her own childhood, saying:

Member 2: When we were younger, we loved horses and many in our family were involved in horses and horse shows . . . many of the horse shows were on Saturday and she [mother] always struggled with that should she allow the girls to participate . . . Afterwards we got to where it was hit and miss we would miss some and attend some shows and it was always riding the fence, always that internal struggle. At the time I thought “we are intelligent and can make our own decisions and felt empowered. . . . But it is only afterwards when I reflect on it and my mother that I did wish we had made stronger decisions on Sabbath.

Another member provided a different perspective:

Member 3: I had a very different response in growing up and looking back on those same years I think the fact that we weren't always firm it has to be this way made me realize that I have choices that I have to eventually make for myself as to what's important and I never felt the need to rebel against Sabbath issues because it came down to it what do I really want for myself? Sure I can make these choices and I can choose to do other things and go other places because it had never been a hard and fast line that was drawn for me . . . and I felt both sides of it and when I grew up and started making choices for myself as an adult was able to say what do I really want for myself.

As the discussion ended, Member 2 (with the horse-riding experience) concluded that such attitudes are actually consistent with direction of the larger Church, stating, “Yeah and I don't feel that it has to be this rigid that you can't do anything on Sabbath . . . It seems like the Adventist community is loosening its grip on Sabbath.”

Like the previous excerpt, this group conversation illustrates the restructuring function as one observes the transformation of members' understandings of sanctioned Sabbath behavior, a core value of the SDA organization. Restructuring in this excerpt is somewhat different from the first, however, in that the member did not replace one structure with a more desirable one (i.e., treating people well is more important than Sabbath observance). Instead, Member 2, initially troubled by the notion of not strictly observing the Sabbath, transformed the structure in question by concluding the larger Church is actually “loosening its grip” on the issue and, therefore, rigid rules about Sabbath observances are unnecessary. Thus, the conversation in the group *locale* functioned to transform and restructure the relevant organizational identity structure. This transformed structure functions as a resource that enables members to both enact multiple approaches to Sabbath observance *and* continue to identify with the organization.

Buffering

Although group discussions often helped members restructure different identities in ways that helped maintain their identification with the larger organization, occasionally members chose to accept, rather than resolve, conflicts between their personal identity and the organization's identity. In such cases, the groups functioned as a *buffer* between the individual and the organization, providing a context for

disidentification. The groups provided a safe and comfortable environment for acknowledging and expressing different and nonoverlapping identities—the back regions of identity.

Interview participants explained that the SSCs provided a context in which to express their disagreement with the larger church, noting that the group was a place where they could more freely share their opinions and beliefs. As one interview participant explained, “it is wonderful to go and share my views and talk with other people who share their ideas. And that is so refreshing after a week of keeping my personal opinions to myself.” Another highlighted the buffering function by explicitly acknowledging her perception of the fluid nature of her own identity compared to the identity of the larger organization, stating, “This class has made me even more aware and makes me think about my responsibility, you know, that I, we can’t change anyone else, we can’t change the Church, we can only change ourselves.”

One interviewee provided an illustration of the group’s buffering function recounting a recent period during which she experienced serious doubts about the local SDA organization. At that time, her son went to prison and her husband lost his job at the SDA college in town. She felt her family had been treated unfairly compared to other SDA members and she felt unsupported by the church. The SSC group helped her through that experience, not by helping her restructure her identity to be consistent with that of the organization, but instead by providing support and allowing her to disidentify with the organization. As she explained:

When our son went to jail for the first time, I had a really hard time with that and when [my husband] lost his job at the college I had a really hard time with that. I had a harder time, I think, than he did. There were people in the college who, for instance, had gotten divorced for what didn’t seem to be really good reasons and they were still there and he was let go and [I thought] “God why is this happening?” After a long time the one thing that really helped me during that time was my Sabbath School Class . . . [it] really helped me to understand that I was to stay close to God . . . that I had to divorce the church from the [SDA] institution. I had to do that for my own sanity . . . My Sabbath School Class supported me during that time . . .

This example illustrates the stress that can result from a disconnection between one’s individual identity and the organization’s identity, and the important role groups play in helping individuals deal with that stress by providing a buffer between the individual and the organization. In the group context, the member was able to express, rather than suppress, “back region” structures. As the respondent explained, by enabling her to disidentify with the organization, the group helped her not only maintain her connection to the SDA, but perhaps more profoundly helped her maintain her “sanity.”

Interviews also revealed that group members found comfort in learning they were not the only ones to disidentify with the larger organization. As one participant stated, “What a relief it is to know there are other people who feel the same way.” Group interaction enabled members to navigate through their own personal identity

process and created an environment where people felt, as one member put it, “it’s not so much that I belong but [that] everybody belongs.”

Although not as common as restructuring, the buffering function was observed in the videotapes, revealing how during group meetings, members sorted out their own personal struggles by learning that tensions they felt with the broader church were not theirs alone, but were shared by others. The following example from a class illustrates this process. In reference to Sabbath observance one member shared:

I remember growing up in my extreme youth in Guam. When you grow up on a Pacific island by the beach there is no way you are going to keep the kids out of the water. There were a number of different opinions in the church. There were some that said you absolutely could not swim on Sabbath. There were some who said if you only went into the water up to your waist you were not swimming. Then there were those who said you could go all the way into the water as long as you didn’t enjoy it. Then there were those who went snorkeling and skin-diving. It wasn’t a problem for me. [laughter] It was a problem for my parents.

This story exemplified the tensions many experienced regarding allowable Sabbath activities. In contrast to the earlier restructuring excerpts, this discussion did not remove the tension or increase overlap between personal and organizational identities with respect to Sabbath observance. The member did not attempt to (re)negotiate the meaning of Sabbath observance and transform existing structures or replace them new structures regarding Sabbath. Instead, the story simply reproduced the member’s disidentification with the larger church organization. It also functioned, however, to help relieve the individual–organizational tension by demonstrating to group members that such tension is acceptable and even normal (e.g., “It wasn’t a problem for me . . . [laughter]”). Thus, via the duality of structure, the member’s comment to the group both reproduced disidentification with the organization and simultaneously produced another structure (i.e., one doesn’t have to agree with and abide by all of the organization’s values, beliefs, and rules in order to remain a member of the organization) that enabled the members to remain members. The buffering function, therefore, enables members to simultaneously decline to restructure conflicting personal identities and still maintain organizational identification and membership.

Discussion

Analyses revealed three primary ways groups linked the individual and the larger organization. First, the group context enabled members to develop a sense of *connection* to the organization. Building strong connections to an abstract and large entity is difficult. The groups, therefore, provided an important link between the members and the organization. Group interaction provided opportunities for individuals to produce and reproduce identification with the organization. This result highlights the important impact of the local, copresent interaction individuals experience with the more immediate and tangible group as they negotiate their relationship with the larger, abstract organization, revealing the important “linking” role of groups in the individual–organizational relationship.

Because it acknowledges and incorporates the existence of multiple identities, structurational analysis enabled us to examine relationships between various identities (i.e., individual and organizational) in complex ways. This analysis revealed that the group context is an important *locale* for *restructuring* individual and organizational identities that may have little overlap or even conflict with one another. Members who found they could not identify with some of the organization's policies or values (e.g., required Sabbath observance) obtained new and diverse insights regarding those issues from group discussion that enabled them to develop or construct areas of overlap between the formerly distant identities. The restructuring function provides a particularly dynamic view of identity production, reproduction, and transformation. Examples provided via interviews and class observations illustrate this dynamism, demonstrating moment-by-moment identity alterations through group interaction.

Finally, our analysis revealed a *buffering* function of group identification. When members were unable or unwilling to develop overlap between conflicting individual and organization identities, group discussion enabled them to accept the differences and yet retain some sense of identity with the organization. The group context was important in this area as it provided members with a dynamic, yet safe, context in which to disidentify with the organization. As participants expressed in the interviews, this psychological distancing helped relieve tension experienced by the individual (Scott et al., 1998).

Theoretical Implications

By revealing the complex and dynamic linking role of groups in the individual–organization relationship, this study has important theoretical implications. Organizational identification has evolved conceptually over time from a cognitive construct involving shared beliefs and values between an individual and the organization (Lasswell, 1935), to a communication-centered construct in which identity is expressed through a variety of identification behaviors including interaction and decision making (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). Scott et al.'s (1998) structuration theory of organizational identification acknowledges and incorporates the dynamic nature of identity and identification, the reciprocal relationship between the two, and the notion of multiple identities that overlap or maintain independence to varying extents. Empirical research grounded in the Scott et al. model is sparse, however, and, to date, focused largely on comparing levels of identification with varying sources (e.g., Larson & Pepper, 2003; Pepper & Larson, 2006; Scott et al., 1999) to determine with which sources (e.g., group, organizational, occupational) individuals are more likely to identify. Rather than comparing levels of identification with sources, our study empirically addressed the *links between* two identification sources—the individual and the organization. Thus, our results contribute to organizational identification theory by illustrating the dynamic and complex interrelations between identification sources. Moreover, we conceptualized groups not as identification sources, but as *locales* for identity negotiation. Thus, this study

contributes to organizational identification theory by providing an alternative conceptualization of the group and its role in organizational identification processes.

Our results also shed important insights into organizational disidentification—a process that has received little research attention to date (Scott, 2007). Specifically, the restructuring and buffering functions demonstrate how members can disidentify with the organization yet maintain sufficient levels of identification to remain members. When members engage in restructuring, they discursively transform the problematic identity structure by adding new information and/or alternative structures; (e.g., the Church is “loosening its grip” on the Sabbath; treating people well is more important than strict Sabbath observance). The buffering function enables members to disidentify with the problematic identity structure and, rather than transform it or replace it with an alternative structure, the act of disidentifying and receiving confirmation for the disidentification in the group context helps members feel the sense of belonging necessary for continued membership. This may represent a discursive form of Elsbach’s (1999) concept of “schizo-disidentification,” a cognitive state in which members simultaneously identify and disidentify with the organization.

Our results also contribute to the literature on organizational groups and group processes. Most group research focuses on processes *within* groups, whereas our study demonstrates the impact of groups on entities outside the group itself, specifically revealing the important and complex role of groups in linking individuals and organizations. Consistent with Poole’s (1998) call, this study demonstrates the group is a rich “base for developing communication theory and research” (p. 359). Our study suggests that scholars should acknowledge, rather than ignore, the important linking role of groups in organizational processes.

Practical Applications

Our results have important implications for practitioners. Organizational groups are typically considered important contexts for organization- and task-related activities such as brainstorming and decision making. The present study demonstrates that groups are also important sites of identity negotiation. In particular, practitioners would benefit from recognizing groups as an important resource for maintaining links between individual members and the larger organization. As necessary as organizational identification is to the organization, individual identity is equally important to the member. The restructuring and buffering functions, in particular, demonstrate how powerful personal identities are for individuals and the compelling nature of the organizational identity. Positioning groups as *locales* between the potentially divergent needs of both can provide “zones” where organizational members are free to examine and adjust identity and identification.

As our results indicate, the local, tangible nature of groups and group communication helps strengthen members’ connection to an otherwise largely abstract organizational entity. In other words, groups help make organizations and members’ connections to organizations, more palpable and “real.” Groups are also important *locales* in which to negotiate identity differences. As our study demonstrates, individuals

often find their values and beliefs differ from those the organization espouses or enacts. Rather than disengaging from the organization (either emotionally or physically), groups can provide a relatively safe space in which to express such differences and, perhaps, obtain information and insights that enable members to restructure individual or organizational identities and maintain their connection to the organization.

As we discuss in our analysis, restructuring is not always possible and members sometimes must accept differences and disagreements between individual and organizational identities. Again, groups are important in helping individuals accept such differences and still maintain a connection to the organization. This is accomplished in group contexts that allow individuals to comfortably express disidentification with the organization.

Such groups could include, of course, the more traditional forms used in organizations such as task forces, ad hoc committees, and standing committees. We also recommend, however, that practitioners encourage and support groups specifically designed as places for open discussion such as management and staff support groups and member groups organized around various interests. Many universities, for example, have women faculty groups (often sponsored by the Association for Faculty Women national organization), various minority faculty and staff employee groups, faculty and staff interest groups, and faculty and staff senates. The groups are important contexts in which various employee groups can discuss their unique circumstances, needs, and (dis)connections with the larger organization. Beyond providing social and professional links between organizational members, practitioners should recognize and encourage such groups as sites of organizational identity negotiation and maintenance. Such groups can provide especially important identity negotiation functions in a global environment bringing increasing diversity into organizations.

Recognizing and understanding the value of group communication and its' influence on organizational identity could also prove valuable to nonprofit organizational practitioners. Compared with paid organizational members, voluntary members have less extrinsic motivation to commit to and maintain investment in such organizations. Group contexts that enable members to create and "recreate" a purposeful and strong sense of community and connection may provide a strong platform for member satisfaction and identification. Such groups can enable members create their own sense of community via group communication and build consensus or reinforcement for organizational attachment. This could be especially useful when, as noted above, an individual finds his or her goals or value differ those of the organization. The opportunity to listen, discuss and even debate ideas and opinions or bring differing information to the "table" or even sharing more personal experiences can help individuals negotiate their diverse identity needs.

Limitations and Future Research

We note that the senior author was a participant observer in this organization and her practical knowledge also was a potential limitation as bias on the part of the researcher could influence outcomes. We attempted to mitigate this potential bias by

conducting member checking at several points along the research process, during interviews and after the interpretation of the data to validate the findings. In addition, the observational data obtained by videotaping the groups validated the member accounts.

This study is limited in its focus on only one type of organization, and, in particular, a voluntary organization that members join primarily due to shared values. This limitation likely accounts for the largely positive tone of the interviews and the groups. Members who had very negative experiences likely chose to no longer participate in the church. As noted earlier, identity and identification are as relevant to religious organizations as to other types. We do not intend to simplify, however, the messy and unclear boundaries that exist among a religious organization and religion. Such boundaries are necessarily arbitrary and artificial. Scott et al. (1998) acknowledged the “messy” territory of religious organizations when describing their model, stating, “To keep our essay both manageable and focused, we excluded from consideration here broad institutional identifications such as those associated with class, religion, nation, ethnicity, etc.” (p. 300). People who join an organized religion, however, still must grapple with issues of personal and organizational/religious (dis)identification and our analysis shows the group context is an important site for negotiating such identity struggles. In this way, the present study indicates religious organizations are important and useful venues for research. In fact, increasing attention is being given to communication in religious contexts (e.g., Driskill & Camp, 2006; Gribas, 2008) and the incorporation of spiritual practices (e.g., the search for meaning and connection) into the workplace setting (Burack, 1999). Nonetheless, our focus on only one organization and one type of organization does limit the generalizability of our findings.

Members of all types of organizations (religious or secular), however, likely experience identity struggles and we encourage research examining these processes in a variety of organizational types. Along these lines, the data provide insights into individual–group–organizational dynamics that, on their face, could apply to variety of different types of organizations to varying degrees. To build on this exploratory study, scholars should use similar methods to examine these processes in other types of organization including corporations, manufacturing organizations, and other types of voluntary organizations. One might find, for example, that individuals only loosely identify with a large, complex manufacturing organization and their personal and organizational identities have very little overlap. An important group or set of groups in such environments would be labor union groups. Examination of the linking functions of union groups in such organizations may provide additional insights into the “buffering” function as those may be prime contexts for disidentification. As useful would be analysis of how such groups provide connection between individual and organization, if at all. Such research may reveal other functions of groups that diminish, rather than enhance, individuals’ organizational identification.

Research should also examine these processes in informal groups such as friendship and other types of social networks in organizations. Research indicates that informal groups in organizations are prime sites of information sharing and influence (e.g.,

Kanter, 1977; Sias & Cahill, 1998). Examining these issues using a structural identification approach would be an important development in that literature. Thus, although our findings can only be generalized to formal groups in one type of organization, we see great potential for our method and results to guide studies of multiple group and organizational types.

The present study intentionally took a unidirectional focus on individual–group–organizational relationships. That is, we specifically examined how individuals identified with the organization and the role of groups in those links. Future research should examine how groups may also provide an opportunity for “the organization” to identify with individual employees. For example, task forces, planning committees, and other group entities charged with shaping an organization’s mission, vision, and strategic goals enable individual-level identity structures to impact the organization’s identity.

The goal of the present study was to obtain insights into the group as a *locale* in which members negotiate organization identity structures. We, therefore, intentionally limited our analysis to member discourse that represented individual identity and organizational identification. It is likely, however, that identification with the *group* also impacts member linkages to the organization. Our understanding of individual and group identity structures and identification behaviors would provide additional insights into the linking role of members and organizations and future research should center on such dynamics.

In sum, the present study highlights the role groups play in the individual–organizational relationship. Groups are important *locales* in which members can express front region identity structures via identification, restructure conflicting identity structures, and express back region identity structures via disidentification. These functions help members maintain both their individuality and their membership in, and commitment to, the organization.

References

- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, E. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, *14*, 2–39.
- Berger, I. E., Cunningham, P. H., & Drumwright, M. E. (2006). Identity, identification, and relationship through social alliance. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *34*, 128–137.
- Burack, E. H. (1999). Spirituality in the workplace. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *12*, 280–291.
- Carbaugh, D. (1996). *Situating selves: The communication of social identities in American scenes*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Cheney, G., & Tompkins, P. K. (1987). Coming to terms with organizational identification and commitment. *Central States Speech Journal*, *38*, 1–15.
- Cox, T., Jr. (1991). The multicultural organization. *The Executive*, *5*, 34–48.
- Croucher, S. M., Long, B. L., Meredith, M. J., Oommen, D., & Steele, E. L. (2009). Factors predicting organizational identification with intercollegiate forensics teams. *Communication Education*, *58*, 74–91.
- Deetz, S. A. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Driskill, G., & Camp, J. W. (2006). Identification strategies for unity: A unity movement among Christian church organizations. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 29, 445–483.
- Elsbach, K. D. (1999). An expanded model of organizational identification. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 21, 163–200.
- Freud, S. (2001). New identities for the new century. *Families in Society*, 82, 335–344.
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Gioia, D. A., Schultz, M., & Corley, K. G. (2000). Organizational identity, image, and adaptive instability. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 63–82.
- Glynn, M. A. (1998). Individuals' need for organizational identification (NOID): Speculations on individual differences in the propensity to identify. In D. Whetten & P. Godfrey (Eds.), *Identity in organizations: Building theory through conversations* (pp. 283–244). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual*. New York: Anchor.
- Gossett, L. M. (2002). Kept at arm's length: Questioning the organizational desirability of member identification. *Communication Monographs*, 69, 385–405.
- Gouran, D. S. (1999). Communication in groups: The emergence and evolution of the field of study. In L. R. Frey, D. S. Gouran, & M. S. Poole (Eds.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 1–34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gribas, J. (2008). Doing teams while being the body: Managing spiritual/secular dialectical tensions of defining the Church collective through transcendent metaphor. *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 31, 206–244.
- Holmer-Nadesen, M. (1996). Organizational identity and space of action. *Organization Studies*, 17, 49–81.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kirby, E. L., & Krone, K. J. (2002). “The policy exists but you can't really use it”: Communication and the structuration of work-family policies. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 30, 50–77.
- Kuhn, T., & Nelson, H. (2002). Reengineering identity: A case study of multiplicity and duality in organizational identification. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 16, 5–38.
- Larson, G. S., & Pepper, G. L. (2003). Strategies for managing multiple organizational identifications: A case of competing identities. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 16, 528–557.
- Lasswell, H. (1935). *World politics and personal insecurity*. New York: Free Press.
- Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings* (3rd ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Macionis, J. J. (1992). *Society: The basics*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Mael, F. A., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13, 103–123.
- Mathieu, J. E., & Zajac, D. M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 171–194.
- Morgan, J. M., Reynolds, C. M., Nelson, T. J., Johanningsmeier, A. R., Griffin, M., & Andrade, P. (2004). Tales from the field: Sources of employee identification in agribusiness. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17, 360–395.
- Morrow, P. C. (1983). Concept redundancy in organizational research: The case of work commitment. *Academy of Management Review*, 8, 486–500.
- Pepper, G. L., & Larson, G. S. (2006). Cultural identity tensions in a post-acquisition organization. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34, 49–71.
- Poole, M. S. (1998). The small group should be the fundamental unit of communication research. In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication: Views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 94–97). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Putnam, L. L. (1983). Paradigms for organizational communication research: An overview and synthesis. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46, 192–206.
- Putnam, L. L., & Stohl, C. (1990). Bona fide groups: A reconceptualization of group context. *Communication Studies*, 41, 248–265.
- Scott, C. R. (1997). Identification with multiple targets in a geographically dispersed organization. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 10, 491–522.
- Scott, C. R. (2007). Communication and social identity theory: Existing and potential connections in organizational identification research. *Communication Studies*, 58, 123–138.
- Scott, C. R., Connaughton, S. L., Diaz-Saenz, H., Maguire, K., Ramirez, R., Richardson, B., Shaw, S. P., & Morgan, D. (1999). The impacts of communication and multiple targets on intent to leave: A multimethodological exploration. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 12, 400–435.
- Scott, C. R., Corman, S. R., & Cheney, G. (1998). Development of a structural model of identification in the organization. *Communication Theory*, 8, 298–336.
- Sias, P. M., & Cahill, D. J. (1998). From coworkers to friends: The development of peer friendships in the workplace. *Western Journal of Communication*, 62, 273–299.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel (Ed.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (2nd ed., pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Van Knippenberg, D., & van Schie, E. C. M. (2000). Foci and correlates of organizational identification. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 73, 137–148.
- Weber, M. (1978). G. Roth & C. Wittich (Eds.), *Economy and society: An outline of an interpretive sociology*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Witmer, D. F. (1997). Communication and recovery: Structuration as an ontological approach to organizational culture. *Communication Monographs*, 64, 324–349.

Copyright of Journal of Applied Communication Research is the property of National Communication Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.