



This is “Organizational Identity and Diversity”, chapter 8 from the book [An Introduction to Organizational Communication \(index.html\)](#) (v. 0.0).

This book is licensed under a [Creative Commons by-nc-sa 3.0](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/) license. See the license for more details, but that basically means you can share this book as long as you credit the author (but see below), don't make money from it, and do make it available to everyone else under the same terms.

This content was accessible as of December 29, 2012, and it was downloaded then by [Andy Schmitz](#) (<http://lardbucket.org>) in an effort to preserve the availability of this book.

Normally, the author and publisher would be credited here. However, the publisher has asked for the customary Creative Commons attribution to the original publisher, authors, title, and book URI to be removed. Additionally, per the publisher's request, their name has been removed in some passages. More information is available on this project's [attribution page](http://2012books.lardbucket.org/attribution.html?utm_source=header).

For more information on the source of this book, or why it is available for free, please see [the project's home page](#) (<http://2012books.lardbucket.org/>). You can browse or download additional books there.

## Chapter 8

# Organizational Identity and Diversity

### Who Are “We”?

It’s a weeknight, you’ve worked late, and you don’t feel like making dinner when you get home. So you decide to grab a bite on the way. Having opted for fast food, you consider the choices. There’s the leading national burger chain; if you go there, then you know exactly what you’ll get no matter which location you visit. One rival burger chain, however, works hard at promoting a reputation for higher-quality *meat*, while another advertises higher-quality *sandwiches*. Then there are the alternatives to hamburgers: a national chain that proffers a home-style menu; another that promotes chicken as a kind of anti-burger; yet another that specializes in Mexican-themed foods. Among all these different chains, their corporate identities have been respectively conveyed through the symbols of a clown, a king, a redhead, a colonel, a cow, and a dog.



© Thinkstock

This scenario highlights some basic issues of *organizational identity*. Each of the organizations referenced above is trying to foster a unique identity in a world already saturated with competing messages. George Cheney and Lars Christensen likened this challenge to that of a shipwrecked castaway who, after putting a message in a bottle, goes to throw it in the ocean but “cannot see the water [because] it is covered with messages in bottles.” Cheney, G., & Christensen, L. T. (2001). Organizational identity: Linkages between internal and external communication. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 231–269). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; pg. 240. To convey its identity to the world, however, the organization must first establish its own firm sense of who “we” are. And because “we” means everyone, then organizational identity is not just a corporate matter to be decided by management. To carry off its corporate image, individual organization members—from executives to employees—must buy into and identify with the organization.

Then, too, if organizational identity starts with members and is then projected to others, the traditional distinction between “external” and “internal” communication becomes blurred. Communication activities—including advertising, marketing, and public relations—that convey an organization’s identity to external audiences are, in fact, the flip side of internal communication activities by which members make sense of who “we” are. The concept of identity casts organizational communication as a dialectic: organization members negotiate who “we” are; that identity is negotiated with the organization’s environment; and then the organization adjusts its identity in response to how it is perceived. To return to our opening scenario, the external activities by which each fast food chain communicates its identity to consumers cannot be divorced from the internal communications by which that same identity is fostered among members of each organization. Thus, the basic issues of organizational identity can be expressed by a series of questions:

- How do communications between members of an organization develop a sense of who “we” are?
- As this sense is developed, how is organizational identity maintained and transmitted to new members?
- How is this identity conveyed to persons who are, at least in a formal sense, outside the organization?

The first question is of greater interest to managers of new organizations, while the second and third are concerns for managers of established organizations. Indeed, *organizational identification* is a prime corporate objective as management strives to cultivate employees who feel strongly attached and loyal to the organization and its values. At the same time, leaders engage in *impression management* to engender positive feelings among the various publics—from customers, to shareholders, to the media—on whose goodwill the organization depends. Nevertheless, the managerial drive to maintain a stable corporate identity and foster strong organizational identification among employees has certain risks. Too much homogeneity can cause an organization to be set in its ways and respond too slowly to changes in the marketplace; for example, IBM ruled the computer world through the 1980s but its organizational identity as a maker of “business machines” may have caused it to miss the personal-computer revolution. Moreover, too much homogeneity in a workforce can lead to groupthink and deny organizations the diverse mix of employees and viewpoints that boosts creativity and leads to better decisions.

In this chapter, then, we have paired *identity* and *diversity* as two aspects of organizational life that exist in a tension which must be successfully balanced. This is true for leaders who must manage public impressions about the organization and, simultaneously, who must manage employees so that they identify sufficiently with

the organization to support the desired corporate identity. But this need to manage the tension between identity and diversity is also true for individual organization members.

Since the Industrial Revolution and then with accelerating force in the twentieth century, organizations have become major sources of personal identity for many people. In traditional societies, the bonds of local community and local authority supplied stable roles for people. In modern societies, however, people derive a major part of their identities from the organizations with which they affiliate. Perhaps you know people who identify so completely with an organization that its values form their personal sense of moral duty. Perhaps you have experienced this feeling yourself about a sports team on which you played, a church or mosque to which you belong, a club that you joined, or even the college you now attend. For individuals, the tension between organizational identity and diversity is sometimes called the *work-life conflict*. At work you want to be a valued “team player” who helps to achieve organizational goals, and yet you also want to retain your own identity. First, you desire to give your employer the advantage of your own unique perspectives; second, you understand the personal need to “get a life.”

Then, too, the social contract between employers and employees has changed over the past two generations in response to globalization (see [Chapter 6 "Organizational Communication Climate, Culture, and Globalization"](#)). Until the 1970s people generally believed that employees who strongly and loyally identified with their organizations would be rewarded with job security and a reasonable expectation of a lifelong career. Today, employees realize they have no such guarantees and do not expect to spend their entire adult lives working for a single company. Under this new social contract you must balance the level of organizational identification needed to do your work effectively and gain satisfaction from your employment, with the knowledge that you must build a personal “brand” that is separate from your current organization. Why? Chances are that you will be working for another company someday.

## 8.1 Identity and the Organization

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. See how different approaches to the nature of organizations lead to different perspectives on organizational identity.
2. Understand the concept of organizational identity, both its roots in theories of individual identity and how the literature on organizational identity has developed to the present.
3. Differentiate between organizational identity, organizational culture and organizational image, and grasp the dynamic relationships between them.
4. See how organizational identity can be unstable and mutable, changing and adapting in response to external feedback or events that challenge an organization's image and reputation.
5. Understand the danger of self-referential auto-communication and the ethical challenges posed.

Because it raises questions of ontology, epistemology and axiology (see [Chapter 4 "Modern Theories of Organizational Communication"](#)), the concept of *identity* evokes debate among organizational communication scholars which reflects larger controversies in the field. One review noted that, while “interest in concepts of organizational identity has grown” and “the literature is expanding rapidly,” the notion “has been subjected to much scrutiny and debate, [and] definitions and conceptualizations of the topic remain essentially contested.” Seidl, D. (2005). *Organizational identity and self-transformation: An autopoietic perspective*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate; pg. 67.



© Thinkstock

From a postmodern perspective the very concepts of identity and individuality are suspect. Where Western philosophy views each person as a self-contained unit who is in charge of his or her intentions, postmodernists regard each person as “site” where the flux of larger historical and cultural discourses conditions our thoughts and intentions. From a critical perspective, on the other hand, the concept of identity is entangled with societal structures of power that “colonize” individual consciousnesses in order to make the dominant order seem normal and natural. These two approaches, postmodern and critical, may also be extended from personal identity to organizational identity. Postmodernists would question the

assumption that organizations have autonomous identities and instead view organizations as sites where larger historical discourses compete. And critical scholars might analyze how management cultivates an organizational identity that legitimates its own interests and, by making those interests seem the natural order of things, brings workers under its control and domination.

The concept of organizational identity also raises a question similar to one we explored in [Chapter 6 "Organizational Communication Climate, Culture, and Globalization"](#) about organizational culture. In other words, is organizational identity just one attribute, among a set of many different attributes, that an organization “has,” a variable that leaders can “manage” to boost performance? (This would be the postpositive or functionalist view.) Or should identity be seen as a phenomenon that emerges from members’ communicative interactions, and thus part of what an organization “is”? (This would be the interpretive view.) [Table 8.1 "Approaches to Organizational Identity"](#) below suggests how the four approaches to organizations—postpositive, interpretive, critical, and postmodern—might view organizational identity. See also Gioia, D. A. (1998). From individual to organizational identity. In D. A. Whetten & P. C. Godfrey (Eds.), *Identity in organizations: Building theory through conversations* (pgs. 17–31). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Table 8.1 Approaches to Organizational Identity

Approach to Organizations	View of Organizational Identity
Functionalist	Identity is one of the attributes that an organization “has” and may be managed to improve organizational performance
Interpretive	Identity is an emergent phenomenon that arises from the social and communicative interactions between organization members
Critical	Identity is a tool that management can manipulate to universalize its interests (i.e., equate “company interests” with managerial interests)
Postmodern	Identity is a modern conceit; an organization does not have a unique “self” for its intentions are conditioned by larger historical discourses; if anything, organizations are fragmented into multiple identities

We will explore postmodern and critical views of organizational identity in greater detail later in the chapter. But we start with an interpretive perspective since the concept of organizational identity originated in that tradition. To get a grip on the concept, we begin with two basic metaphors: the organization as a biological organism, and the organization as a person. The first metaphor will help us grasp

the *organizational* aspect of identity and the second to comprehend the *communicative* aspect.

## Two Metaphors

As we learned in [Chapter 4 "Modern Theories of Organizational Communication"](#), systems theory is based on the metaphor that an organization can be likened to biological organism. From that perspective, we can understand how a living thing must somehow maintain a boundary between itself and the environment. The boundary may be permeable as resources pass between the organism and the environment. But if there is no boundary then the organism would cease to exist as an identifiable entity. Now let us apply the metaphor to organizations.

We do not speak of a “civilization” as an “organization”; a civilization is, practically speaking, unbounded. On the other hand, a basic function of any organization is to continually organize a boundary between itself and its environment. Establishing a boundary is accomplished in two ways. First, an organization sets up formal hierarchies: for example, a company adopts a form of ownership and a corporate structure, sets hiring and firing procedures for determining who can be an employee, and establishes locations where work takes place. But since all organizations establish formal boundaries, something is still missing: What makes “us” different from “them”? Thus, a second way that an organization creates and maintains a boundary is by developing a sense of “who we are” that distinguishes it from other organizations. This second type of boundary is one way to define the concept of organizational identity. From this standpoint, then, one basic organizing function of an organization is to continually organize an identity that distinguishes it from the environment of other organizations.

Our second metaphor likens an organization to a person. More than a century ago, Charles Horton Cooley asserted that identity is constructed through language and has both an individual *and* a social aspect; indeed, identity is partly shaped as each of us mentally constructs a **looking-glass self**<sup>1</sup> based on how we believe others perceive us. Cooley, C. H. (1922). *Human nature and the social order*. New York: Scribner. Writing at about the same time as Cooley, George Herbert Mead likewise described how speech is the means by which each person develops a unique sense of self. Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. He reasoned that if each human lived alone then there would be no need for a “self.” The need arises from the fact that humans live in societies. Like Cooley, he conceptualized the self as having individual and social aspects; Mead called the individual element the “**I**”<sup>2</sup> and the social element the “*me*.” The “**I**” is the spontaneous and creative self; the “*me*” is the looking-glass self (a term Mead borrowed from Cooley) a person constructs by imagining how a “generalized other” (a composite mental picture of society) perceives him or her. Acquiring and

1. A term coined by Charles Horton Cooley, the looking-glass self is a mental image of how you think others perceive you and which drives the social aspect of your self.

2. As first described by George Herbert Mead, the “**I**” is the individual aspect of your self and the “*me*” is the social aspect of your self.

maintaining a “self” comes through negotiating it with others. In turn, negotiation is accomplished via language and talk—by communicating. Mead held that each person negotiates a sense of self by imagining what others think of him or her and then negotiating a self that will be accepted by others. A later theorist, Erving Goffman, built on Cooley’s and Mead’s theories by likening humans’ everyday relations to a drama; people are actors who each present a **face**<sup>3</sup> and stage a (continually updated and amended) life story that will gain them social approval. The notion that the events of your life folded in a logical progression and can be told as a sequential narrative is really a conceit; events happen randomly so that, in fact, you must impose a “plot” upon them. And yet, just as in a play, your “audience” participates by suspending its disbelief in order to benefit from larger truths. So to play the game, save face with others and feel good about yourself, you must have coherent and satisfying life story to tell. Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday. If we extend these ideas to organizations, we can grasp how development of an organizational identity is a process of communicatively (and continually) negotiating (and adjusting) an organizational “self” by telling a coherent story that the organization’s members and publics will accept.

How people use communication to negotiate and manage their identities is a vital field of research in communication studies. William Cupach and Tadasu Imahori proposed an Identity Management Theory to explain the communication strategies that individuals use to manage their identities, or “support” their “faces,” at various stages of their interpersonal relationships. Cupach, W. R., & Imahori, T. T. (1993). Identity management theory: Communication competition in intercultural episodes and relationships. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competence* (pp. 112–131). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. The impact of group affinities (family, gender, ethnic, cultural) and intergroup encounters on identity is explored by Stella Ting-Toomey’s Identity Negotiation Theory. Ting-Toomey, S. (1993). Communication resourcefulness: An identity negotiation perspective. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester (Eds.), *Intercultural communication competence* (pgs. 72–111). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. (2005) etc Michael Hecht and his colleagues look at identity as a layered phenomenon that has individual, social, and communal properties which are enacted via communication. Hecht, M. L., Warren, J. R., Jung, E., & Krieger, J. L. (2005). The communication theory of identity: Development, theoretical perspective, and future directions. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pgs. 257–278). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Interest in exploring the formation of individual and group identities through communication arose in the 1980s and has remained strong. Not surprisingly, this movement also stimulated scholarly interest in theorizing the dynamics of organizational identity.

3. According to Erving Goffman, constructing your self is like a drama; that is, you are like an actor who presents a face to an audience and, as in a play, stages a life-story that you hope will gain social acceptance.



## The Concept of Organizational Identity

Through the biological metaphor we grasped how an organization must establish boundaries, even if permeable and blurred, in order for the notion of an “organization” to have any meaning. And through likening the organization to a person, we saw how these boundaries must be communicatively negotiated in ways that distinguish the organization’s story from those of other organizations in a socially acceptable manner. We chose this way of introducing our topic because, as Dennis Gioia observed, the “important features of individual identity supply the basis for the extension of the notion to organizations.” Gioia, D., op cit., pg. 20. Blake Ashforth and Fred Mael similarly noted that identity has been researched at the level of the individual, group and, more recently, the organization because of the many parallels across the three levels.” Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1996). Organizational identity and strategy as a context for the individual. *Advances in Strategic Management*, 13, 19–64.

So we turn now to the literature on **organizational identity**<sup>4</sup>, a concept that originated in 1985 with Stuart Albert and David Whetten. They defined organizational identity as a tripartite combination of “the central character of an organization” (e.g., its values, practices, services, products, structure, ownership), the distinctive qualities that it claims to possess, and the enduring manifestation of its identity over time. Albert, S. A., & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7, 263–295; pg. 292. According to this definition, then, the fast food chains described in the opening scenario of this chapter have formed identities that bring together their central characters as retail restaurants operated through a franchise business model, their individual claims to distinction vis-à-vis the other chains, and their consistency in sticking with their respective identities. Albert and Whetten did not suggest leaders “decide” the identities of their organizations. Rather, identity formation is an interactive process in which outsiders voice perceptions of an organization, so that the organization’s definition of itself is influenced as it considers this feedback and reflects on how it fits into its environment. Ibid, pg. 273.

Their conception was modeled on the processes of individual identity formation theorized by Cooley, Mead, and Goffman. Writing a few years later, Ashforth and Mael further grounded organizational identity in **social identity theory**<sup>5</sup> (SIT). Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 20–39; pg. 21 This psychological theory, proposed in the 1970s by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, holds that one’s self-concept combines a “personal identity” based on individual traits with a “social identity” based on group classifications. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 38–43). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole. At the time, most social

4. In Stuart Albert and David Whetten’s original conception, organizational identity has three dimensions as it reflects the central character of an organization and its own claims of distinctiveness, and as it endures over time; subsequent scholars have explored how organizational identity can change and how an organization can have multiple identities.

5. Proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, social identity theory (SIT) holds that one’s self-concept combines a “personal identity” based on individual traits with a “social identity” based on group classifications.

psychologists believed a group identity was generated through competition with other groups; Tajfael and Turner contended that a group identity can emerge when members feel like insiders. SIT thus provided an insight that, through Ashford and Mael’s application, aided in further developing the concept of organizational identity. As David Seidl noted, SIT explained how “the individual member uses descriptions of the organization as part of his [sic] own self-descriptions” and thereby opened the door “to apply psychological identity theories to organizations.”Seidl, D., op cit., pg. 72.

Since the work of Albert and Whetten and Ashford and Mael in the 1980s, the literature on organizational identity has continued to expand. Over three decades, the concept has moved from Albert and Whetten’s original thesis—that organizational identity is central, distinctive, and enduring—to a more nuanced view: identity is adaptive, even unstable, and exists in dynamic relation with external audiences’ and internal members’ perceptions of an organization. In particular, researchers question whether identity can be seen as enduring when today’s organizations exist in a world of accelerating change and many are now set up as loosely structured networks. Recently, Mary Jo Hatch and Majken SchultzHatch, M. J., & Schultze, M. (2004). *Organizational identity: A reader*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. summarized the major developments in theorizing organizational identity, which are presented in Table 8.2 "Theoretical Developments: Hatch & Schultz" below.

Table 8.2 Theoretical Developments: Hatch & Schultz

ROOTS IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY		
<b>Cooley</b> Cooley, C. H., op cit.	<b>1902</b>	The self has both individual and social aspects. The social aspect is constructed as a “looking-glass self” when a person considers how others may perceive him or her.
<b>Mead</b> Mead, op. cit.	<b>1934</b>	The self is comprised of an “I” (the spontaneous and creative aspects of self) and a “me” (the looking-glass self that imagines how it is perceived by the “generalized others”).
<b>Goffman</b> Goffman, op cit.	<b>1959</b>	The self is a “face” that each person “presents” to others. Negotiating and maintaining the self is like a drama; a person strives to present a face that will be accepted by an audience of others.

<b>Tajfel &amp; Turner</b> Tajfel & Turner, op cit.	<b>1979</b>	One's self-concept combines a personal identity based on individual traits with a social identity based on group classifications. Group identities can emerge as members feel like insiders.
<b>Brewer &amp; Gardner</b> Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this "we"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 71, 83–93.	<b>1996</b>	The self can be analyzed at three levels: personal self-concept, relational self-concept, and collective self-concept.
<b>EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT</b>		
<b>Albert &amp; Whetten</b> Albert & Whetten, op cit.	<b>1985</b>	Originated concept of organizational identity, theorized as a combination of an organization's central character, the distinctive qualities it claims to possess, and the enduring manifestation of an identity over time.
<b>Schwartz</b> Schwartz, H. S. (1987). Anti-social actions of committed organizational participants: An existential psychoanalytic perspective. <i>Organization Studies</i> , 8, 327–340.	<b>1987</b>	Proposed that research on organizational identity can be pursued through a psychoanalytic framework.
<b>Ashforth &amp; Mael</b> Ashforth & Mael, Social identity theory, op cit.	<b>1989</b>	Applied Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory to organization studies and introduced the concept of "organizational identification" to describe how individual members identify with an organization.
<b>Alvesson</b> Alvesson, M. (1990). Organization: From substance to image? <i>Organization Studies</i> , 11, 373–394.	<b>1990</b>	Introduced the concept of "organizational image" as an aspect of organizational identity.
<b>Dutton &amp; Dukerich</b> Dutton, J. E., & Dukerich, J. M. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i> , 34, 517–514.	<b>1991</b>	Investigated how organizational identities adapt in response to an organization's environment and concerns for how it is perceived.
<b>Ginzel, Kramer &amp; Sutton</b> Ginzel, L. E., Kramer, R. M., & Sutton, R. I. (1993). Organizational impression management as a reciprocal influence process: The neglected role of the organizational audience. <i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i> , 15, 227–266.	<b>1993</b>	Adapted Goffman's notion of impression management to organizations, thus envisioning impression management not as merely a managerial function but as a negotiation between an organization and its audiences.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: MULTIPLE IDENTITIES		
<b>Pratt &amp; Rafaeli</b> Pratt, M. G., & Rafaeli, A. (1997). Organizational dress as a symbol of multilayered social identities. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i> , 40, 862–898.	1997	Organization members manage multiple identities; for example, their identities as members of a specific organization and their identities as members of their professional community.
<b>Golden-Biddle &amp; Rao</b> Golden-Biddle, K., & Rao, H. (1997). Breaches in the Boardroom: Organizational identity and conflicts of commitment in a nonprofit organization. <i>Organization Science</i> , 8, 593–611.	1997	Different segments of an organization may have different identities, which may lead to “hybrid identities” as members combine different (and sometimes conflicting) identities.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: STABILITY AND CHANGE		
<b>Gioia, Schultz &amp; Corley</b> Gioia, D. A., Schultze, M., & Corley, K. G. (2000). Organizational identity, image, and adaptive instability. <i>Academy of Management Review</i> , 25, 63–81.	2000	Contrary to Albert and Whetten’s description of organizational identity as enduring, identity is dynamically unstable and adaptive. The <i>label</i> given to an organization may be stable, but the meaning of the label changes.
<b>Hatch &amp; Schultz</b> Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2002). The dynamics of organizational identity. <i>Human Relations</i> , 55, 989–1018.	2002	Organizational identity is formed, maintained, and transformed through the dynamic interaction of organizational identity, organizational image, and organizational culture.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: NARRATIVE AND DISCOURSE		
<b>Czarniawska-Joerges</b> Czarniawska-Joerges, B. (1997). Narratives of individual and organizational identities. <i>Communication Yearbook</i> , 17, 193–221.	1997	Organizational identity may be analyzed as a narrative production or a story that an organization tells to gain acceptance.
<b>Alvesson &amp; Willmott</b> Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (2002). Identity regulation as organizational control producing the appropriate individual. <i>Journal of Management Studies</i> , 39, 619–644.	2002	Managerial interests attempt to regulate organizational identity in order to “produce” an “appropriate” member and thus maintain control.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: AUDIENCES		
<b>Elsbach &amp; Kramer</b> Elsbach, K. D., & Kramer, R. M. (1996). Members’ response to organizational identity threats: Encountering and countering the <i>Business Week</i> rankings. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i> , 41, 442–476.	1996	Threats to organizational identity (e.g., criticism in the media) prompt members to respond with various strategies to affirm and repair the threatened identity and thus restore their own social identities.

<p><b>Cheney &amp; Christensen</b>Cheney &amp; Christensen, op. cit.</p>	<p>2001</p>	<p>An organization’s internal and external communication is linked through its identity. How an organization sees itself and believes others see it will affect corporate issue management.</p>
--	-------------	---

To get a sense of where the theory of organizational identity is headed, consider how fast food chains have been transformed over the years. In the 1960s and 70s when families seldom ate out, McDonald’s advertising proclaimed “You Deserve a Break Today.” Back then its main rival, Burger King, trumpeted the slogan “Special Orders Don’t Upset Us” to reassure moms that their finicky kids would not balk at going out to dinner. Television commercials for Kentucky Fried Chicken were aimed at mothers who could enjoy an occasional respite from the stove by putting a ready-made, home-style meal on the family dinner table. Today, of course, families eat out regularly and fast fare, rather than home cooking, sets consumer taste preferences. As their environment has changed, the chains have adapted their identities—and are adapting again, even now, in response to concerns about “McDonaldization” and obesity. With people spending more time and eating more meals in fast food establishments, all of the major chains are cultivating identities akin to comfortable sit-down restaurants with quality menus.

A further challenge for research on organizational identity is a problem that has confronted those who study organizational culture. As we learned in [Chapter 6 "Organizational Communication Climate, Culture, and Globalization"](#), the idea of organizational culture was popularized in the 1980s by the business press and, at the same time, separate literatures developed in management science (taking the view that an organization “has” a culture which can be managed) and organization studies (taking the view that an organization “is” a culture). A similar situation exists in the expanding literature on organizational identity. The business press has offered popularized notions of organizational (or corporate) identity (or image); the management science literature has explored how organization leaders can form, maintain, and transform identity; and the organization studies literature—as seen in [Table 8.2 "Theoretical Developments: Hatch & Schultz"](#) above—has investigated identity as a phenomenon that emerges through social interaction. Through it all, terms such as *organizational identity*, *corporate identity*, *organizational image*, *corporate image*, *organizational culture*, and *corporate culture* have assumed different meanings to different scholars and researchers.

Hatch and Schultz attempted to sort out and synthesize these literatures with a theory that not only distinguishes the differences between identity, image and culture, but shows how each dynamically impacts on the other. Along the way, they

put forth a theory of how organizational identity is formed, maintained, and transformed.

### Identity, Image, Culture

While the term *organizational identity* is common in the literature of organization studies, Hatch and Schultz found that the term *corporate identity* appears frequently in the literature on managerial strategy and marketing. Upon review, they discovered that the term “organizational identity” typically connoted something that was transmitted internally via interpersonal communication and was shared by all organization members. In contrast, “corporate identity” often connoted a managerial perspective that was transmitted to external stakeholders via mediated communication. But “instead of choosing between corporate and organizational identity” as a preferred term, Hatch and Schultz “advocate combining the understandings . . . into a single concept of identity defined at the defined at the organizational level of analysis.” Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2000). *Scaling the Tower of Babel: Relational differences between identity, image, and culture in organizations*. In M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch & M. H. Larsen (Eds.), *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand* (pp. 13–35). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; pg. 17. Their proposal is grounded in the notion, described at the outset of this chapter, of organizational identity as a dialectic phenomenon in which internal sense-making about “who we are” interacts dynamically with the perceptions of external stakeholders.

To construct a concept of organizational identity that unifies its internal and external aspects, Hatch and Schultz’s began by defining what identity is *not*. They observed in the organizational literature that *identity* and *image* were often linked, as were *identity* and *culture*. But is identity synonymous with image? Or is it synonymous with culture? And if not, what are the differences? To spell them out Hatch and Schultz delineated, as illustrated in [Table 8.3 "Identity, Image, and Culture: Hatch & Schultz"](#) below, how the concepts might be distinguished.

Table 8.3 Identity, Image, and Culture: Hatch & Schultz

Distinguishing Culture and Identity		Distinguishing Identity and Image	
CULTURE	IDENTITY	IDENTITY	IMAGE
Contextual	Textual	Internal	External
taken-for-granted assumptions and meanings that	narrative of organization whose “text” its members “read” and shapes	perspective on the organization held by its own members	perspective on the organization held by its external stakeholders

6. In Stuart Albert and David Whetten’s original conception, organizational identity has three dimensions as its reflects the central character of an organization and its own claims of distinctiveness, and as it endures over time; subsequent scholars have explored how organizational identity can change and how an organization can have multiple identities.

7. To distinguish organizational culture from organizational identity, Hatch and Schultz described culture as emerging from members’ symbolic constructions to form unconsciously accepted assumptions and meanings that shape everyday organizational life. Organizational image is the perspective held by external stakeholders who view the organization as “other” to themselves and interpret the organization based not only on the organization itself but on multiple sources.

8. To distinguish organizational image from organizational identity, Hatch and Schultz defined image as a perspective held by external stakeholders who view the organization as “other” to themselves and interpret the organization based not only on the organization itself but on multiple sources.

Distinguishing Culture and Identity		Distinguishing Identity and Image	
shape everyday organizational life	sense of “who we are”		
<b>Tacit</b>	<b>Explicit</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Other</b>
taken-for-granted assumptions and meanings that do not require conscious reflection	reflections by members about the meaning of the organization which occur at a conscious level	perspective held by insiders who regard the organization as a “self”	perspective held by outsiders who regard the organization as an “other”
<b>Emergent</b>	<b>Instrumental</b>	<b>Singularity</b>	<b>Multiplicity</b>
members’ own local constructions of symbols out of organizational artifacts and meanings	use of organizational symbols and artifacts to express and communicate “who we are”	perspective of insiders who interpret the organization based primarily on the organization as a source	perspective of outsiders who interpret the organization based on multiple sources of information

**Organizational identity**<sup>6</sup>, then, is according to Hatch and Schultz the internal perspective of members who identify with the organizational “self” as they “read” its narrative, base their interpretations on internal information, reflect consciously on its meaning, and deploy symbols and artifacts to express their collective identity. **Organizational culture**<sup>7</sup> emerges from members’ symbolic constructions to form unconsciously accepted assumptions and meanings that shape everyday organizational life. **Organizational image**<sup>8</sup> is the perspective held by external stakeholders who view the organization as “other” to themselves and interpret the organization based not only on the organization itself but on multiple sources.

By these definitions, Hatch and Schultz mark out organizational identity, culture, and image as distinct phenomena. Nevertheless, these phenomena do not operate in isolation but exist in dynamic relationships by which identity and culture, and identity and image, influence one another. Their Organizational Identity Dynamics Model holds that identity and culture are related as conscious “reflecting embeds identity in culture” and “identity expresses cultural understandings,” and that identity and image are related as “expressed identity leaves impressions on others and “identity mirrors the images of others.” Hatch & Schultz, The dynamics of organizational identity, op cit.; pg. 379. In other words, as members consciously reflect on an organization’s identity, their shared understandings become internalized and part of a tacit culture whose taken-for-granted assumptions are manifested through the symbols and artifacts that members construct to express “who we are.” And as those expressions of “who we are” leave impressions on outsiders to create the organization’s external image, the image becomes the

organization's own looking-glass self by which the organization consider how it is generally perceived and accordingly adjusts and (re)negotiates its identity. Hatch and Schultz graphically represented the identity/culture and identity/image dyads as shown in Figure 8.1 "Organizational Identity and Culture: Hatch & Schultz" and Figure 8.2 "Organizational Identity and Image: Hatch & Schultz" below.

Figure 8.1 *Organizational Identity and Culture: Hatch & Schultz*

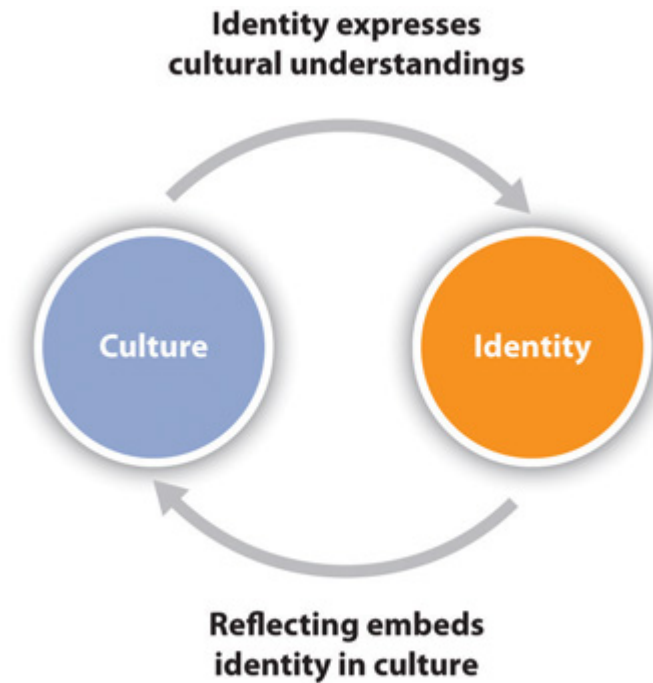
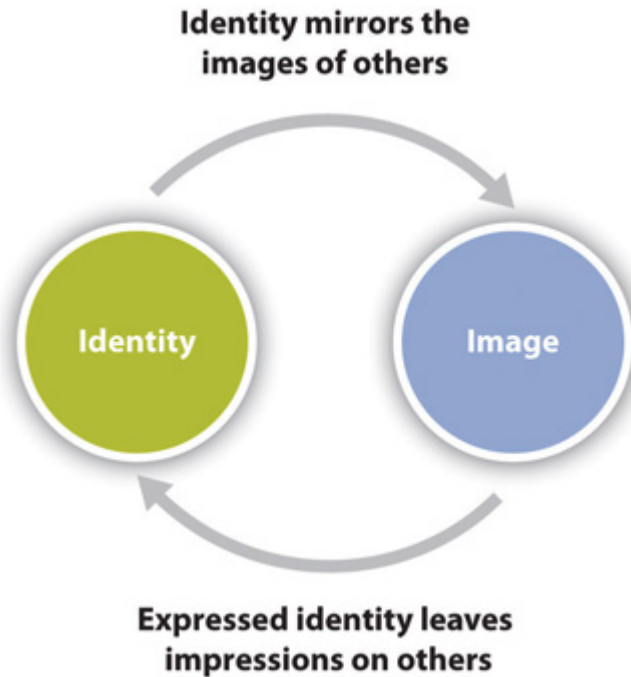


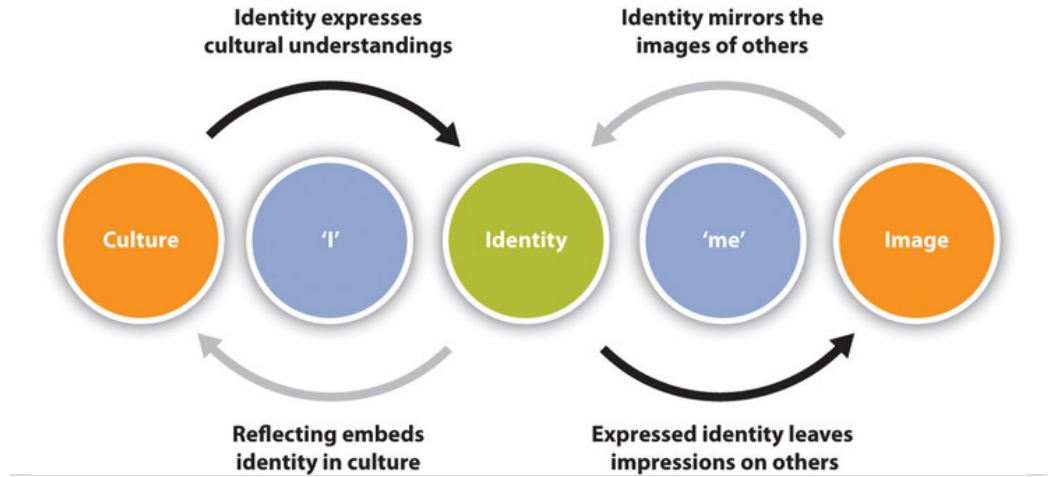


Figure 8.2 *Organizational Identity and Image: Hatch & Schultz*



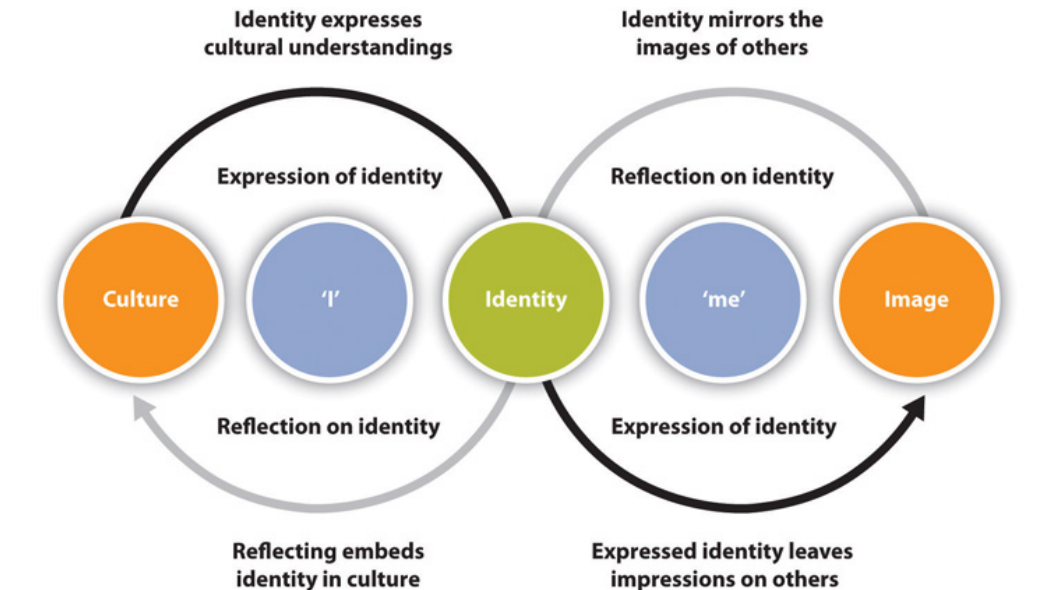
Taking their cue from Mead, Hatch and Schultz labeled the identity/culture dyad as the organizational analog for the “I” of the organizational self, and the identity/image dyad as the analog of the “me.” Thus, through the dynamic interrelationship between organizational identity and culture, members construct an organizational “I” that is tacit internalized, and furnishes the context for making meaning. And through the dynamic interrelationship between identity and image, members construct an organizational “me” that must be continually negotiated with others. Yet Mead’s original theory also held that the “I” and the “me” shaped one another. Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics Model therefore combines the two dyads and puts identity as the nexus between the organizational “I” and “me,” as shown in [Figure 8.3 "Organizational Identity Dynamics Model"](#) below.

Figure 8.3 *Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*



By extending Hatch and Schultz’s Organizational Identity Dynamics Model, as depicted in [Figure 8.4 "Integration of Culture and Image via Identity"](#), we can see how identity mediates—provides a transmission belt, if you will—between internal culture and external image. The figure below shows how organizational culture and image are integrated through the two processes of reflection on identity and expression of identity.

Figure 8.4 *Integration of Culture and Image via Identity*



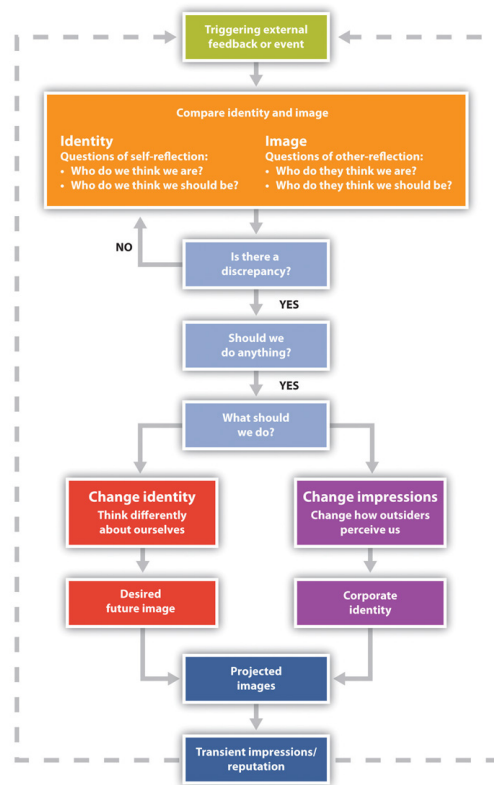
## Identity as a Mutable Quality

Conscious reflection on organizational identity is a key to the notion of **adaptive instability**<sup>9</sup> advanced by Gioia, Schultz, and Corley. Gioia et al., Organizational identity, image, and adaptive instability, op cit. Their theory addresses a trend that was recognized by Stuart Albert, who originated the concept of organization a generation earlier. In the twenty-first century, organizations operate in a world characterized by the “flattening of hierarchies, the growth in teamwork and empowerment, the outsourcing of secondary competencies, and so on [that] are means of creating flexible pools of sophisticated capacities.” Albert, S., Ashforth, B. E., & Dutton, J. E. (2000). Organizational identity and identification: Charting new waters and building new bridges. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 13–17; pg. 13. In such a world, can organizational identity be an *enduring* trait? Albert and his colleagues argued that the dismantling of bureaucratic structures increases the need for cognitive structures—that is, identities—which give organizations a rudder to steer by. But Gioia, Schultz, and Corley challenged the notion that organizational identity is enduring—which, together with centrality and distinctiveness, is one of the three dimensions contained in Albert and Whetten’s original definition.

In their model—as in the Organizational Identity Dynamics Model described earlier—identity and image are distinct but interdependent phenomena. As the external impressions that form an organization’s reputation are inevitably subjected to feedback and events, members ask themselves four questions. Two are questions of self-reflection: Who do we think we are? Who do we think we should be? Two are questions of other-reflection: Who do “they” think we are? Who do “they” think we should be? If a discrepancy is detected between self-perception and other-perception, and if action is believed to be warranted, then organization members must ask: How should we change our identity (the way we think about ourselves) to sustain a new image? And how should we change our image (the way outsiders perceive us) to sustain a new corporate identity? The changes are projected to outsiders, external impressions of the organization are altered, and the adaptive process—shown in [Figure 8.5](#) below—reboots (and continually recurs) all over again. As such, argued Gioia, Schultz and Corley, organizational identity is best seen as unstable and mutable rather than enduring.

9. Challenging Albert and Whetten’s thesis that organizational identity is enduring, Dennis Gioia and his colleagues argued that identity has the quality of adaptive instability as external feedback and events trigger challenges to an organization’s image and the organization responds by reflecting on how it sees itself and how others see it.

Figure 8.5



*Identity-Image Interdependence: Gioia et al.*

## Communicating Organizational Identity

Organizational identity is projected to external audiences through various means of communication—a topic we will explore at length in [Chapter 14 "Stress, Conflict, and Negotiation"](#). Taken together, these are often called “strategic communication” or “integrated marketing communication.” Separately, scholars and practitioners designate these means of communication as advertising, marketing, and public relations. As David Guth and Charles Marsh explain:

- Advertising is “the use of controlled media (media in which one pays for the privilege of dictating message content, placement, and frequency) in an attempt to influence the actions of targeted publics.”
- Marketing is “the process of researching, creating, refining, and promoting a product or service to targeted consumers.”

- Public relations is “the management of relationships between an organization and its publics.”Guth, D. W., & Marsh, C. (2012). *Public relations: A value-driven approach* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon; pg. 11.

If you are majoring in communication then you may be concentrating on advertising, marketing, and public relations; you may aspire to do these activities as a career. Certainly, many communication majors end up as advertising, marketing, or public relations professionals. Traditionally, these activities are treated as linear communication (see [Chapter 4 "Modern Theories of Organizational Communication"](#)) in which a sender conveys a message through a channel to a receiver. Theories of mass communication have progressed over the past eighty years from the simplistic “magic bullet theory” (mass media direct sway the public) and two-step theory (mass media reach opinion leaders, who sway the public), to the n-step theory (mass media reach the different opinion leaders on various issues, who sway the public on those issues) and diffusion theory (mass media influence people who then influence their peers), and to agenda-setting theory (mass media do not determine what people think but, rather, what they think *about*)McCombs, M. & Shaw, D. (1972). The agenda-setting function of the mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176–187. and uses and gratifications theory (people are not passive users of media but choose their information sources).Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973/1974). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37, 509–523. The latter theory envisions mass communication as a two-way process in which media users’ choices influence media producers, even as media producers’ messages influence users who choose to consumer their programming. Similarly, public relations theory views “PR” not as one-way and asymmetrical, but as a two-way symmetrical process by which an organization and its stakeholders mutually resolve conflicts.Hunt, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285–326). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

With this growing appreciation for the two-way nature of external organizational communication, George Cheney and Lars Christensen have injected the concept of organizational identity into the mix. Corporate communication campaigns are generally viewed as linear or interactional: organizational leaders think up a message, strategically choose the channels that most effectively reach the desired recipients, and measure results to determine success and guide future campaigns. In other words, corporate communications are formulated according to the rational intentions of corporate communicators. But Cheney and Christensen challenged this assumption: “[I]nternal perceptions (identities, expectations, and strategies) strongly affect what problems are ‘seen,’ what potential solutions are envisioned, and how the problems are ultimately addressed.” Thus, “organizational identity affects the diagnosis of issues” and how corporate leaders manage them.Cheney & Christensen, op cit., pg. 249. This leads Cheney and Christensen to observe that, if

organizational identity is the reference point for corporate communicators, then corporate communication and issue management are self-referential and, even though they “seem to be directed toward others, [they] may actually be **auto-communicative**<sup>10</sup>, that is, directed primarily toward the [organizational] self.”Ibid, pg. 258.

This startling observation has profound meaning for anyone who is, or aspires to be, a corporate communicator. Cheney and Christensen laid out a number of ethical concerns. For example, as a corporate communicator you may need to ask yourself whether your organization’s culture is disposed toward actions of integrity or of harm. You may need to question whether you are conveying “truth” when, because your point of reference is a given organizational identity, your messages emerge from your own perspective. At worst, your messages may have become so auto-communicative, and thus your system so closed, that you are only talking to yourself. The antidote to self-referentiality, argue Cheney and Christensen, is self-reflexivity. “To know the environment better, organizations should, in other words, try to know themselves.” Only by bringing core meanings and assumptions to the surface and by being “sensitive to . . . one’s own auto-communicative predispositions . . . can organizations hope to counter the self-referential tendencies” that can lead to unethical communications.Ibid, pgs. 263–264.

10. As George Cheney and Lars Christensen noted, an organization’s identity shapes how its leaders and managers diagnose and address problems; thus, since corporate issue management is self-referential, corporate communication (advertising, marketing, public relations) that seems directed to external audiences may actually be auto-communication as the organization in reality talks primarily to itself.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Different ontologies about organizations (i.e., the nature of their being) lead to different perspectives on organizational identity. A functionalist (or postpositive) ontology regards identity as one of a set of attributes that an organization “has” and which therefore can be managed to optimize performance. An interpretive ontology regards identity as part of what an organization “is” since it emerges from the communicative interactions that constitute an organization. A critical ontology may see organizational identity as a tool of management to make its interests seem normal and natural. A postmodern ontology “de-centers” the very notion of identity by seeing organizations and individuals not as autonomous units but as sites of contestation between multiple discourses.
- In originating the concept of organizational identity, Stuart Albert and David Whetten built on theories of how individual identities are formed. They looked to the theories of Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, and Erving Goffman who held that the “self” has both an individual and a social aspect. Extending these ideas to organizations, Albert and Whetten argued that organizational identity is the central character of an organization, the distinctive qualities it claims to possess, and the enduring manifestation of its identity over time. Formation of this identity, however, is an interactive process in which outsiders voice perceptions that influence the organization’s definition of itself. Since Albert and Whetten introduced their thesis in 1985, subsequent scholars have explored how organizations can have multiple identities and how organizational identities can change.
- To distinguish between organizational identity, organizational culture and organizational image, Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz advanced a single theory to delineate each concept and explains how each phenomenon is interrelated with the other. Identity is a conscious perspective shared by members; culture emerges from members’ symbolic constructions to form tacit assumptions and meanings; and image is a perspective held by external stakeholders. Organizational identity and culture are interrelated because members’ reflections on identity become embedded in culture, even as identity comes to express cultural understandings. Organizational identity and image are interrelated because the expression of identity leaves impressions on outsiders, even as the organization takes those impressions into account in forming its identity. The identity/culture dynamic is the organizational equivalent to the individual aspect of the self, and the identity/image dynamic is equivalent to the social aspect.

- Dennis Gioia, Majken Schultz, and Kevin Corley challenged Albert and Whetten's original assertion that organizational identity is enduring. Instead they argued that organizational identity is unstable and mutable. As external feedback and events trigger challenges to an organization's image, its identity takes on the quality of "adaptive instability." The organization reflects on itself, reflects on how it is perceived, compares its identity and its image, addresses any discrepancy by adjusting its identity to generate a desired image, projects the image to its external environment, and the process starts over again.
- An organization externally communicates its identity through advertising, marketing, and public relations. By these communications, organizations engage in corporate issue management. George Cheney and Lars Christensen pointed out that an organization's identity—how it sees itself—shapes the problems it perceives and the solutions it formulates. When issue management becomes "self-referential" then corporate communication can actually become "auto-communication." Though advertising, marketing, and marketing are purportedly directed to external audiences, the organization is really talking to itself. To avoid unethical communication, leaders and managers must be aware of their potential for auto-communication.



## EXERCISES

1. Think of an organization to which you have belonged. It might be a sports team on which you played, a club that you joined, a company where you worked, a church or mosque or synagogue where you have worshipped, or the college you now attend. What was (or is) its organizational identity? Now as you think of that identity, think of how it may have formed. How would you compare the formation of its identity to the way a person forms his or her identity? Are the theories of Cooley, Mead, and Goffman applicable to organizations? If so, how?
2. Consider again the organization you named in Exercise 1. Describe how (using Albert and Whetten's definition) its identity reflects its central character and the distinctive qualities it claims to possess, and how the identity has endured over time. Now, referring to Hatch and Schultz's theory, describe how its identity, culture, and image are interrelated. Finally, referring to Gioia, Schultz and Corley's theory of adaptive instability, describe how the organization's identity has changed in response to external feedback and events that have challenged its image.
3. Finally, think again of the organization you analyzed in Exercises 1 and 2. In what ways might its organizational identity—the way it sees itself—have shaped the problems it perceives and the solutions it formulates? Do you see, as Cheney and Christensen cautioned, any auto-communication in its advertising, marketing, and public relations? Explain your answer.

## 8.2 Identity and the Organization Member

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Distinguish between organizational *identity* and *identification*.
2. Recognize how management strives to guide employees' socialization into the organization so employees strongly identify with the organization.
3. Understand the processes by which organization members come to identify with the organization and incorporate that affinity into their self-identities.
4. Grasp the postmodern and critical concern that managerial interests can use organizational identity and identification to sustain their control.

While organizational *identity* may be developed by an *organization*, organizational *identification* may be developed by its *members*. In introducing their concept of **organizational identification**<sup>11</sup>, Ashforth and Mael defined it as “a specific form of social identification,” where identification is “the perception of oneness with or belongingness to a group, involving direct or vicarious experience of its successes and failures.” Ashforth & Mael, Social identity theory, op cit., pgs. 22, 34. As noted above, you may have felt such identification with a sports team, a club, a house of worship, your alma mater, your place of work, or any number of organizations to which you have belonged. In a moment we will look at the psychological components that Asforth and Mael ascribed to organizational identification. But first, let us review the issue from the corporate side rather than the individual side.



© Thinkstock

11. Blake Ashforth and Fred Mael started with social identity theory—which holds that one’s self-concept combines a “personal identity” based on individual traits with a “social identity” based on group classifications—and originated the concept of organizational identification by defining it as a specific form of social identification or perception of oneness with a group.

### From the Organizational Perspective

Leaders expend much effort toward managing employees’ identification with the organization in hopes of producing a workforce that is committed and loyal. So they pay much attention to ensuring new members “learn the ropes” and are socialized into the values and practices of the organization. As we review at length in [Chapter 12 "Entering, Socializing, and Disengaging"](#), Fredric Jablin, F. M. (1987). Organizational entry, assimilation, and exit. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts, & L. W. Porter (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 679–740). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Jablin, F. M.

12. Through processes initiated by management and through your own information gathering, you are socialized into the values and practices of an organization.
13. According to Frederic Jablin's framework, this is the first phase of organizational socialization in which, prior to formal entry, your environmental influences (e.g., family, media, peers, education, previous organizational experiences) and the employer's recruiting process begins your socialization and aligns you with the organization's identity.
14. This second phase of organizational socialization spans the period from your initial employment offer, to your start on the job, to your full assimilation into the organization.
- 15.
16. During the third and final phase of organizational socialization you are separated from the organization; the manner of your disengagement is governed by the manner of your exit: whether by retirement, taking another job, or being discharged.
- 17.
18. During the preentry segment of organizational entry, when you have been offered a job but not yet begun, messages from your employer and the formation of initial impressions (on both sides) continue your organizational socialization.

(2001). Organizational entry, assimilation, and disengagement/exit. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 732–818). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. proposed that **organizational socialization**<sup>12</sup> occurs in three phases: **anticipatory socialization**<sup>13</sup>, **organizational entry**<sup>14</sup> and **assimilation**<sup>15</sup>, and **organizational disengagement**<sup>16</sup> and **exit**<sup>17</sup>. These are illustrated in Figure 8.6 "Organizational Socialization" below.

Figure 8.6 Organizational Socialization



In the first phase, anticipatory socialization, you envision a specific job or career; this vision, according to Jablin, is likely influenced by family, media, peers, education, and any previous organizational experiences you have had. Along with environmental influences, noted Michael Kramer, the process of anticipatory socialization also takes in process of being recruited and hired by a specific organization. Kramer, M. W. (2010). *Organizational socialization: Joining and leaving organizations*. Malden, MA: Polity. Hiring, of course, leads to organizational entry and assimilation, the next phase of socialization. Jablin broke this phase down into three segments. Jablin, F. M. (2001). Organizational entry, assimilation, and disengagement/exit. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 732–818). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. During **preentry**<sup>18</sup> when you have been offered a job but not formally begun, you receive messages from the employer and initial impressions—both by and about you—are formed. Then during formal **entry**<sup>19</sup> the organization strives to acclimate you to its ways, while you try to make sense of how you fit in—until you experience the **metamorphosis**<sup>20</sup> of assimilation as an established member. Finally, the phase of organizational disengagement and exit occurs as you leave your employment. Through the first two phases in which you are recruited and hired, and then initiated and assimilated, organizations use many methods to “get you on board” and foster strong identification: new employee orientation programs, training programs, mentoring programs, information giving, and more.

From the perspective of organization leaders, the goal of the socialization is to produce employees who adopt—as we learned in Chapter 7 "Leader and Follower Behaviors & Perspectives"—a desirable **followership style**<sup>21</sup>. Ira Chaleff described the ideal follower as one who supports the leader and offers corrective feedback

19. During the period of your initial formal entry into an organization, socialization continues as managers and coworkers help you “get on board” and as you try to make sense of how you fit in.
20. In the last segment of the entry phase of organizational socialization, you experience the metamorphosis of full assimilation as an established member of the organization.
21. The concept of different leadership styles has prompted the complementary concept of different followership styles; the literature on management generally presupposes that strong organizational identification is a component of the followership style that effective managerial leadership should produce.
22. Ashforth and Mael defined identification as a cognitive construct (or mental picture of one’s self as intertwined with a group) as opposed to a set of behaviors or emotions; further, identification attaches the self to a social categories (“I am”), while internalization attaches the self to guiding principles (“I believe”).

when needed. Chaleff, I. (2003). *The courageous follower* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Barrett-Koehler. Roger Adair contrasted the Disgruntled follower and the Disengaged follower, with the excited and motivated Doer and the self-sacrificing Disciple. Adair, R. (2008). Developing great leaders, one follower at a time. In R. E. Riggio, I. Chaleff, & J. Lipman-Blumen (Eds.), *The art of followership: How great followers create great leaders and organizations* (pp. 137–153). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Robert Presthus divided followers into Upwardly Mobiles who revel in an organization’s system, Indifferents who go along, and Ambivalents who resist. Presthus, R. (1962). *The organizational society: An analysis and a theory*. New York, NY: Random House; pg. 15. Robert Kelley proposed a typology of Alienated, Passive, Conformist, and Exemplary followers—the latter combining active engaged in an organization with independent thought and judgment for achieving organizational goals. Kelley, R. (1992). *The power of followership: How to create leaders that people want to follow and followers who lead themselves*. New York: Doubleday/Currency. A common thread that runs through all of these typologies is the assumption that followers should identify strongly enough with an organization to perform their duties with motivation and commit their independent thought and judgment to the service and benefit of the group.

### From an Individual Perspective

Fostering organizational identification is seen by leaders as an essential management function. But for individuals, the implications are more complex. As we noted at the outset of the chapter, people in modern societies derive much of their self-identities from the organizations with which they affiliate. Evaluating the implications must start with a better understanding of organizational identity as a psychological phenomenon. Since much of the research follows Ashforth and Mael’s construct of organizational identity, then that is where we will begin. Ashforth & Mael, Social identity theory, op cit.

Table 8.2 "Theoretical Developments: Hatch & Schultz" above illustrates how Ashforth and Mael applied to organizations the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner—who, in turn, had built on the work of Cooley and Mead. Ashforth and Mael surveyed the extant literature and found that the term *organizational identification* was sometimes used interchangeably with such terms as *commitment* and *internalization*. Guided by social identity theory, they defined **identification**<sup>22</sup> as a “cognitive construct that is not necessarily associated with any specific behaviors or affective states” since “an individual need only perceive him- or herself as psychologically intertwined with the fate of the group” and he or she “personally experienc[es] the successes and failures.” Ibid, pg. 21. In other words, your identification with a social group (such as an organization) is a mental picture rather than a set of actions or feelings. Further, identification can be distinguished from *internalization*: “Whereas identification refers to self in terms of social

categories (I am), internalization refers to the incorporation of values, attitudes, and so forth within the self as guiding principles (I believe).”Ibid, pgs. 21–22. Table 8.4 "Distinguishing Organizational Identification" below puts these ideas into perspective by suggesting how an employee of the (hypothetical) Better Burgers franchise might express affinity with her organization.

Table 8.4 Distinguishing Organizational Identification

Phenomenon	Example	Explanation
Identification	“I’m Better!”	The employee cognitively constructs a mental picture of her social self as intertwined with Better Burgers.
Behavior	“I’m loyal”	The employee takes the action of being committed to her association with Better Burgers
Emotion	“I’m love my job”	The employee enjoys feelings of satisfaction through her association with Better Burgers
Internalization	“I’m a <i>burgerista</i> ”	The employee takes as her guiding principle the value that Better Burgers places on creativity and quality

Ashforth and Mael argue that social identification can drive your actions and feelings, or vice versa. But when organizational identification is understood as a specific form of social identification—and when identification is seen as a cognitive construction or mental picture of the self, rather than a set of behaviors or feelings—then social identity theory suggests five factors can push employees and managers to identify with their organizations:

- The *distinctiveness* of the organization, so that membership confers a unique self-identity.
- The *prestige* of the organization, so that membership boosts self-esteem.
- An awareness of *out-groups* (i.e., other organizations), so that awareness of the *in-group* (i.e., one’s own organization) is reinforced.
- *Competition* with other organizations, so that distinctions are more clearly delineated.
- *Groups formation factors* that may include physical proximity, interpersonal relations, attractiveness, similarity, shared background, and common threats or aspirations.Ibid, pgs. 24–25.

Think again of the fast food chains we have used as an example throughout this chapter. If you were employed by one of these chains then (ideally, from management’s point of view) you might identify with the chain as your own self-

23. In Tompkins and Cheney's theory of organizational control, management gains concertive control when employees internalize approved attitudes and behaviors and discipline themselves.
24. Using structuration theory as a framework, Phillip Tompkins and George Cheney argued that members' identification with an organization's identity furnishes a medium for members to act socially within the organization; in so doing, they reproduce the system so that member identification and organizational identity also become outcomes of their action—hence, an *identity-identification duality*.
25. In Tompkins and Cheney's theory of organizational control, the direct and open use of power by management is called simple control.
26. In Tompkins and Cheney's theory of organizational control, management's selection of the communication tools employees are expected to employ is called technical control.
27. In Tompkins and Cheney's theory of organizational control, management's determination of formal policies and procedures employees must follow is called bureaucratic control.
28. In Tompkins and Cheney's theory of organizational control, management's attempts to inculcate common values and practices around which members form their interests and relationships is called cultural control.

identity becomes intertwined with its distinctiveness (“Our burgers are uniquely best!”) and prestige (“We’re the leading national chain!”) and with its contrasts to other chains (“The other chains want to be like us” and “The competitions won’t beat us because their burgers aren’t as good!”). In addition, your organizational identification might be enhanced if your restaurant is in your own neighborhood, if get along well with your manager and coworkers, and if your fellow employees are nice people who have similar personalities, background, dreams, and challenges.

For your manager—and more broadly, for the fast food chain’s corporate leadership—a prime goal is to “produce” employees with the organizational identification described above. Of course, if you like where you work and feel a sense of belonging and purpose, then your organizational identification will tend to boost your job satisfaction. But it also follows that an organization’s attempts to “manage” your identity is tied to corporate leadership’s desire for control and predictability. Phillip Tompkins and George Cheney have called this **concertive control**<sup>23</sup>. Drawing on structuration theory (see [Chapter 4 "Modern Theories of Organizational Communication"](#)), they proposed that and **identity-identification duality**<sup>24</sup> operates within organizations. Tompkins, P. K. & Cheney, G. (1985). Communication and unobtrusive control in contemporary organizations. In R. D. McPhee & P. K. Tompkins (Eds.), *Organizational communication: Traditional themes and new directions* (pp. 179–210). Newbury Park, CA: Sage; see also Scott, C. R., Corman, S. A., & Cheney, G. (1998). The development of a structural theory of identification in the organization. *Communication Theory*, 8, 298–336. The more you are linked with other organization members that share the same premises, the more you will all cultivate like identities for yourselves and, in turn, be self-actualized by relationships with likeminded coworkers. Thus, identity and identification are both mediums and outcomes of social action. Tompkins and Cheney theorized that organizations deploy communication to control their members in five ways starting with **simple control**<sup>25</sup> through direct and open use of power, **technical control**<sup>26</sup> that selects the communication tools members are expected to employ, and **bureaucratic control**<sup>27</sup> that determines formal policies and procedures members must follow. Then through **cultural control**<sup>28</sup> organizations seek to inculcate common values and practices around which members form their interests and relationships, while through concertive control organizations induce members to discipline themselves as approved attitudes and behaviors come to seem natural and normal. As members accept these unwritten rules they in turn reinforce and reproduce them—individually and through interactions with other members—until these expectations become the very goals which motivate members and form their sense of obligation.

Tompkins and Cheney also drew on rhetorical theory (see [Chapter 4 "Modern Theories of Organizational Communication"](#)), citing Kenneth Burke’s concept of identification as a process in which **consubstantiation**<sup>29</sup>, or a sharing of substances,

29. Rhetorical scholar Kenneth Burke (whom Tompkins and Cheney reference in their theory of organizational control) contended that persuasion cannot occur without identification; the basis for one person to persuade another is *consubstantiation* or a sharing of substances that causes a listener to identify with a speaker.
30. Aristotelian rhetorical theory (which Tompkins and Cheney reference in their theory of organizational control) holds that argument syllogistically from major premise, to minor premise, to conclusion; a skillful speaker who knows the mind of an audience can omit a well-known premise, which the audience mentally supplies and thus is drawn along to the speaker's conclusion.
- 31.
32. Four "technologies" or modes for getting things done, theorized Michel Foucault, operate in the modern world; technologies of production permit us to manipulate the physical world.
33. Four "technologies" or modes for getting things done, theorized Michel Foucault, operate in the modern world; technologies of sign systems permit us to communicate.
34. Four "technologies" or modes for getting things done, theorized Michel Foucault, operate in the modern world; technologies of power submit individuals to domination and determine their conduct.

causes persons to identify with one another and makes persuasion possible. Burke, K. (1969). *A rhetoric of motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Identification with an organization occurs as members imbibe its premises, shape their own identities by these premises, and ultimately reason by them. They likewise drew on Aristotle's concept of the **enthymeme**<sup>30</sup>. Aristotle (2007). *On rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse* (2nd ed.) (G. A. Kennedy, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press. Reasoning in organizations occurs syllogistically—often from a major premise, to a minor premise, to a conclusion. Enthymemic argument occurs when a premise is widely shared by an audience. A speaker merely omits that premise from the argument and thus impels the audience to fill in the missing premise and be drawn along to the speaker's conclusion. So for example, when management and workers share the premise that profits are good for everyone, managers need only urge employees to practice "customer service excellence" and employees will supply the missing premise that "satisfied customers are repeat customers" and so be drawn along to the conclusion that making a profit is an imperative. When such identification occurs, the organization has gained concertive control over its members.

### From Postmodern and Critical Perspectives

Writing in the 1970s, French philosopher Michel Foucault described a fundamental change from premodern to modern societies. In the old era of kings, discipline was achieved through direct and physical punishments such as public beheadings of people who offended the order of the realm. In the present era of bureaucracies, however, **discipline**<sup>31</sup> is achieved not through direct and physical means but through indirect and intangible means, such that people come to discipline themselves. Foucault gave the analogy of a state prison, which is an invention of modern society. Inmates are aware of the faceless, all-seeing (or "panoptic") guard tower above them. Knowing they are not watched *every* moment but could be at *any* moment, they discipline themselves. Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage. (Original work published 1975) In a modern organization the method of surveillance may not be visual means such as cameras; bureaucracies have methods of reporting and accounting that keep tabs on people. Foucault became interested in the development of the concept of "self" throughout Western history and concluded that the "self" has become one of four "technologies" that operate in the modern world. These include:

- (1) **technologies of production**<sup>32</sup>, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things;
- (2) **technologies of sign systems**<sup>33</sup>, which permits us to use signs, meanings, symbols, symbols, or signification;
- (3) **technologies of power**<sup>34</sup>, which, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject;
- (4) **technologies of the self**<sup>35</sup>, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain

number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. . . . each one of them is associated with a certain type of domination. Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes. Foucault, M. (1988). *Technologies of the self*. In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 16–49). Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press; pg. 18.

In Foucault’s formulation, “technologies” is not meant in the popular sense of machines but, rather, simply as ways of getting things done. Thus, modern society has ways of manipulating the physical world, of communicating, of hierarchizing human relationships (since a completely egalitarian society is an impossibility), and of modifying the self (since living with other people makes the unmodified self an impossibility). Each way of getting things done implies submission to the larger historical and cultural discourses that are the dominant discourses in a given society. Numerous scholars in organization studies have applied Foucault’s ideas to organizational settings. For example, see Burrell, G. (1988). *Modernism, post modernism, and organizational analysis 2: The contribution of Michel Foucault*. *Organization Studies*, 9, 221–235; McKinlay, A., & Starkey, K. (1998). *Foucault, management, and organization theory*. London: Sage. Thus, as Mike Savage demonstrated in his study of a major nineteenth-century railroad, employees readily disciplined themselves in return for pay increases and a career ladder that offered upward mobility. Savage, M., (1998). *Discipline, surveillance, and the “career”*: Employment on the Great Western Railway, 1833–1914. In A. McKinlay & K. Starkey (Eds.), *Foucault, management, and organization theory* (pp. 65–92). London: Sage. Foucault himself examined the implications of his thesis and argued that individuals, when confronted with pressures by dominant discourses to modify their selves, could respond ethically by asking four questions:

1. *Ethical substance*: Which part of myself or my behavior is influenced or concerned with moral conduct? What do I do because I want to be ethical?
2. *Mode of subjection*: How am I being told to act morally? Who is asking? To whose values am I being subjected?
3. *Ethical work*: How must I change myself or my actions in order to become ethical in this situation?
4. *Ethical goal*: Do I agree with this definition of morality? Do I consent to becoming this character in this situation? To what am I aspiring to when I behave ethically? Faber, B. (1999). *Intuitive ethics: Understanding and critiquing the role of intuition in ethical decisions*. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 8(2), 189–202; adapted from Foucault, M. (1984). *On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress*.

35. Four “technologies” or modes for getting things done, theorized Michel Foucault, operate in the modern world; technologies of the self permit individuals to modify their bodies, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being to attain desired ends.



In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader* (pp. 352–355). New York: Pantheon; also see Moore, M. C. (1987). Ethical discourse and Foucault’s conception of ethics. *Human Studies*, 10, 81–95.

While Foucault’s ideas provide a framework for many scholars to explore questions of the self in organizational settings, Matts Alvesson and Hugh Willmott took their own critical look starting with the literature—reviewed above—on organizational identity and identification. They argued that management engages in **identity regulation**<sup>36</sup> as a form of organizational control in order to “produce” the “appropriate” individuals that management desires. Alvesson & Willmott, *Identity regulation*, op cit. Identity regulation, believed Alvesson and Willmott, is accomplished as management promulgates a discourse that defines identity and thus shapes processes of identity formation and change. This managerial discourse addresses four targets and is conducted in nine modes, as shown in **Table 8.5** “Identity Regulation: Alvesson & Willmott” below.

Table 8.5 Identity Regulation: Alvesson & Willmott

Target	Mode	Example
Employee	Defining the person directly	“A male middle manager” may do his “managing” by following directives from above but then hides his subordinate position by projecting masculine values
	Defining a person by defining others	A group of salesmen are constructed as “real men” because management believes women lack a “killer instinct” and thus does not hire them
Action orientations	Providing a specific vocabulary of motives	A manager tells new employees the company pays fair wages and does not “bid” for recruits, implying they should be motivated intrinsically and not by pay
	Explicating morals and values	The organization espouses certain values and heroes, so that employees cannot resist without losing their dignity and being made to feel unworthy
	Knowledge and skills	The organization conducts management training that prompts managers to identify with the company as a whole and not with a department or specialty
Social relations	Group categorization and affiliation	Giving employees emotional gratification as “team members” counters any tendency for employees to think of themselves as individuals
	Hierarchical location	The social status of units in the organization (leaders, executives, middle and junior managers, employees, etc) is supported by their positions in the hierarchy

36. Matt Alvesson and Hugh Willmott argue that, as means of organizational control, managerial interests engage in identity regulation through discursive practices that shape the processes of employees’ identity formation and thus “produce” the “appropriate” employee.

Target	Mode	Example
Scene	Establishing and clarifying a distinct set of rules of the game	A “team player” ethos causes employees to rein in their own traits (brilliance, ability, aggressiveness, personal values, etc) so others do not feel threatened
	Defining the context	Management talks about the uncertainty, competition and changes that globalization is bringing, thus implying that employees must be adaptable and enterprising

Thus, identity regulation “encompasses the more or less intentional effects of social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction” and includes “induction, training, and promotion procedures [that] are developed in ways that have implications for the shaping and direction of identity.”Ibid, pg. 625. These practices are intended to influence what Alvesson and Willmott call the **identity work**<sup>37</sup> that all members do to ascertain the nature of the organization and their parts in it. This identity work explores six aspects of **self-identity**<sup>38</sup>: central life interest, coherence, distinctiveness, direction, positive value, and self-awareness. In particular:

- A person’s *central life interest* is bound up in the questions of “Who am I?” and “What are we?”
- The desire for *coherence* is felt as a need to tell one’s life story as a narrative with a discernible sequence rather than a fragmented jumble of random events
- The desire for *distinctiveness* is akin to the need, discussed earlier in the chapter, to set boundaries that distinguish “me” from others
- *Direction* provides a (if often vague) basis of what is appropriate, desired, and valued on which a person can decide what is reasonable
- A set of *positive social values* lend self-esteem to a person’s identity
- A person gains a self-identity, in part, when he or she has acquired a *self-awareness* of that identity.

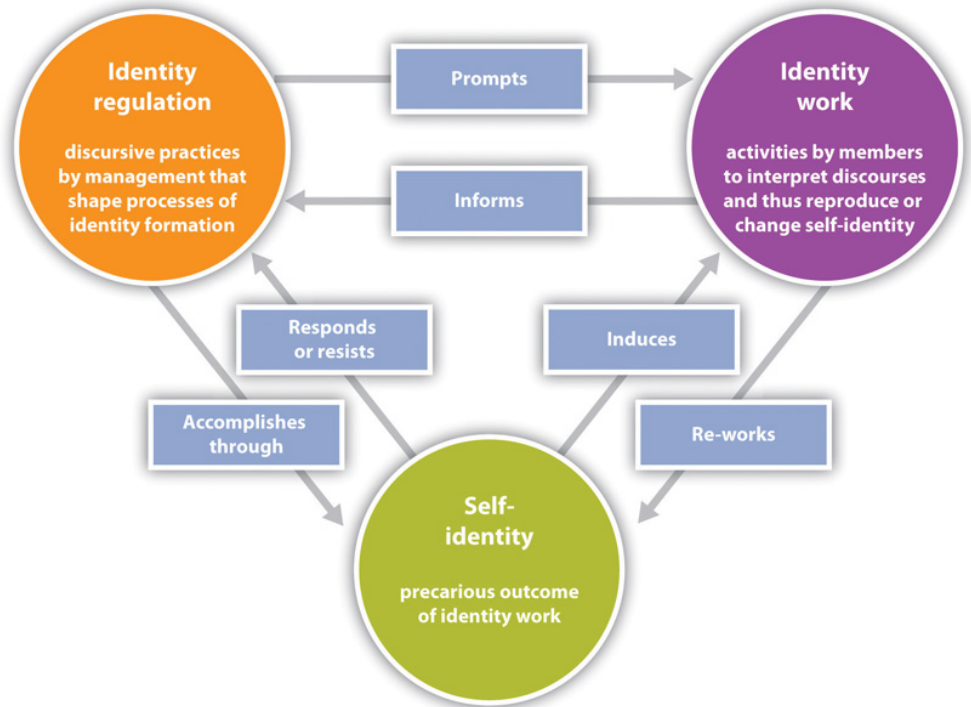
37. All employees engage in identity work, theorized Alvesson and Willmott, as they interpret organizational discourses in light of their own central life interest, desires for coherence and distinctiveness, need for direction and self-affirming social values, and emerging self-awareness.

38. In Alvesson and Willmott’s theory, identity work produces a (precarious) self-identity; the managerial objective in identity regulation is to shape the processes of identity work and this produce appropriate employees.

Thus, identity work is the process by which “people are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness.”Ibid, pg. 626. Having defined the three concepts of identity regulation, identity work and self-identity, Alvesson and Willmott saw them working in a dynamic relation as shown in **Figure 8.7 "Identity Regulation, Identity Work, Self-Identity"** below. Their conclusion: identity is “an important yet still insufficiently explored dimension of organizational control,” and one whose importance will increase in a post-

bureaucratic world of loosely networked organizations where control must be accomplished by managing the “insides” of employees. Ibid, pg. 620.

Figure 8.7 Identity Regulation, Identity Work, Self-Identity



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Organizational identity is the collective identity that an organization may form; organizational identification is developed by individual members as they identify with the organization. The concept of organizational identification originated with Blake Ashford and Fred Mael. In applying social identity theory—which holds that one’s self-concept combines a “personal identity” based on individual traits with a “social identity” based on group classifications—they defined organizational identification as a form of social identification as members perceive oneness or belonging with the organization.
- A key management objective is to foster strong organizational identification among employees. This occurs through conscious efforts to socialize employees into the values and practices of the organization so that they “get on board” and feel an affinity with the organization’s identity. Frederic Jablin described how this socialization occurs in three phases: anticipatory socialization, organizational entry and assimilation, and organizational disengagement and exit. During the first two phases especially, management strives to encourage organizational identification through such means as recruiting and hiring communications, new employee orientation programs, training programs, and mentoring programs.
- While management strives to encourage organizational identification, these efforts are not the whole story of how employees come to identify with an organization. Taking their cue from social identity theory, Ashforth and Mael observed that feelings of oneness and belonging are fostered as the organization is seen as distinctive and prestigious, and as comparisons to and competitions with other organizations delineate differences between “us” versus “them.” However, Phillip Tompkins and George Cheney drew on structuration theory to posit an *identity-identification duality*. Identification is not only a means for organizations to engage in social actions; identification is also an outcome of those actions. The more employees who identify with an organization act together with other such coworkers, the more they identify with the organization. Over time, believed Tompkins and Cheney, increasing identification leads to *concertive control* as members so identify with an organization that they discipline themselves to conform to managerially approved values.
- French philosopher Michel Foucault described how premodern societies enforced discipline through direct physical means, whereas modern societies enforce discipline through the possibility of indirect surveillance that compels people to discipline themselves. Matts Alvesson and Hugh Willmott, working from the literature on

organizational identification, posited that *identity regulation* affords management a means of control through “producing” the “appropriate” employee. All organization members must do *identity work* to form an organizational self-identity. Identity regulation occurs as management engages in discourses that attempt to shape employees’ identity work. These management discourses may strive to define the appropriate employee, appropriate actions, appropriate relations, and appropriate rules and contexts for organizational life.

## EXERCISES

1. In the exercises for [Section 8.1 "Identity and the Organization"](#) above, you were asked you to think of an organization to which you have belonged—perhaps a sports team on which you played, a club that you joined, a company where you worked, a church or mosque or synagogue where you have worshipped, or the college you now attend. In section 8.1 we asked you to explore that organization’s identity; now we ask you think about your own identification with that organization. Describe how the organization guided your socialization, first through the anticipatory socialization phase prior to your actual joining, and then through the phase of your formal entry and assimilation. What methods did the organization use in encouraging you to strongly identify with that organization?
2. Thinking of the same organization you analyzed in Exercise 1, switch your gaze from the ways it tried to socialize you and instead consider your own responses. Following Ashforth and Meal’s framework: Did the organization’s distinctiveness make you, as a member, feel unique? Did its prestige boost your self-esteem? As you became aware of other similar organizations, did the comparisons highlight what was different about your organization? Did that make you feel more a part of the “in” group? Was this feeling heightened by any actual or perceived competition with the other organizations? And as Tompkins and Cheney suggested, did your organizational identification increase as you spent more time with other members who also identified with the organization? Did you ultimately conform to the organization’s values and practices, without being told, because you felt they were your own?
3. Finally, consider again the organization you analyzed in Exercises 1 and 2. Now refer to [Table 8.5 "Identity Regulation: Alvesson & Willmott"](#) above which lists the targets and discourses that organization leaders and managers can use to engage in identity regulation. The left column lists discursive targets, the second lists discursive modes, and the third lists examples given by Alvesson and Willmott. Make a chart of your own and, in the third column, list your own examples of how the organization to which you belonged may have engaged in identity regulation. After listing your examples, jot down some thoughts on how these discourses may have shaped your identity work and influenced your self-identity in the organization.

## 8.3 Diversity and the Organization

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify demographic changes that are producing an increasingly diverse labor force and the opportunities (improved recruiting, creativity, problem-solving, flexibility, marketing) and challenges (prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, ethnocentrism) of this trend for organizations.
2. Understand that balancing your organizational identification and your personal identity—in other words, balancing work and life—ultimately requires a change in organizational cultures so that flexibility becomes the norm and expectation for employers and employees alike.

In thinking about identity and identification, we can easily slip into the trap of thinking the organization has *an* identity and that, likewise, the employee has *an* identity. In other words, each has *one* unified and integrated identity. This mode of thinking is, in fact, the “default” position in Western culture. We think of a each person as a single unit so that, metaphorically, we project this same quality onto the “super-person” which is the organization. Yet Albert and Whetten’s original thesis about organizational identity readily allowed that organizations can have multiple identities. Albert & Whetten, op cit. Communication scholars, as well as researchers in psychology and other fields, have long recognized that the same is true of individuals. Each one of us constructs our sense of self from a multitude of identities—perhaps our family, ethnicity, gender, age country of origin, region or city, religion, hobbies, clubs, alma maters, political affiliations, profession, employer, and work department. Moreover, identity is an ongoing construction that must be constantly negotiated, renegotiated, and adjusted in light of new experiences as you encounter new people and situations. (And from a postmodern perspective, the “self” is a fiction since each person is a “site” where multiple discourses compete. Thoughts and intentions are shaped and conditioned by those discourses and by the language with which to express them.)



© Thinkstock

To illustrate how people with different (and multiple) identities must mesh to accomplish work, consider this textbook. Under the auspices of a publisher, the

three authors came together to perform the work. We share an interest in organizational communication and yet our identities (and their components) are very different. One author (Wrench) is a white male, a member of Generation X who hails from Texas, earned his doctorate in West Virginia, moved from Ohio to New York, has a special interest in learning processes, and identifies with his roles as department chair, teacher, scholar, author, speaker, and consultant. Another author (Punyanunt-Carter) is a woman of color and member of Generation X who also attended universities in Texas and Ohio, and now teaches at her Texas alma mater where she researches, among other interests, father-daughter communication. The third author (Ward) is a Baby Boomer who almost exactly mirrors the average (documented by the Bureau of Labor Statistics) of holding 11.3 jobs through the first three decades of his career. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012, July 25). Number of jobs held, labor market activity, and earnings growth among the youngest baby boomers: Results from a longitudinal survey summary. Retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/nlsoy.nr0.htm> White, middle-aged, male, American, Southerner, proud of his alma maters in Virginia and South Carolina, he self-identifies as an academic, teacher, faculty member of his Texas institution, and specialist in organizational and religious communication. Yet through a dozen job changes his identity has varied: writer/editor, corporate communication director, broadcaster, freelance and, upon entering academe in midlife, graduate student, and college professor. Furthermore, two of the authors favor social-scientific research methods while the third holds to an interpretive epistemology. To write this textbook, then, we found ways of making our diversity an advantage rather than a liability.

Or consider your Organizational Communication class. Your class is analogous to an organization with a governing board (the administration), CEO (your instructor), and members (the students). Probably you have experienced how different classes have different “personalities” or, if you will, organizational identities. Somehow, the climate and culture of one class—even just the atmosphere when you walk in the door—is completely different than another class. That identity is driven by many factors: the university, the subject of the class, the instructor, and the composition of the students. And college professors know that different sections of the *same* course, even during the *same* semester, have different identities. Thus, for every class in which you are enrolled—including your Organizational Communication class—you must work through the diverse identities of your teachers, your classmates, and yourself in order to pass the course. You must find a way to work with your instructor, and you must cooperate with other students for class discussions and group projects that are integral to the work of each course.

In a very real sense, your textbook and your Organizational Communication class are microcosms of processes that occur daily in the workplace—as individuals and organizations balance the need for a shared identity with the need to accommodate



a diverse identities and collectively leverage the strengths they bring to the table. That is the tension we will explore in this section.

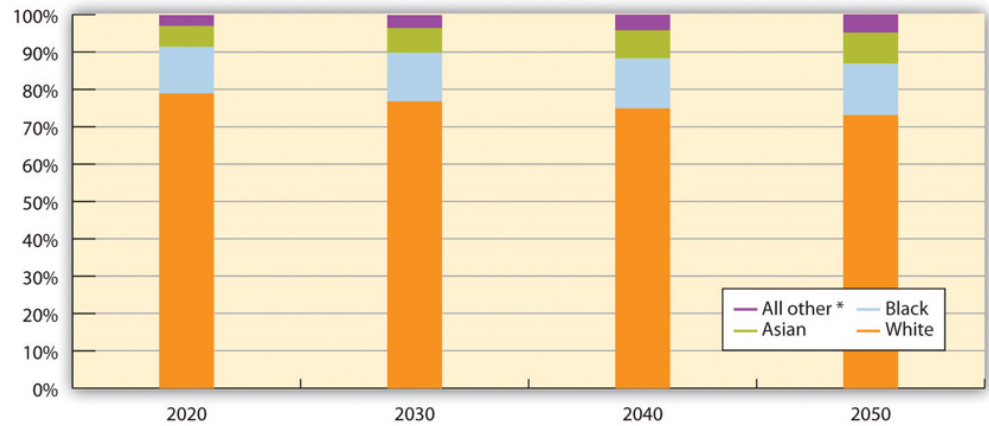
### Theory and Reality

The notion of boosting performance by encouraging a diverse workforce takes us a long way from the classical theories of management that we encountered in [Chapter 3 "Classical Theories of Organizational Communication"](#). The theories of Frederick Taylor envisioned the organization as a homogeneous “machine” whose inputs and outputs could be scientifically managed. Max Weber held that bureaucratic management according to impersonal and but fair rules was preferable to the personalized leadership that characterized nineteenth-century capitalism. And Henri Fayol advocated a military style of management based on unity of direction and command. With all these classical theories, individual identities should be left at the factory gate and a diversity of perspectives and opinions would detract from Taylor’s control, Weber’s impartiality, and Fayol’s unity. Yet as we also saw in [Chapter 3 "Classical Theories of Organizational Communication"](#), the human relations approach to organizations recognized that workers have felt needs, while human resources theories encouraged management to tap worker creativity by enlisting their participation in organizational decision-making. Systems theory likewise, as we learned in [Chapter 4 "Modern Theories of Organizational Communication"](#), acknowledges that an organization needs a diversity of resources that is sufficient to handle the complexity of its environment. Interpretive approaches suggest that an organization “is” its diversity since the organization and its culture are constituted by the communicative interactions of its various members. Postmodern and critical approaches celebrate diversity by recovering voices that have been historically marginalized in organizations.

Quite apart from theory, however, is the practical reality of an increasingly diverse workforce in the United States and many other nations. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) tracks numerous demographic traits including age, gender, race and ethnicity, disability, family and marital status, educational attainment, military veteran status, and more. Each trait can be an integral component of a person’s self-identity both in private life and on the job—and in the aggregate, the demographic mix is constantly changing. Organizations must keep abreast of these changes to find and attract the best talent; managers must stay on top of these changes to best help their employees succeed; employees must be aware of these changes to work effectively with coworkers. In 2006, a BLS report projected the composition of the U.S. labor by decade through 2050. Toossi, M. (2006, November). A new look at long-term labor force projections to 2050. *Monthly Labor Review* [electronic version]. Retrieved October 26, 2012, from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2006/11/art3full.pdf> The projections, shown in [Figure 8.8 "U.S. Labor Force Racial Distribution to 2050"](#), [Figure 8.9 "U.S. Labor Force Race and Gender Distribution to](#)

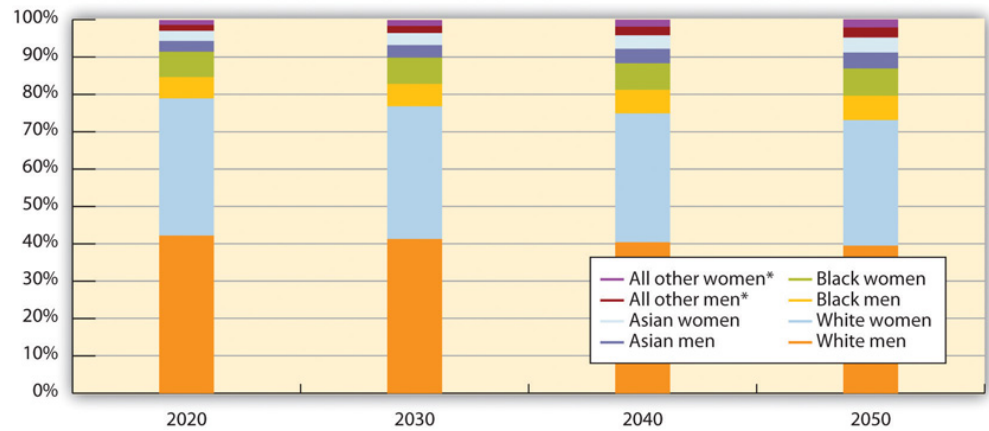
2050", [Figure 8.10 "U.S. Labor Force Ethnic Distribution to 2050"](#), and [Figure 8.11 "U.S. Labor Force Ethnic and Gender Distribution to 2050"](#) below, suggest steady growth in the numbers of black, Asian, and Hispanic men and women as percentages of the workforce. But despite the growing numbers of workers in these categories, the agency estimates that overall growth in the U.S. labor force will slow significantly as compared the previous half-century. The Baby Boom generation is aging, while the participation rate of women in the labor force is leveling off after previous decades of rapid growth.

*Figure 8.8 U.S. Labor Force Racial Distribution to 2050*



\*"All other" includes those classified as of multiple racial origin and the race categories of American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders.

*Figure 8.9 U.S. Labor Force Race and Gender Distribution to 2050*



\*"All other" includes those classified as of multiple racial origin and the race categories of American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders.

Figure 8.10 U.S. Labor Force Ethnic Distribution to 2050

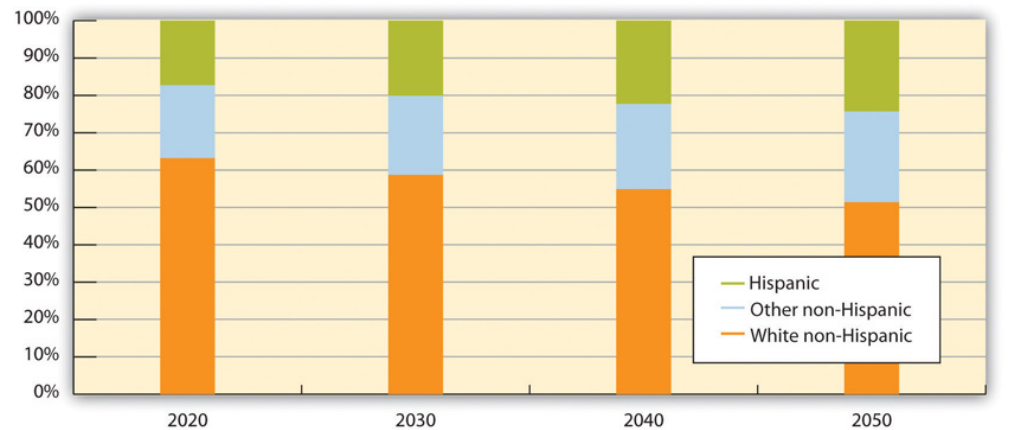
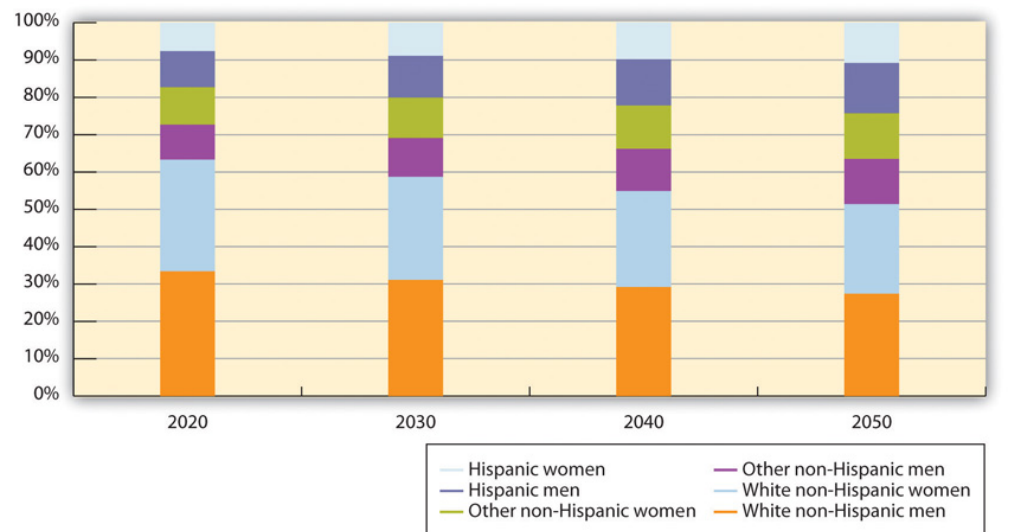


Figure 8.11 U.S. Labor Force Ethnic and Gender Distribution to 2050



Given the trend toward increasingly multicultural workplaces, organizations have solid business reasons to keep pace. Taylor Cox and Stacy Blake summarized these reasons in six arguments for embracing diversity: (1) Organizations with a reputation for welcoming diverse employees will gain a recruiting edge in a shrinking labor pool, while (2) those that struggle with integrating women and minorities will face increased costs as the labor pool steadily diversifies. Further, organizations with diverse workforces will benefit from the improved (3) creativity, (4) problem-solving and (5) managerial flexibility spurred by multiple viewpoints, even as they (6) gain greater insights for marketing products and services to an increasingly diverse public. Cox, T. H., & Blake, S. (1991). Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational effectiveness. *Academy of Management*

*Executive*, 5(3), 45–56. Nevertheless, achieving these benefits is not easy because accustomed modes of thinking—whether in an organizational culture, or in the surrounding society—may be transmitted over generations, be deeply ingrained, and be slow to change. A sense of the challenge is suggested in **Table 8.6 "Prohibited Employment Practices: EEOC"** below, which lists employment practices prohibited by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and examples of violations cited by the agency. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (n.d.). *Prohibited employment policies/practices*. Retrieved October 26, 2012, from <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/practices/index.cfm>

Table 8.6 Prohibited Employment Practices: EEOC

<b>Protected categories</b>	“Under the laws enforced by EEOC, it is illegal to discriminate against someone (applicant or employee) because of that person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. It is also illegal to retaliate against a person because he or she complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.”
<b>General principles</b>	“The laws enforced by EEOC prohibit an employer or other covered entity from using neutral employment policies and practices that have a disproportionately negative effect on applicants or employees of a particular race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), or national origin, or on an individual with a disability or class of individuals with disabilities, if the policies or practices at issue are not job-related and necessary to the operation of the business. The laws enforced by EEOC also prohibit an employer from using neutral employment policies and practices that have a disproportionately negative impact on applicants or employees age 40 or older, if the policies or practices at issue are not based on a reasonable factor other than age.”

<b>Aspect of employment</b>	<b>Prohibited practice</b>	<b>Example</b>
Job advertisements	“It is illegal for an employer to publish a job advertisement that shows a preference for or discourages someone from applying for a job because of his or her race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”	“For example, a help-wanted ad that seeks ‘females’ or ‘recent college graduates’ may discourage men and people over 40 from applying and may violate the law.”

Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
Recruitment	<p>“It is also illegal for an employer to recruit new employees in a way that discriminates against them because of their race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p>	<p>“For example, an employer's reliance on word-of-mouth recruitment by its mostly Hispanic work force may violate the law if the result is that almost all new hires are Hispanic.”</p>
Application and hiring	<p>“It is illegal for an employer to discriminate against a job applicant because of his or her race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p>	<p>For example, an employer may not refuse to give employment applications to people of a certain race.</p>
	<p>“An employer may not base hiring decisions on stereotypes and assumptions about a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p>	
	<p>“If an employer requires job applicants to take a test, the test must be necessary and related to the job and the employer may not exclude people of a particular race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, or individuals with disabilities.”</p>	
	<p>“In addition, the employer may not use a test that excludes applicants age 40 or older if the test is not based on a reasonable factor other than age.”</p>	
<p>“If a job applicant with a disability needs an accommodation (such as a sign</p>		

Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
	language interpreter) to apply for a job, the employer is required to provide the accommodation, so long as the accommodation does not cause the employer significant difficulty or expense.”	
Job referrals	“It is illegal for an employer, employment agency or union to take into account a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information when making decisions about job referrals.”	
Job assignments and promotions	“It is illegal for an employer to make decisions about job assignments and promotions based on an employee's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”	“For example, an employer may not give preference to employees of a certain race when making shift assignments and may not segregate employees of a particular national origin from other employees or from customers.”
	“An employer may not base assignment and promotion decisions on stereotypes and assumptions about a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”	
	“If an employer requires employees to take a test before making decisions about assignments or promotions, the test may not exclude people of a particular race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), or national origin, or individuals with disabilities, unless the employer can show	

Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
	<p>that the test is necessary and related to the job.”</p> <p>“In addition, the employer may not use a test that excludes employees age 40 or older if the test is not based on a reasonable factor other than age.”</p>	
Pay and benefits	<p>“It is illegal for an employer to discriminate against an employee in the payment of wages or employee benefits on the bases of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p> <p>“In some situations, an employer may be allowed to reduce some employee benefits for older workers, but only if the cost of providing the reduced benefits is the same as the cost of providing benefits to younger workers.”</p>	<p>“For example, an employer may not pay Hispanic workers less than African-American workers because of their national origin, and men and women in the same workplace must be given equal pay for equal work.”</p>
Discipline and discharge	<p>“An employer may not take into account a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information when making decisions about discipline or discharge.”</p> <p>“When deciding which employees will be laid off, an employer may not choose the oldest workers because of their age. Employers also may not discriminate when deciding which workers to recall after a layoff.”</p>	<p>“For example, if two employees commit a similar offense, an employer may not discipline them differently because of their race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p>
Employment references	<p>“It is illegal for an employer to give a negative or false</p>	

Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
	employment reference (or refuse to give a reference) because of a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”	
Reasonable accommodation and disability	“The law requires that an employer provide reasonable accommodation to an employee or job applicant with a disability, unless doing so would cause significant difficulty or expense for the employer.”	“Reasonable accommodation might include, for example, providing a ramp for a wheelchair user or providing a reader or interpreter for a blind or deaf employee or applicant.”
	“A reasonable accommodation is any change in the workplace (or in the ways things are usually done) to help a person with a disability apply for a job, perform the duties of a job, or enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment.”	
Reasonable accommodation and religion	“The law requires an employer to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs or practices, unless doing so would cause difficulty or expense for the employer.”	“This means an employer may have to make reasonable adjustments at work that will allow the employee to practice his or her religion, such as allowing an employee to voluntarily swap shifts with a co-worker so that he or she can attend religious services.”
Training and apprenticeship programs	“It is illegal for a training or apprenticeship program to discriminate on the bases of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”	“For example, an employer may not deny training opportunities to African-American employees because of their race.”



Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
	<p>“In some situations, an employer may be allowed to set age limits for participation in an apprenticeship program.”</p>	
Harassment	<p>“It is illegal to harass an employee because of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p>	<p>“Harassment can take the form of slurs, graffiti, offensive or derogatory comments, or other verbal or physical conduct. Sexual harassment (including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other conduct of a sexual nature) is also unlawful.”</p>
	<p>“It is also illegal to harass someone because they have complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.”</p>	<p>“The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.”</p>
	<p>“Although the law does not prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal if it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or if it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).”</p>	<p>“Harassment outside of the workplace may also be illegal if there is a link with the workplace. For example, if a supervisor harasses an employee while driving the employee to a meeting.”</p>
Terms and conditions of employment	<p>“The law makes it illegal for an employer to make any employment decision because of a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.”</p>	<p>“That means an employer may not discriminate when it comes to such things as hiring, firing, promotions, and pay. It also means an employer may not discriminate,</p>

Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
		for example, when granting breaks, approving leave, assigning work stations, or setting any other term or condition of employment—however small.”
Pre-employment inquiries	“As a general rule, the information obtained and requested through the pre-employment process should be limited to those essential for determining if a person is qualified for the job; whereas, information regarding race, sex, national origin, age, and religion are irrelevant in such determinations. Employers are explicitly prohibited from making pre-employment inquiries about disability.”	“Therefore, inquiries about organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges of which an applicant may be a member or any other questions, which may indicate the applicant's race, sex, national origin, disability status, age, religion, color or ancestry if answered, should generally be avoided.”
	“Although state and federal equal opportunity laws do not clearly forbid employers from making pre-employment inquiries that relate to, or disproportionately screen out members based on race, color, sex, national origin, religion, or age, such inquiries may be used as evidence of an employer's intent to discriminate unless the questions asked can be justified by some business purpose.”	“Similarly, employers should not ask for a photograph of an applicant. If needed for identification purposes, a photograph may be obtained after an offer of employment is made and accepted.”
Dress code	“In general, an employer may establish a dress code which applies to all employees or employees within certain job categories. However, there are a few possible exceptions.”	“For example, a dress code that prohibits certain kinds of ethnic dress, such as traditional African or East Indian attire, but otherwise permits casual dress would treat some employees less favorably
	“While an employer may require all workers to follow a	

Aspect of employment	Prohibited practice	Example
	uniform dress code even if the dress code conflicts with some workers' ethnic beliefs or practices, a dress code must not treat some employees less favorably because of their national origin.”	because of their national origin.”
	“Moreover, if the dress code conflicts with an employee's religious practices and the employee requests an accommodation, the employer must modify the dress code or permit an exception to the dress code unless doing so would result in undue hardship.”	
	“Similarly, if an employee requests an accommodation to the dress code because of his disability, the employer must modify the dress code or permit an exception to the dress code, unless doing so would result in undue hardship.”	
Constructive discharge/ forced to resign	“Discriminatory practices under the laws EEOC enforces also include constructive discharge or forcing an employee to resign by making the work environment so intolerable a reasonable person would not be able to stay.”	

- 39. The unseen attitudes that lead to discrimination.
- 40. The observable actions that are prompted by prejudicial attitudes.
- 41. The belief that one’s own culture is the most natural and is superior to others.
- 42. Generalizations that ascribe certain traits to all members of a social classification; e.g., older persons are forgetful, women are emotional, the differently abled are helpless, religious believers are judgmental, gay men are effeminate, or persons of a given racial or ethnic heritage are lazy, or unscrupulous, or dirty, or timid.

Still, the laws enforced by the EEOC can only address *discrimination* and not *prejudice*. **Prejudice**<sup>39</sup> is an unseen attitude; **discrimination**<sup>40</sup> is the observable behavior driven by prejudice. Prejudicial attitudes need not consist of active malice; a prejudicial attitude can stem from **ethnocentrism**<sup>41</sup>—the belief that one’s own culture is the best or most natural—and from **stereotypes**<sup>42</sup> which portray older persons as forgetful, or women as emotional, or the differently abled as helpless, or religious believers as judgmental, or gay men as effeminate, or persons of a given racial or ethnic heritage as lazy, or unscrupulous, or dirty, or timid. Though more

than 100,000 individual charge filings were lodged with the EEOC in 2011, enforcement alone cannot end prejudice and its effects. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (n.d.). *EEOC charge receipts by state (includes U.S. territories) and basis for 2011*. Retrieved October 26, 2012, from [http://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/enforcement/state\\_11.cfm](http://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/enforcement/state_11.cfm) There can be, for example, the silent discrimination that limits the access of women and minorities to informal communication networks and to professional mentors, or turns them into “tokens” so that employers feel no obligation to recruit more. The real path to embracing diverse identities within today’s organizations is in the everyday business of working out relationships of mutual respect and dignity. Brenda Allen, in her study of social identities and communication, concluded with three simple recommendations: *be mindful* of your own biases, *be proactive* in setting aside those biases, and *fill your communication toolbox* with a repertoire of skills for effective and empathetic listening and dialogue. Allen, B. J. (2011). *Difference matters: Communicating social identity*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland.

### Balancing Identification and Identity

We opened the chapter by pairing identity and diversity as aspects of organizational life that exist in a tension which must be balanced. This is just as true for you, as an organization member, as it is for the organization. In this concluding section we will cast the identity/diversity balance *for individuals* as an identification/identity balance. In other words, how do you balance your organizational identification with your personal identity—that is, your need to identify with the organization sufficiently to be a team member and get satisfaction from your job, with the need to “be your own person” and “have a life”? Concern about **work-life balance**<sup>43</sup> is not new; much was said in the postwar years as fathers went back to work and climbed the new corporate ladders, and again a generation later when the rise of two-income households put terms such as *latchkey kid* and *supermom* into the popular vocabulary. Today with the rise of the Internet and social media, many are concerned about the subtle ways that work is “colonizing” personal life as employees are increasingly pressured to answer work-related emails at home and be available 24/7 to answer phone calls, texts, and tweets from supervisors, coworkers, clients, and customers.

Since the 1990s some organizations have experimented with alternative work arrangements including flex time (flexible working hours), telecommuting or flex place (working from home a certain number of days per week), and job sharing (allowing a full-time job to be shared by two or more part-time employees). Yet the Families and Work Institute (FWI), in its *2012 National Study of Employers*, found that the “culture of flexibility” had stagnated due to the economic pressures of the 2008–09 recession. Matos, K., & Galinsky, E. (2012). *2012 National Study of Employers*. New York: Families and Work Institute; pg. 6. After surveying more than a thousand

43. Term often used to describe the issues that arise as individuals attempt to balance the sometimes conflicting demands of their work and their personal lives.

U.S. organizations of all sizes and occupations, FWI discovered that on the one hand, since 2005 “employers have increased their provision of options that allow employees to better manage the times and places in which they work” through flex time, flex place, and other policies. But on the other hand, “employers have reduced their provision of options that involve employees spending significant amounts of time away from full-time work” through opportunities to move between full- and part-time status and with career breaks for personal or family responsibilities. Employees thus have more options for managing their daily time but fewer options for managing their lives and careers.

Still, the availability of more flex time is a positive step. But why, then, did a 2008 FWI study find that between two-thirds and three-quarters of employee in various occupations reported “not having enough time” to spend with their spouses, partners, or children? Matos, K., & Galinsky, E. (2011). *Workplace flexibility in the United States: A status report*. New York: Families and Work Institute; pgs. 12–13. The same survey revealed that, even when employees have access to schedule flexibility, 70 percent use it no more than once a month and 19 percent never use it. Even to care for a sick child, employed parents took an average of only 3.6 days off per year. Ibid, pg. 5. “[H]aving access to flexibility options is one thing, but having a culture that supports their use is another. Employees can have substantial access to flexibility, but when they feel that its use is not condoned, they might as well not have access. . . . [A] culture of flexibility is as, if not more, important than simply having access to flexibility options.” Ibid, pg. 14. Since 89 percent or more of employees in all occupations surveyed reported that their supervisors are responsive to requests for time off, then “the obstacles to using flexibility likely reside with coworkers, senior leaders, clients, and with employees’ perceptions of the organizational norms.” Ibid, pg. 14.

This returns us, of course, to the issue of balancing identification and identity—how much you identify with your organization, versus how much you construct your identity from other sources and maintain that identity. In modern societies where many people spend the bulk of their waking hours at work—and where many people accept job transfers that uproot them from traditional sources of identity—striking a good balance between work and life is a challenge. In the United States, the “culture of flexibility” that organizations need to accommodate a diverse workforce has run up against the ingrained expectation that employees should, heart and soul, be “company people.” The “right” balance between work and life, between organizational identification and self-identity, is different for each person. You will need to decide what is right for you. But knowledge is power. In this chapter we have learned about the processes by which an organization forms an identity, by which it attempts to socialize employees into that identity, and by which employees acquire an organizational identification. We have learned about *identity regulation*, *concertive control*, and *technologies of the body* through which

modern organizations “produce” employees who discipline themselves according to desired norms. With this knowledge you can look squarely at organizational processes, question assumptions that may be taken for granted as normal and natural, and make informed choices about your own participation.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Black, Asian, and Hispanic men and women will comprise steadily increasing percentages of the U.S. labor force through at least 2050. Yet the total labor force will grow slowly as Baby Boomers retire and the participation rate of women levels off after rising rapidly in previous decades. Organizations that embrace a diverse labor force will, as Cox and Blake summarized, enjoy a recruiting edge in a shrinking labor pool and benefit from the creativity, problem-solving, flexibility, and marketing insights generated by diverse perspectives. But as large number of charges filed annually with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission suggest, prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes still lead to workplace discrimination. This discrimination may be subtle, perhaps as women and minorities are denied access to informal networks and mentors. Brenda Allen recommends three simple steps: be mindful, be proactive, and fill your communication toolbox with effective listening and dialogue skills.
- Although organizations are increasingly willing to provide some measure of daily schedule flexibility for their employees, they have been less willing in recent years to give significant time off (beyond what the law requires) to employees who desire a career break for parenting or other caregiving responsibilities. Even so, large majorities of employees who do have access to scheduling flexibility seldom or never use it. The reason is not that supervisors are unresponsive. Rather, the cultures of most workplaces assume that strong organizational identification and dedication should be the norm. Awareness of how organizational identity and identification are formed can help you assess the processes occurring around you and make informed choices for balancing work and life.

## EXERCISES

1. Throughout the section exercises in this chapter, you have thought about a specific organization to which you have belonged—perhaps a sport teams, a club, a house of worship, a workplace, or the college you attend. Think one more time about this organization. Could it benefit from taking a more proactive stance toward recruiting a diverse membership? If so, make a list of how the organization would gain a recruiting edge over other organizations, and how a greater diversity of perspectives within its membership could improve creativity and problem-solving and help the organization do a better job of getting its message out to a diverse public. Think of specific instances when the organization’s actions could have been more effective if its membership and leadership were more diverse.
2. Chances are that you have struggled with balancing your personal life with your work—whether that work was a job, or school, or your involvement in community organizations or clubs. To what extent do you think that your decisions about the amount of time you spend at work, at school, or in other involvements are shaped by your identification with the organization in question? To what extent is it shaped by the norms and expectations of that organization’s culture? Has there ever been a time when you overcommitted yourself? Why? Jot down your thoughts. How could the information in this chapter have helped you make more informed choices?

## 8.4 Chapter Exercises



## Real World Case Study

An important and frequently cited article in the literature on organizational identity explored the case of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Dutton & Dukerich, op cit. Established in 1921, the Port Authority develops and operates transportation facilities that serve a two-state region. These include three airports (Kennedy, LaGuardia, and Newark), a major downtown bus terminal, a train service, various bridges, tunnels and harbor facilities, and—at the time the study was conducted in the 1980s—the World Trade Centers in Manhattan. Researchers Jane Dutton and Janet Dukerich interviewed managers and employees and found they most frequently described the Port Authority's identity as a technically expert professional organization and not a social services agency, as ethically high-minded, as a superior provider of quality transportation services, as committed to the betterment of the region and indeed a symbol of the region, as a “fixer” with an “can-do” ethos, and as a “family” that deserved employee loyalty.

This identity was externally challenged in 1982 when the numbers of homeless persons frequenting the downtown Port Authority bus terminal increased. Improvements in the Manhattan real estate market prompted to closure of many single-occupancy hotels, putting hundreds of men on the street. Their increasing presence at the bus terminal was all the more noticeable because the Port Authority had just completed a major facelift and enlargement of the facility.

The Port Authority, which maintains a large police force, saw the homeless as a police issue and invoked New York's anti-loitering law to evict offenders from the terminal. By 1985, however, the homeless could be found not only in the bus terminal but in the Port Authority's flagship facilities including its three airports and the World Trade Centers. Now the homeless were not just an issue for the bus terminal, but for the entire organization. Facility managers were compelled to formally budget funds for dealing with the problem. Their focus was still on removing the homeless, but now the bus terminal managers sought out social services agencies to take them.

Several events in 1987 marked a turning point. New York City repealed its anti-loitering law; the appearance of crack cocaine in the city increased the number of homeless; and the police union, to gain leverage in a contract dispute, circulated negative stories about the Port Authority in the press. Public concerns were voiced that the Port Authority was inhumanely evicting the homeless. Recognizing that a coordinated response was needed, the Port Authority formed a centralized Homeless Project Team and funded a research project. For the organization, homelessness had now become a business problem with a moral dimension. By 1988, Port Authority leaders publicly argued that homelessness was a regional problem and funded construction of two drop-in centers, one near the bus terminal and the other near the World Trade Centers. But when municipal authorities balked at running the shelters, Port Authority personnel became increasingly resigned to—and began to feel heroic about—dealing with the homeless themselves. By the time Dutton and Dukerich ended their research in 1989, the Port Authority had come to see itself as a “quiet advocate” for the homeless—and even bolstering the

economic competitiveness of the region by providing model leadership on an issue faced by transportation services in cities and regions nationwide.

1. How did the Port Authority's organizational identity change? At the same time, how was the changed identity rooted in its original identity as technically expert, professional, ethical, a service provider, a "can-do" fixer, and a regional symbol?
2. Using Hatch and Schultz's Organizational Identity Dynamics Model (see [Figure 8.3 "Organizational Identity Dynamics Model"](#)), explain how the Port Authority's identity and culture were interrelated, and how its identity and image were interrelated.
3. Using Gioia, Schultz, and Corley's model for identity-image interdependence (see [Figure 8.5](#)), describe the external event of the homelessness issue triggered at the Port Authority a process of self-reflection and other-reflection as managers compared their organizational identity and organizational image, perceived discrepancies, and made changes. Continue your analysis by following the model of Gioia et al. through the successive phases of the homelessness issue.
4. Cheney and Christensen argued that organizational identity strongly affects the problems that corporate leaders "see" and their strategies for managing those issues. To what extent was this dynamic at work in the Port Authority's responses to the homelessness issue? Did the Port Authority's public communication ever reach the point of being auto-communicative; i.e., the organizational mostly talking to itself?
5. Dutton and Dukerich found that many of the personnel they interviewed exhibited a strong identification with the Port Authority? Using Ashforth and Mael's framework (in-group distinctiveness and prestige; awareness of and competition with other groups), how do you think these employees formed such a strong organizational identification? Using Alvesson and Willmott's model (see [Figure 8.7 "Identity Regulation, Identity Work, Self-Identity"](#)), how do you think these employees' identity work was shaped by the discourses of Port Authority management?
6. Dutton and Dukerich did not document the diversity of the Port Authority's management and workforce. But as a general proposition, how do you think a diverse and multicultural organization might have approached the homelessness issue described in the case study? Would the response be different than the response of the Port Authority?

### End-of-Chapter Assessment Head

1. According to Albert and Whetten's original definition, organizational identity refers to features of an organization that are:
  - a. internal, external, and environmental
  - b. formal, informal, and cultural
  - c. cognitive, affective, and behavioral
  - d. central, distinctive, and enduring
  - e. structural, cultural, and adaptive
2. According to Hatch and Shultz, organizational identity is distinguishable from organizational culture because it is:
  - a. contextual, tacit, and emergent
  - b. textual, explicit, and instrumental
  - c. internal, self-referential, and singular
  - d. external, other-focused, and multiple
  - e. cognitive, affective, and behavioral
3. According to Ashforth and Mael, organizational identification is a:
  - a. set of feelings
  - b. set of behaviors
  - c. set of guiding principles
  - d. cognitive construct
  - e. cultural assumption
4. According to Tompkins and Cheney, when organization members discipline themselves to conform to desired norms then the organization has achieved:
  - a. simple control
  - b. technical control
  - c. bureaucratic control
  - d. cultural control
  - e. concertive control
5. According to Alvesson and Willmott, management engages in discursive strategies to shape the processes of employees' identity formation; these discourses are called:

- a. identity construction
- b. identity work
- c. identity regulation
- d. identity control
- e. identity production

**Answer Key**

- 1. D
- 2. B
- 3. D
- 4. E
- 5. C