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Perceived external prestige and internal respect: New insights into the organizational identification process

*Jerry Bryan Fuller, Kim Hester, Tim Barnett, Len Frey,
Clint Relyea and Danielle Beu*

ABSTRACT

The group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) suggests that identification with one's organization is based not only on the individual's evaluation of the status of the organization (i.e. perceived external prestige), but also the individual's evaluation of their own status within the organization (i.e. perceived internal respect). Using data drawn from three different sources (subordinates, supervisors, and company records), results from a sample of healthcare employees ($n = 205$) provide support for the core relationships proposed in the group engagement model and extend the model by showing that prestige and respect have different antecedents. The perceived status of the organization's employees, the organization's perceived success in achieving its goals, the visibility of the organization, and the status level of the individual employee were all associated with perceived external prestige. The results also indicate that visibility within the organization, perceived opportunities for growth, and participation in decision-making were all related to perceived respect. Further, prestige and respect were directly related to organizational identification, but only indirectly related to organization-supportive behavior. These results extend the group engagement model in that we utilize a form of supportive behavior that focuses upon constructive change (i.e. voice behavior; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), rather than the helpful, but status quo maintaining behavior.

KEYWORDS group engagement model ■ organizational identification ■ perceived external prestige ■ respect ■ voice behavior

An emerging stream of research has focused upon social identification as a means of gaining insight into the connection between individuals and a specific form of social group – the organization (Pratt, 1998). Much of the work examining organizational identification has been guided by social identity theory and the substantial body of literature related to group identification processes (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Elsbach, 1999). Consistent with social identity theory and the group identification literature, organizational identification is considered to be the ‘perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member’ (Mael & Ashforth, 1992: 104). Thus, organizational identification is different from organizational commitment in that it involves a cognitive connection with the organization and describes the relationship between the individual and the organization in terms of the individual’s self-concept (Pratt, 1998). Organizations benefit from fostering identification among employees because it provides ‘greater assurance that employees will decide with organizational interests uppermost in mind’ (Cheney, 1983: 158).

One of the basic tenets of social identity theory is that ‘people use groups as sources of information about themselves’ (Tyler et al., 1996: 914). This perspective suggests that employees will use the status or social standing of their organization to assist them in assessing their self-worth (Tyler, 1999). That is, individuals tend to identify with organizations which are perceived to be prestigious because membership in a prestigious organization enhances self-esteem and meets the need for self-enhancement. However, changing organizational forms and the emergence of more non-work identity options all serve to increase the complexity of the organizational identification process (Albert et al., 2000). This increased complexity may make it more difficult for organizations to utilize identification-related strategies to help assure that employees think and act in ways that benefit the organization. For these reasons, social identity theorists have suggested that multi-faceted perspectives of social identity theory are needed to facilitate a greater understanding of the organizational identification process.

With the development of their group engagement model, Tyler and colleagues (Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002, 2003; Tyler et al., 1996) have extended the traditional social identity perspective, which focuses upon inter-group dynamics, to include intragroup dynamics. The group engagement

model maintains that people make at least two different status evaluations about their groups that shape self-perceptions and group-supportive behavior. That is, a group member not only evaluates a membership group's status in the eyes of those *outside* the group, but also his or her own status in the eyes of others *within* the group (Tyler & Blader, 2003). In an organizational context, the perceived status of the organization has been termed the 'perceived external prestige' of the organization (Smidts et al., 2001). The perception of one's relative status within the group has been termed 'respect' (Tyler & Blader, 2003). According to the group engagement model, the perceived prestige of the organization and the perceived respect accorded the individual within the organization should influence the degree to which the individual cognitively merges his or her self-identity and self-worth with the organization's characteristics and status, or organizational identification (Tyler & Blader, 2003). In short, the group engagement model broadens the conceptual framework for understanding the avenues by which a membership group may provide an individual with a positive view of themselves.

However, existing research has not demonstrated that the status of the organization and the individual's status within it have different antecedents. This raises questions about the distinctiveness of the two constructs, and the extent to which the model may have some utility in practical application. As the first study to focus upon deriving different theoretical antecedents for perceived external prestige and perceived internal respect, we contribute to the literature by revealing variables that are uniquely related to each type of status evaluation. The present study also provides an empirical test of the central tenet of the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) by testing the proposition that each type of status evaluation is likely to account for unique variation in organizational identification. Further, the study examines the relationship between the identity-based judgments suggested by the group engagement model (prestige, respect, identification) and a proactive form of organization-supportive behavior. Consistent with the group engagement model, we hypothesize that organizational identification mediates the relationship between the two types of status evaluations and the behavior variable. Unlike most identification-related research, our study was conducted in an organizational context, instead of a small group setting, and utilized data collected from multiple sources (i.e. company records, supervisors and subordinates) instead of the self-report data that characterize most of the existing empirical research in the area (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Tyler & Blader, 2002). Our theoretical model, shown in Figure 1, depicts the hypothesized antecedents and outcomes of the two status evaluations.

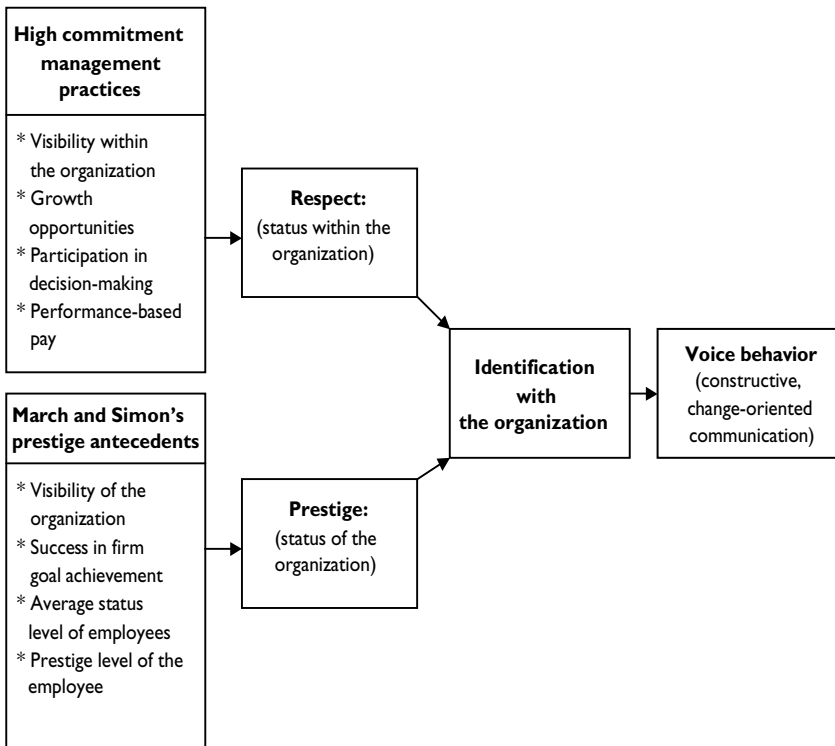


Figure 1 Hypothesized model of antecedents and outcomes of prestige and respect

Prestige and respect as status evaluations

According to social identity theory, people utilize their associations with organizations to define their self-concepts (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Because individuals are motivated by self-enhancement needs, they tend to identify with organizations that confer positive qualities upon them (Dutton et al., 1994). Consequently, people are particularly likely to be aware of status-related issues in the organizations to which they belong (Tyler, 1999). As previously noted, the group engagement model of group identification suggests that two status evaluations should affect one's identification with an organization – perception of the status of the organization and perceptions of one's own status within his or her organization (Seta & Seta, 1996; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002; Tyler et al., 1996).

Individuals form perceptions of the attractiveness of their organization's identity by assessing the organization's distinctive, central and

enduring characteristics (Dutton et al., 1994). Tyler and his colleagues (i.e. Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002; Tyler et al., 1996) have focused their empirical research upon this type of organizational status evaluation (i.e. pride). However, Tyler and Blader (2003) note that organizational status can also be assessed by perceived external prestige (Smidts et al., 2001), sometimes called construed external image (Dutton et al., 1994). Perceived external prestige (hence referred to as 'prestige') is based upon the individual's evaluation of the extent to which *organizational outsiders* hold the firm in high regard or esteem because of the positive, socially valued characteristics of the organization. In the research presented here, we chose to examine prestige rather than pride because ultimately, status is conferred upon a group or organization by outsiders rather than insiders (Dukerich et al., 2002). Indeed, decades ago, March and Simon (1958) proposed that when individuals believe their organization is held in high esteem by external parties, they tend to more strongly identify with the organization. In short, to the extent that an employee believes that outsiders view the organization positively (i.e. I work for an organization that is valued by people outside the organization), he or she 'basks in the reflected glory' of the firm (Cialdini et al., 1976: 366). Thus, perceived external prestige answers the question 'what do outsiders think of me because I belong to this organization?' (am I valued?), which relates to the social value of organizational membership (Dutton et al., 1994). Prestige reflects the categorical self and is related to the motivation to achieve and maintain a positive social identity (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

Another aspect of organizational status thought to influence an individual's identification with the organization and subsequent behavior is his or her perceived status *within* the organization (Ellemers et al., 2004; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002; Tyler et al., 1996). Consistent with a stream of prior social identity research (Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002, 2003; Tyler et al., 1996), we define an individual's evaluation of their standing within the organization (i.e. their level of inclusion or exclusion) as 'respect.' Essentially, respect is a reflection of an individual's global evaluation of the extent to which they feel that they are a member 'in good standing' (Tyler & Blader, 2002: 830) or that they believe they are a valued member of the organization (i.e. 'I am valued by my organization,' Tyler, 1999: 219).¹ Thus, respect answers the question 'how am I thought of within the organization?' (am I valued and held in high regard?), or 'what is my social standing within the organization?' (Tyler, 1999: 212). Perceptions of respect within the organization (i.e. respect) reflect the reputational self and are related to the motivation to achieve and maintain a positive personal identity (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

Theoretical antecedents of prestige and respect

Theoretically, perceived external prestige and perceived respect are related, but distinct (Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002, 2003; Tyler et al., 1996). Yet, no research has examined whether prestige and respect have unique antecedents. A review of the literature indicates that only Tyler and colleagues have examined any antecedent to prestige (i.e. organizational justice), and they suggest that it should influence both prestige and respect. Other than this work, there is no extant research examining theoretical antecedents of prestige. To our knowledge, only March and Simon (1958) have forwarded a proposed model of prestige antecedents. According to March and Simon (1958), perceived prestige is likely to be a function of a) the position of the organization in society and b) the individual's standards of prestige. An organization's position in society is based upon the extent to which it possesses the symbols of success that are recognized within that particular society (March & Simon, 1958). March and Simon discuss three symbols of success: 1) the visibility of the organization; 2) the extent to which the organization has been successful in achieving its goals; and 3) the average status level of the organization's employees.

Organizational visibility is based upon characteristics that are likely to result in the organization having a 'publicly recognized name.' The greater the size, the growth, and the distinctiveness of the organization, the more likely the organization will be observed or distinguish itself from other organizations (March & Simon, 1958). Another symbol of success that should be positively related to an organization's prestige is its *success in achieving organizational goals* (March & Simon, 1958). Sociologists generally define prestige as 'a reputation arising from success' (Shenkar & Yuchtman-Yaar, 1997: 1362). Indeed, past organizational performance is generally recognized as a predictor of prestige perceptions (Sine et al., 2003), since organizational performance is a signal of quality and competence (Podolny, 1993). Consequently, an organization that has successfully achieved its short-term and long-term objectives is likely to be regarded by the individual as being held in high regard by people outside the organization. March and Simon (1958) also suggest that the *average status level of all employees* should be positively related to the organization's position in society. Groups whose members possess positive qualities 'provide confirmation to the world of the value and worth of a firm' (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978: 145). Therefore, it seems likely that the more an individual perceives the firm's personnel to possess positive characteristics, the more likely he or she will believe people outside the firm hold the firm in high esteem. Finally, in addition to the three symbols of success, March and Simon (1958) also propose that the *prestige level of the employee* should be negatively related

to his/her perception of the prestige of the organization. A person's prior work experiences are a form of human capital which conveys status (Certo, 2003; D'Aveni, 1990). According to March and Simon, these experiences are likely to 'color personal evaluation of prestige' (1958: 75). The greater a person's prestige level, the higher their benchmark or anchor (Chapman & Johnson, 1999) of prestige, and the more likely that his/her present employer will be perceived as being less prestigious (March & Simon, 1958). Said differently, the less prestigious an individual's prestige anchor, the more likely they are to perceive their present employer as being prestigious. For example, a person who has previously worked at a prestigious university (e.g. Harvard, Oxford, Stanford, or Northwestern) is unlikely to perceive a community college to be a high status place to work. Conversely, a person who has only worked at community colleges is likely to perceive a prestigious university, such as the aforementioned institutions, to be a high status place of employment. Overall, these four antecedents provide an examination of the extent to which different symbols of success and individual success relate to prestige perceptions and should provide some implications for managerial practice such as internal and external communication strategies.

H1a: Organizational visibility will be positively related to prestige.

H1b: The average status level of employees will be positively related to prestige.

H1c: Success in achieving organizational goals will be positively related to prestige.

H1d: The individual's prestige level will be negatively related to prestige.

Whereas prestige is based upon characteristics of the organization that others are likely to value, individuals evaluate their status within the organization based upon their assessment of signals or cues that indicate *they* are 'central, included, valued, and respected within the organization' (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001: 218; Tyler & Blader, 2002). As noted by Pratt (1998), the extraction of status-related cues is central to the identification process. Although individuals evaluate their status within the organization based upon information that comes from many sources (i.e. co-workers, organizational structure, organizational culture, policies, norms, the experiences of others, and general evaluations of organizational characteristics), their perceived status within the organization is heavily influenced by key organizational members such as their direct supervisors and other members of management (Levinson, 1965; Tyler, 1999; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001). Actions taken by supervisors and other management personnel are often interpreted

by employees to be 'behavior of the organization' (March & Simon, 1958: 82; Levinson, 1965). Thus, actions by management that communicate inclusion or belongingness in the organization are viewed as messages of organizational respect for the individual (Tyler, 1999).

One group of managerial practices that should signal to employees that they are valued is called 'high commitment management.' High commitment management (HCM) practices are based upon a philosophy that employees are valued assets to be developed rather than 'disposable factors of production' (Wood & de Menezes, 1998: 486). Thus, HCM practices are designed to signal to the employee that he or she is valued by the organization. These practices focus largely upon increasing employee involvement and therefore include many practices that an individual might interpret as an indication that he or she is valued by the organization. Indeed, HCM practices are thought to encourage employees to identify with the overall goals and direction of the organization (Wood & de Menezes, 1998). Further, HCM practices are thought to increase worker performance and initiative because of their involvement and identification with the organization (Wood & de Menezes, 1998). Consequently, to the extent that HCM practices ultimately influence organizational identification, they can be viewed as acts of organizational control because identification tends to constrain action to behavior that affirms that identification (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998).

A review of the literature reveals that there are a wide variety of managerial practices that are consistent with the concept of high commitment management. For the purposes of this study, we chose those that are common to many conceptualizations of HCM: recognition, opportunities for extensive training/development, participation in decision-making and problem solving, and pay for performance. Opportunities for growth, participation in decision-making, and pay-for-performance map onto the three main components of HCM systems identified by Bailey et al. (2001) (i.e. HR practices that ensure workers develop broad skills and enriched responsibilities, opportunities to participate in decisions, and pay-for-performance). We chose to add a recognition-related variable (i.e. visibility within the organization) to the three other antecedents of respect not only because it is an important aspect of HCM (Bartel, 2004), but also because it parallels the visibility-related antecedent of prestige. Each of these different HCM practices is likely to be viewed by an individual as a signal or cue indicating that he or she is valued and respected within the organization, and should make independent contributions to an individual's overall evaluation of his or her status within the organization (i.e. respect). However, as noted by Whitener (2001), it is the individual employee's perception of human resource practices that influence the employee's attitudes and behaviors. Accordingly, we

assess employee perceptions of each of the aforementioned HCM practices. The extent to which individuals receive positive recognition by top management is called *visibility in the organization* (Wayne et al., 2002). Recognition by top management should convey to the employee that the organization values the employee's contributions, in part because it is only afforded to a small group of workers (Fasolo, 1995). According to Wayne et al. (2002), recognition by top management should signal to the employee that he or she has 'a bright future with the organization' (p. 592). The extent to which individuals believe that the organization provides the chance to engage in developmental activities, or *perceived opportunities for growth*, should also signal that the organization values the individual's contribution (Allen et al., 2003). Providing the employee with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge should communicate that the organization is willing to invest in the employee (Allen et al., 2003). *Participation in decision-making* has long been linked with organizational identification because it signals inclusion. According to Wayne et al. (2002), being allowed to participate in decision-making also signals that the organization values the individual's opinions and trusts him/her to act in the best interest of the organization. Finally, a *performance-based pay increase* should foster perceived respect because it signifies the organization's positive evaluation of the individual (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Folger, 1993). Performance-based rewards are one way to recognize employee accomplishments, and should signal to the employee that the organization not only values their contributions but also is willing to invest in them (Fasolo, 1995; Wayne et al., 1997). As noted by Doby and Caplan (1995), rewards serve to convey the employee's worth to the organization.

H2a: Visibility within the organization will be positively related to respect.

H2b: Perceived opportunities for growth will be positively related to respect.

H2c: Participation in decision-making will be positively related to respect.

H2d: Performance-based pay increase will be positively related to respect.

Theoretical consequences of prestige and respect

Theoretically, the relationship between prestige and organizational identification is well established in the social identity literature. According to this

research, the greater the prestige of the organization, the more likely the individual is to identify with the organization because the connection with the organization enhances their self-esteem (Smidts et al., 2001). That is, being a member of an organization which has positive, socially valued characteristics leads people to believe they share those positive, socially valued characteristics (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). Therefore, people identify with prestigious organizations as 'a means of gaining personal status' (March & Simon, 1958: 75). Empirical research has shown that prestige is linked to stronger identification with the organization (e.g. Dukerich et al., 2002; Smidts et al., 2001; Wan-Huggins et al., 1998).

Compared to prestige, the relationship between respect and organizational identification is substantially less well established. March and Simon (1958) proposed that an individual 'is more likely to identify with an organization that he perceives as accepting him than one he perceives as rejecting him' (p. 75). To the extent that an individual feels that they are held in high regard by the organization (i.e. I am a valued member of the organization), they are likely to identify with the organization because they value the status they are accorded in the organization. That is, to the extent that respect meets needs for self-enhancement, individuals are likely to identify with the organization. Respect is thought to be an important factor in social identification – perhaps even more so than prestige (Seta & Seta, 1996). Prior research indicates that respect is positively related to organizational identification (Tyler & Blader, 2002).

According to the group engagement model, both prestige and respect should influence organizational identification. This is likely to occur because prestige and respect reflect different aspects of self and are based upon different motivational foundations (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Although both prestige and respect should be related to organizational identification to the extent that they enhance or help maintain self-esteem, the self-esteem literature suggests that there is a self-esteem motive that pertains to the public-self and a self-esteem motive that pertains to the private-self (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). That is, people are not only concerned about having other people regard them favorably, but also about maintaining a positive view of themselves (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Thus, prestige and respect should both influence organizational identification because they make different contributions to one's sense of self.

H3: Perceived external prestige will be positively related to organizational identification.

H4: Perceived respect will be positively related to organizational identification.

According to the group engagement model, prestige and respect should be related to discretionary organization-supportive behavior largely through their influence on organizational identification. That is, the relationship between the two status judgments and organization-supportive behavior should be mediated by organizational identification. The specific form of organization-supportive behavior examined in the present study focuses upon 'constructive, change-oriented communication intended to improve the situation' (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001: 326). Consistent with the authors who developed the measure of this behavioral construct (i.e. Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) and subsequent use in the literature (e.g. LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001; Thompson, in press), we refer to this behavior as voice. Voice is considered to be a promotive, challenging form of organizational citizenship behavior in that it involves offering suggestions for improvements in standard procedures or processes as well as other constructive ideas meant to improve the organization (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Voice is also considered to be a form of contextual performance (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001) in that it supports the social environment in which task performance takes place. According to LePine and Van Dyne (2001), individuals who exhibit voice behavior typically support organizational goals, and devote effort to developing and expressing ways to overcome impediments to the achievement of those goals (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Voice also increases the social well-being of the organization because it helps to align the structure of roles within the organization, thereby lessening conflict over individual role responsibilities (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Thus, voice is likely to enhance cooperation and cohesion within the organization – another purported outcome of organizational identification (Dutton et al., 1994; Kramer, 1993). Although Tyler (1999) suggested that organization-related status evaluations should lead individuals to 'make suggestions about how to improve organizational practice' (Tyler, 1999: 214), no research has tested this proposition.

Although previous empirical research suggests that judgments about the status of one's organization and one's respect within the organization are directly related to supportive behavior (Dukerich et al., 2002; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002), we contend that prestige and respect are likely to be related to voice behavior largely to the extent that they positively influence organizational identification. Unlike helping behavior, voice may entail risks for those who engage in this behavior because it may be viewed by some as criticism or complaining (Stamper & Van Dyne, 2001). Consequently, the positive regard drawn from prestige and respect may be sufficient to promote helping behavior, but it may be insufficient to promote voice given the potential risk of the behavior. However, to the extent that prestige and respect foster

organizational identification, individuals may be more willing to accept the possibility that making suggestions for constructive change may be viewed as criticism or complaining because 'identifiers align organizational outcomes with their own' (Elsbach, 1999: 171). Organizational identification also makes individuals more competitive with other organizations, which makes it more likely that they will engage in voice behavior because it may help to improve the competitive stance of their organization (Dutton et al., 1994; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). In short, we propose that employee voice behavior is not driven by the status drawn from the organization, but rather by the desire to see their organization, and by extension themselves, succeed.

H5: Organizational identification will mediate the relationship between prestige and voice behavior and the relationship between respect and voice behavior.

Method

Data were collected from a health services company comprising 305 nurses, technicians and other support staff. Employees were given time during work hours to complete the survey and were informed that participation was voluntary and confidential. We obtained 205 matched pairs of supervisors and employees. Most of the respondents had been with the organization fewer than five years (i.e. 60 percent). Ninety-one percent of the respondents were female, which very closely approximates the gender composition of the organization (i.e. 90 percent female) – an indication that our sample is representative of the sample population. Prior research suggests that this sample may have some influence upon our results. For example, Van Dyne and LePine (1998) found that men are more likely to exhibit voice behavior than women. Therefore, because there were more women in our sample than men, the overall level of voice might be somewhat low. Further, given that the majority of our sample comprised nurses, voice behavior is likely to be considered an extra-role (i.e. discretionary) behavior. Finally, because organizational tenure has been found to be positively related to organizational identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), the fact that most of the sample respondents have relatively short tenure with the organization may influence the overall level of identification with the organization.

Measurement

All scales utilized a seven-point response format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), unless otherwise noted. *Voice behavior* was

assessed by each employee's supervisor using Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) six-item scale, which utilizes a five-point response format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A sample item from this scale reads 'this individual speaks up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures.' *Organizational identification* was assessed using Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item scale (e.g. when I talk about this organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'). *Prestige* was assessed with six items from Riordan et al.'s (1997) scale. One item from this scale is 'generally, I think [organization name] has a good reputation in the community.' *Respect* was assessed with Eisenberger et al.'s (1997) eight-item perceived organizational support (POS) scale. Perceived organizational support is consistent with Tyler's (1999) definition of respect (i.e. 'I am valued by my organization': p. 219) in that it is a global 'evaluation of how that entity views the individual' (Moorman et al., 1998: 355). More specifically, perceived organizational support reflects an employee's evaluation of 'the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contributions' (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 501). Thus, POS is an evaluation of the extent to which an individual believes that they are held in positive regard within the organization. Examples of scale items are 'the organization really cares about my well-being,' 'the organization shows very little concern for me,' and 'the organization values my contribution to its well-being.' The definition of POS and its corresponding scale items are consistent with other measures of perceived internal organizational status such as supervisor's perceived organizational status (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Supervisor's perceived organization status is defined as a worker's evaluation of 'the organization's positive valuation of the supervisor and care about the supervisor's welfare' (Eisenberger et al., 2002: 567) and is assessed by items such as 'the organization values my supervisor's contributions' (p. 568). POS scale items are also consistent with Tyler and Blader's (2002) respect scale (e.g. your managers: 'value what you contribute at work') (p. 835). *Visibility in the organization* was assessed with Wayne et al.'s (2002) three-item scale, on which one item reads 'I have received recognition from upper management.' This scale uses a five-point response format that asks respondents to compare themselves with others who have been with the organization about the same amount of time and indicate their visibility as being much less (1) to much more (5) than these other individuals. *Opportunities for growth* was assessed with Price and Mueller's (1986) three-item scale (e.g. the organization provides me the opportunity to improve my skills and knowledge). *Participation in decision-making* was assessed utilizing Steele and Mento's (1987) five-item measure (e.g. I am frequently allowed to be involved in resolving problems that affect my work group). Both opportunities for growth and participation in decision-making were assessed using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to

strongly agree 5). *Performance-based pay increase* was drawn from company records based upon employees' most recent performance evaluation.

The measures for several constructs were developed specifically for this study because we could find no existing measures designed to assess the four theoretical antecedents to prestige detailed in March and Simon's (1958) model. Items for these scales were crafted to be consistent with March and Simon's (1958) definition of each variable and the accompanying discussion. All of the items used to assess the four new scales are provided in the appendix. *Individual prestige level* was assessed by the employee's supervisor with five items. This scale utilized a five-point response format ranging from strongly disagree 1) to strongly agree 5). The remaining three scales utilized a seven-point response format. *Visibility of the organization* was assessed with five items. *Average status level of all employees* and *success in achieving organizational goals* were both assessed with four items.

Analysis

In order to facilitate a comparison with prior research (i.e. Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002), we utilized a form of regression analysis known as usefulness analysis (Darlington, 1968) to assess the relationships of the study variables with prestige and respect. In order to test the extent to which the relationship between the two status variables and voice behavior was mediated by organizational identification, we used hierarchical regression analysis. Finally, we used structural equations modeling (i.e. LISREL) to assess the validity of the measurement model, as well as to assess the fit of the hypothesized process model. Since our model included 56 items and models with strong theoretical support are difficult to fit in LISREL when the model contains more than 30 indicators (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1986), we used composite scales or 'parceled indicators' as the manifest indicators of each latent construct (the three original items assessing visibility in the organization and growth opportunities were retained). Based upon the results of confirmatory factor analysis of each scale, two parceled indicators were constructed for each scale. The items were placed in the two parcels in a process that progressed from the highest loading item to the lowest loading item (i.e. the highest loading scale item in the first parcel followed by the next highest loading item in the second parcel, then back to the first parcel). This process resulted in 25 manifest indicators of 12 study variables. This process has been used in other studies with large parameter-to-sample size ratios (e.g. Settoon et al., 1996) and offers an increased degree of model falsifiability over using one indicator per construct.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the study variables. The correlations observed were generally consistent with a priori expectations. All of the measurement instruments had acceptable reliabilities. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis in order to obtain additional information about the potential influence of common methods variance and the adequacy of the measures. Results of this analysis showed that a one-factor model exhibited a poor fit to the data (χ^2 (276 d.f., $N = 205$) = 3630.11, χ^2 /d.f. = 13.15, RMSEA = .24, RMR = .32), and the measurement model exhibited an adequate fit to the data, (χ^2 (210 d.f., $N = 205$) = 408.51, χ^2 /d.f. = 1.95, RMSEA = .07, RMR = .04). These results support the discriminant validity of the measures used in the study (Carmines & McIver, 1981; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Table 2 presents the results of the regression analyses for the hypothesized antecedents of prestige and respect. The standardized beta weights for the final regression models are presented. A look at the individual antecedent variables indicates that all four prestige antecedents, as well as participation in decision-making, were related to prestige. These results provide support for hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d. Further, visibility within the organization and opportunities for growth was related to respect, and one prestige-related antecedent (goal achievement) is also related to respect. These results provide support for hypotheses 2a and 2b. Overall, the results support our argument that prestige and respect do have unique predictors. Specifically, visibility of the organization, prestige of the employee, and average status level of the organization's employees appeared to uniquely relate to perceived prestige while visibility within the organization and opportunities for growth appear to be unique predictors of respect.

Usefulness analysis provides an indication of the extent to which each group of predictor variables explains unique variance in the criterion variable not explained by the other group of predictor variables. The four hypothesized antecedents of respect (entered as a group) did not account for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in prestige beyond the group of variables predicted to be related to prestige (unique variance = 2 percent for respect predictor variables; 32 percent for prestige predictor variables). This provides an indication that prestige was more strongly related to the hypothesized predictor variables than to the hypothesized antecedents of respect. The results of the analysis examining respect as an outcome variable indicated that the variables predicted to be related to respect accounted for a greater degree of unique variance in respect than the variables predicted to be related to prestige (unique variance = 18 percent for respect variables; 12

Table I Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities

Study variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Voice behavior	3.65	.66	(.94)											
2. Organizational identification	5.24	1.20	.24	(.86)										
3. Respect	5.08	1.14	.08	.34	(.89)									
4. Prestige	5.75	.94	.00	.41	.57	(.92)								
5. Visibility in the organization	3.15	.89	.16	.14	.46	.15	(.88)							
6. Opportunities for growth	3.97	.85	.14	.32	.51	.39	.25	(.74)						
7. Participation in decision-making	3.93	.60	.34	.38	.56	.40	.39	.48	(.93)					
8. Performance-based pay increase	3.53	.47	.35	.23	.24	.06	.28	.21	.33	–				
9. Visibility of the organization	5.82	.88	.14	.52	.56	.64	.24	.42	.44	.02	(.82)			
10. Success in firm goal achievement	5.54	1.05	.16	.54	.59	.68	.26	.38	.54	.09	.76	(.91)		
11. Status level of average employee	5.09	1.10	.52	.49	.48	.62	.14	.40	.13	.16	.60	.61	(.86)	
12. Prestige level of employee	3.76	.55	.05	.11	.02	–.06	.08	.00	.45	.23	.55	.00	.06	(.79)

Note: $N = 205$. Reliabilities in ().

$r > .14$, * $p < .05$, $r > .22$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 Results of regression analysis examining effect of antecedents on status variables

Variable	Respect (status within the organization)	Prestige (status of the organization)
<i>Control variables</i>		
Tenure	-.04	-.04
Gender	.09	.07
<i>Antecedents of respect</i>		
Visibility in the organization	.19**	-.11
Opportunities for growth	.30**	.02
Participation in decision-making	.12	.19*
Performance-based pay increase	.03	-.02
<i>Antecedents of prestige</i>		
Organizational visibility	-.02	.18*
Success in achieving firm goals	.44**	.39**
Average status level of all employees	.02	.22**
Prestige level of individual employee	.00	-.13*
Total adjusted R ²	.59**	.60**
Unique variance explained by:		
Antecedents of respect	.18**	.02
Antecedents of prestige	.12**	.32**

Note: N = 205.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

percent for prestige variables). This suggests that the hypothesized antecedent variables were more useful in 'predicting' respect than the group of variables hypothesized to predict prestige.

The results of the analyses examining the hypothesized outcomes of prestige and respect are presented in Table 3. Consistent with our expectations, the results indicated that both prestige and respect were positively related to organizational identification. These results support hypotheses 3 and 4. The results indicated that prestige accounts for a larger amount of incremental variance in organization identification than respect (unique variance = 8 percent for prestige; 2 percent for respect). These results are consistent with prior research which has shown that group or organization status is more strongly associated with organizational attachment-related variables than status within the group or organization (Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002).

Table 3 Results of regression analysis examining organizational identification and voice behavior

Variable	Organizational identification	Voice behavior	
		Step one	Step two
<i>Control variables</i>			
Tenure	.20**	.28**	.24**
Gender	.00	.05	.06
Respect	.17*	.14	.11
Prestige	.34**	-.08	-.15
Organizational identification	–	–	.20**
Total adjusted R ²	.23**	.07**	.10**
Unique variance explained by:			
Respect	.02*	–	–
Prestige	.08**	–	–

Note: $N = 205$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Although the results presented in Table 3 suggest that prestige and respect were not significantly associated with voice behavior, organization identification was positively related to voice behavior. Adding organizational identification to the equation in step two, the results indicate that organizational identification was related to voice behavior. Taken together, the results presented in Table 3 suggest that prestige and respect were related to organizational identification, and that organizational identification was related to voice behavior. This suggests that organizational identification plays an intervening role rather than a mediating role in the relationship between the two status variables and voice behavior (Baron & Kenny, 1986). That is, in order to qualify as a mediator, one of the requirements is that the antecedent variable(s) (i.e. prestige & respect) be related to the outcome variable (i.e. voice) (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Our results indicate that this qualifying condition did not occur, therefore organizational identification cannot be considered to be a mediator. However, because the antecedents are related to organizational identification and organizational identification is related to voice behavior, organizational identification can be considered to be an intervening or linking variable. Therefore, prestige and respect appear to have an indirect influence on voice behavior through their relationship

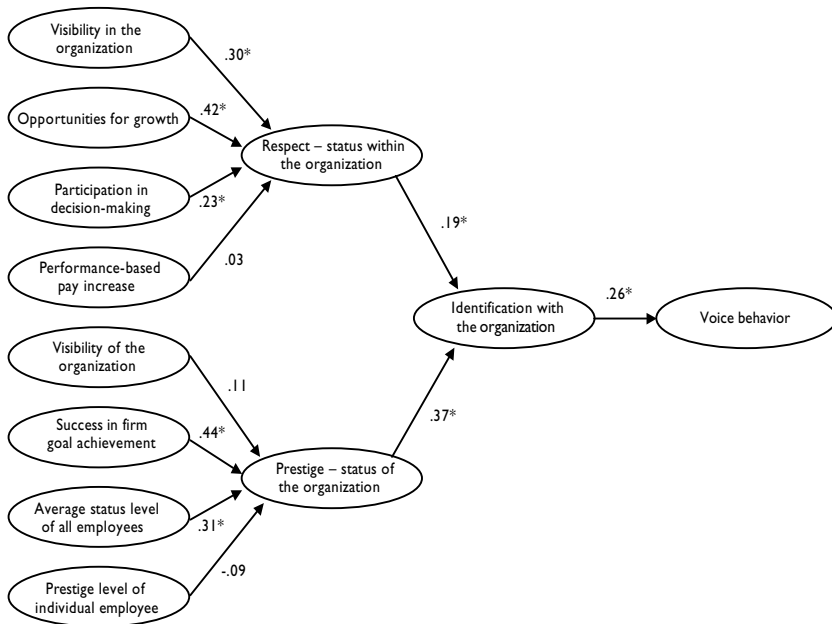


Figure 2 Pathway estimates for hypothesized model

with organizational identification. These results provide support for hypothesis 5.

Figure 2 shows the standardized data for each pathway in the hypothesized model, which indicate that visibility within the organization, opportunities for growth opportunities, and participation in decision-making are positively related to respect. The results also indicate that goal achievement and average employee status were positively related to prestige. Further, the results show that both prestige and respect were related to organizational identification, and organizational identification was positively related to voice behavior. In summary, the results are generally consistent with our expectations.

Discussion

The purpose of our study was to gain a greater understanding of the two status evaluations prestige and respect – the core components of Tyler and Blader's (2003) group engagement model. By utilizing an extended conceptualization of social identity theory that incorporates not only the traditional

interorganization dynamics but also an intraorganization dimension, our results suggest that both are necessary in order to attain an adequate understanding of the organization-related identification process. Our study makes a number of important contributions to the literature. For example, our results offer new insights into those factors which predict prestige and respect. While many researchers have suggested that prestige is a means of fostering increased identification with the organization (e.g. Dukerich et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 1994; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smidts et al., 2001; Wan-Huggins et al., 1998), virtually nothing is known about how perceptions of prestige are formed. Consequently, our research addresses a major shortcoming in the organizational identification literature by providing some new insight on those factors which might influence prestige perceptions. The relatively strong positive relationship between success in achieving organizational goals and prestige provides empirical support for the proposition offered by others (Dutton et al., 1994; March & Simon, 1958; Shenkar & Yuchtman-Yaar, 1997) that prestige arises from success. The relationship reported here is also consistent with the view that knowledge of organizational issues like goal achievement helps employees to distinguish their organization from others. This facilitates social categorization and makes the organization a more salient source of identification (Smidts et al., 2001). The results related to the hypothesis that visibility of the organization is positively related to prestige are less strong, but also support the view that success underlies perceptions of prestige because visibility includes organizational size and growth – both of which are symbols of success. The results also strongly support the view that perceptions of the quality and reputation of the firm's workforce are positively related to perceived external prestige. The general prestige level of the workforce provides an indication of the legitimacy and value of the firm's competence and social reputation of the organization's membership is viewed by individuals as a strong indicator of the firm's value and worth. Finally, the results of the regression analysis support March and Simon's (1958) proposition that the prestige level of the employee shapes the individual's perception of the prestige of their employer. This finding is consistent with the argument that an individual's prior experiences convey status (D'Aveni, 1990) and the suggestion that an individual's status level is based upon their skills and abilities which provide them mobility in the employment market (i.e. general human capital) (Certo, 2003). Overall, these results provide some initial support for March and Simon's (1958) model of group prestige.

Further, our examination of predictors of respect also adds to the literature. Employee perceptions of two factors derived from the high commitment management literature appear to most strongly relate to respect – visibility

within the organization and opportunities for growth. Participation in decision-making was found to be related to respect only in the structural equations model analysis. Perhaps most interesting is the finding that performance-based pay increase was not related to respect when controlling for the influence of other variables, although these two variables were positively correlated. This finding is surprising given the prominence performance-based compensation has received in the high commitment management literature. It may be that the greater social visibility of attention from upper management, participation in training opportunities, and ongoing participation in decision-making offer stronger signals of respect than a one-time pay increase.

Taken together, the results of the regression analysis and structural equations modeling indicate that prestige is uniquely related to the perceived average status level of all employees, and that respect is uniquely related to visibility within the organization and opportunities for growth. This finding is an important contribution to the literature in that it provides much needed evidence of the discriminant validity of the two types of status evaluations which form the core of the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Moreover, these results expand the theoretical and empirical foundation for the group engagement model in that Tyler and colleagues (Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2002) have only examined justice as the foundation for both types of status judgments. Because these results provide some initial evidence about how each status evaluation might be uniquely influenced, this finding suggests that the group engagement model may have the potential to guide organizational identity and identification regulation efforts in a more targeted fashion (cf. Smidts et al., 2001). That is, some individuals' identification with the organization may be more strongly influenced by one of the two status evaluations than the other. The likelihood that individuals can be identified whose identification with the organization is more strongly influenced by either prestige or respect is discussed in the future research section.

With regard to the outcomes of prestige and respect, our findings provide support for the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) in that both status variables were positively related to organizational identification. These results were found in both the regression analysis and the structural equations analysis. This finding is particularly important in that it provides confirming evidence for the two central relationships proposed by the group engagement model utilizing different measures of the two status evaluations than have been used by Tyler and colleagues. Consequently, our results provide triangulation for the primary conceptual relationships proposed in the group engagement model.

Finally, our study makes an important contribution to the literature in that prestige and respect were found to be related to voice behavior only to

the extent that they influence organizational identification. This finding provides empirical support for the relationships among these variables proposed in Tyler and Blader's (2003) group engagement model. This finding does not support Tyler's (1999) earlier suggestion that status judgments directly and strongly influence making 'suggestions about how to improve organizational practices' (p. 214). However, it does support the proposition offered by others (i.e. Dutton et al., 1994; Fisher & Wakefield, 1998) that organizational identification should be positively related to voice behavior. The positive relationship between organizational identification and voice behavior is important because voice behavior has become increasingly important as competitive advantage and organizational success are thought to be increasingly dependent upon personal initiative and constructive change-oriented behavior (Crant, 2000; Parker, 2000; Seiling, 2001). Indeed, employees in many organizations are increasingly being assigned responsibility for constructive, change-oriented behavior (Boswell et al., 2001; Seiling, 2001). Therefore, our finding suggests fostering organizational identification may not only promote helpful behavior that tends to maintain the status quo, but also constructive, change-oriented behavior which is likely to become increasingly important in the future as the basis for an organization's continuing competitive advantage. Our finding is particularly important to the organizational identification literature because most of the extant empirical research linking organizational identification with organization-supportive behavior is based upon self-report data. Our use of different sources provides an additional margin of confidence that the relationship between organizational identification and supportive behavior is not merely the result of common methods bias.

Overall, the results provide support for our research model which represents an integration of many propositions within the literature. For example, in their future research section, Dutton et al. (1994) suggest a greater understanding of how changing conditions affect the images individuals have of their organization and subsequent behavior. More specifically, they suggest that declines in organizational performance may lower perceived external prestige, which would result in weakened identification with the organization and less organization-supportive behavior (Dutton et al., 1994). Our model provides initial support for all of these linkages and provides additional insight into the potential psychological and behavioral effects that might result from other contextual changes.

Managerial implications

If organizational policies and practices are often initiated with the intent to foster identification with the organization (Cheney, 1983; Pratt, 1998), then

our results are important because they provide some clues as to specific practices that might be used to achieve this end. A review of the 'high commitment' human resource management literature indicates that practices such as those measured in our study (e.g. involvement in decision-making, visibility in the organization, pay for performance, opportunities for training) may increase organizational attachment and supportive behavior largely to the extent that they influence perceptions of status within the organization. Indeed, research (e.g. Allen et al., 2003; Wayne et al., 2002) shows that many of these practices are related to the measure we used to assess respect (i.e. perceived organizational support). However, our results suggest that if managers wish to foster greater identification with the organization, then high commitment HR strategies need to also include practices that promote prestige. The results of this study indicate these practices should focus upon increasing perceptions of the status of the organization's employees and touting the accomplishments of the organization. This information can be communicated in such a way that it positively influences the perceptions of both employees and external constituencies. For example, corporate communication campaigns can communicate employee and organizational accomplishments (e.g. awards, certifications, achievement of individual and organizational goals) both internally (e.g. via e-mail, memoranda, company website, recognition ceremonies) and externally (e.g. newspapers, advertising, trade publications). Additionally, recruiting, socialization and training programs can incorporate information about the accomplishments of the organization and its employees. Finally, our finding linking organizational identification with voice behavior suggests that organizations implementing policies with the intent of fostering identification may not necessarily limit creative behavior, but rather may promote innovative behavior.

We think it is important to note that we have taken a more positivist, managerial perspective on the organizational identification process than other researchers. For example, some researchers view high commitment management (HCM) practices as 'more sinister and manipulative' because these practices work by 'inculcating workers with a managerial ideology that reshapes employee identities and belief systems' (Goddard & Delaney, 2000: 495). This perspective suggests that proponents of HCM practices have not maintained a neutral or more analytical perspective, but embrace a narrow view of HCM which ignores the conflict of interest inherent in labor relations. In essence, researchers who hold a more critical perspective of HCM view these practices as an attempt to manage the identity of employees in order to exert normative control over those individuals – providing the illusion of autonomy while actually reducing workers' discretion in behavior to those acts that affirm their identification with the organization (see Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). This perspective examines the 'dark side' of

high commitment management practices. We acknowledge the legitimacy of this viewpoint, as well as the insights this viewpoint may offer into the organizational identification process (e.g. fostering resistance behavior).

Limitations

Although the research presented here has strengths, such as the use of data from three different sources, there are limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. Because we utilized a cross-sectional design in our study, conclusions about the direction of causality in our model cannot be drawn. Longitudinal research is needed to firmly establish the direction of causality for the model presented here. The potential for common methods bias is also a concern. However, we did include data drawn from three sources in the study and confirmatory factor analysis showed that a single-factor solution was an extremely poor fit to the data. Overall, these factors suggest that common methods bias was not a major problem (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

We would also advise caution with regard to generalizing the results of the study. For example, while the general proposition that organizational identification should be related to voice behavior appears in the literature without contextual qualification, a review of the social identification literature also suggests an alternative explanation for our results indicating a positive relationship between organizational identification and voice behavior. The literature suggests that identification should foster behavior consistent with the norms and values of the organization. This might narrow the situations where organizational identification would be related to change-oriented behavior, like voice, to those organizations where proactive behavior is normative rather than extra-role in nature. Thus, our finding may be due to the fact that voice behavior is generally consistent with the norms of the organization from which we collected our data. However, research suggests that voice behavior for healthcare occupations such as nursing is generally an extra-role behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Given that most of our sample comprised nurses, it seems probable that voice was not likely to be normative behavior in our sample – however, we cannot rule out the possibility. Finally, despite the indications from prior research that the tenure and gender characteristics of our sample might influence our results, we found that tenure and gender were unrelated to organizational identification and voice behavior.

Future research

Obviously, there exists a need for further research exploring predictors of prestige. There may be frameworks different from March and Simon's (1958) which offer additional insight into how perceptions of external organizational prestige develop. The same can be said for respect. One way to approach this issue would be from a qualitative perspective, utilizing interviews and observation to provide additional insight into how and why different employees make sense of their relative levels of prestige and respect. Future research should also investigate the possibility that organizational identification is more strongly influenced by prestige or respect depending upon an individual's personal identity or their occupation. Ellemers et al. (2004) suggested that this is one advantage of social identity approaches to organizational attachment over organizational commitment approaches – it should help to predict which source of collective self-definition is likely to be dominant in a given situation. For example, Tyler (1999) suggested that organizational identification is likely to be a function of status judgments *and* aspects of a person's identity. For example, organizational identification for individuals with professional or cosmopolitan social identities might be more a function of prestige than respect, while respect might be more influential than prestige on others' identification with the organization. Conversely, individuals who occupy low prestige jobs (e.g. 'dirty work,' Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) may strongly identify with their employer, not because they draw increased self-worth from the prestige of their organization, but rather because they ignore organizational outsiders' prestige evaluations and focus upon respect-related evaluations as the source of their self-worth. Pratt's (2000) ethnographic study of organizational identification suggests the same may be true for Amway employees. To the extent that research can identify situations where individuals' identification with the organization is more a function of prestige or respect, this would allow organizations to more effectively target their identity and identification management efforts.

There is also a need to relate status-related variables and organizational identification to behavior that is relevant for organizations in today's turbulent competitive environment. Given that organizational identification was found to be positively related to voice behavior, future research should investigate the extent to which organizational identification is related to other change-oriented behavior such as personal initiative (Frese et al., 1996) or taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Future research should also investigate the extent to which organizational identification is related to resistance-related behavior, which is also likely to appear in organizations experiencing change (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

As stated previously, more in-depth examination of the generalizability of our results may help determine the extent to which organizational identification is generally related to constructive, change-oriented behavior or whether this relationship is moderated by situational variables such as organizational culture, norms, or changes in top management or organizational mission. Given that the organization in our study was evaluated to be moderately prestigious by the study authors due to size and reputation, the generalizability of our results should also be examined in organizations that have lesser and stronger reputations.

In conclusion, we believe our results provide some indication of the promise of extending social identity theory beyond current theoretical conceptualizations. The multi-faceted approach utilized in the present research clearly provides a promising approach for gaining a greater understanding of the identification process in organizations. Further, our results indicating that individuals who identify with the organization are likely to engage in positive adaptive behavior, suggest that organizational attempts to promote identification may contribute to greater organizational performance. We hope that our findings encourage researchers to extend the boundaries of current social identity theoretical frameworks. Perhaps more importantly, we hope that our study will stimulate managers to consider the implications our model has for making work more fulfilling and forging stronger bonds between workers and their organizations.

Note

- 1 Conceptualizing supervisory practices as behavior by 'the organization' is not new to the literature or even the organizational identification literature. Mael and Ashforth (1995) suggest that March and Simon (1958) for example, refer to supervisory practices as 'behavior of the organization' (p. 82). Levinson (1965) provides what is perhaps the seminal treatment of the personification of 'the organization.' According to Levinson (1965), individuals tend to anthropomorphize (i.e. personify) the organization based upon the actions of organizational agents. Levinson suggests that the moral, financial, and legal responsibility that organizations' bear for the behavior of their agents serve to support the personification of organizations. The personification of an organization is also influenced by organizational traditions, culture, norms, and policies (Levinson, 1965). By personifying the organization in this manner (Levinson, 1965), individuals incorporate organizational membership and role status into their own self-identity.

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Appendix A

Items developed to assess March and Simon’s (1958) theoretical antecedents of prestige:

Visibility of the organization

___ is one of the larger employers in the area.

___ has grown in recent years.

When I tell people where I work, most are familiar with the organization.

Most people in this area have heard of ___.

In this area, many people believe that ___ is the best place to go for certain services.

Success in achieving firm goals

___ has been successful in achieving its organizational goals.

It is fair to say that ___ has met many of its objectives.

___ has accomplished many positive things in recent years.

In recent years, ___ has made progress toward achieving many of its long-term goals.

Status level of average employee

In general, ____ is staffed with higher quality personnel than other hospitals in the area.

In general, ____ employs individuals who are better at their job than the average employee at other hospitals in the area.

In general, ____ employees have good work reputations.

____ employs many people who are highly regarded by others.

Prestige level of the individual employee

This individual could get a similar job at a more prestigious organization.

This individual has worked at a more prestigious organization in the past.

We are fortunate to have this individual work here.

This individual would have a difficult time finding a job at a more prestigious organization. (R)

This individual could work at a more prestigious organization if they wanted to leave here.

Note: Name of the organization was inserted into spaces with blanks.

Jerry Bryan Fuller (BS, MBA, PhD) is Assistant Professor of Management at Louisiana Tech University. He has published in journals such as *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Labor Research*, *Journal of Managerial Issues* and *Journal of Social Psychology*. His research interests include organizational justice, predictive models of cooperative and proactive behavior in both labor and employer organizations and the role status plays in organizational attachment.

[E-mail: bfuller@cab.latech.edu]

Kim Hester (BS, MBA, MA, PhD) is Professor of Management at Arkansas State University. Her research interests include organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational support, and union commitment and participation. She has published in journals such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Labor Research*, *Journal of Managerial Issues* and *Journal of Social Psychology*.

[E-mail: khester@astate.edu]

Tim Barnett (BS, MBA, DBA) is Professor of Management at Mississippi State University. He has published in journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice* and the *Journal of Business Research*. His research interests include organizational justice, ethical decision-making processes in organizations and applications of management theory to family firms.

[E-mail: tbarnett@cobilan.msstate.edu]

Len Frey (BS, MBA, PhD) is Associate Professor of Management and Dean of the Arkansas State University College of Business. He received his PhD in management from the Fogelman School of Business at the University of Memphis. His research interests include social identity theory, organizational stress and leadership. His research has been published in journals such as *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *Journal of Social Psychology* and *Journal of Managerial Issues*.

[E-mail: lfrey@astate.edu]

Clint Relyea (BS, MBA, EdD) is Assistant Professor of Management and Coordinator of the International Business Program at Arkansas State University.

[E-mail: crelyea@astate.edu]

Danielle Beu (BA, MBA, PhD) is an Organizational Development Consultant at the American Heart Association. Prior to that she was an Assistant Professor of Management at West Virginia University and Louisiana Tech University. She has been published in journals such as the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics: A European Review*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Human Resource Management Review* and *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*. Her areas of interest include leadership development, ethics and human resource management.

[E-mail: dani_beu@yahoo.com]