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**Different forms of (dis)affection with the organization:**

**The positive influence of organizational identification on employees**

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*Alla mia Famiglia,  
e a chi crede ancora in me.*

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## Introduction

In this dissertation I will talk about a new perspective within the social identity approach – *the expanded model of organizational identification* – the validity of this model and its applications in organizations. The social identity literature provides an important framework for understanding the reciprocal relationships between organizations and their employees. Recent research in the organizational field showed that the traditional identity approach has largely neglected a new notion of organizational identification that includes other forms of attachment to the organization. In fact, although organizational identification has been widely recognized as a useful instrument to understand employees' behaviors and health (Riketta, 2005; Steffens, Haslam, Schuh, Jetten, & van Dick, 2016), other conceptualizations of identification emerged from empirical research which started to explore and take into account also undesirable feelings that people express toward the organization in which they work. In particular, the new conceptual framework of the expanded model of organizational identification proposed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) suggests that the nature of the attachment toward the organization may be more complex than a linear process which develops gradually toward a positive form of organizational identification. By this, the general focus on organizational identification is not generally challenged, but is thought to *push* its boundaries *further* toward new research questions.

Specifically, based on the related literature, I identified two open issues: first, there is relatively little work examining the new perspective of the expanded model of organizational identification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), which integrates organizational identification with other notions of identification, namely ambivalent identification, neutral identification and disidentification, and how this approach is related to individuals' outcomes.

Second, with regard to research on individual outcomes, it is difficult to compare the results of empirical studies on stress since organizational identification revealed a small-to-moderate relationship with it, as well as a substantial heterogeneity in the strength of this relationship (Steffens et al., 2016). This suggests that there are likely to be important contingencies to consider – such as different forms of (dis)affection with the organization.

As the expanded model of organizational identification represents a novel contribution in theoretical conceptualizations and organizational research, it is necessary to further explore the constructs that this model proposes, as well as its possible applications in organizational contexts. Accordingly, this dissertation represents a first formal attempt to empirically testing a model that integrates organizational identification with an expanded perspective that includes other forms of attachment to the organization. Thus, to fill this gap in scientific research, I pursued a twofold purpose in the present contribution: first, examining the validity of this new expanded perspective; and second, investigating its applications in organizational contexts.

In order to reach these aims, in *Chapter 1* I will start to introduce theoretical models mostly used in scientific research on work-related stress, proposing a step

forward by adopting a social identity framework that includes the expanded model of organizational identification. Examining the theoretical framework on stress, it will be discussed the major contribution of the social identity approach to investigate this phenomenon in comparison to individual perspectives. Building on this perspective, the following chapters will show four empirical studies which mostly reflect the evolution of the research process that I have undertaken and developed over time during three years of my Ph.D.

More specifically, in *Chapter 2* I will present a contribution to the validation of an Italian-translation of the scales assessing the expanded model of organizational identification. In particular, the psychometric properties of a short measure of the scale will be analyzed and discussed, including the distinctiveness of the constructs and their antecedents.

Afterwards, other three empirical studies will examine possible applications of the expanded model of organizational identification for scientific research and organizational practice. In order to reach this second aim of the dissertation, the following chapters will describe how the interplay between different forms of identification can contribute to decreasing negative outcomes for individuals and organizations.

More specifically, in *Chapter 3* I will present an empirical study on the expanded perspective of organizational identification, in which an application of this model is proposed to better understand the positive impact of organizational identification on work-related stress. This study represents a contribution to address the issue related to why organizational identification literature revealed a small-to-

moderate relationship with stress so far, and a substantial heterogeneity in the strength of this relationship.

Furthermore, in *Chapter 4*, two empirical studies - one field and one scenario study - will extend the application of the expanded model analyzed in the previous chapter, by focusing on how the interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification contributes to decreasing counterproductive work behaviors, which are considered as a form of behavioral strain.

Finally, in the *Conclusions*, I will discuss the overall findings of the present dissertation and their implications for future research directions and practice.

As the included studies were developed under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Franco Fraccaroli and the co-supervision of Prof. Dr. Rolf van Dick, the next chapters will be introduced using the form “we”.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Stress at work from a social perspective:**

#### **Theoretical framework and future research directions**

##### **1.1. Introduction**

Work-related stress produces significant costs for societies and organizations. The *European Agency for Safety and Health at Work* reports that stress has direct monetary costs mostly paid by societies through the public health care systems, resulting in more than €20 billion a year (EU-OSHA, 2014). Costs related to absenteeism, presenteeism, reduced productivity or high staff turnover resulting from work-related stress are also paid by organizations (EU-OSHA, 2014), and individuals pay the cost of stress in terms of health impairment, mortality and reduced quality of life (Hoel, Sparks, & Cooper, 2001). Stress is the second most frequently reported work-related problem in Europe and is thought to account for more than half (50%-60%) of all lost working days (Cox & Cheyne, 2000). Accordingly, stress is one of the major contemporary challenges facing organizations and stress prevention and management strategies are thus important fields on which scientific research needs to focus on.

In the scientific literature as in practice, the concept of stress has often been confused with the term challenge, which may lead also to positive effects, and there is also some confusion between the stimulus (stressor) and the response (strain) which

has contributed to produce a wide range of stress definitions (Sonnentag, Perrewé, & Ganster, 2009). Recent theoretical approaches have contributed to defining work-related stress as a negative psychological state that results from a dynamic interaction between the individuals and their environment, which includes cognitive and emotional components and affects the health of both the individual and the organization (Leka et al., 2008).

Considering the wide interest that this topic has stimulated in research, a variety of theories have tried to explain work-related stress from different point of views, for example, theories based on physiological approaches, on individual differences approaches, and on stimulus-based approaches (for an extensive review, see e.g., Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2003; see also Griffin & Clarke, 2011).

One of the most frequently used theories in studying stress at work is the Job Demand-Control Model, which considers stress as a result of the interaction between psychological job demands and job control, which are both dimensions of the work environment (J. V. Johnson & Hall, 1988; Karasek Jr, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1992). From this perspective, workload, cognitive and emotional demands, as well as interpersonal conflict are classically considered as dimensions of job demands, and job control refers to the individual ability to decide about the own job and the skills used to exert control (J. V. Johnson & Hall, 1988). According to the Job Demand-Control Model, the balance between these two aspects of demands and control leads to experience psychological strain and physical and mental problems in the long term, specifically when workers perceive high demands together with low control.

The Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) provides evidence for two simultaneous

processes that interplay in work-related stress mechanisms. More specifically, the model conceptualizes strain as the result of exceeding demands over individual's resources. High job demands are aspects that require a physical or a mental effort (e.g. workload) and therefore could lead to consuming of energy and consequently health problems when individual resources cannot contrast their effect. The second process considered in the Job Demands-Resources model, in fact, is referred to the use of those resources that can bolster employee's ability to cope with high demands (e.g. peer or supervisor support). Job resources mostly have the potential to buffer the negative effect of job-stressors, preventing reactions of stress such as mental and physical problems, but they also have a motivational potential, which improves employee work engagement and personal growth.

The Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (ERI model) assumes that stress results from a non-reciprocal relationship between effort spent by individuals and rewards received at work for their efforts (Siegrist, 1996). This balance creates a psychological contract, that may be breached under specific conditions, such as over-commitment to cope with high demands, or the obligation to accept the working conditions for little alternative employment opportunities, or for promised favorable working conditions.

The Transactional Stress Model (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) is another influential theoretical approach that contributed to our understanding of work-related stress and provides a focus on the psychological mechanisms which underlie the process that leads to strain. From this perspective, strain results from a transaction between the individual and the environment, including the individual's perceptions of job demands and his/her capability to deal with the job demands. Specifically, two types of cognitive appraisal are considered as a response to stressors: the primary

appraisal, which involves the evaluation of the potential stressor as a threat, and the secondary appraisal, which involves the cognitive assessment of the ability to cope with the stressor. A major contribution of this model was to consider that complex relationships between psychological demands and health outcomes depend on individual variations and differences in the evaluation of stress.

Beyond these most widely used approaches in the literature<sup>1</sup>, there is a general tendency of research to consider stress from an individual difference perspective, in which the characteristics and abilities of people play the fundamental role. One major implicit assumption underlying these perspectives is that stress is mostly an individual “fault”. Organizations may thus be relieved from their responsibilities when it is hard to overpass the border of individuals’ “characteristics”, related to aspects such as personality, attitudes or subjective evaluations of stress.

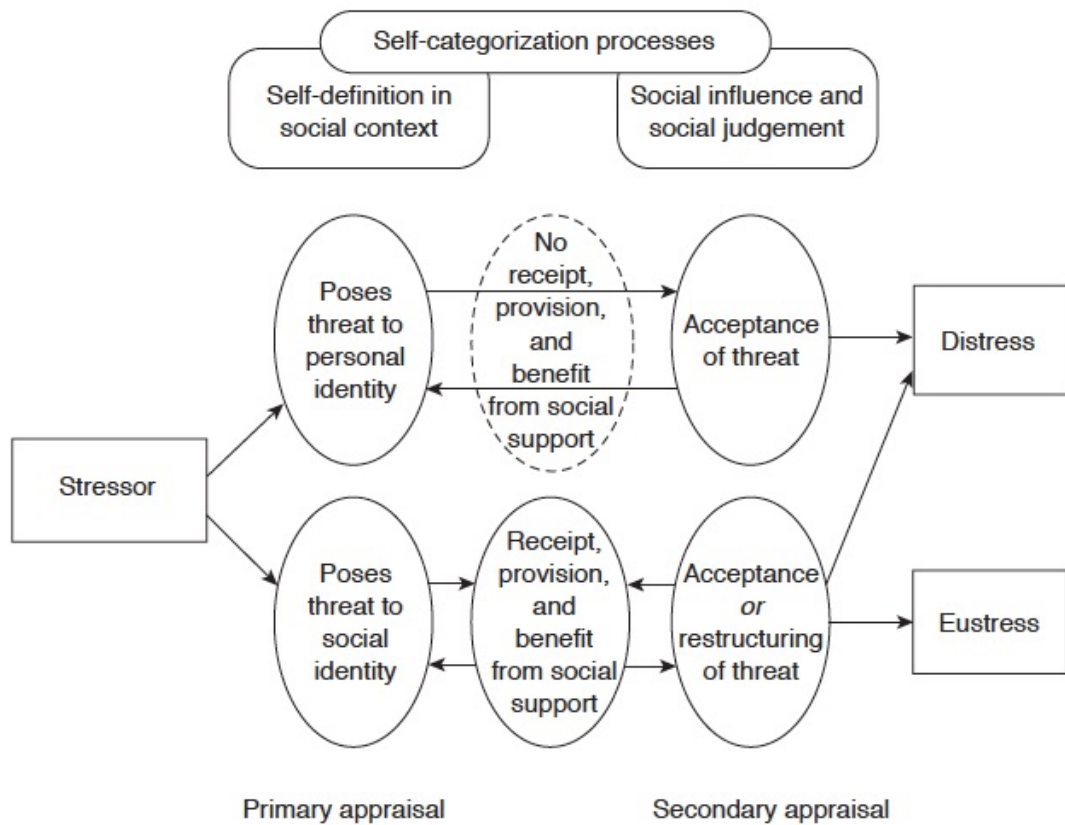
Conversely, the social identity approach proposes a model that incorporates a social conceptualization of self to understand stress processes. This model is basically based on two different theories, namely Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory, but it refers to a broad perspective widely applied to organizational contexts. Building on these theories, the social identity approach refers to a theoretical framework and a set of intervention practices that “point to the interdependence of individual cognition and a social context with structural, comparative and normative dimensions” (Haslam, 2004, p. 38).

With regard to stress, the social identity approach considers that people’s

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive review on models of stress at work, see e.g. Jonge, J. de, Dorman, C. (2017). Why is my job so stressful? Characteristics, processes, and models of stress at work. In N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli, M. Sverke (a cura di), *An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology (Third Edition)*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 80-101.

ability to cope with stressors depends on the self-categorization as a group member (Haslam, 2004). Accordingly, when the social identity becomes salient, individuals are more willing to provide other group members with help and support because they are representative of a shared social self-category. On the other hand, people are also more likely to receive help and support from their ingroup members. Beyond the impact on the dynamics of social support, social self-categorizations also influence interpretations of stressors, which are reframed as a function of the social meaning shared within the specific group. More specifically, stressors are perceived as potentially harmful or not if they are perceived as threats also by the group to which individuals belong. The primary appraisal of stressors (e.i. *“Is this stressful?”*), as well as the second appraisal of the stressors (e.i. *“Can I cope?”*) are therefore defined and shaped by the social group membership, such that individuals can glean the information from social shared meanings (e.i. *“Is this stressful for us?”*), and they can benefit from resources present within the social context (i.e. *“Can we cope?”*) (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** A self-categorization model of stress (Haslam, 2004, p. 192).

Only recently, with the social identity approach applied to organizational psychology, researchers have started to consider work-related stress as an organizational issue and not an individual shortcoming. The research on stress and its possible consequences on individuals, in fact, assumes different connotations in relation to the theories and to the approaches used to investigate this construct.

Building on these considerations, the present work wants therefore to examine stress-related problems through such a social psychological perspective, in order to offer not only a further understanding of these phenomena, but also a framework that can drive interventions and suggest strategies built on this approach. Specifically, we refer to the frameworks of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner,

1979), Self-Categorization Theory (Turner, 1982; Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994), and to the approach of Organizational Identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and its developments. More specifically, we use the social identity model of stress (Haslam, 2004; Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012) as a basis for our studies.

In the following paragraphs, we want to present an overview of these theoretical perspectives in which we developed the different empirical studies.

## **1.2. Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory describes the social group as the origin of individuals' identity (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Specifically, Tajfel and colleagues proposed that an individual's identity is developed through three psychological processes functionally related to each other: categorization, identification, and comparison.

- a) *Categorization*. The individual shapes different "categories" of belonging, based on various kinds of features (by age, gender, social or work position, religion, political affiliation, football team typhoid, reference ideologies, ethnicity, etc.), tending to maximize the similarities between subjects within the category, while maximizing the differences with the opposite categories. This process allows simplifying the understanding of the social world in which the individuals live and to reduce their cognitive efforts in assessing and relating to the other people.

- b) *Identification*. The membership of different groups provides the psychological basis for developing the individual's social identity. Social identity is a hierarchy of multiple memberships.
- c) *Social comparison*. The individual continually compares his or her ingroup with the outgroup of reference, with a pattern clearly marked by evaluative biases in favor of the ingroup. Their group is implicitly considered "better" than "others", which are systematically devalued or critically compared. An effect related to this process is that part of one's individual self-esteem can also derive from the perception of "superiority" of one's ingroup over the outgroups of reference, and this phenomenon can, therefore, lead to the continuous search for occasions of "social confrontation".

Social identity theory was developed in order to comprehend the psychological processes underlying the intergroup relations and the predisposition to discriminate other social groups (and their members) in comparison with the membership group of the individual (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). The researchers observed that in intergroup relations people show an ingroup-favoritism by giving preferential treatment to others when they are perceived members of the ingroup. To understand the circumstances that lead people to discriminate against others in comparison to those belonging to the ingroup, researchers conducted a series of experiments called the minimal group studies. In these studies, Tajfel and colleagues (1971) found that ingroup favoritism occurs not only when the social groups referred to meaningful social criteria such as cultural, gender, sexual orientation, and first languages differences (Hogg & Turner, 1987), but also basing on "minimal" differences such as preferences for paintings of Klee and Kandinsky (Tajfel et al., 1971), or the color of

their shirts (Frank & Gilovich, 1988). It was found that even arbitrary divisions of people into a 'heads' group and a 'tails' group based on the toss of a coin, could lead individuals to favor their ingroup and discriminate against members of the outgroup (Brewer, 1979). Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that the motivational determinants of ingroup favoritism should be searched in the need for positive distinctiveness of individuals.

The psychological processes, as described by Social Identity Theory, respond to the innate need of human beings to give a sense to themselves and to their own identity, which can be developed through the identification with a social group. The protection of ones ingroup, and the tendency to promote it in comparison to social outgroups, represent the defense of the "social" self of individuals. We defend our group because it gives positive meaning to us, so that defending the group means protecting ourselves.

As Social Identity Theory considers and describes deep aspects of individuals such as the identity, the psychological processes of identification and group biases are observable in many contexts of individuals' life. One of these is the organizational context, where employees can identify with the social group organization or subgroups within the organization they belong to. Several studies showed how the Social Identity Theory and its psychological processes can be observed in organizational contexts (Haslam, 2004).

An early study conducted by Brown (1978) highlighted how employees of an aircraft company, in relation to the potential increase of their payment, were more focused on maintaining pay differentials between the different classes of employees within the company than to augment their absolute earnings. The outcomes of this

study raise another important issue, evidencing the presence of multiple social identities for individuals: all the employees worked for the same company, but within the organization, they identified with a specific group which was perceived as "different" in relation to the other workers' clusters. These results highlight the importance in understanding the processes which lead people to change their identification with a certain group in relation to a potential hierarchical order of social groups.

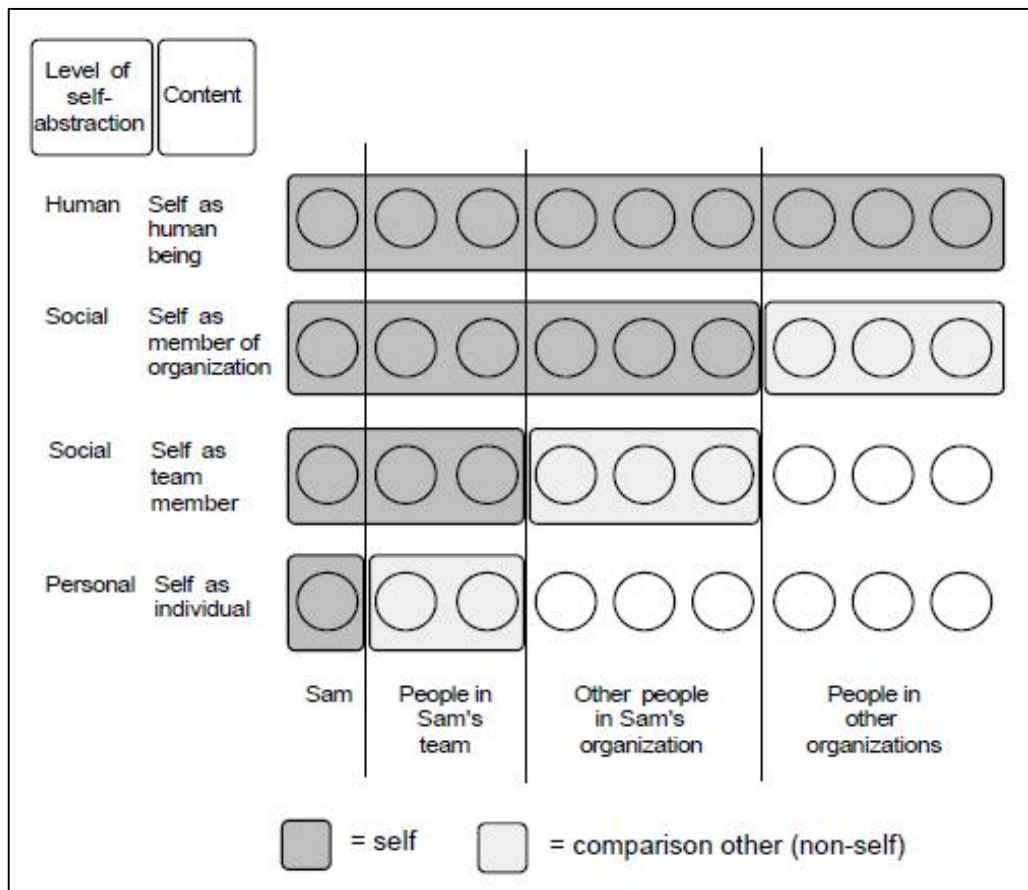
### **1.3. Self-Categorization Theory**

If the Social Identity Theory can highlight the psychological reasons that underlie some people's behavior also within organizational context, however, it cannot explain the cognitive processes related to social identity salience (Haslam, 2004). In this sense, the Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al., 1987) offers a perspective which allows a deeper comprehension of individuals' behaviors and psychological processes - also in organizational contexts.

Self-Categorization Theory was developed by Turner and colleagues during the 1980s, with the aim of understanding the Social Identity Theory's underlying mechanism related to the social identification. More specifically, Self-Categorization Theory tried to answer to the question on what leads an individual to identify with a specific group rather than with another group (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, Reynolds, & Eggins, 1996; Turner, 1999; Turner & Oakes, 1986). Turner and colleagues were inspired by cognitive psychology when trying to explain that people self-categorize at different levels of abstraction (Oakes & Turner, 1990; Turner, 1985):

people categorize themselves as a singular element (i.e., personal identity), or as more collective construct (i.e., social identity). In particular, when an individual identifies with a certain group he/she will have the tendency to self-stereotype increasing the similarity of the person with the other members of his/her own ingroup (Turner & Oakes, 1986).

To exemplify the different levels of abstraction, researchers in Self-Categorization Theory described three kinds of self-categorization (Turner & Oakes, 1986; Haslam et al., 1996; Haslam, 2004). The first level of abstraction corresponds to the personal self, and the individual perceives himself as "I". The second level of abstraction is given by the social self, and the person identifies himself as a group member, that is as a "we", which is compared with other social groups (the outgroup). At the third level of abstraction, the individual refers to the macro category of human beings and compare him or herself as "we humans" to other macro categories such as animals and/or machines (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The self-categorical hierarchy for a person in an organization. The darkly shaded regions indicate those others who are included in Sam's definition of self at different levels of abstraction. The lightly shaded regions indicate others who are compared with self at different levels of abstraction. (Haslam, 2004, p. 32).

However, it is important to highlight that if it possible to consider three different types of abstraction, the self-categories of individuals are potentially innumerable and interchangeable in relation to the social context (Haslam, 2004).

Taken together, The Social Identity theory and the Self-Categorization theory provided a kind of approach, named Social Identity Approach, which revolutionized the investigations and the research in organizational context highlighting the importance of social aspects of individuals.

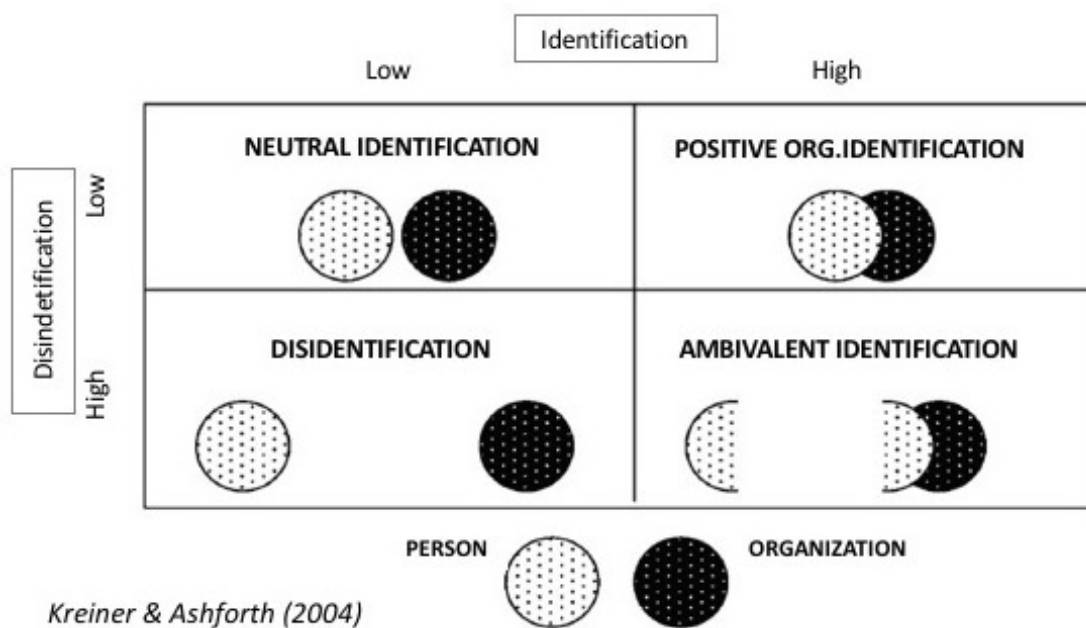
#### **1.4. Beyond the organizational identification: The Expanded Model of Kreiner & Ashforth**

According to Mael & Ashforth (1989), organizational identification is a special form of social identity, which involves the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, considered as a self-categorization at an organizational level (Haslam, 2004). When organizational identification is salient, employees are more likely to be involved in factors associated with group processes, such as social interactions and social cohesion (Mael & Ashforth, 1989), but they are also more likely to benefit from social support to cope with stress (Haslam, 2004). This perspective, applied to several domains of organizational contexts, may thus offer the framework to understand a number of critical organizational issues, such as performance or employees' health (Ricketta, 2005; Steffens et al., 2016).

If, on one hand, organizational identification can define part of the identity of individuals, on the other hand, it has also the characteristics of being organization-specific (Mael & Ashforth, 1989). Consequently, the belongingness and the self-definitions as a function of the own organization may develop in complex forms. The open questions, for example, arise when we think about the situations in which employees are in conflict with the organization, or when the organizational membership is not on the top priorities of the employees' lives.

In order to answer these types of questions, Kreiner & Ashforth (2004) have proposed a new model that integrates the organizational identification construct with other forms of identification, in order to define and understand problematic memberships within the organization. More specifically, they operationalized an

expanded model that results from the combination of two opposite poles, namely a strong positive organizational identification and a strong disidentification, that can both appear in low or high levels. This 2 x 2 combination results in three additional forms of identification, namely ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** A graphical representation of the expanded model of organizational identification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004, p. 6).

As illustrated in Figure 3, when employees simultaneously experience low levels of organizational identification and low levels of disidentification, they may develop a form of identification which Kreiner and Ashforth refer to as *neutral identification*, and which represents a type of attachment defined as a low sharedness of organizational meanings, values, and mission. For example, employees would act and pursue mostly their own values and goals showing a disinterest in their organization's priorities and culture. For this kind of people values as benevolence or

universalism could have less importance in comparison to other values, or they might prefer to mostly build affective bonds outside the organization and to participate in activities within the organization in a passive way, giving few contributions to colleagues.

A positive organizational identification is mostly considered equal to the previous conceptualization of Mael and Ashforth (1989). Kreiner and Ashforth have included it in the expanded perspective that arises from the combination of the poles organizational identification-disidentification. As illustrated in the square of positive organizational identification, part of the circle that represents the individual partially overlaps with the circle that represents the organization. In other words, one part of the self-definition of an employee is identified with one part of the (perceived) identity of the organization, developing a strong positive organizational identification. For example, employees would develop a strong commitment to their organization, building relationship among colleagues and giving mutual help. Since they clearly share their membership and values, they agree with organizational norms and practices and they offer reciprocal collaboration with other departments or senior management, contributing to building a shared trust.

Conversely, when employees experience low levels of organizational identification and high levels of disidentification, they may develop a form of strong disaffection which generates an opposite form of identification, namely disidentification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). In this case, people consciously separate the sense of self from the organization by distancing the characteristics of the organization from themselves. Kreiner and Ashforth referred to this form as *disidentification*, and it happens for example when employees' values are in contrast

with their organization's values. In certain circumstances they might openly scorn their organization in case they feel that, for instance, legal rights are not respected, or if they feel a general sense of exclusion and unfair rejection from the organization or from the majority of their colleagues, and a lack of sharedness prevails over most of working aspects making difficult any kind of social bonds.

When employees experience both high organizational identification and high disidentification, the self-categorization of the individual is separated in two opposite parts which both exist in the same individual's identity (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Pratt, 2000). One part of the self-definition of an employee is identified with one part of the (perceived) identity of the organization, but another part detaches him/herself from the organizational identity which generates contradictory feelings and desires of simultaneously being and not being a member of the organization. Kreiner and Ashforth referred to this form as *ambivalent identification*, when, for example, employees might develop close bonds with their immediate colleagues sharing values, goals, commitments but at the same time they might disagree with actions taken by senior management or colleagues from other departments of the same organization. This would lead them to simultaneously identify and disidentify developing a sense of ambivalent identification toward the organization.

Building on this new perspective, the following chapters will present empirical studies conducted using this expanded model of organizational identification and aiming at applying it to various issues. More specifically, our research questions aim to examine the positive impact of organizational identification in interaction with the other forms of self-categorization.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The Expanded Model of Organizational Identification:**

#### **The construct validity of a short measure<sup>\*</sup>**

#### **Abstract**

Recent evidence suggests that people establish relationships with their organization that comprise a variety of different attachments and define their organizational membership in complex ways. As a result of these recent developments, Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) have developed a new model and accompanying measure of organizational identification, which integrates the positive form of organizational identification with three other dimensions, namely ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification. The aim of the present study is to provide further evidence for this model and to show discriminability and reliability of an Italian-language translation of Kreiner and Ashforth's scales of the expanded model of organizational identification (EMOI). As such, this study is the first to test the characteristics of a short version of EMOI in an Italian speaking sample. Using data from 423 employees across two samples our results provide good scale reliabilities,

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<sup>\*</sup> Valeria Ciampa contributed to the present work developing the study concept, with the literature review to support the different stages of the study preparation, technical guidance and assistance to the research design, result analysis and interpretation with statistical analyses, and writing the manuscript (from initial writing until the present version). Michele Vecchione contributed to the translation of the Italian version of the scale. Alessandro David contributed to the collection of data. Rolf van Dick and Fraccaroli Franco contributed to the revision of the manuscript.

and confirmatory factor analyses demonstrate good factorial validity of the short measure. To establish the criterion-related validity of the model we also examined several antecedents of the four forms of identification, namely person-organization fit, reputation, organizational cynicism, intra-role conflict, and individualism. Finally, we tested the discriminant validity of organizational identification and affective commitment. Implications of the results and the study's limitations are discussed.

## **2.1. Introduction**

The relationships that people develop with their organizations drive their perceptions and their behaviors in the workplace to a large extent (Mael & Ashforth, 1989). Therefore, the importance to observe their subjective models of attachment plays a critical role in the maintenance of a positive compliance between the organizations and individuals. A growing body of literature recognizes that organizational identification plays a role, for instance, in psychological and physical well-being (see e.g., Bizumic et al., 2009; Harris & Cameron, 2005; Häusser, Kattenstroth, van Dick, & Mojzisch, 2012; Steffens, Haslam, Schuh, Jetten, & van Dick, 2016; Wegge et al., 2006). However, recent research on identification has started to consider a new perspective that still needs to be explored with regards to its correlates, and outcomes.

Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) developed a model and provided first empirical evidence that other forms of identification are an important addition to the desirable attachment developed by individuals to their employing organizations. More

specifically, they proposed to go beyond organizational identification, considering also an ambivalent dimension, a neutral dimension, and a dimension of disidentification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Following Ashforth and Mael's theorization (1989), they built on previous arguments (see e.g. Dukerich et al., 1998; Elsbach, 1999; Pratt, 2000; and Ashforth, 2001) for the existence of an opposite form of organizational identification in which people consciously separate the sense of self from the organization's values, behaviors, and mission, which represents a kind of attachment that they operationalized as *disidentification* (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

From the combination of different levels of the poles of “positive” organizational identification and “negative” disidentification, employees may develop other two different forms of identification, namely ambivalent identification, and neutral identification. In particular, individuals develop an ambivalent identification when they simultaneously identify *and* disidentify with their organization, and they develop a neutral identification when they mostly build their perceptions following their own values and beliefs, consciously avoiding extreme attachments to one pole or the other (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Building on these considerations, these authors proposed new scales that add to the “classic” measure of organizational identification developed by Ashforth and Mael (1989) these other three dimensions of identification, in a new expanded model that includes all four forms of attachment (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), which are qualitatively different from each other and complementary.

Consistent with this new approach to measure individuals' attachment to the organization, the purpose of this study is to provide further evidence of the construct validity of an Italian-translation of the expanded model of organizational

identification, which extends the classic conceptualization by the other forms of identifications, namely ambivalent identification, neutral identification and disidentification.

Moreover, the present study aims to take previous research one step further develop and examine the reliability and validity of a short version. Longer measures are useful when organizations are interested in targeting specific aspects of one or more types of identification. However, a brief measure of the expanded model can be useful mostly for two reasons. First, from a research point of view, the extension of the organizational identification construct still needs to be explored, particularly with regards to distinct outcomes and the processes underpinning these forms of identification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Validation studies across countries thus are necessary to generalize the findings and short measures are more usable when a number of variables are investigated. Also, research more and more relies on multiple assessments in form of longitudinal and/or diary studies which require shorter scales. Second, if organizations are interested in efficiently monitoring how employees general identification develops over time (e.g. before and after organizational changes), a global measure of all the forms of identification may be appropriate, but costly in terms of time investment if only long measures are available. Therefore, in light of these issues, the purpose of this study is to develop and provide evidence for the construct validity of short scales to assess the forms of the expanded model of organizational identification.

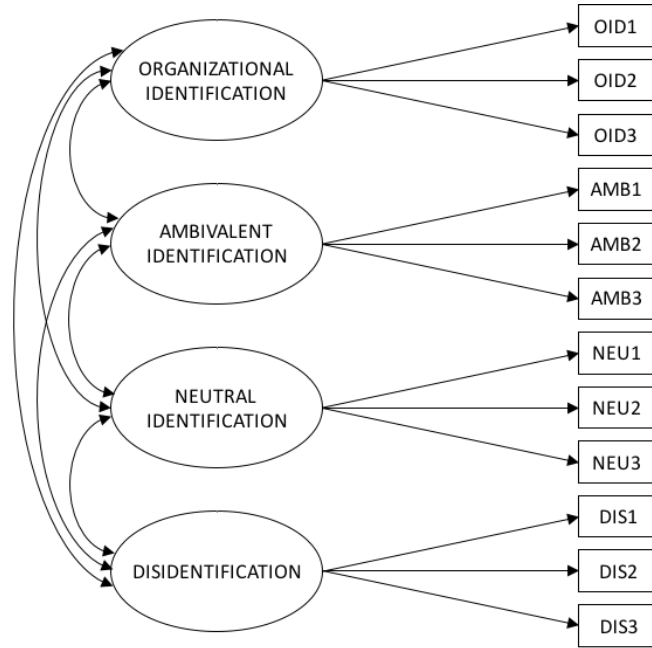
Since the scales of the expanded model of organizational identification have not been administered in Italy before, the first objective of our study was to provide

evidence of the validity of the short version in an Italian population. More specifically, we examined the factorial structure and the reliability of short versions of the four scales developed by van Dick, Nimmerfroh, and Ullrich (2013; see Egold & van Dick, 2015) in an Italian sample of employees working in public and private organizations in the healthcare sector. We assumed the same underlying four-factor structure of the short scale (see Figure 1) with the Italian data and thus, we posited the following hypothesis:

*H1a: In an Italian sample, the short version with three items for each subscale fits a four-factor solution equivalent to the solution proposed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004), in which correlations between observed indicators are explained by the four latent dimensions of organizational identification, ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification, respectively.*

We also aim to test the reliability of each subscale, using *Cronbach's alpha (α)* to examine the internal consistency of the Italian-translation of the scale. Following Nunnally (1970)' suggestions, we considered an alpha of .70 as a cutoff, with a higher number indicated higher reliability. Accordingly:

*H1b: The EMOI will demonstrate internal consistency estimates above .70 for each subscale (organizational identification, ambivalent identification, neutral identification, disidentification).*



**Figure 1.** Theoretical model of the proposed four-factor structure.

Moreover, in the present study, the factorial structure's validity of the proposed short version will be compared to competing models to test whether the four-factor model fits the data best. The four correlated latent factors will be tested against different three-factor models (each of them combining alternately two dimensions of the three forms ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification, respectively, plus a latent factor for organizational identification), and against a two-factor model (i.e. a latent factor for organizational identification plus a second factor combining ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification) and, finally, a one-factor model (with all dimensions together).

The second aim of the study was to investigate the antecedents of the four dimensions of the expanded model of organizational identification. Previous research suggests, for example, that employees' organizational identification would be

associated with a positive organizational prestige (Dukerich et al., 2002; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Reade, 2001; Smidts, Pruyn, & van Riel, 2001). In particular, a previous study found that organizational reputation was positively associated with organizational identification and negatively associated with disidentification (Kreiner, 2002; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Moreover, researchers found that another correlate of social identification was person-organization fit, which was positively associated with organizational identification, and negatively associated with disidentification (Kreiner, 2002; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Specifically for disidentification, researchers found that cynicism was also positively associated with this desire to detach oneself from the organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), which is in line with the idea that individual characteristics could also influence the resulting forms of negative attachment.

In contrast with previous research that used cynicism as a general attitude according to which “one cannot depend on other people to be trustworthy and sincere” (Andersson & Bateman, 1997, p. 450), we stress the idea that, most importantly, disidentification would be associated with organizational cynicism, rather than a personality trait of cynicism toward others in general. As a consequence, and consistent with our aim to examine this antecedent with a form of attachment toward the organization, in the present study we referred to organizational cynicism as a negative attitude towards the whole organization, which consists of three dimensions, including a cognitive, an affective and a behavioral component (Brandes, Dharwadkar & Dean's, 1999).

Building on these arguments, we thus hypothesized:

*H2: (a) Person-organization fit and (b) reputation are positively associated with organizational identification.*

*H3: (a) Person-organization fit and (b) reputation are negatively associated with disidentification, whereas (c) organizational cynicism is positively associated with disidentification.*

When employees experience incompatible demands related to their identity as organizational members, they are more likely to express conflicting feelings toward their belongingness to organizations, striving between a force that pulls them towards the organization and a force that pushes them away from it which is referred to as ambivalent identification in previous research (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Pratt, 2000, Schuh et al., 2016). Consistent with this, we expect that incongruities of role requirements such as role conflicts (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970), will be associated with ambivalence, as shown by previous research (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Accordingly:

*H4: Intra-role conflict is positively associated with ambivalent identification.*

Neutral identification is a state in which people favor their own values, rather than those of others which results in less cooperative behavior compared to collectivistic orientations (Earley & Gibson, 1998). Furthermore, Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) argued that neutral identification is more than the absence of identification, but it instead rather reflects the individual's tendency to avoid extreme attachment toward their organization - both positive and negative, in order to preserve their own interests (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Accordingly, employees with high

levels of individualism would be more likely to develop neutral identification (see Kreiner & Ashforth):

*H5: (a) Vertical and (b) horizontal forms of individualism are positively associated with neutral identification.*

The third aim of the present study was to investigate whether organizational identification significantly differed from affective commitment. Since there is a greater chance of overlap in the meaning of several items of these two constructs which led to substantial correlations in previous research (of .70 and more; see, for instance, Riketta, 2005), we predicted better distinctiveness of the examined constructs using the short subscale of organizational identification with only the core items representing the construct of identification more clearly according to the literature (e.g., van Dick, 2001; van Dick, 2016). Accordingly, we posited the following:

*H6: The subscale of organizational identification and affective commitment represent distinct constructs and thus, the data fits a two-factor solution better than a one-factor solution.*

## **2.2. Methods**

### *2.2.1. Participants and procedures*

Several organizations from the public and private healthcare sector were involved in the present research. Informative letters to the representatives of the management and personnel departments of the organizations were sent to invite them to participate in the study. Specifically, we kindly requested employees to fill out an

anonymous questionnaire at their workplace, after providing them with informed consent that explained their rights as research participants.

*Sample 1.* A total of 195 useful questionnaires were returned from eleven regions of Italy (from a total of twenty regions). Since exact data on the number of employees was not available, corresponding response rates cannot be calculated. Three percent of respondents worked in small organizations with less than 50 employees; 11% in medium sized organizations (50 to 250 employees); 70% worked in larger organizations with more than 250 employees; 16% did not provide this information. Average age was 47.95 ( $SD = 10.14$ ; range: 23 to 69 years); 55% were male, 29% were female (16% did not answer the respective question). Average organizational tenure was 14.8 years ( $SD = 9.95$ ), and work experience was 19.4 years ( $SD = 10.97$ ). Fifty-five percent of participants were doctors, 10% were nurses, 16% were medical technicians, the remaining participants did not reveal their profession.

Since the aim of the study was to validate a multifactor measurement model in which the factors are expected to be distinct but correlated (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), this generally requires larger samples (Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013), considering that the number of indicators in a model has an inverse effect on sample size requirements (i.e., models with fewer indicators per factor require more cases). Moreover, the ratio of sample size to number of free parameters is more appropriate to be at least 10:1 for expected non-normal distributions (Bentler & Chou, 1987). Therefore, and to provide greater robustness, we added a second data set which included the same measures of the expanded model but not all scales for construct validation.

*Sample 2.* Other eight small-to-medium organizations from the private healthcare sector were involved in the study in the same way as for the first sample. We were able to gather a second data set consisting of 228 respondents\*. Average age was 42.44 ( $SD = 9.69$ ; range: 23 to 64 years); 10% were male, 89% were female (1% missing). Average organizational tenure was 9.89 years ( $SD = 8.18$ ), and average work experience was 12.79 years ( $SD = 8.14$ ). Twenty-seven percent of participants were nurses, 72% were social-health operators, the remaining participants did not reveal their profession.

#### 2.2.2. *Measures*

Measures included in *Sample 1* and *Sample 2*.

We selected 12-items of the expanded model of organizational identification scale (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) from the version used by van Dick et. al (2013) which was shown to have good validity and reliability in a heterogeneous sample of almost 4.000 German participants. Items were independently translated into Italian by two Italian psychologists with previous experience in the translation of psychological measures. Both translations were compared and checked for accuracy. They were highly similar and were merged into a single form. Items were presented in random order in the survey. Appendix A shows all the items for the full version and the 12-item version, in Italian and in English.

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\* Sample 2 was a convenient sample of a different study. In the present Chapter, we differently reanalyzed the data collected for the study presented in Chapter 3 as: “**Ciampa, V.**, Steffens, N.K., Schuh, S.C., Fraccaroli, F., & van Dick, R. (*under revision*). Identity and Stress: An application of the expanded model of organizational identification in predicting strain at work. *Work & Stress*”.

### *Organizational identification*

We measured organizational identification with three items from the scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). We used the established Italian version from Bergami and Bagozzi (2000). A sample item was: “*When I talk about this organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'*”). We used a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .74$ .

### *Ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification*

We measured the three additional subscales of the expanded model of organizational identification with three items for each dimension from the items developed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004). A sample item of ambivalent identification is: “*I have contradictory feelings about this organization*”. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .79$ . A sample item of neutral identification was: “*This organization doesn't have much personal meaning to me*”. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .78$ . A sample item of disidentification was: “*I want people to know that I disagree with how this organization behaves*”. The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .81$ . As suggested in the original version of the scale, we used a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*).

Measures included only in *Sample 1*.

### *Person-organization fit*

We measured person-organization fit with three items: “*My personal values match my organization's values*”, “*My organization's culture provides a good fit with my lifestyle*”, “*My organization's products and/or services are the same that I use in*

*my private life*". We used a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .77$ .

#### *Organizational Reputation*

We measured organizational reputation with a 6-item scale from Riordan, Gatewood, and Bill (1997). A sample item was "*Generally I think that my organization has a good reputation in the community*". Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with each statement from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .90$ .

#### *Role conflict*

We used the 9-item scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). A sample item was "*I work under incompatible policies and guidelines*". Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with each statement from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .91$ .

#### *Individualism*

We measured individualism with a 7-item scale by Triandis and Gelfand (1998). The scale has been developed with two subscales to measure vertical (4 items) and horizontal individualism (3 items). A sample item of vertical individualism was "*It is important that I do my job better than others*". A sample item of horizontal individualism was "*I'd rather depend on myself than others*". We used a 5-point Likert scale, on which participants indicated their agreement with each statement from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Scale reliabilities were  $\alpha = .70$  for vertical, and  $\alpha = .65$  for horizontal individualism, respectively.

### *Organizational cynicism*

Organizational cynicism was measured with a 14-item scale by Bobbio, Manganelli Rattazzi, and Spadaro (2006). A sample item was “*When the company says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen*”. Participants indicated their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .94$ .

### *Affective commitment*

Affective commitment was measured with a 10-item scale validated by Pierro, Tanucci, Cavalieri, and Ricca (1992). A sample item was “*I am willing to work harder than one would normally expect to contribute to the success of my organization*”. Participants were asked what extent they agreed with each statement from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale was  $\alpha = .90$ .

### *Control variables*

We assessed a range of control variables that might influence our predictor and outcome variables (age, work experience, organizational tenure, working hours, job satisfaction). We used one-item measures for all control variables.

#### *2.2.3. Data analysis*

Data analysis was performed using SPSS 24 and Mplus 7.4. SPSS was used to perform descriptive statistics, preliminary analysis, correlation and hierarchical regression analyses. Before proceeding with the analyses, we also ascertained the normality of variables by analyzing skewness, kurtosis and multicollinearity indices. In order to examine our hypotheses on the antecedents of the expanded model of organizational identification, we conducted multiple hierarchical linear regressions

(one for each dependent variable), where control variables were entered in the first step. Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) were performed to verify the adequacy of the factor structure of the four-factor model and to test the distinctiveness of the constructs. We used Mplus Maximum Likelihood estimation (ML), that provides an appropriate approach for handling missing data (Bengt Muthén & Shedden, 1999). In order to evaluate the solutions, we took into account the goodness of fit indices of the tested models. The Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) was used to indicate the difference between observed and expected covariance matrices. We considered comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) values above 0.90 as adequate (Bentler, 2005), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values below .08, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMS) values below .06 (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008).

### **2.3. Results**

#### *Preliminary analyses*

As several items of the expanded model of organizational identification showed a deviation from the normal distribution and data were not multivariate normal, the Satorra-Bentler approach was used to perform CFAs using robust maximum likelihood parameter estimates, with corrections of standard errors and the Chi square test statistic (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). Before conducting tests of our hypotheses, we first tested for structural invariance of the expanded model of organizational identification scale in our two samples. We set up the four-factor model on Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) progressively testing for configural, metric

and scalar invariance. As can be seen in Table 1, there is evidence of structural invariance. Considering that the chi-square and the chi-square difference tests are highly sensitive to large sample sizes, we used differences in CFI and TLI as alternative measures for comparing the nested models, where changes in these indices  $\geq .01$  indicate that the null hypothesis of invariance is not tenable (G. W. Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). When factor loadings are constrained to test for metric invariance, the model showed a slightly better goodness of fit (CFI = .92; RMSEA = .076, C.I. = .062 - .089,  $p = .001$ ) and the change in CFI was far below the cut-off (-.003 for CFI), suggesting metric invariance. When constraints on intercepts were introduced, the scalar invariance model's fit did not significantly worsen ( $\Delta\text{CFI} = .009$ ), and the final full scalar invariance model exhibited a good fit (CFI = .91; RMSEA = .077, C.I. = .064-.090,  $p = .000$ ); moreover, the loss of fit in comparison with the metric invariance model is trivial based on observed differences in CFI. The results of these analyses indicated that the survey items have the same meaning in both samples and that the measurement model was not significantly affected by differences between two samples. Therefore, we proceeded with merging the two datasets to test our proposed model on an overall larger sample, consisting of 423 respondents.

**Table 1.** Results of structural invariance testing between two subsamples.

	$\chi^2$	df	$p(\chi^2)$	RMSEA	C.I. (RMSEA)	$p$ (RMSEA)	CFI	$\Delta\text{CFI}$
Configural	226.289	96	.000	.080	.067-.094	.000	.913	
Metric	229.145	104	.000	.076	.062 -.089	.001	.916	-.003
Scalar	251.911	112	.000	.077	.064 -.090	.000	.907	.009

*Factorial Structure of the short scale of the expanded model of OI and reliability*

Results show that, in line with our first hypothesis, the model fit the data well. Fit indices were excellent (CFI = .94; TLI = .92; RMSEA = .062, C.I. = .049-.075; SRMR = .046) confirming the four-factor solution of the hypothesized model. Observed indicators had significant loadings on the respective latent factors, ranging from .58 to .70 for organizational identification, from .59 to .81 for ambivalent identification, from .64 to .79 for neutral identification, and from .71 to .79 for disidentification. Moreover, correlations between the four-latent factors of the expanded model showed that, as expected, organizational identification was negatively associated with ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification, and these three additional forms of identification were all positively associated with a low-to-moderate extent (see Table 2).

Although disidentification shared 53% of the explained variance with ambivalent identification, as well as 37% of the variance with neutral identification, and ambivalent identification shared 31% of the explained variance with neutral identification (see Table 2), scale-difference chi-square tests for non-normal distributions (Satorra & Bentler, 2010) revealed that the four-factor proposed model was significantly better than any other alternative model. Particularly, when we combined disidentification with ambivalent identification, the fit indices of the three-factor structure significantly worsened ( $\Delta \chi^2 (3) = 21.28, p = .000$ ), as well as models combining disidentification with neutral identification ( $\Delta \chi^2 (3) = 50.36, p = .000$ ), or ambivalent identification with neutral identification ( $\Delta \chi^2 (3) = 81.97, p = .000$ ). In line with Hypothesis 1a, the four-factor model fit significantly better than a two-factor

model combining ambivalent identification, neutral identification, disidentification in one factor ( $\Delta \chi^2 (5) = 91.57, p = .000$ ), or a one-factor structure combining all four forms of identification ( $\Delta \chi^2 (6) = 186.07, p = .000$ ).

With regard to the internal consistency, our results provided good reliabilities for each subscale with scores ranging from .74 - .81 (see Table 2). All of the Cronbach's alpha scores were over .70, supporting Hypothesis 1b.

### *2.3.1. Results of hierarchical regression analyses*

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 2. Hierarchical regressions analyses (see Table 3) showed that job satisfaction was the only control variable that significantly influenced three of our outcomes. Specifically, job satisfaction was positively associated with organizational identification ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ), and negatively associated with ambivalent identification ( $\beta = -.46, p < .001$ ), and neutral identification ( $\beta = -.52, p < .001$ ). Organizational identification was also influenced by organizational tenure ( $\beta = -.29, p = .049$ ), as well as ambivalent identification was predicted by organizational tenure ( $\beta = .27, p = .037$ ). Controlling for all these demographics, and with regard to our second hypotheses (H2), the relation between person-organization fit and organizational identification was positive and significant ( $\beta = .27, p = .001$ ) supporting H2a, whereas reputation was not significantly related ( $\beta = -.034, p = .674$ ) in contrast to H2b. The model explained 26% of the variance ( $F(7,159) = 7.515, p < .001$ ). In line with Hypothesis H3, person-organization fit negatively and significantly influenced disidentification ( $\beta = -.40, p < .001$ ), and

reputation was a marginally significant predictor ( $\beta = -.117, p = .093$ ). Organizational cynicism was positively and significantly associated with disidentification ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ). The model significantly explained 48% of the variance ( $F(8, 159) = 17.127, p < .001$ ). Results fully supported Hypothesis 4, showing that ambivalent identification was significantly and positively predicted by role conflict ( $\beta = .32, p < .001$ ), explaining 40% of the variance in the dependent variable ( $F(6, 158) = 17.094, p < .001$ ). Contrary to the hypothesized associations of neutral identification (H5), the effects of the antecedents were not significant for neither vertical individualism ( $\beta = -.02, p = .77$ ) nor horizontal individualism ( $\beta = .10, p = .16$ ). We repeated all analyses without control variables in the first step following Becker et al. (2016), and the general pattern was very similar and did not reveal any substantial differences.

**Table 2.** Means, Standard Deviations, Alphas coefficients, and Correlations between variables of Sample 1.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Age	47.95	10.14	-															
2. Working hours	42.21	6.34	.19*	-														
3. Organizational tenure	14.80	9.95	.72**	.15	-													
4. Professional tenure	19.40	10.97	.85**	.12	.72**	-												
5. Job satisfaction	5.09	1.126	-.03	-.14	.07	.06	-											
6. OID	3.78	.69	.00	.10	-.03	-.06	.39**	(.74)										
7. AID	2.43	.86	.04	.14	.02	.08	-.53**	-.40**	(.79)									
8. NID	2.00	.68	.02	.02	.04	.06	-.46**	-.58**	.56**	(.78)								
9. DIS	2.09	.87	-.06	.05	-.01	.02	-.43**	-.45**	.73**	.61**	(.81)							
10. Person-Organization fit	3.37	.75	.14	.05	.17*	.11	.47**	.43**	-.51**	-.41**	-.59**	(.77)						
11. Reputation	3.63	.70	.05	-.01	.11	.01	.42**	.25**	-.43**	-.33**	-.41**	.41**	(.90)					
12. Role conflict	2.79	.77	.04	.22**	.08	.09	-.33**	-.15*	.47**	.32**	.49**	-.36**	-.31**	(.91)				
13. Vertical individualism	3.62	.75	.07	-.01	.11	.14	.10	.10	.16*	.01	.07	.16*	-.14	.15*	(.70)			
14. Horizontal individualism	2.36	.82	-.01	-.03	.06	.00	.07	.02	.17*	.08	.16*	.10	-.06	.03	.30**	(.65)		
15. Organizational cynicism	2.73	.80	-.08	.19*	-.07	-.06	-.50**	-.15*	.53**	.33**	.54**	-.45**	-.42**	.56**	.08	.06	(.94)	
16. Affective commitment	4.12	.89	.06	-.06	.17*	.07	.57**	.49**	-.51**	-.63**	-.51**	.49**	.45**	-.30**	.11	.02	-.44**	(.90)

*Note.* \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*  $p < 0.05$ . Alpha coefficients along the diagonal;  $M$  = Means;  $SD$  = Standard Deviations; OID = organizational identification;

AID = ambivalent identification; NID = neutral identification; DIS = disidentification.

**Table 3.** Hierarchical regression results.

		Organizational identification		Ambivalent identification		Neutral identification		Disidentification	
		$\beta^*$	$p$	$\beta^*$	$p$	$\beta^*$	$p$	$\beta^*$	$p$
Step 1	Age	.24	.099	-.20	.126	-.26	.073	-.22	.079
	Working hours	.13	.069	.02	.808	-.05	.455	.00	.964
	Work experience	-.09	.410	-.04	.695	.07	.519	.13	.141
	Organizational tenure	-.29	.049	<b>.27</b>	<b>.037</b>	.27	.057	.15	.205
	Job satisfaction	<b>.33</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-.46</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>-.52</b>	<b>.000</b>	-.08	.286
Step 2	Person-organization fit	<b>.27</b>	<b>.001</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>-.40</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Reputation	-.03	.674	-	-	-	-	-.12	.093
	Role conflict	-	-	<b>.32</b>	<b>.000</b>	-	-	-	-
	Vertical individualism	-	-	-	-	-.02	.770	-	-
	Horizontal individualism	-	-	-	-	.10	.163	-	-
	Organizational cynicism	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>.28</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Set 1 R2	<b>.202</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.32</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.000</b>
	Set 2 R2	<b>.257</b>	<b>.005</b>	<b>.40</b>	<b>.000</b>	.26	.377	<b>.48</b>	<b>.000</b>

*Note.* Significant regression coefficients are shown in boldface.

\*The beta coefficients reported refer to the final step of the regressions.

### 2.3.2. Discriminant validity of organizational identification and affective commitment

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to examine the distinctiveness of organizational identification and affective commitment. As fitting models with large numbers of items can be problematic when the free parameters-to-subjects ratio undercuts the recommended ratio at least of 5:1 (Bentler & Chou, 1987), we formed item parcels for affective commitment, i.e. items were randomly assigned to three parcels (two three-item parcels and one four-item parcel) (Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013). Results of the hypothesized two-factor model showed good fit to the data. Specifically, the chi-square test of model fit was not significant ( $\chi^2(8) = 14.006, p = .082$ ), fit indices were excellent (CFI = .99; TLI = .98; RMSEA = .066, C.I. = .000-.121; SRMR = .042). The alternative one-factor model combining organizational identification and affective commitment fits the data significantly

worse ( $\chi^2 (9) = 73.728, p = .000$ ; CFI = .87; TLI = 79; RMSEA = .020, C.I. = .162-.248; SRMR = .097).

## **2.5. Discussion**

These results largely support the construct validity and reliability of the short version of the scale proposed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) in an Italian sample. The short version showed four fundamental dimensions of identification, consistent with the expanded model of identification and the original scales, namely organizational identification, ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification. Confirmatory factor analyses suggested that the four-factor solution of the scale fit the data better than other solutions, in which three items per dimension can be used to detect the four latent constructs which seems to be an optimal result balancing research rigor and practical economy. The subscales also demonstrated good internal consistency in the overall sample of 423 Italian healthcare employees, further supporting the application of the expanded model in future research and practice.

In line with previous findings (see Kreiner, 2002, Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), the four forms of organizational identification relate to a variety of different antecedents. More specifically, person-organization fit predicted organizational identification (positively) and disidentification (negatively) as expected. Disidentification showed a positive association with organizational cynicism, suggesting that the specific form of cynicism toward the organization may be a viable alternative to the commonly used personality trait of general cynicism (Kreiner &

Ashforth, 2004). Future research should compare these different forms of cynicism further to improve our understanding of its nature. This would also assist, for example, in designing interventions to help organizations prevent this form of disaffection, rather than selecting people with a type of stable personality such as cynicism.

We also found the association between role conflict and ambivalent identification to be in line with previous findings (Kreiner & Ashfort, 2004). Contrary to our hypotheses, however, we found that neither vertical nor horizontal individualism were associated with neutral identification. Although previous research (Kreiner & Ashfort, 2004) found individualism as an antecedent of neutral attachment toward the organization, the fact that these results were not replicated in our findings suggest that, in line with the social identity approach (see e.g. Haslam, 2004), investigating variables depending on the context and more related to the person-organization relationship could offer more fruitful contributions to the understanding of these forms of identification.

Furthermore, our study demonstrated that job satisfaction influenced at least three forms of identification, suggesting that this variable should also be considered when studying the attachment relationships that employees develop with their organizations. Job satisfaction is not the only variable that can influence their feelings of membership with the organization, but it certainly plays a crucial role in connecting employees' perceptions of themselves as group members and organizational goals, expectations, outcomes, which may, in turn, plays a role employees' identities. The fact that we found identical results of the associations between the expanded model of

identification and the other constructs with and without control variables, however, make us confident in the robustness of our results.

Another important contribution of this study is the distinctiveness between organizational identification and affective commitment. Previous research has argued that there are similar interpretations of these two concepts (see e.g. Çiftçioglu, 2010, Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Hassan, 2012), but the concept differentiations are mostly defined by using theoretical assumptions. Consequently, our findings provide a new empirical contribution specifically with the short scale of organizational identification as a distinct construct from affective commitment, supporting the idea that these two variables should not be used interchangeably, and that the items of the Italian version can be used to differentiate identification from affective commitment.

Several limitations of this study should be taken into account for future research. First, because of the cross-sectional nature of the survey, we cannot argue for causal relationships between the four dimensions of the expanded model and their antecedents. We cannot exclude, for example, that ambivalent identification can influence the perception of being in a position of role conflict. However, the main aim of our study was to examine the psychometric properties of the Italian-translated scale of the expanded model in a short version. Consequently, these preliminary findings offer an important contribution for future investigations.

A second limitation of the study was the self-report nature of the measures. However, in order to reduce the effect of this potential source of bias, we took some precautions following Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). For instance, the anonymity of the data was guaranteed to reduce social desirability biases.

Moreover, self-report measures of the different forms of identification were necessary since the nature of these constructs is conceptually based on individuals' perceptions and their subjective experience (Chan, 2009).

In conclusion, we believe that the present study can make an important contribution to future research. First, in research as in organizational practice, short measures are necessary when a number of variables are investigated - as is typically the case. Thus, more research in organizational contexts is needed in this direction, and our study provides for such a contribution. Second, also in terms of time investment, a brief scale of all forms of identification can be useful when organizations are interested in efficiently monitoring individual's general identification. Accordingly, it is desirable to administer all the four forms of identification using less of the employees' time. Third, our findings provide further evidence for the validity of the conceptualization proposed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004). Considering the validity of the distinctiveness of the four constructs and their antecedents, it is worthwhile to further explore outcomes and processes of these different forms of identification, and our study hopes to make a contribution to future research in this direction.

## APPENDIX A

English version	Italian version
<i>Organizational identification (from Mael &amp; Ashforth, 1992)</i>	
1 When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult	Quando qualcuno critica la mia organizzazione, mi sento come se fosse stata offesa la mia persona
2 I am very interested in what others think about my organization	Sono interessato/a a ciò che gli altri pensano della mia organizzazione
3 <b>When I talk about this organization, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’</b>	<b>Quando parlo di questa organizzazione, solitamente utilizzo il termine “noi” piuttosto che “loro”</b>
4 <b>This organization’s successes are my successes</b>	<b>Il successo della mia organizzazione è anche il mio successo</b>
5 <b>When someone praises this organization it feels like a personal compliment</b>	<b>Quando qualcuno fa un complimento alla mia organizzazione, lo considero un complimento personale</b>
6 If a story in the media criticized this organization, I would feel embarrassed	Se un evento mediatico criticasse la mia organizzazione, mi sentirei in imbarazzo
<i>Ambivalent identification</i>	
1 <b>I have mixed feelings about my affiliation with this organization</b>	<b>Provo sentimenti ambivalenti circa la mia affiliazione con questa organizzazione</b>
2 I’m torn between loving and hating this organization	Non so se amare o odiare questa organizzazione
3 <b>I feel conflicted about being part of this organization</b>	<b>Far parte di questa organizzazione mi fa sentire in conflitto</b>
4 <b>I have contradictory feelings about this organization</b>	<b>Provo sentimenti contraddittori verso questa organizzazione</b>
5 I find myself being both proud and embarrassed to belong to this organization	Appartenere a questa organizzazione mi fa sentire orgoglioso/a e al tempo stesso in imbarazzo
6 I have felt both honour and disgrace by being a member of this organization	In alcuni casi far parte di questa organizzazione mi ha fatto sentire onorato/a, in altri mi ha fatto vergognare
<i>Neutral identification</i>	
1 It really doesn’t matter to me what happens to this organization	Non sono per nulla interessato/a a ciò che accade a questa organizzazione
2 <b>I don’t have many feelings about this organization at all</b>	<b>Non provo particolari sentimenti per questa organizzazione</b>
3 <b>I give little thought to the concerns of this organization</b>	<b>Presto poca attenzione alle questioni che riguardano questa organizzazione</b>
4 I’m pretty neutral toward the success or failure of this organization	Sono assolutamente neutrale rispetto alla possibilità che questa organizzazione abbia successo o meno
5 <b>This organization doesn’t have much personal meaning to me</b>	<b>Far parte di questa organizzazione non ha per me alcun significato</b>
6 I don’t concern myself much with this organization’s problems	Non mi preoccupo molto dei problemi di questa organizzazione
<i>Disidentification</i>	
1 I am embarrassed to be part of this organization	Far parte di questa organizzazione mi fa sentire in imbarazzo
2 <b>This organization does shameful things</b>	<b>Questa organizzazione fa cose vergognose</b>
3 I have tried to keep the organization I work for a secret from people I meet	Ho cercato di nascondere agli altri per quale organizzazione lavoro
4 <b>I find this organization to be disgraceful</b>	<b>Ritengo che questa organizzazione sia disonorevole</b>
5 <b>I want people to know that I disagree with how this organization behaves</b>	<b>Voglio che gli altri sappiano che disapprovo il modo in cui questa organizzazione si comporta</b>
6 I have been ashamed of what goes on in this organization	Mi sono vergognato/a per le cose che accadono in questa organizzazione

Note. In bold the short version of the Expanded Model of Organizational identification.

## CHAPTER 3

### Identity and Stress:

#### An application of the expanded model of organizational identification

#### in predicting strain at work<sup>\*</sup>

#### Abstract

We contribute to the understanding of the role of organizational identification for work-related stress by adopting the expanded model of organizational identification (Kreiner & Ashforth 2004). The current study explores interactions between organizational identification and the other "problematic" dimensions of the expanded model in predicting employee strain. We hypothesized that ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification would moderate the negative relationship between organizational identification and exhaustion and ego depletion, such that the link between identification and strain would be stronger when the other dimensions are low. We tested these predictions in a survey among 228 employees of care homes for the elderly (72% social-sanitary operators, 27% nurses). Results largely supported the hypotheses and show reliable interactions for disidentification and neutral identification and marginally significant moderation effects for ambivalent identification. We discuss limitations and future implications for research and practice

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of the expanded model in dealing with work-related stress and organizational interventions.

### **3.1. Introduction**

To become and stay healthy, employees benefit from developing and maintaining some attachment towards their organizations. Organizational identification is a concept that concerns the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to the organization” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; p. 34), which explains how social categories contribute to the self-definition of individuals (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Consistent with this perspective, extensive research has shown that a sense of social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) has important consequences for health and psychological well-being (Haslam, O’Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Steffens, Haslam, Schuh, Jetten, & van Dick, 2016). This research has considered identification both as predictor of strain (Avanzi, Schuh, Fraccaroli, & van Dick, 2015) or as a buffer against stress (Wegge, Schuh, & Dick, 2012).

As argued by Mael and Ashforth (1992), striving for a positive organizational identity should be the expected and normative state in order to be more satisfied with one’s work, have better well-being, and effectively cope with stress (Haslam & Reicher, 2006). However, recent developments in the field of organizational identification have led to a theoretical exploration of additional forms of identification. More specifically, Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) in their expanded model of identification suggested that employees simultaneously can think of themselves along

two dimensions, i.e. seeing their own identity as largely overlapping with their organization and at the same time distancing themselves or seeing their own identity as largely separate from their organization. Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) labelled these two dimensions identification and disidentification, and suggested that employees can perceive an overlap between their organizations and their own values or develop close bonds with their immediate colleagues which would lead them to identify - but at the same time, they might dislike the office premises or dislike actions taken by senior management which would lead them to disidentify. Kreiner and Ashforth proposed that when employees are high on identification but low on disidentification, they would be high on organizational identification in the “classic” sense of the construct. When employees are low on identification and high on disidentification, Kreiner and Ashforth labelled this organizational disidentification. When employees are high on both dimensions, this was labelled ambivalent identification and finally, when they are low on both dimensions, Kreiner and Ashforth named this neutral identification. Unfortunately, few empirical studies have utilized this expanded perspective to conceptualize organizational identification (Ashforth, Joshi, Anand, & O’Leary-Kelly, 2013) and the present study is, to the best of our knowledge, the first applying it in the context of stress and strain at work. More specifically, we will study associations between strain reactions at work and interactions of the different forms of identification. By doing this, we pursue two main goals. First, we aim to establish the usefulness of the expanded model of organizational identification in the prediction of employee strain by assessing simultaneously all forms of identification and by examining the extent to which they predict additional variance above and beyond the conventional form of identification. Second, we attempted to examine the extent to

which an expanded model is more suitable not only because it better captures the complex identity processes in health, but also because it offers practical solutions for organizations that aim to reduce employee strain. Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of our research. Before describing the study methods, we will elaborate on the three forms of identification in some more detail and we will then develop our hypotheses based on existing theory and research on social identity and stress.

*Ambivalent identification* occurs when employees simultaneously identify with some aspects of their group while rejecting other aspects that they do not want to integrate into their self-definition, developing a contradictory attachment that pushes them towards membership but also away from it (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Pratt, 2000).

*Neutral identification* is conceptualized as an independent psychological state that is mostly based on one's own personal values (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) and characterized by neutrality toward the organization (Dukerich, Kramer, & Parks, 1998; Elsbach, 1999). Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) argued that it is a state of neither identifying nor disidentifying with an organization, and it occurs when employees express low attachment to their organization and when traits of individualism are prevalent.

*Disidentification* is a cognitive separation between oneself and aspects of the organization that employees typically regard as negative, disagree with, and reject (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) showed that disidentification might lead individuals to actively oppose the organization and publicly criticize it, increasing the likelihood to take action that supports their self-perception of separation from the organization. Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, Kulich, and

Atkins (2007) found that women who were less identified with and distanced themselves from their organization showed reduced commitment and increased turnover.

### **Identification and stress**

Social identity and self-categorization theories propose that individuals' self-concepts are based on both their personal and their social identities. The latter comprise all the groups individuals are members of and due to the motivation to gain or maintain a positive self-concept, group members are motivated to contribute to positive group outcomes. Haslam and colleagues (e.g., Haslam, Jetten, & Waghorn, 2009; see Haslam & van Dick, 2011) developed the social identity model of stress which proposes that members identification with their groups has positive effects on their health and well-being for various reasons. First, being able to identify with a group satisfies the fundamental human need for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Moreover, highly identified group members trust other group members more and therefore provide and receive more social support. And finally, a shared group identity should lead to a higher sense of collective self-efficacy to deal with problems and stressful situations (see Avanzi et al., 2015). Several studies found support for this model by testing the role of organizational identification in predicting well-being in the workplace. For example, van Dick and Wagner (2002) found significant negative relationships between identification on the one hand and withdrawal and physical symptoms on the other. To better understand how social identity can play a protective role in stress reactions, Haslam et al. (2009) examined the nature of the relationship between identification and stress in a longitudinal study across five phases, where the

group was exposed to different levels of stressors. Results showed that highly identified participants were less likely to experience burnout in critical phases when the group was exposed to the greatest levels of strain suggesting that social identification buffers the stressor-burnout linkage.

Experimental evidence for the buffering role of social identity comes from a study by Häusser, Kattenstroth, van Dick, and Mojzisch (2012), in which a social-evaluative threat were induced in the experimental condition, and salivary cortisol responses were measured five times during the experimental session. Results showed that the manipulation of a shared identity increased participants' group identification which in turn led to lower cortisol responses during a stressful task. This supports the idea that a sense of shared social identity attenuates objective stress reactions when a group identity is salient.

The evidence reviewed here suggests a pertinent role for the traditional perspective of identification in explaining stress reactions at work. However, a meta-analysis by Steffens et al. (2016) of two decades of work on the social identity model of health revealed a small-to-moderate relationship of  $r = .22$  as well as substantial heterogeneity in the strength of this relationship. This suggests that there are likely to be important contingencies of this relationship. With a view to identifying such potential moderators of the identification-health relationship, we aimed to examine the interplay of organizational identification and other dimensions of the expanded model in predicting employee strain.

Specifically, our study focuses on exhaustion and ego depletion as two key indicators of strain. Exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and drained of one's emotional and physical resources, and represents a severe reduction of well-

being and a core dimension of burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997; Taris, Schreurs, & Schaufeli, 1999). A number of studies have focused on predicting exhaustion from workplace factors, such as high demands, low job control, low workplace support, workplace injustice, high workload, low reward, low supervisor support, low co-worker support, job insecurity and change (Demerouti, Bakker, & Bulters, 2004; Michielsen, Willemsen, Croon, de Vries, & Van Heck, 2004; for a review see also Aronsson, Theorell, Grape, Hammarström, Hogstedt, Marteinsdottir, ... & Hall, 2017).

Ego depletion involves the self's capacity for active volition (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998), and it refers to a state of reduced ability for self-control that occurs when the self's crucial resources are depleted (Baumeister, 2002). Following the strength model of self-control (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007), studies suggest that ego-depleted states are related to negative behavioral consequences such as procrastination, reduced resistance to hedonic temptations, and reduced pursuit of intrinsic rewards (Hofmann, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2012; Reinecke, Hartmann, & Eden, 2014; Vohs & Faber, 2007; Wagner, Barnes, Lim, & Ferris, 2012).

As argued above, a number of studies have examined the link between social identification and strain (e.g., Jimmieson, McKimmie, Hannam, & Gallagher, 2010). Previous research also supports the idea that social identity threats can leave individuals in depleted volitional states that reduce engagement in effortful self-control and rational decision-making (Inzlicht & Kang, 2010). Accordingly, we propose that organizational identification provides a basis for reduced strain (see Figure 1). More formally, we posit:

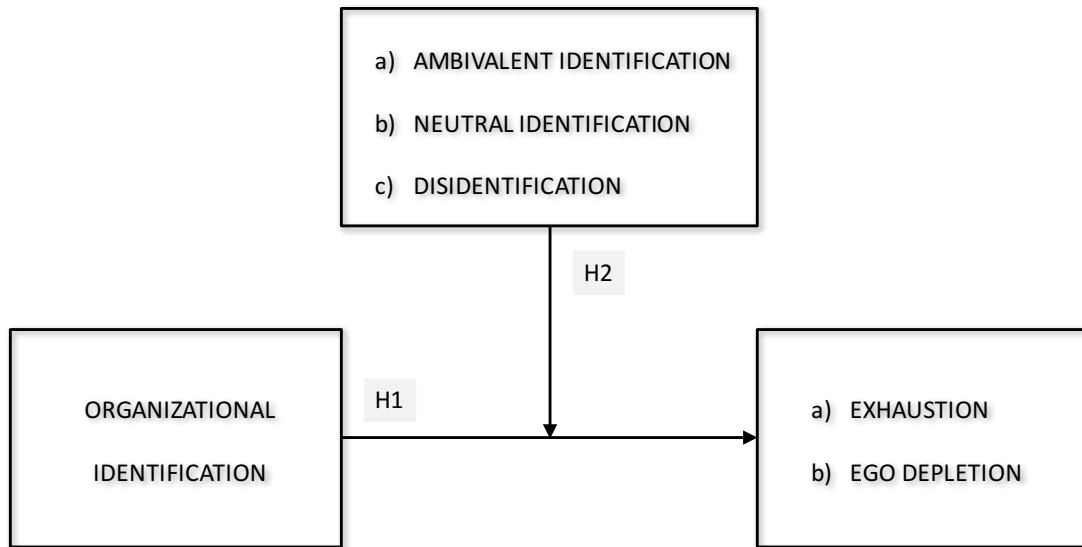
*Hypothesis 1: Organizational identification is negatively related to a) exhaustion and b) ego depletion.*

The traditional social identity approach to stress has largely neglected the important finding that considering only the strength of an individual's attitude toward an object does not fully capture how that person may respond toward this object which leads to imprecise predictions of the person's actual behavior (Conner & Armitage, 2008). Psychologists have, therefore, argued that it is important to not only consider the attitude but also the consistency of the person's beliefs, ranging from univalent to ambivalent (Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995). Ambivalence reflects the degree to which a person perceives to be "pulled in different directions", or has "mixed feelings" (Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, & Pradies, 2014, p. 2). Thus, ambivalence in organizational contexts can be defined as an individual's simultaneous experience of positive and negative reactions toward their organization (Piderit, 2000). Elsbach (1999) argued that identity-based ties with an organization go beyond simple identification with this group and the expanded model of organizational identification suggests that it is important to consider a second dimension that captures the consistency of a person's sense of identification. Several studies showed that the relation between attitudes and behavior is higher when people are less ambivalent. This has been shown for voting behavior in presidential elections (Lavine, 2001) or for low relations between intentions to live on a healthy diet and actual eating behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2000). These findings suggest that ambivalence can reduce the impact of peoples' beliefs on their behaviors. We apply this idea to the identification-strain link proposed

in our first hypothesis and we argue that the other forms of identification reflect the “second” dimension in attitude research, i.e. ambivalence or consistency.

When individuals experience disaffection to their organization, the protective role of identification is then likely to be reduced such that people are more likely to react to critical events with greater exhaustion and ego depletion. Ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification might thus reduce the health benefits deriving from organizational identification since dysfunctional feelings such as contradictory emotions, indifference, and rejection of one’s own workplace characterize these negative forms of identification. Consequently, we expect that the effect of organizational identification on strain will be stronger when employees experience low levels of any form of disaffection, such as ambivalent, neutral, or disidentification (see Figure 1). Accordingly, we posit:

*Hypothesis 2: The negative relationship between organizational identification and exhaustion and ego depletion will be moderated by a) ambivalent identification, b) neutral identification and c) disidentification, such that the relationship becomes stronger for low, rather than high, levels of these forms of identification.*



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model underlying the study hypotheses.

### 3.2. Methods

#### 3.2.1. Participants and procedures

Participants were 228 Italian employees (89% female) in eight homes for the elderly (72% social-sanitary operators, 27% nurses, 1% unspecified). Participants average age was 42 years ( $SD=9.7$ ), they worked an average of 33.4 hours per week ( $SD=6.3$ ). Average organizational tenure was 9.9 years ( $SD=8.2$ ), and average professional tenure was 12.8 years ( $SD=8.1$ ). Data were collected with a questionnaire which included the informed consent to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. We decided to test our hypotheses in a survey using self-report as this is the best way to assess individuals' identification and also the dependent variables of ego depletion and exhaustion. All these concepts cannot be easily measured by external raters. As self-reported data can be affected by common method biases, we will test for potential distortions. However, we want to highlight that the focus on interactive effects cannot be affected by common method variation.

### 3.2.2. Measures

We used Italian versions to measure organizational identification and exhaustion, and the other scales were translated by two independent native speakers of the target language with previous experience in the translation of psychological measures. We compared and merged the two forms into a single translation by taking into account the cultural adaptation of measures.

*Organizational identification* was assessed using the 6-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992; sample item: “*When I talk about this organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'*”). Participants rated the degree of their agreement with each statement that assessed organizational identification and other forms of identification using a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 5=*strongly agree*.

*Ambivalent identification*, *neutral identification* and *disidentification* were measured by 6-item scales for each dimension, developed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004). A sample item of ambivalent identification is: “*I have felt both honour and disgrace by being a member of this organization*”. A sample item of neutral identification is: “*This organization doesn't have much personal meaning to me*”. A sample item of disidentification is: “*I want people to know that I disagree with how this organization behaves*”.

*Exhaustion* was assessed using the 8-item subscale of the Italian version of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005; Pompili et al., 2009). A sample item is: “*After work, I regularly feel worn out and weary*”. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with each statement from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*.

*Ego depletion* was assessed using the 5 item-scale from Johnson et al. (2014) and developed by Twenge et al. (2004; sample item: "*At work...I feel like my willpower is gone*"). Participants indicated the extent to which the items captured how they felt at work using a 5-point scale from 1=*never/almost never* to 5=*always*.

### *Data analysis*

Descriptive statistics, preliminary analysis and correlations were performed using SPSS 21. We also ascertained the normality of variables by analyzing skewness, kurtosis and multicollinearity indices. PROCESS macro 2.15 (Hayes, 2012) was used to examine interaction terms among variables.

### **3.3. Results**

The descriptive statistics and reliabilities of all study variables are reported in Table 1. Before proceeding with testing the hypotheses, we performed confirmatory factor analyses to test the distinctiveness of the constructs in Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). We used parceling and combined 2 items to three parcels for each dimensions that represented the different latent factors, and we found that the proposed four-factor model fitted the data reasonably well ( $\chi^2(48) = 137.403, p = .000$ ; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .090, C.I. = .073-.108; SRMR = .059). We tested the model fit against all plausible alternative models (i.e. three 3-factor model combining ambivalent identification and disidentification, neutral identification and disidentification, and neutral and ambivalent identification, respectively; a 2-factor model combining all

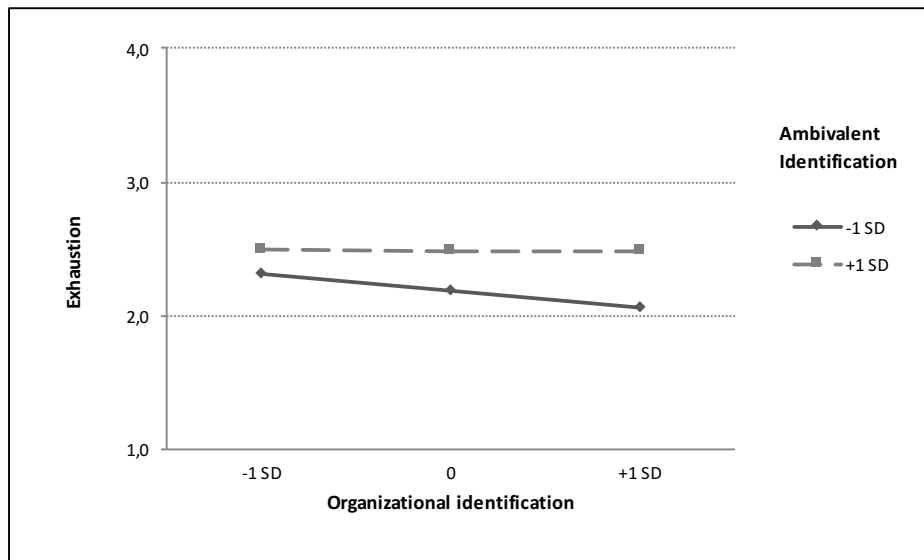
**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, Aphas coefficients, and Correlations between variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Age	42.44	9.69	-									
2. Working hour	33.40	6.27	-	.22**								
3. Organizational tenure	9.89	8.18	-	.62**	.19**							
4. Professional tenure	12.79	8.14	-	.67**	.22**	.87**						
5. Organizational ID	3.09	.72	.68	.12	-.10	.12	.07					
6. Ambivalent ID	2.35	.72	.80	-.05	.01	-.09	-.03	.14*				
7. Neutral ID	1.98	.64	.79	-.03	.08	-.09	-.03	-.13	.67**			
8. Disidentification	1.97	.72	.81	-.14*	.04	-.11	-.09	-.04	.77**	.72**		
9. Exhaustion	2.34	.53	.71	.00	.15*	.04	.05	-.12	.28**	.29**	.34**	
10. Ego Depletion	1.94	.86	.91	.03	.08	.08	.03	-.05	.26**	.19**	.31**	.66**

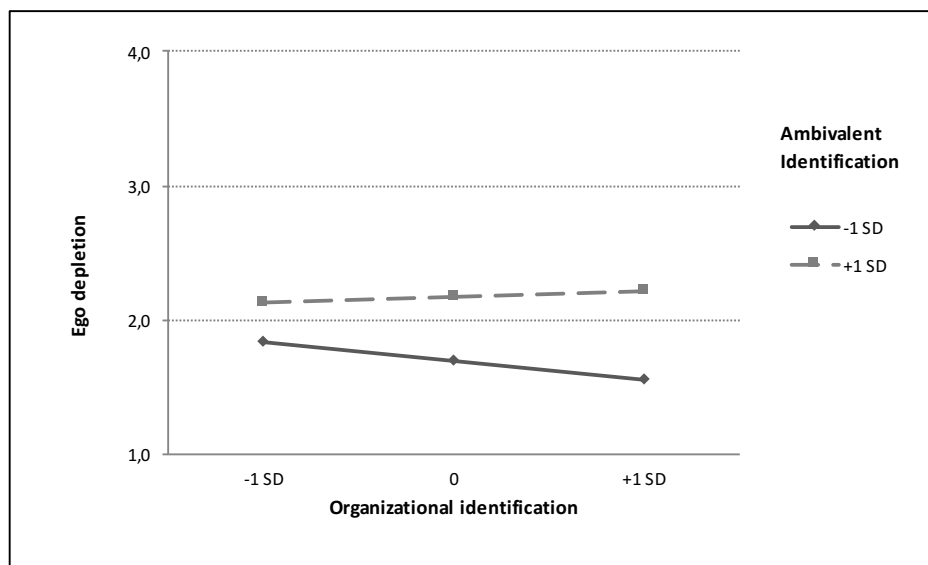
**Note:** \*Pearson correlations significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). \*\*Correlations significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). *M* = Means. *SD* = Standard Deviations.  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alphas.

three problematic forms and a 1-factor model) and found that all other models fit the data worse. The best fitting alternative model was the a 3-factor model with separate factors for organizational identification and ambivalent identification and a second factor combining neutral identification and disidentification, and even this model fit the data less well than the 4-factor solution ( $\Delta \chi^2(3) = 8.844$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

With regard to regression analyses, our results showed only a marginally significant main effect of organizational identification on exhaustion ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p = .068$ ) and no effect for ego depletion ( $\beta = -.051$ ,  $p = .457$ ). As expected, we found significant moderations by neutral identification and disidentification, but the interaction term between organizational identification and ambivalent identification was only marginally significant for exhaustion ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p = .083$ ) and just not significant for ego depletion ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p = .105$ ). However, simple slopes analysis (see Figure 2a) showed that at one standard deviation below ( $-1SD$ ) the mean of ambivalent identification the relation between organizational identification and exhaustion was negative and significant ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .002$ ), likewise for the relation between organizational identification and ego depletion ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .044$ ) (see Figure 2b).



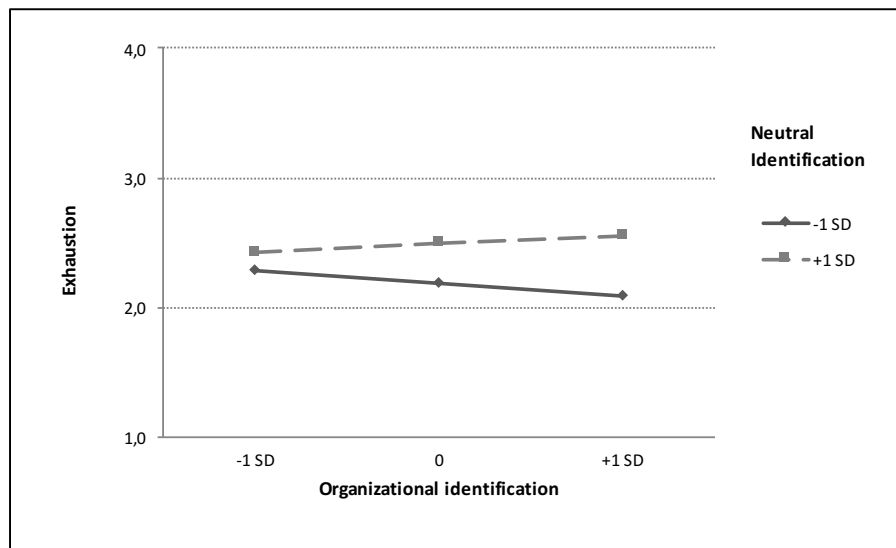
**Figure 2a.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on exhaustion.



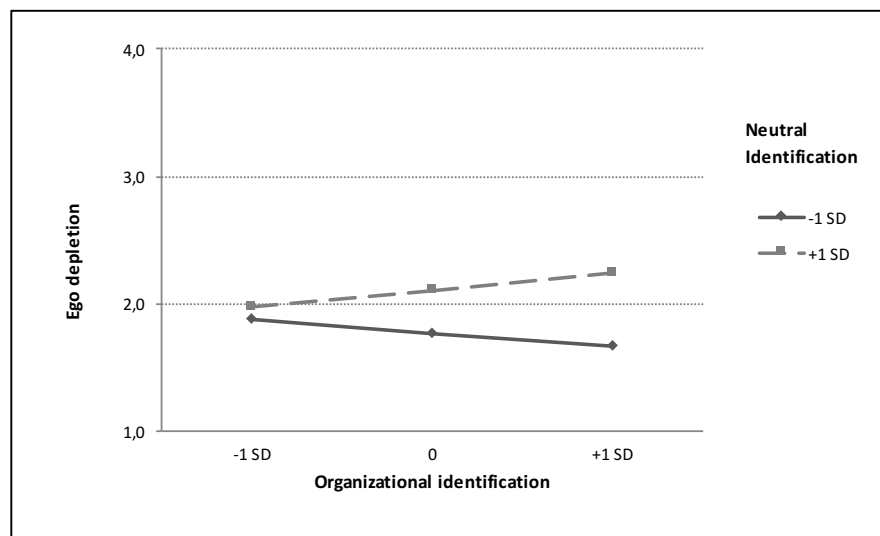
**Figure 2b.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on ego depletion.

The interaction between organizational identification and neutral identification explained a significant incremental amount of variance in exhaustion ( $DR^2 = .02$ ,  $p = .022$ ) and in ego depletion ( $DR^2 = .02$ ,  $p = .029$ ), demonstrating the expected

moderating role of neutral identification on the identification-strain consistency. We also found a significant interaction between organizational identification and disidentification, with significant incremental variance explained in exhaustion ( $DR^2 = .03, p = .003$ ) and in ego depletion ( $DR^2 = .02, p = .013$ ). The significant interaction effects for both outcomes indicated that the negative relationship between organizational identification and strain increased as neutral identification and disidentification decreased. To interpret the interaction effect, simple slopes for interactions were tested at one standard deviation below ( $-1SD$ ) and above ( $+1SD$ ) the means of moderator variables, following Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003). At  $-1SD$  of neutral identification, the relation between organizational identification and exhaustion was negative and significant ( $\beta = -.14, SE = .06, p = .017$ ), but at  $+1SD$  the relation was not significant ( $\beta = .09, p = .282$ ) (see Figure 3a). For ego depletion, at  $-1SD$  of neutral identification, the effect of organizational identification was negative but just slightly close to the significance ( $\beta = -.14, SE = .08, p = .086$ ), and at  $+1SD$  the relation was not significant ( $\beta = .18, p = .192$ ) (see Figure 3b).



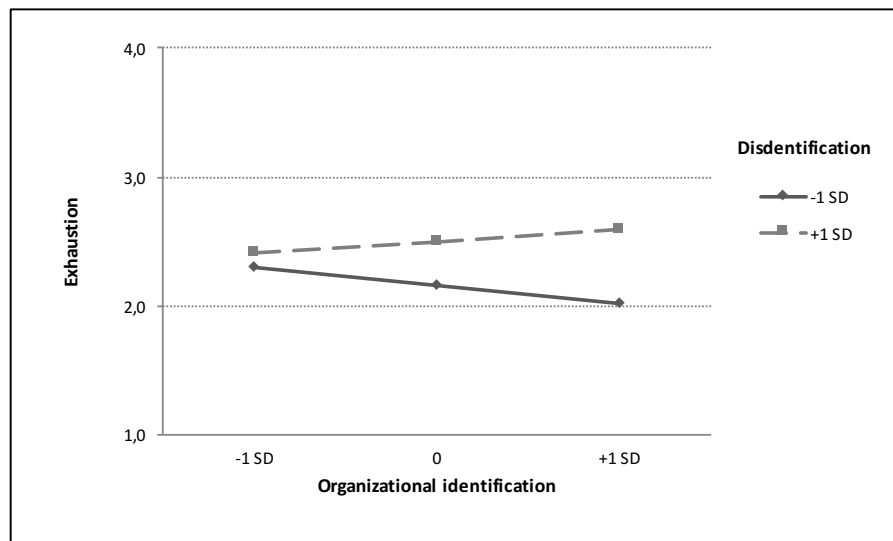
**Figure 3a.** Interaction between organizational identification and neutral identification on exhaustion.



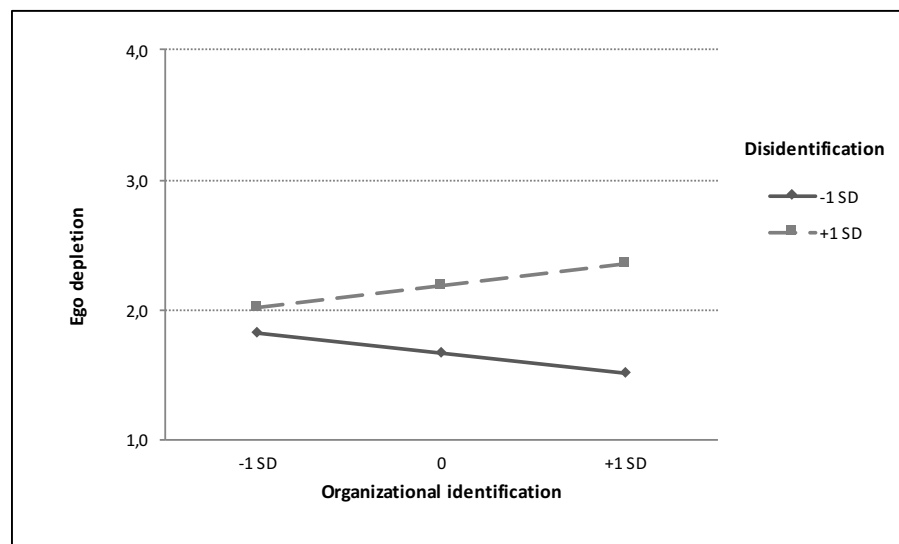
**Figure 3b.** Interaction between organizational identification and neutral identification on ego depletion.

Results showed the same pattern for disidentification as moderator: at  $-1SD$ , the relation between organizational identification and exhaustion was negative and significant ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .002$ ), but at  $+1SD$  the relation was not significant

( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p = .108$ ) (see Figure 4a). Also at  $-1SD$  of disidentification, the relation between organizational identification and ego depletion was negative and significant ( $\beta = -.21$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .039$ ), and at  $+1SD$  the relation was not significant ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p = .086$ ) (see Figure 4b).



**Figure 4a.** Interaction between organizational identification and disidentification on exhaustion.



**Figure 4b.** Interaction between organizational identification and disidentification on ego depletion.

### **3.4. Discussion**

In sum, the regression results indicated that neutral identification and disidentification had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between organizational identification and employees' strain. Although the moderation effect of ambivalent identification was only marginally significant, simple slopes showed that the pattern of interactions was similar to neutral identification and disidentification, such that when employees experienced low levels of ambivalence the relationship between identification and strain was stronger.

The general pattern of our results is important in different respects. First, they provide empirical support for the expanded model of identification and its practical application in organizational contexts. Previous studies mostly focused on antecedents and outcomes of each single dimension (Ashforth et al., 2013; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), but not on their potential interplay with individuals' more conventional positive forms of identification with their organization (but see Schuh et al., 2016). Second, our findings further support the idea that within organizations, bolstering organizational identification may be useful to reduce employees' strain even though Steffens et al. (2016) show that organizational identification is related more strongly to the presence of well-being rather absence of stress. On the other hand, we know little about the interplay of more complex ways of attachment to one's organization, and our results shed light on the (boundary) conditions for when the protective role of identification for stress is likely to be found. Specifically, our study suggests that the unidimensional effect of organizational identification does not provide a complete understanding of reactions to stress at work, and supports the idea that organizational

identification is related to reduced stress in particular in the absence of any more disaffection towards the organization.

Our study also adds support to the findings on the nature of the link between organizational identification and stress. According to van Dick and Haslam (2012), organizational identification should have indirect positive effects on well-being besides direct effects. Several empirical studies supported this idea. For example, Haslam and Reicher (2006) showed that since a sense of shared identity provides a basis for receipt of more social support, the ability to effectively cope with stress increases. Avanzi et al. (2015) showed that identification increases social support, which bolsters collective efficacy which, in turn, reduces burnout. Therefore, our results expand upon previous research into the social identity framework which links organizational identification and well-being through indirect effects, by expanding the conceptual framework of identification in considering an important moderating effect on the identification-strain link.

Some limitations should be taken into account. First, the present cross-sectional data does not provide evidence of causality. However, since we focused on interaction effects between different forms of identification, we aimed to explore how these dimensions interplay and provide a better representation of the complex relationship between organizational identification and stress. However, further studies are needed to replicate these findings, by considering different types of strains at work, and ideally using a longitudinal and experimental designs. Secondly, the data are self-reported and may thus suffer from common source biases. However, our interaction hypotheses and the use of hierarchical regression analyses account for common method variance: although the main effects may be overestimated in data subject to

common source bias, Evans (1985; see also McClelland & Judd, 1993) stated that common method variation cannot artificially inflate interaction effects in regression analyses because the individual predictors are controlled for in the first step of the analysis. It might also be argued that the incremental variance explained by the interaction terms, although statistically significant, seems rather small. However, Evans (1985) stated that moderator effects in the field are so difficult to detect that even those explaining as little as 1% of the total variance should be considered as important. Moreover, in their review of the social science literature, Champoux and Peters (1987) conclude that field study interactions typically account for about 1%-3% of the variance. Thus, we believe that the additional amount of variation explained by the interaction in this study is not only statistically reliable but also relevant.

A further limitation concerns the cross-sectional nature of our data which allows no strict test of causality. The causal direction we proposed is in line with the social identity theory of stress (Haslam & van Dick, 2011) and longitudinal (e.g., Haslam et al., 2009) and experimental (e.g., Häusser et al., 2012) studies have supported the view that identification can impact well-being. However, reversed causality is also possible in our study and theoretically plausible so that individuals who are exhausted and suffer from ego-depletion may have fewer resources for positive interactions with their colleagues which, over time, may also reduce their identification or increase the other forms of identification. Future research is certainly needed to further explore the temporal dynamics between identification and stress and well-being. Also, future research would benefit from the consideration of stressors and to test the buffering effects of identification on the stress-strain linkage. Identification would be expected to unfold its positive effect as a psychological resource as

suggested, for instance, in the job demands control model (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Despite the above limitations, a significant contribution of this study has been to highlight the importance of considering different forms of attachment to the organization that can alter the strain-reducing effect of identification. Implications for organizations are that in addition to gaining an understanding of employees' organizational identification, they should pay attention to employees' disaffection towards the organization. Since positive identification was supposed to be the normative and expected state (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), monitoring risk factors for disaffection is beneficial, both considering temporary stressful conditions, as well as more stable antecedents such as individualism, cynicism, and contradictory roles and demands (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Moreover, the process that leads to develop positive strong identification over time might not be linear and further studies are needed to explore the potential simultaneous presence of other disaffectionate forms of organizational identification in order to better understand the process of identification and to prevent stress at work.

## CHAPTER 4

### **The negative link between organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors: The moderating role of ambivalent identification<sup>\*</sup>**

#### **Abstract**

Using Social Identity Theory, we predicted a negative relationship between organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors and a moderation of this link by ambivalent identification. We explored both overall counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) and also CWBs toward the organization (CWB-O), and CWBs toward other individuals (CWB-I). A first survey-based study of 198 German employees revealed a moderating effect of ambivalent identification on the negative relationship between organizational identification and CWB, and CWB-O. Employees highly identified with their organization reported lower levels of CWB and CWB-O but - and as predicted - only when ambivalent identification was low. A scenario study of 228 American employees supported the findings of *Study 1*: when organizational identification was high, participants in the low ambivalent condition reported lower levels of CWB-O than participants in the high ambivalent condition. The moderating effect of ambivalent and organizational identification was not significant on CWB-I in

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both studies. These findings provide new evidence for the positive influence of organizational identification under conditions of low ambivalence on counterproductive behaviors toward the organization. Possible reasons for non-significant effects on CWB-I and practical implications are discussed.

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Ethical behavior in the workplace has become an important and fruitful topic for organizations and research in the last decade (Basran, 2012). Unethical behaviors have in fact a costly and unpredictable price for organizations (see e.g., Hollinger & Davis, 2002; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001), also in terms of organizational efficiency, compliance with customers, collaboration between members, and employees' efficiency and satisfaction (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Researchers have only recently focused on antecedents and correlates of counterproductive work behaviors (see Marcus, Taylor, Hastings, Sturm, & Weigelt, 2016; Dalal, 2005). The existing body of research has contributed to developing the idea that counterproductive work behaviors are mostly influenced by individual perceptions of stressors or individual reactions driven by stable internal traits, although they are largely considered as the counterpart of organizational citizenship behaviors (Dalal, 2005; Miles, Borman, Spector, & Fox, 2002), which are in contrast mostly associated with contextual and interpersonal factors (Chahal & Mehta, 2010; Harper, 2015).

Consistently, traditional approaches have linked counterproductive work behaviors to dispositional traits such as low conscientiousness, low agreeableness, or high neuroticism (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004), as well as

narcissistic personality (Grijalva & Newman, 2015), or more to negative affectivity trait (Bowling & Eschleman, 2010), and moral disengagement (Fida, Paciello, Tramontano, Fontaine, et al., 2015).

In addition to personality approaches, extensive research has also shown that the presence of stressors at work can trigger a process that leads to counterproductive work behaviors as a result of a stressor-emotion chain (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Spector & Fox, 2002, 2005; see also Balducci, Shaufeli, & Fraccaroli, 2011). From this perspective, counterproductive work behaviors are considered a dysfunctional coping strategy, used when frustrating factors at the workplace provoke negative emotions. As O'Boyle, Forsyth, and O'Boyle (2011) have argued, there is a tremendous majority of research to stay at the individual level of analysis in the area of counterproductive work behaviors, even if they argue that individual dispositions are as influential as situational factors (O'Boyle et al., 2011).

Despite the importance of personality and attitudinal approaches, in fact, there are still few studies that focus on factors that consider the organization a social environment where people's perceptions are a function and result of a shared identity and thus, on which organizations can intervene in a no-blame culture. Aiming to advance a literature that risks accusing individuals of their personalities or inability to cope with stressors in the workplace, we propose a different model that focuses on the person-by-situation effects by examining the interplay between organizational identification and an ambivalent form of disaffection with the organization, namely ambivalent identification.

Building on social identity and self-categorization theory, organizational identification has been conceptualized as a special form of social identity (Ashforth &

Mael, 1989), through which individuals integrate their individual self-definition with the social category they belong to, and the organizational identity becomes part of their self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Organizational identification thus is a relevant aspect of identity-based processes which has been found to be highly motivating (Van Knippenberg, 2000), thus providing the incentive for actions beneficial for the organization. Accordingly, we propose that also unethical behaviors toward the organization should be examined following this perspective - as the flipside of the coin of research that has so far been limited on positive behaviors such as performance and extra-role behavior.

Moreover, we consider equally important a further dimension, namely ambivalent identification, since recent research in this field has expanded the perspective of organizational identification by highlighting the complexity of the attachments that people establish with their organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004: 18; see also Pratt, 2000).

Although there is only very limited research adopting the expanded model of organizational identification, one previous study by Schuh, van Quaquebeke, Göritz, Xin, De Cremer, & van Dick (2016) supports the idea that the combination of organizational identification and ambivalent identification plays an important role in deliberate positive behaviors that benefit the organization (Schuh et al., 2016). More specifically, the authors found that the effect of organizational identification on organizational citizenship behaviors was reduced when employees experienced high levels of ambivalent identification (Schuh et al., 2016).

Conversely, with regard to behaviors that intentionally harm the organization, the expanded perspective on different forms of identification has still to be explored,

and the existing literature on counterproductive work behaviors also shows that the perspective that examines personality and attitudinal variables does not take into account the relationship that employees establish with their organizations. Moreover, Dalal (2005) stated that it is also worthwhile to determine whether the moderators of antecedent-behavior relationships are the same for both counterproductive work behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors, also to clarify their relationship (Dalal, 2005).

One of the most common conceptualizations of counterproductive work behaviors distinguishes between the interpersonal-direction and the organizational-direction, as two different aspects of workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Since they are considered volitional actions that intend to harm organizations and/or organizational stakeholders such as clients, coworkers, customers, and supervisors (Spector & Fox, 2005), the definition includes a wide range of behaviors with different labels, such as theft, sabotage, withdrawal (Spector et al., 2006), and the focus has been set on different levels (e.g., bullying, insulting coworkers; Dalal, 2005). However, consistently with our focus on the two forms of organizational identification as important parts of individuals' self-definition that may drive employees' behaviors, in the present study we refer to the distinction originally proposed by Robinson and Bennett (1995), which include deviant behaviors toward the organization and deviant behaviors perpetrated toward other individuals.

### **Organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors**

Extensive research has investigated the links between social identity and positive behavioral outcomes, such organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g. Bergami

& Bagozzi, 2000; Christ, Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher, 2003; Van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006) and consistently found positive associations. Although several studies also investigated negative outcomes of organizational identification such as absenteeism (Edwards & Peccei, 2010), turnover intention (Iftikhar & Zubair, 2013), or intentions to quit (Marique & Stinglhamber, 2011), little research has investigated the possibility that organizational identification can exert a protective role against behavioral outcomes that can intentionally damage the organization. For example, Ali Al-Atwi and Bakir (2014) found that different foci of identification lead to different types of counterproductive work behaviors. Specifically, they found that organizational identification was negatively related to organizational deviance, and also that the effect of perceived external prestige and perceived top management respect on counterproductive work behaviors directed to the organization was mediated by organizational identification (Ali Al-Atwi & Bakir, 2014).

Also, Vadera and Pratt (2013) proposed a distinction of different typologies of workplace crimes, in which organizational identification plays a major role in their occurrence. Specifically, they proposed that under-identification may lead employees, for example, with low cognitive moral development to engage in non-aligned organizational workplace crime, but also that over-identification may increase the propensity to engage in pro-organizational workplace crime (Vadera & Pratt, 2013). Interestingly, they argue that, in comparison to other concepts such as commitment or person-organization fit, organizational identification is a construct that better adapts to the study of unethical behaviors since it refers to a self-referential attachment to a particular organization, and when employees act with deviant behaviors, they act against their own organization in mind (Vadera & Pratt, 2013).

The evidence reviewed here seems to suggest a pertinent role of organizational identification in explaining counterproductive work behaviors, and the current study aims at extending the application of the social identity approach on contrasting deviant phenomena within the organization. Accordingly, we posit:

*Hypothesis 1: Organizational identification is negatively related to a) overall counterproductive work behaviors, b) counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization, c) counterproductive work behaviors toward other individuals.*

### **Ambivalent identification as a moderator**

We refer to ambivalent identification as a specific form of organizational identification, in which individuals have both a positive and a negative orientation toward the organization they belong to (Ashforth et al., 2014). Specifically, Wang & Pratt (2007) argue that individuals may identify with some aspects of the organization, such as its values but simultaneously disidentify with other aspects. When employees are both highly identified and highly disidentified with their organization, they experience a sort of ambivalent attachment that leads them to have contradictory feelings and cognitions toward the organization (Ashforth et al., 2014, Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

A new analysis and discussion of this construct was recently presented by Rothman, Pratt, Rees, and Vogus (2016), who extend prior work proposing that the effects of ambivalence move over a continuum along the poles of flexibility-inflexibility on the one hand, and a continuum along the opposite dimensions of engagement-disengagement on the other hand (Rothman et al., 2016). Their arguments

highlight two important concerns regarding the effects of ambivalence: first, if people react to ambivalence with more stable and fixed (inflexible) cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, they are more likely to act negatively. For example, van Harreveld, Rutjens, Schneider, Nohlen, and Keskinis (2014) showed that ambivalence led to an increased belief in conspiracy theories and this effect was mediated by the negative emotions elicited by ambivalence. These authors also argued that the experience of ambivalence leads to a sense of loss of control over the situation which, in turn, could trigger negative affective responses (van Harreveld et al., 2014). Secondly, Rothman et al. (2016) argue that the other set of reactions to ambivalence refers to the tendency to move towards (engagement) or away (disengagement) from the object of ambivalence. Previous research, in fact, showed that when people react with distancing themselves, they are more likely to engage in negative behaviors like, such as avoidance of customers, or lower commitment to the organization (see e.g. Bruno, Lutwak, and Agin, 2009; Pratt & Doucet, 2000).

Following the mapping of the effects of ambivalence suggested by van Harreveld et al. (2014), we then argue that if people experience low levels of ambivalence, their attachment to the object and their flexibility to react to contradictory feelings would be stronger because individuals in the “inflexible-disengaged” position may undermine the sense of belongingness and identification with the organization. Since little research was built on the interplay of organizational identification and ambivalent identification (see for an exception: Schuh et al., 2016), we stress the importance of examining the combined role of these two different forms of identification, considering that the expanded model of organizational identification (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) delineates the different nature and the strength of these

attachments (Dukerich et al., 1998), and not only the degree (high versus low levels) of the attachment with the organization (see also Pratt, 1998).

Building on this theoretical perspective and the empirical evidence reviewed above, we argue that organizational identification provides, therefore, a motivation and a valence (positive or ambivalent) that can influence individuals' negative actions directed to the organization, in the present case intentional deviant behaviors. Accordingly, the link between organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors should be more influential when employees experience low levels of ambivalence toward their organization. Thus, we posit:

*Hypothesis 2: Ambivalent identification moderates the negative relationships between organizational identification and a) overall counterproductive work behaviors, b) counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization, and c) counterproductive work behaviors toward other individuals, such that these relations are stronger for employees who experience low ambivalent identification compared to employees who experience high ambivalent identification.*

## **4.2. Overview of studies**

A field study and a scenario experiment were conducted in order to increase the generalizability of our hypotheses and the robustness of our results (see Chatman & Flynn, 2005). In *Study 1*, the survey study, we focused on the negative relationships between organizational identification and overall counterproductive work behaviors, on counterproductive work behaviors directed to the organization, and directed to other individuals (Hypotheses H1a-H1c). We then tested the moderating effect of

ambivalent identification on the negative relationship between organizational identification and overall counterproductive work behaviors, and deviant behaviors toward the organization, as well as directed to other individuals (Hypotheses H2a-H2c). Following the same hypotheses, in *Study 2* we tested the interplay between organizational identification and ambivalent identification in a scenario experiment, where employees were assigned to four different conditions in which ambivalent and organization identification were manipulated in order to replicate the results of *Study 1*. The combination of a field study and a scenario experiment aims to foster the empirical findings, preserving high external validity in the field survey and simultaneously increasing internal validity by manipulating the relevant constructs in the scenario study (Chatman & Flynn, 2005).

#### **4.2.1. Study 1**

##### *4.2.1.1. Participants and procedure*

One hundred ninety-eight German participants (41% students of Psychology who also worked in organizations for at least six months) were recruited to complete the survey. Forty-two were male (21%), 153 female (77%; three participants did not provide this information), and their average age was 28.62 years ( $SD = 8.43$ , range: 18-55 years). Average work experience was 8 years ( $SD = 8.19$ ), average organizational tenure was 3.66 years ( $SD = 4.68$ ), and 20% of respondents had managerial responsibility. Participants were recruited through a social network (76.2% through “Facebook”) or other online platforms (e.g. 11.6% through the German edition of “Psychology today”). They were asked to complete an online

survey on the topic of “behaviors at work”, and they were asked to agree to the consent form before proceeding to complete the questionnaire. The anonymity of the data provided was guaranteed.

#### 4.2.1.2. Measures

*Organizational identification* was measured with the 3-item German short version (van Dick, Nimmerfroh, & Ullrich, 2013) of the scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). A sample item was: “*When I talk about this organization, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'*” ( $\alpha = .93$ ). Participants rated their agreement with each statement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree* ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

*Ambivalent identification* was measured with 3-item the German short version (van Dick, Nimmerfroh, & Ullrich, 2013) of ambivalent identification from the expanded model of organizational identification scale developed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004). A sample item of ambivalent identification was: “*I have mixed feelings about my affiliation with this organization*” ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Participants answered the items on 5-point scales from 1=*totally disagree* to 7=*totally agree*.

*Counterproductive work behaviors* were assessed with ten items translated in the German language from the established scale by Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh, and Kessler (2006). Participants were asked to what extent they would engage in the following behaviors. Three items were deleted to improve the reliability of the scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ). The scale was also analyzed by taking into account two subscales, one including deviant behaviors directed toward other individuals (3-items; CWB-I; sample item: “*Blamed someone at work for an error you made*”;  $\alpha = .56$ ) and one

referring to deviant behaviors directed toward the organization (4-item; CWB-O; sample item: “*Come to work late without permission*”;  $\alpha = .76$ ). Participants rated to what extent they would agree with each statement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 6=*strongly agree*.

Age and gender were included as control variables.

#### 4.2.1.3. Results

To test for distinctiveness of the constructs, we conducted a series of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) which showed good fit indices of the proposed five-factor solution, considering organizational identification, ambivalent identification and one higher-order factor of counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) encompassing the counterproductive work behaviors dimension directed toward the organization (CWB-O) and the counterproductive work behaviors dimension directed toward other individuals (CWB-I). Results of the CFA showed a  $p$ -value of the Chi-Square Test value greater than .001 ( $\chi^2 (61) = 83.127, p = .031$ ), and excellent fit indices (CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .043, C.I. = .014-.064; SRMR = .047), confirming the five-factor solution of the tested model. We also compared this model with a three-factor solution, combining the two dimensions of counterproductive work behaviors ( $\chi^2 (62) = 109.155, p < .0001$ ; CFI = .93; TLI = .92; RMSEA = .062, C.I. = .042-.081; SRMR = .053), and with a two-factor solution combining organizational identification and ambivalent identification into one factor ( $\chi^2 (64) = 259.524, p < .0001$ ; CFI = .72; TLI = .66; RMSEA = .124, C.I. = .109-.140; SRMR = .089), and with a one-factor solution combining all the dimensions together ( $\chi^2 (65) = 495.652, p < .0001$ ; CFI = .39; TLI = .26; RMSEA = .183, C.I. = .168-.198;

SRMR = .152). The Chi-Square difference Test showed significant differences between our model and all the alternative tested models, demonstrating a better model fit for the five-factor solution.

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and zero-order correlations between all study variables are presented in Table 1. In order to test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of moderated regression analyses using PROCESS macro 2.15 (Hayes, 2012) to examine interactions among independent variables. No significant reduction of the variation in counterproductive work behaviors was found considering the direct effect of organizational identification. Specifically, the effect of organizational identification was not significant both considering deviant behaviors toward the organization (CWB-O,  $b = -.08$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .128$ ), as well as deviant behaviors toward other individuals (CWB-I,  $b = .01$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .758$ ), but also considering the overall dimension (CWB,  $b = -.04$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p = .342$ ). The effects of age and gender as control variables also were insignificant in every moderated regression analysis conducted on each dependent variable. Hypotheses 1a-1c were thus not supported.

With regards to the interaction effects, results showed a significant incremental amount of explained variance in overall counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) when the interaction term between organizational identification and ambivalent identification was added ( $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $p = .013$ ). We also found a significant interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification, with significant incremental variance explained in counterproductive work behaviors directed toward the organization (CWB-O,  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $p = .044$ ), but a non-significant model when counterproductive work behaviors directed toward other individuals are considered (CWB-I,  $R^2 = .037$ ,  $p = .368$ ). The significant interaction effects showed the expected

moderating role of ambivalent identification on the identification-deviant behaviors link, both considering the effect on the overall dimension ( $b = .06$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p = .013$ ), as well as for the subscale of deviant behaviors directed towards the organization (CWB-O,  $b = .07$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p = .022$ ).

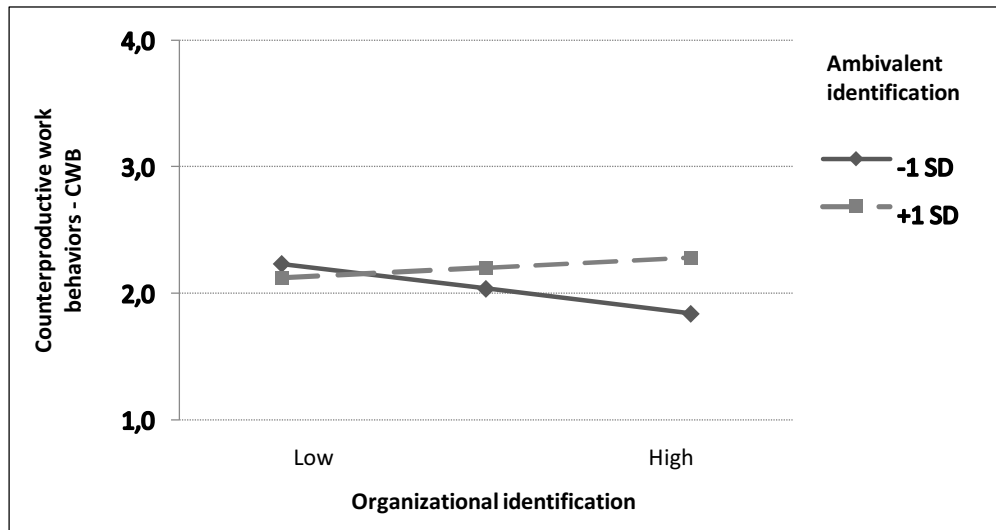
**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations, Alphas coefficients, and Correlations between variables of Study 1.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	28.62	8.43								
2. Work experience	8.00	8.19	.89**							
3. Organizational tenure	3.66	4.68	.65**	.64**						
4. Organizational identification	4.32	1.44	-.07	-.03	.03	(.78)				
5. Ambivalent identification	3.24	1.51	-.06	-.10	-.07	-.32**	(.81)			
6. CWB	2.30	1.00	.03	-.08	-.05	-.12	.10	(.76)		
7. CWB-O	1.77	.78	.02	-.09	-.07	-.14*	.09	.92**	(.76)	
8. CWB-I	2.07	.78	.03	-.03	.01	-.04	.08	.75**	.44**	(.56)

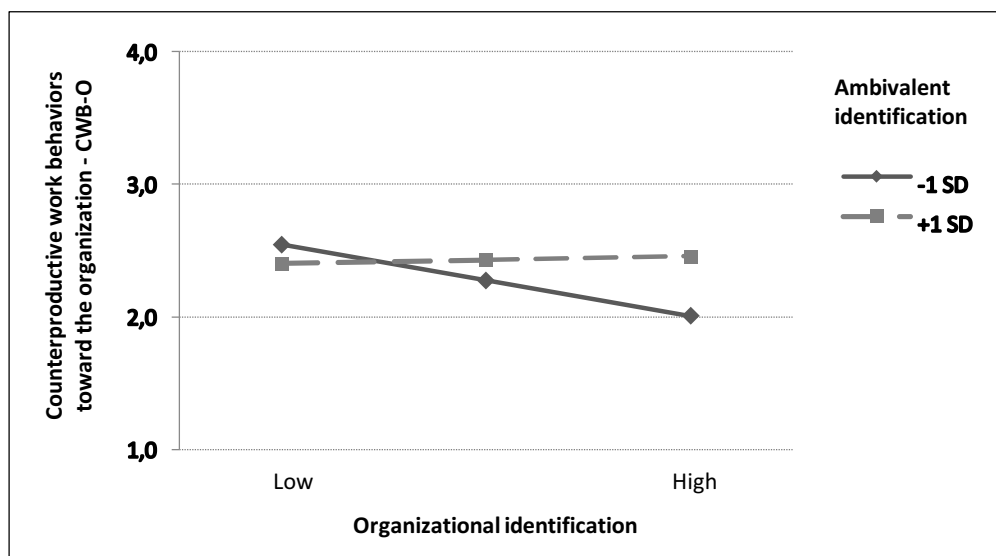
*Note.* \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*  $p < 0.05$ . *M* = Means; *SD* = Standard Deviations; Alpha coefficients are along the diagonal; CWB = overall counterproductive work behaviors; CWB-O = counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization; CWB-I = counterproductive work behaviors toward other individuals.

In order to interpret the interaction effects, simple slopes analyses were conducted at one standard deviation below ( $-1SD$ ) and above ( $+1SD$ ) the means of the moderator variable, according to Cohen et al. (2003). In line with Hypothesis 2a, when the overall scale of counterproductive work behaviors was examined, at  $-1SD$  of ambivalent identification the relation between organizational identification and the dependent variable was negative and significant ( $b = -.14$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .017$ ), but at  $+1SD$  above the mean the relationship was not significant ( $b = .055$ ,  $p = .350$ ) (see Figure 1a). For counterproductive work behaviors directed toward the organization, the simple slopes analysis showed a similar pattern. More specifically, at  $-1SD$  of ambivalent identification the relation between organizational identification and the dependent variable was negative and significant ( $b = -.19$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .005$ ), but at

+1SD above the mean the relation was not significant ( $b = .020, p = .793$ ) (see Figure 1b).



**Figure 1a.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors (CWB, Study 1).



**Figure 1b.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization (CWB-O, Study 1).

## **4.2.2. Study 2**

### *4.2.2.1. Participants and design*

Two-hundred forty employees participated in this study. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (organizational identification: high vs. low) x 2 (ambivalent identification: high vs. low) between-subject design. To recruit employees from a broad spectrum of industries and occupations, we used Amazon Mturk, an online panel that is valid and commonly-used for experimental studies (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; see also Cheung, Burns, Sinclair, & Sliter, 2017). The survey was restricted to employed participants from the USA. We excluded twelve participants because they provided incomplete data or because they failed to correctly answer a reading check (“For this item, please click answer 2”). This resulted in a final sample of 228 employees. Seventy-eight participants were women (38%), the average age was 33.38years ( $SD = 10.16$ ), and the average work experience was 14.55 years ( $SD = 14.39$ ). Participants worked in a wide range of sectors with the most frequent ones being information technology (20%), education (12%), and finance/banking (9%).

### *4.2.2.2. Procedure and materials*

In conducting this study, we used an established design from previous research (Schuh et al., 2016). We invited participants to take part in a study on “behaviors at work.” After reading and agreeing to the consent form, we introduced participants to the description of a workplace situation. We asked them to imagine that they were actual employees in the described situation and to answer all questions with this idea in mind. In line with Schuh et al. (2016), we ensured that our manipulations were as

close as possible to the meaning and content of the definition of the established measure by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004). This approach allowed us to introduce participants to experimental conditions that are similar to the items that can be used in field research, thus fostering a high degree of consistency between the experiment and Study 1. The scenario asked participants to imagine that they were managers in a company called “Duran Paints.” Thereafter, the organizational identification manipulation was introduced. In the *high organizational identification* condition, participants read: “Thinking about your time working for this company, you realize that you strongly identify with it. When someone praises the company, it feels like a personal compliment to you. In fact, you see the company’s successes as your successes. And when someone criticizes the company, it feels like a personal insult”. In the *low organizational identification* condition, the description stated: “Thinking about your time working for this company, you realize that you don’t really identify with it. When someone praises the company, it doesn’t feel like a personal compliment to you. In fact, you don’t see the company’s successes as your successes. And when someone criticizes the organization, it doesn’t feel like a personal insult”.

Next, participants were introduced to the manipulation of ambivalent identification. In the *high ambivalent identification* condition, participants read: “You also realize that you have mixed feelings about the company. At times, you feel torn between both loving and hating the company. Moreover, you sometimes feel torn between being proud and being embarrassed to belong to the company”. In the *low ambivalent identification* condition, the description stated: “You also realize that you don’t have mixed feelings about the company—in fact, your feelings about the company are quite clear. You never feel torn between loving and hating the company.

Moreover, you never feel torn between being proud and being embarrassed to belong to the company”.

#### 4.2.2.3. *Measures*

After reading one of the four scenarios, participants answered the manipulation checks and dependent measures. To examine whether participants correctly read the manipulation of organizational identification, we asked, "According to the description, do you identify with the company?" (yes / no). To check whether they read correctly the manipulation of ambivalent identification, participants were asked: "According to the description, do you have mixed feelings about the company?" (yes / no). We then presented the measure of the dependent variable to the participants. We measured counterproductive workplace behavior with the same 10-item scale and subscales as in *Study 1*. Participants were asked whether they might engage in deviant behaviors at work. The reliability was  $\alpha = .93$  for the overall scale,  $\alpha = .82$  for the subscale of deviant behaviors directed toward other individuals, and  $\alpha = .91$  for the subscale of deviant behaviors directed toward the organization. Participants answered the items on 5-point scales from 1=*totally disagree* to 5=*totally agree*. As in *Study 1*, we controlled for participants' age and gender.

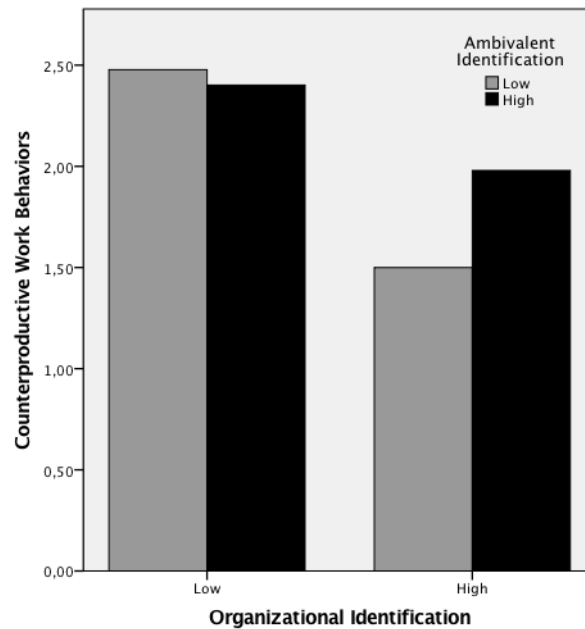
#### 4.2.2.4. *Results*

*Manipulation checks.* To examine whether the manipulations had the intended effects, we conducted two two-factorial logistic regression analyses on the measures of organizational identification and ambivalent identification. These analyses allow for testing the main and interactive effects of the manipulations. For the measure of

organizational identification, we found that participants in the high organizational identification condition were more likely to identify with the organization than participants in the low organizational identification condition ( $b = 3.04$ ,  $SE = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ; 97% vs. 4%). The main effect of ambivalence and the interaction were not significant. For ambivalent identification, results showed that participants in the high ambivalence condition were more likely to report ambivalence than participants in the low ambivalence condition ( $b = 2.38$ ,  $SE = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ; 96% vs. 23%). The main effect of organizational identification and the interaction were not significant. In sum, both manipulations were successful.

*Hypothesis tests.* We conducted three 2 (organizational identification)  $\times$  2 (ambivalent identification) ANCOVAs on the measures CWB, CWB-O, and CWB-I. In support of Hypothesis 1, organizational identification had a significant negative effect on CWB ( $F(1, 222) = 41.193$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .16$ ). Results showed a marginal positive effect of ambivalent identification on CWB ( $F(1, 222) = 3.186$ ,  $p = .076$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ) and a significant effect of age ( $F(1, 222) = 4.064$ ,  $p = .045$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ). In line with Hypothesis 2, we also found a significant interaction of organizational and ambivalent identification ( $F(1, 222) = 7.193$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ). Simple effects analysis showed that when organizational identification was low, the difference in counterproductive work behaviors between participants in the low ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = .85$ ) and participants in the high ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = .93$ ) was not significant ( $F(1, 111) = .335$ ,  $p = .564$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .003$ ). Conversely, in line with Hypothesis 2, when organizational identification was high, participants in the low ambivalent condition reported lower levels of CWB ( $M = 1.46$ ,  $SD = .67$ ), than participants in the high ambivalent condition ( $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = .79$ ), ( $F(1, 111) =$

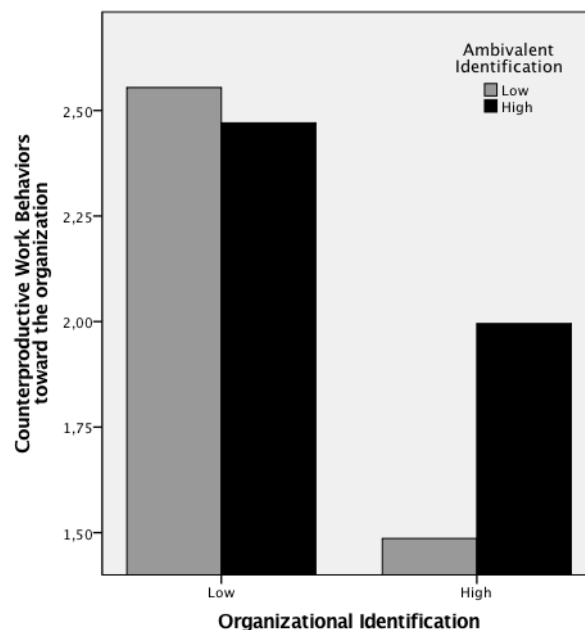
12.543,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ) (see Figure 2a).



**Figure 2a.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors (CWB, Study 2).

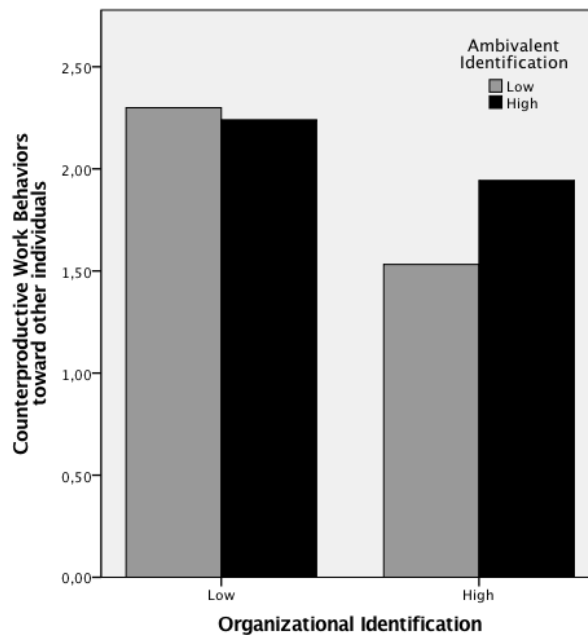
We then conducted the same analyses for CWB-O and CWB-I as outcomes. Consistent with the results for the overall scale, we found that organizational identification had a significant main effect on both forms of counterproductive work behaviors (CWB-O:  $F(1, 222) = 47.265$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .18$ ; CWB-I:  $F(1, 222) = 18.145$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$ ). Moreover, results further showed a marginally main effect of ambivalent identification on CWB-O ( $F(1, 222) = 3.659$ ,  $p = .057$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ) and a non-significant main effect on CWB-I ( $F(1, 222) = 1.399$ ,  $p = .238$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ). Finally, both ANCOVAs indicated a significant interaction of organizational and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors directed toward the organization ( $F(1, 222) = 8.188$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ ), and a marginally significant interaction of

organizational and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors directed toward other individuals ( $F(1, 222) = 3.255, p = .073, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ). Simple effects analysis showed that when organizational identification was low, the difference in CWB-O between participants in the low ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.55, SD = .95$ ) and participants in the high ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.44, SD = .95$ ) was not significant ( $F(1, 112) = .346, p = .558, \eta_p^2 = .003$ ). Conversely, in line with Hypothesis 2, when organizational identification was high, participants in the low ambivalent condition reported lower levels of CWB-O ( $M = 1.44, SD = .68$ ), than participants in the high ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.00, SD = .77$ ), ( $F(1, 112) = 17.073, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .13$ ) (see Figure 2b).



**Figure 2b.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization (CWB-O, Study 2).

We also exploratory conducted simple effects analysis for the marginally significant interaction of organizational and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors directed toward other individuals. Results revealed the same pattern as for counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization: when organizational identification was low, the difference in CWB-I between participants in the low ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) and participants in the high ambivalent condition ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) was not significant ( $F(1, 111) = .174$ ,  $p = .678$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ ). Conversely, when organizational identification was high, participants in the low ambivalent condition reported lower levels of CWB-I ( $M = 1.50$ ,  $SD = .74$ ), than participants in the high ambivalent condition ( $M = 1.92$ ,  $SD = .97$ ), ( $F(1, 111) = 5.523$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ) (see Figure 2c).



**Figure 2c.** Interaction between organizational identification and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors toward other individuals (CWB-I, Study 2).

### 4.3. General discussion

Using an expanded perspective of social identity in organizations, our findings highlighted the protective role of organizational identification on counterproductive work behaviors, which represent negative and costly outcomes both for organizations and for individuals, if we look at CWB as a form of behavioral strain (Fida, Paciello, Tramontano, Fontaine, et al., 2015). Particularly, the combination of organizational identification and ambivalent identification has not previously explored as contributing to the understanding of deviant work behaviors. Our study allows us to conclude that examining the interplay between these two variables may be a fruitful way to explore how to prevent or reduce this negative outcome.

Interestingly, in *Study 1* organizational identification was not directly associated with counterproductive work behaviors, both considering deviant behaviors toward the organization and deviant behaviors toward other individuals. However, also Enns and Rotundo (2012) did not find a significant correlation between group identification and CWB in their survey study, suggesting that a cross-sectional study could be, at least partially, involved in these findings, and this point should be further addressed in future research. In contrast to *Study 1*, in the scenario study organizational identification had a significant main effect on both forms of counterproductive work behaviors – CWB-O and CWB-I – as well as on the overall dimension, confirming our hypotheses and suggesting that further research is needed to figure out this point, ideally a longitudinal study, in order to explore the process underpinning this link.

Consistent with our hypotheses, *Study 1* and *Study 2* largely provide evidence for an interactive effect of organizational identification and ambivalent identification on counterproductive work behaviors. The interaction effect between these two forms

of identification showed that the overall counterproductive work behaviors are lower for highly identified employees but only under the condition of low ambivalent identification. However, if we look at the different aspects of deviant behaviors, separating behaviors that directly harm the organization from behaviors that directly harm individual members of the organization a different and interesting picture emerged: both studies showed the same non-significant pattern when considering deviant behaviors towards other individuals. This could suggest that when the social identification with the own organization as whole is salient, this may not result in a reduction of the intention to harm other members, or, in other words, we cannot expect that a strong organizational identification has a protective role against CWB-I, suggesting that other factors intervene directly in intragroup processes. These findings also indicate that different forms of identification should be explored to distinguish and predict different forms of deviant behaviors, at an individual level - against colleagues or supervisors, or at a group level - ingroup or outgroup, beyond the organizational level that is directly related to the construct of identification that we considered in our study.

Furthermore, both studies confirmed our hypothesis of the interplay between organizational identification and ambivalent identification together as potential influences on counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization. Deviant behaviors that can harm the organization decreased under conditions of high levels of organizational identification and low levels of ambivalence toward the organization, fostering our assumption that the combination of the forms of identification are necessary to avoid unethical behaviors in organizations. In other words, only when the self-categorization as a member of the organization is central and clear, the attachment

to the organization allows employees to express their commitment and willingness to engage in prosocial behaviors (Schuh et al., 2016), rather than deviant behaviors.

Generally, the findings supported our hypotheses that the relationship between organizational identification and people's voluntary behaviors is not simply linear, but it needs to be understood in a wider framework that includes also multidimensional relationships of identification based on conflicting ways to be attached to one's organization. Although in *Study 1* the direct link between organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors was not supported, our results provide support for the moderating role of ambivalent identification. The interplay between ambivalent identification and organizational identification confirmed the idea that a strong and consistent membership in the workplace prevents people from engaging in deviant behaviors. In fact, while previous research focused on positive outcomes of the interplay between organizational identification and ambivalent identification (Schuh et al., 2016), this study investigated the relationships between identification and deviant work behaviors as a negative outcome that can harm the organization, offering also a further contribution to the social identity theory. These findings provide evidence for the idea that the identification has an impact also on negative voluntary behaviors, as a result of the function that a shared identity can exert on people's self-categorization and thus on their actions within the organization.

Despite similar results were found in the field study and in the scenario study, several limitations should be addressed in future research. First, as in *Study 1* the reliability of CWB-I subscale is not totally adequate ( $\alpha = .56$ ), we cannot exclude that an optimal reliability could change the results and therefore this point should be addressed in future research by replicating these findings.

Another limitation of the present research is that, in both studies, we administered self-report measures. Although social desirability could affect the measure of unethical behaviors, the anonymity of the data was guaranteed in order to reduce this effect, as suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). Moreover, the online survey was used in order to reduce further method biases produced by measurement context, such as interviewer characteristics, expectations, and verbal idiosyncrasies, that can threaten measurement validity as in face-to-face approaches (Martin & Nagao, 1989; Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999). Internet-based procedures from outside the laboratory are also demonstrated to induce less distortion of taboo attitudes and behaviors (D. C. Evans, Garcia, Garcia, & Baron, 2003), because of the absence of the researcher and the privacy of the own home. Although external raters are a supplementary medium to self-ratings to evaluate counterproductive work behaviors, a meta-analysis by Berry, Carpenter, and Barratt (2012) support the use of self-reports in most CWB research as a viable alternative to other-reports, since other-ratings capture a narrower subset of CWBs whereas self-raters generally report engaging in more CWB, and because self- and other-report CWB exhibit common correlates with similar patterns and magnitudes of relationships (Berry et al., 2012). Differently, the measure of organizational identification and ambivalent identification reflects individuals' perceptions in nature, and also their assessment is not accessible to external observers (Chan, 2009).

A further limitation of this study is related to the scenario manipulation of identification. Although we were able to replicate the results of the field study, ecological validity should be improved in future research, for example by conducting experiments with established interactions in real organizations, as suggested by Enns

and Rotundo (2012). However, the authors also suggested that in real dynamics the effects might be amplified because the in-group identification might be stronger (Enns & Rotundo, 2012).

The present study also offers implications for practice. First, it is relevant to understand how organizations may reinforce their employees' membership, enhancing a relationship with them that reduce the potential feeling of ambivalence toward the organization. This suggests that in order to avoid undesirable behaviors, organizations need specific strategies to facilitate a sense of belongingness among their members. Consistently, and in line with the social identity approach in organizations (see Haslam, 2004), interventions should be designed not only with the aim of promoting modeling processes, alternative behavioral patterns, or intervening on individuals' characteristics - as social-cognitive approaches generally suggest (see e.g. Fida, Paciello, Tramontano, Barbaranelli, & Farnese, 2015), but also fostering employees' identification with the organization as whole. More specifically, our findings suggest that interventions should be oriented toward two distinct directions: first, paying attention to selectively allocate organizational resources on developing a strong positive identification, for example with strategies oriented to reinforce identification with, for instance, better internal communication climate (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001) or reinforcing long term work relationships by reducing short-term contracts (Johnson & Ashforth, 2008). Second, interventions should also be oriented to reducing potential risks of developing disaffection toward the organization, namely ambivalent identification. By monitoring typical antecedents of ambivalence, like, for example, role conflicts (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), or reducing existing contradictory feelings toward the organization, this increases the possibility that a positive organizational

identification might dissuade employees to act with deviant behaviors in their workplace.

In conclusion, our study both makes a theoretical contribution for the understanding of deviant behaviors from an identity perspective. And it makes an important contribution in offering practical implications for organizations that should invest efforts also in diminishing ambivalence of their employees because it pays off in terms of reduced consequences of individual deviant work behaviors at an organizational level, which can be largely prevented by reducing employees' disaffection to their organizations.

## Conclusions

When we talk about stress and behaviors that directly harm the organization, the individual is generally the key focus of attention in research and the organizational practice. That is, the unit of psychological observation is commonly the individual employee. Work-related stress and behavioral strains are thus examined mostly through individual perspectives, and even when organizational characteristics are considered, it is rarely highlighted that the categorizations the people use and are influenced by are the product of multiple factors - both at the individual level and the organizational level. These categorizations as members of specific social groups (here: the organization and/or parts of it) drive people's feelings, health, and behaviors by influencing their social identity. Accordingly, organizational identification plays a major role in examining individual factors from a social perspective which can offer an interpretation of these phenomena, and also an approach to intervening, allocating more responsibility to the organization to support people in their coping with stress.

Although organizational identification has been widely recognized as a useful instrument to understand employees' behaviors and health (see Riketta, 2005; Steffens et al., 2016), the expanded model of organizational identification has mainly been neglected in scientific research. The contribution of the present dissertation is thus twofold: examining the validity of this extended perspective, and possible applications of this new perspective in organizational contexts.

Accordingly, *Chapter 1* approached this issue by discussing the relevant theoretical framework. Specifically, we proposed the social identity perspective as a viable approach to analyze work-related stress in organizational contexts. Social

Identity and Self-Categorization Theories together provide a powerful framework to the construct of organizational identification as a relevant unit of psychological analysis in organizations. The expanded model of organizational identification is then proposed as complementing and integrating the concept of organizational since the additional forms suggested in the expanded model have largely been neglected in the previous literature - particularly with respect to their outcomes.

Based on the theoretical framework presented in *Chapter 1*, the following chapters present a total of four empirical studies. In *Chapter 2*, we presented a validation study of the scales to assess the expanded model of organizational identification proposed by Kreiner and Ashforth (2004), namely organizational identification, ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification. More specifically, the aim of this study was threefold: first, we examined the psychometric properties of short versions of Italian translations of the scales. Second, we investigated the antecedents of the four forms of the expanded model. Third, we investigated the discriminant validity of the organizational identification subscale with the construct of affective commitment. The results largely supported the construct validity and reliability of the short version in the Italian sample, showing four fundamental dimensions of identification, consistent with the expanded model of identification and the original scales.

The investigation of the antecedents of the four forms were in line with previous research, in particular with regard to the positive associations between person-organization fit and organizational identification, organizational cynicism and disidentification, and role-conflict and ambivalent identification, and the negative associations between person-organization fit and disidentification. Differences with

previous findings concerned the association between reputation and organizational identification and disidentification, and individualism and neutral identification, which resulted not significant in our study, in contrast with the literature (see Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

Results also supported the distinctiveness of affective commitment and the short measure of organizational identification in the Italian sample.

In *Chapter 3*, we focused on an application of the expanded model of organizational identification. The aim of the study was to examine the interactions between organizational identification and the other (problematic) forms of identification in predicting employee strain. We hypothesized that the negative relationship between organizational identification and exhaustion and ego depletion was moderated by ambivalent identification, neutral identification, and disidentification. More specifically, we expected that the link between organizational identification and strain was stronger when the other dimensions were low. Results largely supported the hypotheses and showed reliable interactions for disidentification and neutral identification and marginally significant moderation effects for ambivalent identification.

Following on these results that demonstrated the usefulness of the expanded model in applied contexts (i.e. for the prediction of strain), we conducted two further studies presented in *Chapter 4*. In a field study of 198 German employees and a scenario study of 228 employees in the US, we predicted a negative relationship between organizational identification and counterproductive work behaviors, and a moderation of this link by ambivalent identification. The survey study of German employees revealed a moderating effect of ambivalent identification on the negative

relationship between organizational identification and overall counterproductive work behaviors, as well as on counterproductive work behaviors toward the organization, but not toward individuals - these results were largely replicated in the scenario study.

### *Limitations*

A major limitation of the studies presented in this thesis concerns the use of self-report measures. However, several strategies were adopted in order to reduce potential biases, such as ensuring anonymity of the data and use of online surveys (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Martin & Nagao, 1989; Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999; Evans, Garcia, Garcia, & Baron, 2003). Although external raters are a supplementary medium to self-ratings of psychological aspects, the measurement of the different forms of organizational identification reflects individuals' perceptions in nature, and also their assessment is hardly accessible to external observers (Chan, 2009). Accordingly, self-report scales are considered a viable instrument to measure such constructs. Furthermore, in the chapters 3 and 4, we predicted and found interaction effects which, statistically, cannot be influenced by common method biases typically associated with self-report data, as such biases are controlled for by the inclusion of main effects in the first steps of the regression analyses (Evans, 1985; see also McClelland & Judd, 1993).

Another major limitation of the studies presented was the use of cross-sectional designs. An exception is provided in the scenario study presented in *Chapter 4* which replicates the survey data and gives us confidence in the reliability of our findings. However, future research is desired using longitudinal designs, for two important concerns. First, a longitudinal design allows researchers to establish causal

relationships by holding constant different variables measured on previous occasions. Second, a longitudinal approach could reveal insights into the processes that underpin the development of each form of attachment toward the organization. For example, by exploring mediation effects between antecedents and the problematic forms of identification, the process that leads to the experience of disaffection toward the organization can be better understood and prevented. Similar mediation processes can be examined with respect to the outcome variables. Furthermore, considering that little research has been conducted on the expanded model so far, it may also be of interest to explore how employees' change over time in one form of identification or the other is related to selected aspects of the organizational environment, for example with latent class and latent transition analysis (see e.g. Lanza, Bray, & Collins, 2013).

Although longitudinal studies were not conducted in the present dissertation, data were collected in different regions and countries, and this makes an important insight for future studies that aim to generalize across different cultural contexts. More specifically, for the validation study, we used an Italian sample, but the data were collected from eleven Italian regions in order to increase the sample representativity. Although the short version was administered in previous studies in German (van Dick, Nimmerfroh, & Ullrich, 2013; see Egold & Van Dick, 2015), further research is desired for cross-cultural comparison in other languages. The study presented in *Chapter 3* was also conducted with Italian employees, but the results of the hypotheses with respect to the interplay of the four dimensions of the expanded model showed similarities with the studies of German employees and American employees, in which the interactions between organizational identification and ambivalent identification showed very similar patterns but with regard to different outcomes.

### *Practical implications*

Above and beyond the present dissertation making an important contribution to the validity and the usefulness of the expanded model of identification, it offers insights for organizational practice.

Although primary prevention has obviously the priority in the workplace, it is also relevant to monitor individuals' identification over time in order to intervene, for instance, in environments causing work-related stress. Therefore, a short measure of all forms of identification could be a viable way to investigate a number of different outcomes. When organizations are interested in efficiently monitoring employees' general identification, a brief scale is also useful in terms of time and costs.

Our findings also suggest that interventions should focus on two different aspects: first, organizations should pay attention to develop strategies in order to reinforce a positive identification among their employees, for example by improving internal communication (Smidts et al., 2001) or by reinforcing long-term work relationships and reducing short-term contracts (Johnson & Ashforth, 2008). Second, interventions should also aim to reduce potential risks of developing disaffections toward the organization or contradictory forms of identification, i.e. the more problematic forms suggested by the expanded model. By intervening on specific antecedents of each of the problematic forms of identification, employees are more likely to interact with and benefit from the social context in which they work which - according to our results - helps reducing both strain and deviant behaviors at work.

As discussed so far, managers should be aware of the quality of their employees' identification as a broader concept also comprising the other forms and not only of the strength of organizational identification alone. Thus, understanding the

different types of identification of employees may be crucial to developing more effective interventions and strategies.

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