"Who are We Online?" Changing Perspectives toward Organizational Identity in Social Media Context

Veronica R. Dawson

Abstract

In the last year the conversation about organizing and organizations in digital contexts has seen theoretically valuable additions. This paper presents a contribution to this dialogue, looking at the strict separation between a functionalist, social constructionist, and postmodern perspective on organizational identity in the social media context. Through semi-structured interviews with social media marketing professionals who engage daily in the representation of their organizations online, and the concept of identity work as an interpretive lens, this article shows

Veronica R. Dawson recently completed her PhD in communication at the University of Utah. She is a visiting assistant professor at Weber State University. Correspondence can be directed to veronica.r.dawson@utah.edu.

how the very discourse of organizational identity has changed as a result of the persistent, public, editable, and immediate context of social media platforms. The somewhat rigid theoretical approaches to organizational identity might be conflated in practice.

"Who are we as organization?" This is the question, which defines a social identity theory driven, functionalist based approach to organizational identity. While relevant, the already complex answer to this question has been further complicated by the introduction of various social media in the organizational context. Social media have particularly "affected" the concepts of organizational image, brand, and, by extension, organizational identity. The various platforms of social media used by organizations, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and likely by the time the reader gets through this reading, others, have necessitated different treatment of organizational identity – less functionalist, more constructionist, perhaps postmodern, and certainly discursive. Through an interpretive lens, this paper looks at how organizational use of social media is changing identity discourse as far as representation strategies, image construction, and meaning making are concerned. Interviews with social media marketers and strategists reveal an approach toward organizational identity that is undeniably functionalist, yet social constructionist, and discursive too. This is a view according to which members are hardly distinguished from nonmembers, authenticity and transparency are not ideals, but requirements, and an organization's identity is no longer fully controlled by organizational elite, actor, or rhetorician.

This paper draws on the rich, cross-disciplinary literature on organizational identity and problematizes the adequacy of distinct approaches (functionalist, constructionist, postmodern) to identity in the social media context. The concept of identity work (Alvesson, 1994) is used as a theoretical bridge between the macro perspectives of organizational identity and the micro perspectives of the individuals who work with identity to explain how organizational identity is "done" in the social media context. As Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) suggest, sensemaking is an important piece in any identity narrative, which led toward a qualitative exploration of organizational identity online. Through the responses of eighteen social media professionals, who blog, post, tweet, and pin on behalf of their organizations, I build an argument in which the already arbitrary separation of theoretical approaches or perspectives toward the study of organizational identity might be further complicated by social media and its unique characteristics. Additionally, with the focus on the identity work practiced by social media professionals daily, I emphasize and analyze these people's organizational role, which until recently did not exist.

Literature Review

The timeliness of this study is supported by three assumptions: 1) the recent literature works framed by discursive and narrative approaches to organizational identity online were published in the early to mid 2000s. Facebook, the most widely used social media platform in the world (Yahoo! Finance, 2012) did not exist until 2007 and did not become open to organizational use until 2009. 2) The organizational identity literature spans the fields of

communication, public relations, marketing, organizational behavior, and strategy. Despite their common interest, these fields rarely "talk" to each other due to epistemological differences loosely defined by somewhat arbitrary approaches: functionalist, social constructionist, psychodynamic, and postmodern (He & Brown, 2013). 3) In this study I posit that the organizational identity concept when applied to social media contexts, is not able to support arbitrary separations – its fluidity, flexibility, and complexity expressed in the heavy identity work performed by social media marketers in the current case, is obvious. In taking a more "collaborative" perspective toward the OI concept, I respond to He and Brown's (2013) call for study of organizational identity issues in non-traditional settings. Social media provides an ideal opportunity for blurring the lines between the perspectives to organizational identity and suggests new ways of identity work. Given that the literature connections between social media and organization theory are at this time tenuous and inexplicit, this review is organized to respond to the challenge by proving insight into organization theory, first and identity work in social media, second.

Social Identity Theory and the Functionalist Approach to Organizational Identity

The functionalist perspective of organizational identity (OI) is characterized by its consideration of identity as essential, tangible, and objective (He & Brown, 2013). A well-known definition of OI from this view is as central, enduring, and distinctive (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006), with the combination of all three allowing both members and nonmembers to distinguish

the organization from others. An example of such distinguishing attributes would be the consideration of company logos, mission statements, official histories, and senior executives' speeches as the basis for identity. In a social media context, a clear sense of projected organizational image would be characterized as functional when it is organization-originating (Gilpin, 2010), focusing on elite definitions of brand essence.

Functionalist approaches most clearly appropriate social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986) and its extension, social-categorization theory (Hogg & Terry, 2001) as the basis to their understanding of identity. SIT postulates that individuals base their self-concept on their various group (organization) memberships. Additionally, individuals strive to belong to groups (organizations), which would enhance their self-esteem. By extension, groups strive to attract more members, through the creation and dissemination of a particular image, in order to survive. Social identity theory is in the basis of branding in the age of social media where a sense of group belonging is implicit in the act of "liking," "following," or "pinning" an organization on the various platforms. In this vain, SIT also suggests that organizational membership may not be required for the development of feelings of belonging as demonstrated by studies on customer-company identification (Ahearne & Bhattacharya, 2005; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Social categorization theory post-dates and complements SIT by emphasizing group differentiation between groups rather than in-group similarities. The group prototype is the main construct of the theory, which through social categorization and depersonalization produces social

identity (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Both theories are applied in the context of marketing, branding, and public relations, where differentiation and legitimization are key organizational goals (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; He & Brown, 2013). In these contexts organizational identity is characterized by attempts to situate the organization within given environment and then emphasize strategically selected identity features as a response to environmental cues. Clear articulation of organizational values, as defined by executives, is communicated to the external environment in a reactionary manner (Coupland & Brown, 2004; Cheney & Christensen, 2001; He & Brown, 2013). Such conceptualization of organization identity representation is frequently seen in public relations, where identities are strategized, projected, and managed by someone internal to the organization. Consequently, in this view it is assumed that organizations communicate with one voice and stakeholders have limited access to image construction beyond experience and media representation (Gilpin, 2010).

Organizations must "acquire" a self-referential voice according to the various perspectives on organizational identity, which in turn allows for an organizational "we" to come into existence. Where the perspectives differentiate is in their conceptualization of the origin of organizational voice. Within a functional view, the organization is conceptualized as a "social actor" (Whetten & Mackey, 2002), a self-referential entity moldable under the specific purposes of founders and executives. Recognizing that the organizational voice is a discursive representation of organizational identity is key when considering organizational use of social media platforms to communicate with

stakeholders. It is necessary to point out that recognizing who the social actor is in a social platform setting becomes more challenging too and as a result, organizations such as the National Parks Service mandate that employees posting on behalf of the organization on Facebook identify themselves through initials. The organization as a self-referential, human-like entity is an important concept that resonates within the social media context and through all perspectives on organizational identity presented here.

Social Constructionist Approach to Organizational Identity

The social constructionist view of organizational identity considers identity as a more malleable product of the relationship between collective and individual under-standing of who the organization is, thus allowing for a stakeholder perspective (Corley, Harquail, Pratt, Glynn, Fiol, & Hatch, 2006; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; He & Brown, 2013). It is in this approach where the con-cepts of the organization as a persuasive entity (Cheney, 1983) and identity as a construed organizational image (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994) come through. Both concepts emphasize the relationship be-tween (organizational outsider) society and (organizational insider) member in ways that make sense when looked at jointly. The organization as a persuasive entity and its identity as a result of member perception based on out-sider comments, begin to illuminate the "social" aspect of organizations, which is particularly explanatory in the context of social media.

In the social constructionist approach, the notion of organizational personhood becomes more communicatively

focused: Organizations as persuasive entities or rhetoricians is a communicative concept introduced by George Cheney and based on Kenneth Burke's identity construct in *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969). In its basis Cheney's argument employs Burke's Pentad, consisting of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose, to explicate the complexities of power, influence, and rhetoric in organizational context. The conceptualization of the organization as a persuasive entity, rather than the individual sources within it, requires anthropomorphizing the organization, similar to the concept of the social actor, which in this case is aptly called "the rise of the corporate person" (Cheney & McMillan, 1990, p. 95). The Weberian idea of the organization as a social entity, in which certain forms of behavior and choices are attributed to the organization instead of the people making it up, Cheney's corporate rhetor, and Whetten's social actor all act to produce identity, which is the object of identification among members and nonmembers alike. Member identification in particular is a key element in understanding how the Dutton and Dukerich's concept of construed organizational image works.

Identification is a process intrinsically and consequentially related to identity, of which the organization benefits so much in member commitment and job satisfaction (e.g. Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Glisson & Durick, 1988; Williams & Anderson, 1991), that fostering identification is usually a prime goal of organizational rhetoric (Cheney, 1991; Cheney, 1993; Cheney & McMillan, 1990). Through rhetoric, organizations strive to promote an identity image through external and internal communication (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Although distinguishing between external and

internal organizational communication evokes the old container metaphor for organization, which has been argued and largely discredited (Cheney & Christensen, 2001), I use the differentiation for clarity alone. While it is likely that in a social media world the external-internal dichotomy is less relevant, it does facilitate an understanding of construed organizational image or how member views of who the organization is are affected by nonmember opinions of the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, et al., 1994). The notion of organizational image, more than identity, evokes the idea of public relations and brand management — fields conceived as studying communication relatively external to the organization. Its usefulness in the organization-social media representation realm is in facilitating an understanding of the ways social media comments may affect organizational members and their conceptualization of organizational identity.

The concept of construed organizational image as an example of the social-constructionist perspective engages a shared understanding of what is central, enduring, and distinctive about the organization born out of social interactions (He & Brown, 2013; Kjaergaard & Ravasi, 2011). These social interactions between members and nonmembers include family and friends, acquaintances, customers, vendors, and the media, all of which interpret and build an organizational image based on communication by the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). It is in the essence of interaction that members conceptualize identity as the referent to identify with (the construed image) and nonmembers author organizational identity (the construction of image) (Coupland & Brown, 2004). In this sense, interaction is a key element in the conceptualization of the

constructionist approach, while it also becomes the basis for the postmodern perspective of organizational identity. It is the importance of interaction that is often emphasized in the public relations literature of "how to" organizational social media use – relationship building through continual interaction as a goal and strength of social media platforms (Curtis et al., 2010; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009) that calls for strong associations between the discursive approach and social media.

Postmodern (Discursive) Approach to Organizational Identity

The postmodern approach to organizational identity problematizes the identity concept as central, enduring, and distinct. Thus, the functionalist approaches of management and organizational science view postmodern perspectives to OI as challenging, questioning, emphasizing fragmentation and difference (He & Brown, 2013; Rosenau, 1992), so much so that Gioia (1998) suggests that we acknowledge the postmodern critiques to functionalist approaches and then "for pragmatic reasons actively ignore them" (in He & Brown, 2013, p. 10). Such suggestions are hardly baseless from a pragmatic perspective, since according to a postmodern view, identity is problematized sometimes to a point of rendering it useless (see Baudrillard, 1998). With this said, in terms of organizational identity, the postmodern perspective is associated with language, discourse, plurivocity, and co-authoring, all indicating a shift in power relations from the organization as the rhetor and social actor in charge of identity, to both organizational "insiders" and "outsiders" in charge of identity construction (Coupland & Brown, 2004; Chreim,

2005). It is this shift in power relations that has the most explanatory potential for the organization-social media relationship and its influence on identity processes.

Postmodern research in organizational identity has looked at discourse within policy text, stakeholder letters and addresses, constituent correspondence, and more rarely electronic correspondence, such as emails, websites, and customer feedback (Coupland & Brown, 2004; Chreim, 2005). The goal of past studies exploring organizational discourse, both elite narratives (Chreim, 2005) and employee–customer online correspondence (Coupland & Brown, 2004) is to illuminate the identity work (Loseke, 2007; Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010) going into interpreting the connection between self and organization, and stakeholder and organization. Similarly, in order to theorize on the changing perspectives toward organizational identity, this paper examines the discourse of identity work performed by social media professionals speaking on behalf of their organizations.

Alvesson (1994) introduced identity work while studying the discourse of advertising professionals. What he discovered was that advertisers took on an understanding of the self in terms of the organization. The concept of identity work is important here because it is the process associated with constructing and performing particular identities through interaction (Creed et al., 2010). In the context of this study, it is the social media professionals who interact with stakeholders on behalf of their organization that are engaged in this type of identity performance. Due to the inherent focus on interaction present on social media platforms, the postmodern approach to social media in general has been a dominant one so far.

Identity Work in Social Media Context

Alvesson (1994) introduced the concept of identity work while studying the discourse of advertising professionals. Similarly to this paper, he looked at how advertising agents describe their work, their industry, and the organizations they work for. He discovered that the advertisers in his study had a precarious time constructing professional identities due to the general lack of clear-cut professional path of career development in advertising. As a result of this ambiguity, advertising professionals forcefully assert their expertise in the context of the work they do and the organizations they do it for, suggesting that an assured identity is crucial for success in the field. While Alvesson suggests that the individuals are in charge of the discursive creation of this "assured," professional identity, I contend that the organizations (either employing organization or client organization) advertisers belong to also provide these people with identity-constructing discourse.

Identity work is crucial in the ability to sell one's expertise as marketing and advertising professional — this has already been established by Alvesson's work. However, identity work is often thought of as an internal psychological process of "ongoing mental activity that an individual undertakes in the constructing and understanding of self that is coherent, distinct, and positively valued (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008)." This can be gleaned from Alvesson's early focus on the individual and professional identity discourse. This study focuses on how identity work is carried out in terms of adopting the organizational voice in social media context. Participants in this study are viewed as people who do identity work on behalf not only of their professions, but also largely on behalf of

the organizations they discursively represent online. The discursive representation of organizational identity online and on social media platforms in particular is a relatively new realm of research that helps with clarifying the role of the social media professional.

The few studies that have taken on the subject adopt a postmodern approach to identity and other organizational processes in the new and social media context. For example, Coupland and Brown (2004) made early steps when looking at narrative persuasive and argumentative strategies of online communication between "insiders" and "outsiders," suggesting that the dichotomy is not relevant in the context of an online forum. Despite viewing the organization as a rhetor of sorts, the study clearly problematizes the "official" status of insider posts, explaining that in online forums it is exceptionally difficult to know "who" is in fact engaging in the conversation and whether their message has been sanctioned by management. Coupland and Brown conclude:

> Organizational identities do not refer to a corporate persona or a set of shared traits or beliefs, but are constituted through conversation centered on identity issues. Organizational identities and cognates such as image and reputation are not singular or unitary "things" that can be simply observed and easily measured. Rather, they are emergent aspects of an organization-centered discourse. (p. 1341)

The suggestion that organizational identities are not only discourse centered, but in fact are a product of conversation between a problematized insider-outsider dichotomy is a main contribution of Coupland and Brown's

(2004) work. However, their study was written before Facebook and social media, as we know them today, came about in 2007 and as a result does not explore that context empirically. The challenges to identity presented by the structure and procedures established by these new media forms of organizational connection with itself and its environment remain unexplored from an organizational communication perspective. This study suggests that one way of exploring this novel area is by focusing on the individuals who are in charge of the organizational presence online and its discursive management.

The field that has been primarily engaged in the research of non-identity specific organizational use of social media is public relations. Out of this work, the research of Tom Kelleher stands out as most communicatively oriented. Kelleher and Miller (2006) and Kelleher (2009) are particularly interested in the organization, as a "conversational human voice" in weblogs (blogs). Kelleher and Miller (2006) apply interpersonal communication framework to their study looking at organizational blogging as relational maintenance strategy. Building and maintaining relationships through social media, such as blogs and Twitter, is the focus of other public relations oriented studies as well (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011; Sweetser, 2010). Kelleher's (2009) approach to organizational use of social media expands on the pragmatic view introduced in the 2006 article, elaborating on the relationship building and maintenance aspects of organizational blogging through the assertion that "those reporting greatest exposure to the blogs in this study were more likely to perceive the organization as communicating with conversational voice" (p. 172). Kel-

leher's concept of conversational voice is theoretically valuable to this research, because this research focuses on the individuals who "take on" the organizational voice online to represent an organization's identity.

In order for organizations to take on identities, conceptualizing the organization as a self-referential entity that can act, persuade, and speak polivocally is a necessary step. Due to its macro focus, the OI literature has predominantly focused on the "we" of organizations as in: "Who are we as an organization?" This makes sense because as OI scholars are interested in how the organization as a self-referential entity constructs this collective "we." In this sense, social media platforms present an interesting challenge: the organization is the social actor on social media platforms, but there is an individual taking on that voice, taking on the organization's identity in effect, and posting on its behalf. It is this identity conundrum that is of interest in this study and the role of the social media professional can be enlightening when it comes to understanding it. Additionally, the complex relationship between individual and organization identities present in the context of social media suggests that the very concept of organizational identity has attained another level of fluidity that necessitates a more open perspective toward the traditional functionalist, constructionist, and postmodern views on OI. Hence, the two research questions guiding this study are the following:

> RQ1: How do the social media professionals in this study discursively construct identity work?
> RQ2: How may this discursive construction alter perspectives on organizational identity in the context of social media?

Study Details and Methodology

This paper is based upon data acquired through semi-structured interviews with social media professionals from various organizations in an urban area of the Rocky Mountains region in the United States. Social media professionals are broadly defined as the people who provide social media strategy for organizations and/or write social media content on behalf of organizations. The social media professionals in this study came from organizations that did social media on their own (in-house) and marketing agencies that did social media for client organizations. A goal of this study, reflected in participant selection, is to generally describe what is going on in the space of organizations and social media when it comes to identity, and more specifically, investigate if and how the somewhat rigid theoretical approaches to organizational identity might be conflated in practice.

The selection of research method is also supported by the study's goal of uncovering what is a story in the organizational identity – social media context. The study approach was devised with the realization that few definitions exist when it comes to organizational identity in the social media space, thus making a goal of accurate operationalization and measurement unfeasible. On another hand, a qualitative approach incorporating the benefit of in-depth participant insight might be beneficial in the early delineation of concepts and definitions that would be useful in succeeding studies (Creswell, 2007).

Hence, this study focuses on the interpretations and meaning making strategies of a particular group of participants, social media marketing professionals, who were expected to speak into identity questions from organ-

izational point of view. Individual sensemaking is an important part of the identity process (Ashforth, et al., 2008), making an interpretive methodology ideal for understanding what is a story here (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). The participants were recruited from variety of organizations and variety of industries – advertising, healthcare, market research, retail, and manufacturing. All participants were engaged with social media work for their respective organization. The initial sample of interviewees was purposive and recruitment was conducted during monthly meetings of a local social media club where professionals gathered to discuss current trends and issues in the world of "social." From the total of 18 participants, 10 were female and 8 were male, with an average tenure in marketing of 4.5 years.

Data were collected via digitally recorded, semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at different locations convenient for the participant (not at the club meetings). Each of the 18 interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. The semi-structured form of the interviews allowed for variety of answers – from direct answers to the question asked, to spontaneous stories and interpretations provided by the participants. The interview questions were organized in the following manner:

- introductory (i.e. Why should an organization use social media? What are the drawbacks if any?);
- pertaining to individual perceptions of organizational identity (i.e. Can you describe what makes your organization unique from other organizations in the same field of business?);
- pertaining to collective perceptions of organiza-

tions identity (i.e. Who speaks on behalf of your organization – the organization or the individuals?);

- pertaining to legitimacy of identity claims (i.e. Have you experienced a situation where your organization has been challenged through social media? Probe: Tell me more about it); and

- pertaining to organization-stakeholder identification (i.e. Why do you think people choose to "follow" or "like" an organization on social media?).

The 18 interviews resulted in 234 single spaced pages of transcribed data, which were imported in the qualitative analysis software Nvivo v. 10 for analysis. Nvivo is software that allows for the organization, coding, querying, and arranging of qualitative data electronically instead of manually. The collected data were analyzed following steps inspired by Tracy's (2013) version of iterative approach, alternating between existing theory and research interesting on one hand, and emergent qualitative data on the other. Aligning with Tracy's method, the analysis began with the identifying of first-level codes (very basic, describing behavior or stand out, interesting words, such as "vulnerability"), a constant comparative method in coding and analysis, "reading" for themes began from the start of the interview. Field notes taken during the interviews accounting for location, non-verbal behavior, and general perceived attitude of the participant toward the interview topic were also uploaded to Nvivo where they were coded and analyzed in the context of the emerging themes. From first level to second level, a total of 75 distinct codes were generated. During hierarchical

coding, some of these codes were grouped under "umbrella" codes such as "organizational identity," "identification," "transparency," and "governance." Conceptually-related themes began to emerge almost immediately, which greatly facilitated the coding process from the beginning of the interviews. The results described below are focused on the research questions asked in this paper and do not encompass all themes, codes, and theories identified in the larger study.

Findings

Similarly to the advertisers in Alvesson's (1994) study, the participants in this paper constructed their own identities not only though professional identification, but also through identification with the organization they represented online. It should be noted that as a result identity work becomes an overarching theme throughout the results, which will be addressed with every theme. The themes presented below are of the "appropriate" organization, the structured organization, the organization with a human face, the storytelling organization, and the community-oriented organization.

Working "Appropriateness"

When it came to how their organizations used social media, "appropriate" communication was on the minds of the participants. Stories, now turned mythical, of foiled public relations attempts by organizations using social media platforms were easy to recall throughout every conversation. There was mutual understanding across participants that one had to be "careful," "smart," and "professional" about what went on social media both in re-

spect to the possibility of putting the organization in bad position with its stakeholders (friends and followers in social media terms), and in respect to too much promotion. In fact, the danger of overly promoting one's organization seemed to outweigh otherwise inappropriate content. Participants took the folly of too much promotion as seriously as one would take the violation of any social contract, in this case between the organization and the stakeholder. Yet they understood appropriate communication in terms of dialogue with stakeholders, not issue management, which is usually emphasized in the public relations literature. The participants of this study did not elaborate on the issue management aspect even though most of them had dealt with some kind of problematic customer feedback situation, which had to be taken offline to resolve. Mostly, social media professionals were insistent that their professional expertise resulted in "appropriate" communication online.

In line with previous studies on identity work (Alvesson, 1994), professionalism and expertise were immediately recognized as the legitimate routes to "appropriateness," suggesting that if one did not possess the expertise of a social media professional, appropriate content would not as easily make it on social media. At the same time, what participants considered appropriate was also organizationally defined: relational content mixed with subtle promotion were organizationally defined parameters of appropriateness for social media communication, which professionals heavily adopted in their professional discourse. Organizationally dictated discourse adoptions such as these remind of the controlling function of identity brought up by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) in a

critical perspective of identity work.

Questions about why organizations use social media generated rather functionalist, profit-focused views toward the medium. Social media as a tool for subtle promotion, yet not for straightforward marketing, was a balance professionals had to find for themselves, often struggling between ideas of what they thought was the correct approach vs. the organizationally or industry-dictated approach. The "promotion mix" participants talked about also consisted of appropriate engagement with the organizational "outsiders." Outsiders are defined here as social media stakeholders who were obviously not part of the participant's organization. The strong emphasis on interaction and dialogue with stakeholders did not ring the functionalist bell that an emphasis on promotion suggests, but rather, it offers a more discursive view of the organization. For example, one of the cited goals of organizational social media use was "trust building." One way, in which the participants of this study performed trust building, was by never deleting negative comments from followers.

In the sense of earlier mentioned issue management and trust building, negative comments have a special place in the social media context. For example, Jake, a social marketer for a health organization, mentioned a person complaining about a recent doctor experience via Facebook.

> Interviewer: So, what do you do with negative comments? I have heard that it is a big no-no to delete those.
> Respondent: Yeah…hm, well, I always respond. I mean the code of business is that you should always respond. It is an opportunity to show your customer, the community, that you can handle tough situations and

provide customer service. But then, I try to
take these conversations offline…
I: Can you elaborate more on this?
R: Recently we had a guy from X City who
had a bad experience with a doctor from our
hospital. He went on Facebook and started
posting negative comments, not one, not
two, but a few… and, you know, it didn't
matter what I said, he just wouldn't accept
it. So, I asked for his contact information
and called him personally. Then… we have
customer service people who take over, but
the key is to not let this negative stuff go on
for too long on Facebook. Yet, you want to
show that you can handle it too.

The acknowledgement that "there is always the
possibility of an angry customer" that could be "lying" or
"exaggerating" suggests an identity threatening experi-
ence, which has an organizational and individual side.
From the quote it is clear that negative comments are han-
dled by organizational structures differently than positive
ones. By taking negative comments offline, organizations
attempt to control identity representation in a context
where control is not inherent. Personally, negative com-
ments appear to be a challenge for the participants. "You
want to show that you can handle it too," is a conclusion
that reflects on the organization as much as it reflects on
the individual and his professionalism and expertise. Pre-
senting the organization and the self as someone who "can
handle it" is an essential trust building strategy not only
externally for the stakeholder, but also internally, for the
organization and professional. In other words, how one
deals with negativity online in an appropriate manner is
both an organizational and professional matter reflecting

not only on the organization's identity and image, but also on the professionalism and expertise of the person working that identity. This identity work is usually organizationally supported (or controlled) by a code of business, guidelines, or "social media governance."

Working the Governance

The existence of a code of conduct, a guidance document, written or not, seemed to contain the rules of interaction and the rules of "being" a social media professional. Some thought that having a posting policy defied what was essential about social media, its immediacy, yet most participants took an organizational perspective as representatives and rationalized the use of "social media governance" as something that ultimately facilitates and controls identity work. For example, Matt, who owns his company and deals with business-to-business sales, expressed that the presence of posting guidelines feeds into the perception of his company's responsibility toward its clients. His clients weren't just customers, he said, they were people like him and he could not afford to treat them any differently than the way he treated his own business. Despite the fact that Matt's sensitivity toward governance and policy may have been heightened because of his hierarchical position, the notion of feeling personally responsible for the success or failure of a social media post echoed among participants. This responsibility clearly connected to the sense participants felt for their own expertise on the job.

In addition to defining do's and don'ts, the code compiled through the interviews included information on what platforms of social media are appropriate for one's organization. As explained by few of the participants,

platform choice had a lot to do with identity representation and vulnerability, suggesting an interesting mix of viewing identity as a control mechanism and something that is exposed to any kind of public interaction. Scott and Orlikowski (2012) in work on the material impact of social media on organizations, characterize social media as persistent, editable, public, and immediate. They suggest this set of characteristics may have direct consequences to organizations and organizing. Similarly, the code defined the parameters of interaction and whenever it did not exist organizationally, the professionals created it, speaking of general practices, dos and don'ts, and "rules of engagement." A set of more or less conventional practices also defined identity work for participants. One such practice was the selection of strategic platforms for identity representation. Further, platforms were frequently seen as statements of identity. For example, Pinterest was the most prized platform for an organization that frequently pinned recipes featuring its products.

> Pinterest has had such great success for us. I mean, we basically own Pinterest (laughs). Our following there is so big, and we get so much engagement – it has literally made my work a breeze. I enjoy, you know, I enjoy being on Pinterest and pinning cool stuff, you know, on behalf of <organization name>. I mean it has become who we are. And my job is to maintain that and to, kind of, work it, you know (laughs). – Mary, social media strategist and writer

In this quote by Mary we see the impact platform choice and strategy seems to have on how organizations and their representatives see themselves. Pinterest's activity has become the definition of success not only for her organization, but also for Mary as a professional. This be-

comes even more evident in contrast to her admitting later on that Twitter has been as disappointing as Pinterest has been successful. We can see that for her company featuring product are an important part of brand identity, which is best displayed on Pinterest rather than Twitter. So, according to Mary, the organization owned Pinterest, they had become that kind of company (that pins "cool stuff" on boards) and Mary's job was to manage this form of expression.

Ultimately, however, governance was spoken of as an attempt to control something that was uncontrollable. As David, a social media strategist said with a shrug: "It is your audience, the audience you think that you are talking to, and then, there is everyone else and they can all see you." Thus, having a strategy for a structured response to difficult comments when necessary was seen as a positive. Yet governing guidelines were sometimes dysfunctional, because participants noted, one of the big professionally agreed upon benefits of social media was the possibility for organizations to acquire a voice and a "human face" in no way similar to other media available to them. Too much organizational structure was perceived to stand in the way of doing that kind of identity work.

Working the Human Face

Humanization of the organization is a requirement in order to conceive of organizations as having identities – hence the widespread use of concepts like the social actor, the corporate persona, and the corporate rhetor. The anthropomorphization of corporations is often interpreted as problematic in more critical approaches to organizational identity and is frequently linked to the subtle promotional

efforts typical for social media platforms. Indeed, participants talked about the "value" associated with having a "human face:" making organizations something that people could relate to and hence, euphemistically, "support." Yet the precise value of humanizing the organization was not something anyone could put a number on. In fact, the issue of measuring value exemplifies the complicated relationship between the perspectives on organizational identity in the social media context. All participants were concerned with the uncertain return of investment of social media use, especially when it came to emphasizing social media's benefits and the social media professional's job to organizational leadership. This concern generated a widespread preoccupation with data generation, analysis, and presentation. While among the interviewees the value consisted in being a "friend" to the customer and building a community of "friends," it was exceptionally difficult to translate this postmodern value into functional terms to be measured. Additionally, the desire to connect in a community, typical for social networking media, was not without its sticky and tricky points itself – as Patrick, a social media strategist, noted:

> How can you be friends with a customer and charge them a late fee if they don't pay their credit card on time? Friends do not charge friends fees! The same goes for paying for shipping when ordering stuff online. If we are friends, you can eat the $5 for shipping. But you know, not all companies offer free shipping… I think they should, if they want to be Facebook "friends" (Patrick gestures air quotes here) with their customers…

Being human presented at least two different chal-

lenges for organizations as interpreted by their representatives: 1) as seen in the quote above, being Facebook "friends" with a customer changed the social contract and redefined what is expected and what is acceptable, especially on part of the stakeholder; and 2) being human required an altogether different voice and conceptualization of what it means to be any given organization. Additionally, the human face phenomenon falls explicitly on the social media professional's work list. Adopting a corresponding organizational voice was the sole task of the participants in this study who saw successful "human" representation as central to their performance as social media experts.

Identity work was nowhere more explicit than when "adopting the organizational voice" – a task that defined social media professionals as such. The fluidity of identities is staggering here, expressed by David in the following description of how he goes about doing his job: "You have to know your organization, then you have to know your audience, what they want, who they want you to be, and then you become that, you become that voice online."

Becoming the organizational voice, the human face, without a human face, but a brand logo, was the crux of identity work performed by social media professionals. Its difficulty stemmed partially from the task itself, which assumed also high and frequently displayed levels of organizational identification, viewed by participants was prerequisite for a job in social media, suggesting an interesting mix of identifications in this context.

The adoption of a human face and a distinct organizational voice led to concerns with identity vulnerability,

both for organization and individual, generating an all too human unease of "revealing too much" when "too much" had no definition. The "human face" was also a space of organizational identity and brand concentration, which had to be managed carefully to remain acceptable for a wide variety of stakeholders. For example, Anna, a social media writer, talked about the human face of her organization, specializing in medical products for outdoor recreation use, in terms of providing fun and exciting adventure sport and travel content for its followers. She explained that one challenge for her company, and her as a writer, was alienating people at various expertise levels. Some of the social media might appear "too hardcore" and only relate to its most dedicated friends and customers.

Creating an organizational human face is a balancing act, in terms of functionality and discourse, and in terms of identity appeal. Organizations have multiple audiences for whom they frequently create different identities. This multiplicity of organizational identities and audiences was extensively noted by Cheney (1991) and posited to be one of the most challenging conditions of being an organization. While most individuals understand that everyone cannot like them, organizations seem to struggle with this concept in the context of the social media "like." A plausible explanation here consists in the impossible task to control the intent and identity of the individuals engaging with an organization's social media identity. In this sense, social media may be an excellent way of constructing a human, friendly view of the organization, while also being a respectable face-threatening venue. Maintaining this precarious balance is left up to the expertise and identity juggling of the social media professionals.

Working the Authentic Story

Story telling and representing authenticity, two emerging themes from conversations, were seen as ways of managing identity-threats (negative comments) online. Yet, at first storytelling and authenticity did not appear connected. Storytelling seemed to have more in common with promotion, while authenticity was linked with appropriateness. However, in the context of humanizing the organization, the telling an authentic story becomes important as a face-saving tool. The connection between a good story and organizational authenticity is intrinsic in social media context. It is also a good example of an unlikely connection: a discursive approach to identity in the form of a story and narrative, and functional approach to identity in terms of authenticity and promotion.

Good storytelling is a goal and a tool of all marketing and advertising campaigns, but social media seems to demand more from the organizations represented there. Because of the emphasis on engagement, the stories have to be meaningful beyond a sales pitch. The authenticity of the company has to shine through every story, and a story is told in 140 characters or less (as on Twitter). Because it is not easy to tell a story in 140 characters, images, videos, hyperlinks, music, posts by other companies or people connected to the organizations, were often used to relate a story as well. Social media in essences encapsulated the emotion and passion of a brand and the organization behind it; the social media professionals felt a sense of pride and passion about this work.

> In my opinion, the best way to relate to people on social media, as a brand, is through video. Through video you can express so much passion and you evoke so much passion, and passion, passion for the

brand and the story behind the brand is what social media is all about. – Jeremy, social media strategist and writer

The rules of storytelling are intertwined with the rules of promotion and advertising according to the quote above. This is not a surprising mix, yet it is one that so far has become a specific one to social media organizational representation. The emphasis on passion and emotion throughout the interviews was overwhelming and can be connected with the focus on relational communication that is typical for the social networking context. The generation and communication of passion about an organization and its brand online with the daily consistency of social media platforms rested on the shoulders of social media professionals. The representation of passion along with the adoption of organizational voice was another intensive identity work item on the list of job requirements.

Working the authentic story of brand has clear Goffmanesque traces, in a sense that good storytelling online reminded of performance, with backstage and front stage aspects. For example, the performance of emotion by the social media professional is one that requires careful coordinated preparation and planning on behalf of certain organizational departments (marketing, customer service, sales), but none of this is visible to the stakeholder on social media. Being able to remain passionate, yet also calculating and data driven is a performance challenge for social media professionals – one that requires feelings of belonging, membership, loyalty, and pride (suggesting organizational identification), but also one that participants reported "is part of the job" and "supposedly, can be faked"

in the online context. The idea that identity and identification especially are performative processes evokes communicative and constitutive associations to postmodern notions of narrative.

Jake in healthcare described the role of the story he told online as an important aspect of social media because it "invites outsiders in." Jake defined "outsiders" as the people who did not work for his organization and may have never even heard of it before. Even in its fragmented ways, consisting of short posts, reposts, sharing links, and videos, the social media content worked out by the participants became the story of their organization. Echoing the backstage/ front stage element of social media representation, social media storytelling was both fragmented and continuously planned, suggesting a peculiar mix of postmodern narrative and promotion and data focused functionality. Additionally, the story of the organization had to be created and consistently recreated by writers in an ongoing message for 24 hours a day.

The narrative identity of organizations is often told in stories, but in social media there appears to be a twist about whose identity exactly gets told. As suggested by perspectives on OI, it can be the creation of the elite, all organizational stakeholders, and a relatively consistent identity may not even exist, suggesting a volatile mix of multiple identities in continuous flux. One of the participants, Matt, related personal and organizational identities through social media saying that he, as the owner, was the persona behind his organization and the social media image he chose to create through his content — his personal identity influenced the organizational. In a different way Jake describes that his own identity is "irrelevant at all

times when I work, I am here to do a job," suggesting an almost a lack of agency in representation. Overall, in the discussion of individual and organizational perceptions of self and identity, the participants put their professional hats on, performing an utmost example of identity work. In interviews, the professional marketer persona did not come off, it only seemed to become even stronger when the questions teasing out organizational identity came up.

Descriptions of organizational identity and branding were brief, clear, and rehearsed. Patrick began answering my question with: "That's easy – I tell this to clients all the time – <organization name> is an easy one to identify, <organization name> is a direct response company. Our new thing… our new way to summarize our offering is 'response branding.'" Jake said: "We are the only academic healthcare organization in the region." Jeremy noted that his organization and brand were about "a lifestyle with zero limits," and so on. The stories emerging from these identity statements were passionate, rehearsed performances, aimed to conceal coordinated planning behind casual conversation about an origin story that repeated itself over and over online.

Working the Boundaries and Creating Communities

As reported by participants, the ultimate goal of organizational presence on social media is community creation and engagement. All themes and theme characteristics culminate in the idea of community. As one social media strategist explained: "If you are not providing a community oriented material on your social media platforms, get off of there. Social media is made for community engagement." Another adds: "The goal is not to promote,

but humanize, put a face on the organization and make people smile… Provide advice and useful information…. The value is in pulling them in." This focus on drawing people in and creating a community around an identity explains why storytelling and authenticity are so important for an organization's identity in social media contexts.

Social media marketers may be the ultimate, self-described boundary spanners functioning in organizations today. Boundary spanning is a term used to describe the activities of employees who face outside of the organization and link the organization with its external environments (Bartel, 2001). Systems theory driven, boundary spanning assumes that organizational boundaries exist (playing on the organization as container metaphor), but can be extended and are permeable. However, the discursive aspects of an organization, especially in the context of social media, pose a theoretical question about the existence of organizational boundaries at all. To gauge whether social media plays a role in deconstructing the organizational container, participants answered a question about the role of social media in boundary spanning.

One social media writer explained that his organization's boundaries were "expanded" by social media through the engagement of people who would "never be within my organization's boundaries." He added that this includes people who follow his Twitter feed that are nowhere close to the state where his organization operates or know much about it. Through advice and useful information, the writer's goal in social marketing is not only to bring people in, but to also let them tell their own story through comments, re-tweets, and re-posts. In this way, the story of his organization becomes intertwined with the

stories of stakeholder who have been "pulled in" within a virtual, but not physical boundary. In relation to organizational boundaries, participants clearly saw themselves as the agents taking those off and away – their organizations were in that sense, boundary-less.

For example, the boundary is fragmenting, flexing, even disintegrating, when it comes to Matt's comments regarding "the year of the drop." The year of the drop indicates the time when we "drop" the word "social" from media, because all media has become social. In Matt's organizational worldview there were no boundaries beyond the office walls, which he himself claimed not to frequent too much. His company existed virtually and he found most social value in their website's feedback area where he saw a community emerging in the form emails and comments about his organization's products and offerings. And while the social is still part of "social media" today, most of the media has indeed become a lot more social, an opinion also shared by Julia, who used to work in print journalism and moved on to social recently. She decided to leave her journalism job for social media marketing because,

> "I saw myself doing the job of a social media marketer as a journalist! Most of my day was spent reading the comments, these long conversations that happened below my articles… And honestly, I was more interested in that conversation…"

The community participants aimed for came out of a continual conversation about the organization's identity and voice on social media. This conversation, as interpreted by the participants in this study, has peculiarities

specific to social media. It is confirming and disconfirming of identity. It contributes to a strong sense of vulnerability and exposure, but also to a sense of boundary-less freedom. The ongoing talk on organizational social media creates a story of its own, a contested human face with authentic voice governed by written and unwritten rules and not quite yet existent definitions. At the helm of it all stand individuals who speak on behalf of their organizations with passion and pride that comprise a peculiar sense of organizational identification. For social media professionals, this is work and in its basis, it is the work of an ongoing organizational and individual identity discourse.

Discussion

The three perspectives on organizational identity were found to exist simultaneously in the discourse of social media professionals, strategists and writers whose job is to create the organizational social media content and thus *be* the organization online. The very role of the social media professional as a self-described organizational voice suggests an interesting twist on identity work, a concept that first originated in the discourse of advertisers (Alvesson, 1994). As a concept, identity work has an interpretivist slant, and stands alongside social identity (functionalist) and identity control (postmodern) as conceptualization of identity in organizations (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008). "Identity work" is particularly useful, because it describes what social media professionals do on behalf of their organizations, while also empha-

sizing that what they are doing, is discursive – they are creating and learning the practices of organizational representation on social media, defining and redefining the norms of governing and controlling identity online, adopting organizational voices, telling brand stories, spanning boundaries, working the organizational identity.

Similarly to Alvesson's (1994) identity worker, the social media professional works a unique blend of professional and organizational identity discourse, establishing both a social identity and a controlling organizational identity in the process. In the findings this is repeatedly seen in the discursive struggle between what one knows is professional discourse as a social media expert (focusing on relationships, engagement, community, and being human) vs. what one knows is preferred organizational discourse (focusing on promotion, data, measurement and return on investment). This study finds what Watson (2008) calls a disconnect between the "internal" personal identities and "external" social identities of social media marketers – this is evident when participants described storytelling on behalf of the organization as a place where individual identities do not belong.

Taking on the organizational voice and in effect, identity, online was perceived as the utmost task of social media professionals – their job becoming about *being* the organizations they represented. Taking on these identity discourses in interaction with stakeholders is in the very definition of identity work, in fact, appropriating an organizational identity *can be work in itself* (Hedges, 2008). It is through this work that we glean organizational identity

from various perspectives – functional, constructionist, and postmodern. While all three perspectives acknowledge that in order to conceive of organizations as having identities, we must also conceive of them as somewhat anthropomorphized, they differ in where they place the agency of identity construction. In the discourse of social media professionals, organizational identity is the creation of multiple agencies.

In the discourse of appropriateness and governance we are able to identify voices of the elite, the organization itself defining the norms and desired results of social media interaction. In the same vein, the entire process of identification, closely related to identity work (Hedges, 2008) is driven by the organization to a point that social media professionals interpret identification as a job requirement beyond expertise. Simultaneously however, the participants of this study take on the organizational voice and interact on behalf of the organization with a variety of stakeholders. Beech (2008) suggests that the performance of identity work is fundamentally interactive and this interaction influences the meaning-making processes of individuals. Identity, organizational and otherwise, is always somewhat socially constructed, emphasizing the role of social interaction. And lastly, participants saw authenticity and storytelling as the defining elements of "who" an organization is on social media. The emphasis on organizational narrative here and the focus on building communities through it suggest a postmodern view of the organization where boundaries are flexible and permeable, and a distinction between outsiders and insiders becomes diluted

in discourse (Coupland & Brown, 2004).

Limitations, Future Directions and Conclusion

As all research, these findings have several limitations, which suggest opportunities for future research. First, results are based on interview data rather than posted content on social media or observed communication of social media professionals. Although sensemaking comprises important piece of identity narratives (Ashforth, et al., 2008), future research could explore active decision-making processes of social media professionals' work practices, supplementing the interviews with posted content data.

Second, the participant sample was somewhat limited in that it included social media professionals from the same geographic region and the same professional club, suggesting that the responses shared a similar perspective on social media and organizational identity. In the future, especially considering the rapidly changing social media landscape, larger scale and/ or longitudinal studies of identity work and changing practices would be appropriate.

Larger scale studies or ones collecting interactional data off social media would benefit from a quantitative data collection and analysis that can handle the large amount of data generated by social networking platforms.

In conclusion, theorizing on organizational identity within organization studies and communication has traditionally taken one of three perspectives on identity – functionalist, social constructionist, and postmodern/ discursive. The qualitative data collected from eighteen inter-

views with people engaged with organizational identity representation in a social media context suggest that organizational identity is perhaps best viewed as an intricate combination of all three perspectives. This argument is well demonstrated in the discourse of the social media professionals who do identity work on behalf of the organizational presence online.

References

Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 7*, 263-295.

Alvesson, M. (1994). Talking in organizations: Managing identity and impressions in an advertising agency. *Organization Studies, 15*(4), 535-563.

Alvesson, M., Ashcraft, K. L., & Thomas, R. (2008). Identity matters: Reflections on the construction of identity scholarship in organization studies. *Organization, 15*, 5-28.

Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. (2002). Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual. *Journal of Management Studies, 39*, 619-644.

Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of Management, 34*(3), 325-374.

Balmer, J. M. T., & Greyser, S. A. (2006). Corporate marketing: Integrating corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image and corporate reputation. *European Journal of Marketing, 40*, 730-741.

Bartel, C. A. (2001). Social comparisons in boundary-spanning work: Effects of community outreach on members' organizational identity and identification. *Administrative Sci-*

ence Quarterly, *46*(3), 379-413.

Baudrillard, J. (1998). *The consumer society: Myths and structures* (Vol. 53). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Limited.

Beech, N. (2008). On the nature of dialogic identity work. *Organization, 15*, 51-74.

Bimber, B., Flanagin, A., & Stohl, C. (2012). *Collective action in organizations: Interaction and engagement in an era of technological change*. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, T. J., Dacin, P. A., Pratt, M. G., & Whetten, D. A. (2006). Identity, intended image, construed image, and reputation: an interdisciplinary framework and suggested terminology. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *34*(2), 99-106

Brown, A. D., & Humphreys, M. (2006). Organizational identity and place: A discursive exploration of hegemony and resistance. *Journal of Management Studies*, *43*(2), 231-257.

Briones, R. L., Kuch, B., Liu, B. F., & Jin, Y. (2011). Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(1), 37-43.

Bullis, C., & Bach, B. W. (1989). Socialization turning points: An examination of change in organizational identification. *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)*, *53*(3), 273-293.

Burke, K. (1969). *A rhetoric of motives* (Vol. 111). Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Cheney, G. (1983). The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *69*(2), 143-158.

Cheney, G. (1991). *Rhetoric in an organizational society: Managing multiple identities*. Columbia, SC: University of

South Carolina Press.

Cheney, G., & Christensen, L. T. (2001). Organizational identity: Linkages between internal and external communication. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (p. 231-269). Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage Publications.

Cheney, G., & McMillan, J. J. (1990). Organizational rhetoric and the practice of criticism. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *18*(2), 93-114.

Chreim, S. (2005). The continuity–change duality in narrative texts of organizational identity. *Journal of Management Studies*, *42*(3), 567-593.

Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2004). Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *49*(2), 173-208.

Cornelissen, J. P., Haslam, S. A., & Balmer, J. M. (2007). Social identity, organizational identity and corporate identity: towards an integrated understanding of processes, patternings and products. *British Journal of Management*, *18*(s1), S1-S16.

Coupland, C., & Brown, A. D. (2004). Constructing Organizational Identities on the Web: A Case Study of Royal Dutch/Shell. *Journal of Management Studies*, *41*(8), 1325-1347.

Creed, W. D., DeJordy, R., & Lok, J. (2010). Being the change: Resolving institutional contradiction through identity work. *Academy of Management Journal*, *53*(6), 1336-1364.

Curtis, L., Edwards, C., Fraser, K. L., Gudelsky, S., Holmquist, J., Thornton, K., & Sweetser, K. D. (2010). Adoption of social media for public relations by non-profit organizations. *Public Relations Review, 36*, 90-92.

DiSanza, J. R., & Bullis, C. (1999). "Everybody identifies with Smokey the Bear" Employee responses to newsletter identification inducements at the US Forest Service. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *12*(3), 347-399.

Dukerich, J. M., Golden, B. R., & Shortell, S. M. (2002). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder: The impact of organizational identification, identity, and image on the cooperative behaviors of physicians. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *47*(3), 507-533.

Dutton, J. E., & Dukerich, J. M. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 517-554.

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 239-263.

Feather, N. T., & Rauter, K. A. (2004). Organizational citizenship behaviours in relation to job status, job insecurity, organizational commitment and identification, job satisfaction and work values. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *77*(1), 81-94.

Fombrun, C., & Shanley, M. (1990). What's in a name? Reputation building and corporate strategy. *Academy of Management Journal*, 233-258.

Gilpin, D. (2010). Organizational image construction in a fragmented online media environment. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 22*(3), 265-287.

Glisson, C., & Durick, M. (1988). Predictors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in human service organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 61-81.

Gioia, D. A. (1998). From individual to organizational identity. In D. Whetten & P. Godfrey (Eds.), *Identity in organizations: Developing theory through conversations* (pp. 17-31). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

He, H. W., & Balmer, J. M. (2007). Identity studies: multiple perspectives and implications for corporate-level market-

ing. *European Journal of Marketing*, *41*(7/8), 765-785.

He, H., & Brown, A. D. (2013). Organizational identity and organizational identification: A review of literature and suggestions for future research. *Group and Organization Management*, 38(1), 3-35.

Hedges, J. P. (2008). *The expressions and transformations of identity in Alcoholics Anonymous: A multimethod study of individual, group and organization.* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. J. (2001). *Social identity: Processes in organizational contexts*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press, A Member of the Taylor & Francis Group.

Humphreys, M., & Brown, A. D. (2002). Narratives of organizational identity and identification: a case study of hegemony and resistance. *Organization Studies*, *23*(3), 421-447

Kelleher, T. (2009). Conversational voice, communicated commitment, and public relations outcomes in interactive online communication. *Journal of Communication, 59* (1), 172-188.

Kelleher, T., & Miller, B. M. (2006). Organizational blogs and the human voice: Relational strategies and relational outcomes. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *11*(2), 395-414.

Kjærgaard, A., Morsing, M., & Ravasi, D. (2011). Mediating identity: A study of media influence on organizational identity construction in a celebrity firm. *Journal of Management Studies*, *48*(3), 514-543.

Lee, A. S. (1991). Integrating positivist and interpretive approaches to organizational research. *Organization Science*, *2*(4), 342-365.

Loseke, D. R. (2007). The study of identity as cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal narratives: Theoretical and empirical integrations. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *48*(4), 661-688.

Lovejoy, K., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Information, community, and action: How non-profit organizations use social media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*, 337-353.

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *13*(2), 103-123.

Rosenau, P. M. (1992). *Post-modernism and the social sciences: Insights, inroads and intrusions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schultz, F., Utz, S., & Göritz, A. (2011). Is the medium the message? Perceptions of and reactions to crisis communication via twitter, blogs and traditional media. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(1), 20-27

Scott, C. R. (2007). Communication and social identity theory: Existing and potential connections in organizational identification research. *Communication Studies, 58*(2), 123-138.

Scott, C. R. (2009). A whole-hearted effort to get it half right: Predicting the future of communication technology scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 14*(3), 753-757.

Scott, C. (2013). *Anonymous agencies, backstreet businesses, and covert Collectives: Rethinking organizations in the 21st century*. Stanford University Press.

Sluss, D. M., Ployhart, R. E., Cobb, M. G., & Ashforth, B. E. (2012). Generalizing newcomers' relational and organizational identifications: processes and prototypicality. *Academy of Management Journal*, *55*(4), 949-975.

Sweetser, K. D. (2010). A losing strategy: The impact of nondisclosure in social media on relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *22*(3), 288-312.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel

(Eds.), *The social psychology of group relations* (pp. 33-47). Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Watson, T. J. (2008). Managing identity: Identity work, personal predicaments and structural circumstances. *Organization, 15*, 121-143.

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science, 16*(4), 409-421.

Whetten, D. A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited: Strengthening the concept of organizational identity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *15*(3), 219-234.

Whetten, D. A. (2007). A critique of organizational identity scholarship: Challenging the uncritical use of social identity theory when social identities are also social actors. In *Identity in the modern organization*. C. Bartel, S. Blader, A. Wrzesniewski (Eds.), Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 253-272.

Whetten, D. A., & Mackey, A. (2002). A social actor conception of organizational identity and its implications for the study of organizational reputation. *Business & Society*, *41*(4), 393-414.

Williams, L. J., & Anderson, S. E. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management*, *17*(3), 601-617.