

**Perceived Image, Prestige, Respect and Support:
How Employees Manage Multiple Reflected Appraisals at the Workplace**

Tony Bongiorno

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By: Tony Bongiorno

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Prof. C. Roux

_____ External Examiner
Dr. B. Ashforth

_____ External to Program
Dr. M. Conway

_____ Examiner
Dr. K. Boies

_____ Examiner
Dr. A. Langley

_____ Thesis Supervisor
Dr. K. Lamertz

Approved by: _____
Dr. H. Bhabra , Graduate Program Director

December 13, 2016 _____
Dr. S. Brutus, Interim Dean, John Molson School of Business

ABSTRACT

Perceived Image, Prestige, Respect and Support: How Employees Manage Multiple Reflected Appraisals at the workplace

Tony Bongiorno, Ph.D.

Concordia University, 2017

This thesis collects three articles that explore the construct of reflected appraisal – individuals’ beliefs about how they are seen in the eyes of others. These manuscripts are linked by the overarching question “How do employees manage the bombardment of myriad reflected appraisals in their daily organizational lives?” To address this, the articles examine four workplace manifestations of reflected appraisals that are represented by the constructs of perceived supervisor support, organizational support, respect and external prestige (also called image) while considering the referents inherent in each construct (i.e., Co-workers, team members, the employing organization and external stakeholders). The theoretical manuscript (article 1) examines the four reflected appraisals together, asking what contextual and individual factors predict which reflected appraisals employees are more likely to focus on and when. We use employees’ work-roles as the key construct that links these factors together, arguing that self-motives drive individuals to focus on some reflected appraisals under the constraint of accountability and interdependence that are part of the organizational structure. The quantitative manuscript (article 2) examines the concurrent impact of respect and prestige on relational and organizational identification. In a survey of student-athletes from varsity sports teams, we found that the matching principle prevailed: Prestige and respect that are focused on the relationship predicted relational identification while respect and prestige focused on the collective predicted organizational identification. However, prestige was the better predictor of both the relational and organizational foci. The qualitative manuscript (article 3) focuses on organizational image and explores how individuals respond to perceived organizational stigma. I interviewed employees of general contractors during a city-wide scandal in which various audiences marked their organizations as “the enemy” by virtue of their category-membership. I found that interviewees negotiated two images that embodied individuating and de-individuating reflected

appraisals of their organization. Furthermore, employees constructed these images using various sources of information that they integrated into their reflected appraisals. Overall, the three articles demonstrate that employees actively engage with a plethora of reflected appraisals from multiple referents in the organizational environment.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Kai Lamertz. He has supported me throughout my entire PhD experience, has given me the freedom to explore my own ideas, has been patient with me during difficult times, and led me to discover the intricacies of whisky and beer while, most importantly, allowing me to find and be myself. Finally, he has reminded me on numerous occasions of the hilarity that is ‘Monty Python and Holy Grail’. My gratitude to him is immeasurable.

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

Of the three articles in this thesis, the theoretical and quantitative manuscripts (articles 1 and 2 respectively) were co-authored with my supervisor, Dr. Kai Lamertz. In both works, I am the first author and primary investigator. The qualitative manuscript (article 3) and the bridging documents of this thesis (i.e., the thesis overview and the general discussion) are not co-authored works, being written by myself, Tony Bongiorno. Regarding the co-authored articles, the contribution of authors is described below using Allen, Scott, Brand, Halva and Altman's (2014) taxonomy of author contributions.

Concerning the theoretical article, I performed the following tasks: 1) I developed the initial idea and core research question of the article - I proposed studying perceived supervisor and organizational support, respect and prestige as manifestations of a single underlying construct called reflected appraisal. This represents the heart of the paper as well as the entire thesis; 2) I researched and integrated all four constructs from their respective literatures along with self-motives and the notion of reflected appraisal and metaperception (from the social psychology literature) into a cohesive whole; 3) I developed the first draft of the paper and subsequently oversaw the paper's revisions, structure and model presentation (i.e., Table 1, Figures 1, 2 and 3); 4). Finally, as first author, I have overseen the paper's development toward publication, including the selection of and submission to target journals. In addition to this foundation, Dr. Lamertz contributed to this article by introducing the notion of interdependence and accountability, suggesting organizational structure as an analytical device, which included elaborating on formal versus informal structure toward that end. I integrated these further to make a cohesive argument about reflected appraisal. Subsequent revision of my initial work was performed jointly while preserving the essence of my contributions.

In relation to the quantitative paper, I performed the following tasks: 1) I conceived the study's research question and hypotheses in addition to designing the methodology, theoretical models, and survey questionnaire; 2) I also developed the first drafts that formed the core of this article; 3) I contacted, organized, conducted, designed and administered the survey to varsity sports teams for data collection; 4) I curated the data through data entry and cleaning for later analysis; 5) I coordinated (and will continue to oversee) all activities toward publication. Beyond this, parts of the analysis (e.g., using AMOS) and subsequent revising of the article were done jointly with Dr. Lamertz.

In sum, I attest that this thesis, and the articles it contains, represents my core ideas and work.

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THESIS OVERVIEW

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me” - 1 Corinthians 4:3-4

“When it comes down to it, I let them think what they want. If they care enough to bother with what I do, then I’m already better than them” — Marilyn Monroe

“The eyes of others are our prisons; their thoughts are our cages” –Virginia Woolf

This thesis is a collection of three articles, each focusing on a different aspect of reflected appraisal – the notion that individuals form perceptions about how they are seen in the eyes of others (Mead, 1934), answering the question “What do others think of me?” Together, they explore 1) how reflected appraisal manifests itself at the workplace and 2) how employees form perceptions about many types of referents including their co-workers, their team, the employing organization and external stakeholders. The articles are linked by the overarching question “How do employees manage the bombardment of myriad reflected appraisals they experience in their daily organizational lives?” In the following sections, I explore this question and place the current thesis (and its three articles) in the context of past organizational research.

The definition, history and evolution of reflected appraisal

Reflected appraisal is a broad term that encompasses a family of beliefs that go beyond specific evaluative appraisals, such as respect or prestige, to include non-evaluative information (e.g., ‘My boss does not value me’ versus ‘My boss thinks I support the death penalty’). This is similar to the way individuals’ identities contain many features because individuals have many beliefs about how referents judge features of their identity (e.g., ‘I am a supervisor’ versus ‘I believe my colleagues accept me as their supervisor’). Where identity statements take the form ‘I am X’ or ‘I do Y’ (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), reflected appraisal statements frame identity from the referents’ perspective by taking the form ‘He thinks I am X’ or ‘They like me because I do Y’. Thus, reflected appraisal can include perceptions about one’s identity such as ‘My colleague likes me as her supervisor’, or ‘my supervisor dislikes me because I support the death-penalty’.

Historically, reflected appraisal originates from symbolic interactionism, a sociological perspective that views the self-concept as a product of reflected appraisals – individuals know

who they are by observing how others treat them and then integrate this information into the self-concept (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Cooley (1902) called this process the looking glass self, an idea that introduced reflected appraisal to seminal works ranging from Blumer's (1969) discussion of role-taking as a tool for qualitative research to Goffman's (1959) thesis on the presentation of self in everyday life. Today, the concept of the looking-glass self continues to dominate sociological thinking (Lundgren, 2004) and has spurred a flurry debate about the role of reflected appraisal in the self (Tice & Wallace, 2003), and whether individuals' self-concepts match others' evaluations of them (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). We also see the extent of reflected appraisal's influence in scholarly work such as social identity theory, which argues that individuals want to belong to groups that are seen well in the eyes of others (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), and self-verification theory, which proposes that individuals use others' appraisals to confirm their own self-views (Swann & Read, 1981). Altogether, the notion of reflected appraisal plays an important role in how scholars understand the self.

From these roots, we can trace two separate but related paths of reflected appraisal that have developed concurrently in organizational behavior and social psychology research. In social psychology, reflected appraisal rose in prominence as the field revitalized its interest in the self-concept (Gecas, 1982). Where sociologists have long been concerned with reflected appraisal as a buffer between the self and society, social psychologists more recently began developing theories of the self to account for its active role in human behavior. It is in this historical context that Laing, Philipson, and Lee (1972) coined the term metaperception, which has become a synonym for reflected appraisal in the social psychology literature. Since then, the field has diverged from the sociological perspective, focusing on individuals as active agents in the self-concept's development: Humans are not simply passive recipients of external appraisals but autonomous agents that are heavily involved in creating the self (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983).

As a result of these efforts, metaperception research currently exists as a distinct area of social psychological inquiry that has been dominated by interest in meta-accuracy, which refers to how well individuals' metaperceptions match others' appraisals of them (Carlson, Vazire, & Furr, 2011; Frey & Tropp, 2006; Kenny & DePaulo, 1993). In particular, scholars have explored the degree of humans' meta-accuracy and its impact on outcomes such as relationship quality (Carlson, 2016) and friendship making (Vorauer & Sakamoto, 2006). This has led scholars to explore metaperceptions about many different traits such as liking, personality, stereotypes, and

dating popularity under the umbrella of metaperception (Carlson et al., 2011; Levesque, 1997; Malloy, Albright, Kenny, Agatstein, & Winquist, 1997; Preuss & Alicke, 2009; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000).

Knowing how reflected appraisal has influenced social psychology is important for understanding organizational behavior's current approach to the construct. While metaperception research has diverged from sociology, organizational behavior research has maintained close ties with its sociological roots. Furthermore, the field of organizational behavior has not given the construct the same dedicated attention as metaperception has received in social psychology. Although there are a handful of articles in which organizational scholars borrow from the metaperception literature to bolster their understanding of constructs such as leadership (Sturm, Taylor, Atwater, & Braddy, 2014) or team performance (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006), this is not the mainstream approach to reflected appraisal in the field of organizational behavior. Instead, over the last three decades, organizational scholars have used the idea of reflected appraisal to implicitly understand how specific referents at different levels of analysis - such as the supervisor or the organization - shape an individual's bond with her organization (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Newman, Thanacoody, & Hui, 2011; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014; Vergne, 2012).

Therefore, perceived supervisor support, organizational support, respect, and the construed external image (also called perceived external prestige) are outgrowths of this approach that have become mainstays of organizational behavior research. These constructs channel the spirit of reflected appraisal but, unlike the metaperception research, each has been developed to focus on a form of evaluation or a unique organizational feature. For example, perceptions of organizational support reflect employees' attitude regarding their relationship with the personified organization whereas perceived respect reflects employees' sense status relative to a specific referent (e.g., 'my boss values the work I do' versus 'my organization values my contributions'). Scholars developed perceived organizational support to understand how employees think about the organization as a personified entity with intentions of benevolence or malevolence toward them. Similarly, perceived respect is gaining more attention as scholars seek to understand how supervisors and organizations can communicate to employees that they are valued. In perceived organizational prestige research, scholars instead focus on how organizational members believe their organization is seen by outsiders (Dutton et al., 1994).

Specifically, the implied reflection is by virtue of organizational membership such that the appraisal is about the organizational group directly and about the individual indirectly. Thus, the identity question being asked is ‘What do outsiders think of me because of the organization I work for?’ (Dutton et al., 1994). In the context of organizational behavior and theory, this construct was developed to explain a previous empirical finding in which members of the New York Port Authority were concerned by the public’s perception of their stance on homeless individuals at their facilities. Thus, the term has been used to explain the role of outsiders in employees’ attachment to their organization.

These examples are meant to illustrate that organizational scholars have developed reflected appraisal-like constructs to understand specific features of the organization. As mentioned above, metaperception research has focused on more socially oriented reflected appraisals such as whether one is liked or is seen as extraverted. This contrast highlights how organizational scholars have divided their attention between different manifestations of reflected appraisal at the expense of taking a holistic understanding of the construct.

The two camps of reflected appraisal in organizational research

Although organizational scholars focus on specific work-place manifestations of reflected appraisal, we can still observe trends in the field’s approach to these constructs. Mirroring Kreiner and Ashforth’s (2004) observations about the identity literature more than a decade ago, two groups of organizational scholars have emerged that examine the light and dark side of workplace reflected appraisals. In one camp, scholars have sought to harness the benefits of reflected appraisal, reasoning that, if organizations can help individuals feel valued by those they work with and work for, employees will become more effective in their roles as organizational members. For example, the group engagement model (Blader & Tyler, 2009) is premised on the idea that employees simultaneously hold status-beliefs about how outsiders view their organization in addition to beliefs about whether co-workers respect them as one of its members. Together, these perceptions are said to predict the extent to which employees identify with their organizations and engage with it. More recently, Hameed, Roques, and Arains (2013) found that respect and prestige perceptions within this model can be enhanced by employees’ tenure, which can strengthen its effect on organizational identification.

In the second camp, organizational scholars have sought to understand negative reflected appraisals by examining what happens when individuals believe others devalue them. In

particular, research on occupational and organizational stigma fit in this camp because they concern how negative images develop and become associated with the self. For example, the powerful statement “people don’t like me because I work in a slaughterhouse” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999: 427) reflects an employee’s belief that others’ evaluations of his occupation is synonymous with an evaluation of his identity. At the organizational level, scholars have begun examining stigma whereby an organization is deindividuated, discredited and devalued by external stakeholders (Devers, Dewett, Mishina, & Belsito, 2009). Here, organizations become aware of this negative social evaluation and engage in various strategies to minimize its impacts (e.g., straddling multiple industries to reduce being associated with the stigma). Similarly, individuals who have worked for stigmatized organizations can become “marked”, making it difficult to find new jobs when their previous employment is revealed (Groysberg, Lin, Serafeim, & Abrahams, 2016).

Similarly, other scholars have explored how incongruent organizational images act as identity threats to organizational members when these images do not match employees’ perceived organizational identity (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). In these works, organizational images do not enhance identity but act as a destabilizing force that triggers a process of self-questioning by members and top management. Overall, the view being promoted in these more macro works is that employees are exposed to multiple organizational images from the external environment that may challenge their perceptions of the organization’s identity, its status within an industry or even its legitimacy as a member of a specific organizational category.

In sum, regardless of the camp researchers find themselves in, these strands of research share the observation that reflected appraisal is a key source of identity information because who we believe others think us to be is central to who we think we are.

The need for a holistic approach to workplace reflected appraisals

In the last decade, scholars have begun to champion the study of multiple referents that cross levels of analysis (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2010; Blader & Tyler, 2009; Gioia, Hamilton, & Patvardhan, 2014; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014). The earliest example comes from perceived organizational support research where scholars have become particularly interested in how employees’ perceptions of their supervisors’ support bleeds into perceptions of the organization’s support, becoming almost indistinguishable (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber,

Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Current debate centers on the direction of influence between these perceptions and the attempt to separate them empirically. In addition, Blader and Tyler (2003) proposed examining perceived internal respect (focused on the co-worker referent) and the construed external image (focused on the stakeholder referent) concurrently as predictors of group engagement. However, unlike the perceived support literature, scholars typically treat respect and image perceptions as distinct.

Similarly, Rogers and Ashforth (2014) proposed that employees simultaneously receive cues that others value them for their unique contributions to the organization in addition to cues that they are valued simply as organizational members separately from their individual contributions and achievements. This leads to perceptions that one is respected for their accomplishments and respected for simply being a part of the group. Finally, Gioia et al. (2014) argued that reflected appraisals dominate employees' experience of the modern organization, making a compelling case for considering the myriad types of images that exist (i.e., personal image, brand image, political image, organizational image). Their work recognized that how individuals are seen has become central to their organizational experiences as well as their experience of life in general. With the proliferation of technologies that allow us to manage and project images of ourselves into the environment (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat, Twitter), it is not surprising that individuals are becoming more concerned with how others view them (Wallace & Tice, 2012).

Overall, these works share the fundamental idea that employees perceive and receive judgements from myriad referents, all of which are equally and simultaneously important to individuals' identities. Yet, despite these efforts, most approaches to workplace reflected appraisals implicitly treat each form as having a separate pathway to organizational outcomes assuming that a) reflected appraisal formation comes with no cognitive costs – individuals have unlimited cognitive attention and resources to soak in all these evaluations, and b) all forms of reflected appraisal are perpetually salient for employees across both time and context without variation. Unfortunately, because this supposition is implicit, it precludes an entire line of questioning given that one assumes reflected appraisals are permanently salient. This leaves no room for scholars to consider how different reflected appraisals vary in each other's presence. Specifically, we do not know if workplace reflected appraisals are functionally additive or competitive in their effects nor do we know if there is a dominant reflected appraisal or if

reflected appraisals impact employees' perceptions equally - Will a member of a high status organization bond with her employer if she feels disrespected by its members but valued by the public because of who she works for (e.g., a bank)? Can she use other reflected appraisals (e.g., perceived organizational support) to compensate? Currently, the theoretical tools to explore such questions are lacking.

My goal in this thesis is to advance a new line of inquiry that arises from considering reflected appraisals about referents that are internal and external to the organization. I designed three articles to explore different workplace manifestations of reflected appraisal and advance organizational research toward a more holistic perspective that considers multiple reflected appraisals simultaneously without assuming independence between them.

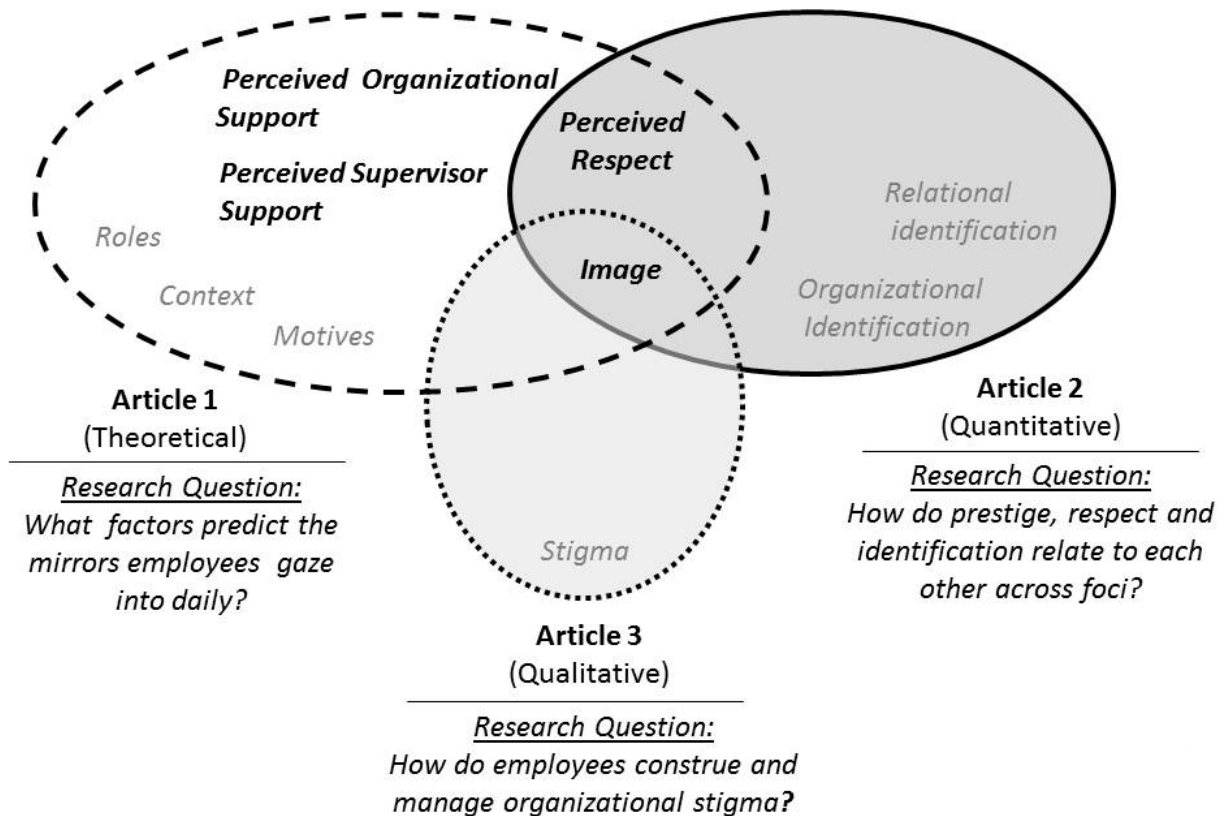
The three articles described

Given reflected appraisal's roots in the self, the three articles in this thesis address a current issue in identity research that concerns how internal and external sources of reflected appraisal interact to predict identity and identification processes. In the three articles, I consider a) the role that context plays in how employees negotiate identity pressures of reflected appraisals about multiple referents; b) how reflected appraisals about different referents and foci interact to predict organizational identification; c) how employees actively engage with individuating and de-individuating reflected appraisals about their organization. Using this three-article format, I also tackle these issues from a theoretical, quantitative and qualitative perspective to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon. A major advantage of this approach is that it highlights each perspective's limitations for investigating reflected appraisal while also emphasizing how each contributes to advancing scholarly understanding of reflected appraisal as a whole. In the sections below, I briefly describe each article and its function within this dissertation.

To begin, Figure 1 summarizes this information through a Venn diagram in which the three ovals represent each article's unique contributions to the thesis. The Figure presents the four reflected appraisals of perceived organizational support, supervisor support, image and respect in bold in order to show how I have divided my approach to reflected appraisal across the three articles. It is important to note that, while Article 1 considers all four reflected appraisals, Articles 2 and 3 respectively focus only one two and one reflected appraisal construct. In addition the Figure also presents several constructs in light gray (e.g., context) to distinguish the articles' unique approaches to their particular research question, shown below the ovals. These

light gray constructs are meant to highlight that while each article addresses the overarching theme of reflected appraisal, I base each in different perspectives and literatures.

FIGURE 1
A Visual Representation of the Three Articles



The first article entitled “House of mirrors: A contextual approach to reflected appraisal”, is a theoretical article that simultaneously examines the four reflected appraisals in this thesis: Perceived supervisor support, organizational support, respect, and the construed external image (see Figure 1). As the first of the three manuscripts, this article seeks to develop a theoretical framework that allows scholars to predict which reflected appraisal employees will choose and when, thereby laying the groundwork for a holistic approach. This article presents the problem of multiple reflected appraisals in full view by asking what factors affect the salience of each appraisal in an employee’s mind. Although this article is framed in terms of identity research, by virtue of the broad set of constructs we consider it is targeted toward a broader audience than the

other articles in this thesis. As such, it is meant to introduce the notion of reflected appraisal salience to several organizational literatures and begin a new line of inquiry which unites them. Finally, as a theoretical piece, this article is also meant to introduce my general argument that the constructs I consider in the second and third article are simply different manifestations of reflected appraisal in a workplace context. Therefore, this article provides the theoretical perspective needed to better appreciate the goals and value of articles two and three.

To bring together multiple constructs from diverse literatures, the theoretical article is based on Johns' (2006) heuristic approach as we ask the contextual questions of who, where, and why. Specifically, we argue that self-motives drive individuals to focus on some reflected appraisals over others under the constraints of accountability and interdependence that stem from organizational structure. We use employee work-roles as the key to linking self-motives and structural factors to suggest streams of research that organizational scholars can follow in the future to explore patterns of reflected appraisal across jobs and organizational contexts. In doing so, this article introduces the notion of reflected appraisal salience, which represents an important contribution to the identity literature because reflected appraisals have been historically assumed unequivocally relevant to employees. We also contribute by providing the first holistic framework for understanding how all reflected appraisals function in an organizational context. Although this theoretical article is limited to the four most prominent manifestations of reflected appraisal, our aim is to provide a set of theoretical tools that can be applied to other organisational contexts and referents where reflected appraisal is relevant. Therefore, in comparison to articles two and three, our aims in this theoretical article are broader.

The second article called "I am how you see me", "I am how they see us": Viewing identification through respect and prestige" is more limited in scope (see Figure 1). In this quantitative study of student athletes from varsity sports teams, we examine the concurrent impact that employees' perceptions of respect and prestige have on identification with the supervisor-subordinate relationship and organizational identification. Therefore, in line with the theoretical article, we unpacked the notion of reflected appraisal by considering that employees will have perceptions about how two types of foci are viewed - their employing organization (i.e., the organizational focus) and their relationship with the supervisor (i.e., the relational focus). We argue that each focus acts a separate target for respect and prestige. This distinction builds on the theoretical article in which we categorize the type of referents that employees can

form reflected appraisals about. However, in this quantitative study, we make a more fine grained distinction by considering the focus of the reflected appraisal in addition to the referent of that appraisal. As a result, this expands the idea introduced earlier that a referent can be internal or external to one's organization.

To examine these features of reflected appraisal, we measured individuals' identification with the organizational and relational focus, finding that the matching principle prevails such that prestige and respect centered on the relational focus predicts relational identification but respect and prestige based on the collective predict organizational identification. Therefore, we concluded that cognitive categorization and impersonalized bonding make prestige an important, if largely overlooked predictor of identification in organizations regarding multiple foci. Through this study, we add to the identification literature by exploring how prestige and respect at multiple foci simultaneously contribute to organizational and relational identification. This also highlights that, as scholars begin to examine prestige and respect concurrently in the new wave of identification research (e.g., Hameed et al., 2013), they must distinguish not only the focus of identification being studied but the focus of prestige and respect as well. Therefore, we emphasize a more nuanced understanding of reflected appraisal as it pertains specifically to multiple identifications. Overall, this study continues this thesis' overarching argument that all forms of reflected appraisal are concurrently important to employees' workplace experience.

The third article (see Figure 1), titled "Splitting images: How employees construe stigma in the Montreal construction industry" complements the theoretical and quantitative articles by demonstrating that construed external image comprises multiple conflicting images rather than a single cleanly defined image. That is, where the first two articles apply the traditional conception of the construed external image as what employees believe outsiders think of their organization (Dutton et al., 1994), this third article delves more deeply into the construct by unpacking the multiple images and referents that organizational members pull apart and stitch together to make sense of their environment. This study explores how individuals are bombarded by multiple competing evaluations, focusing on those from external audiences. To best understand how employees manage these evaluations, I focused on their reactions to a particularly difficult situation that would make reflected appraisals salient. Specifically, I interviewed employees of Montreal-based general contracting companies between 2010 and 2015, during which general contractors were stigmatized by various audiences as being corrupt and untrustworthy

organizations following a city-wide scandal. I discovered that interviewees negotiated tensions between two types of images, which I term the particularized and generalized images. These two images respectively embodied an individuating and de-individuating reflected appraisal of one's organization, which falls in line with this thesis' focus on studying how employees engage with multiple reflected appraisals simultaneously. This finding contributes to the identity literature because it corroborates a similar distinction that has been recently made for perceived respect (Rogers & Ashforth, 2014) and further supports our call in the theoretical article for scholars to more deeply integrate the concept of reflected appraisal into the organizational literature as an umbrella term under the view that the various appraisals are in reality manifestations of the same underlying construct.

FINAL COMMENTS

As a whole, I designed the three articles in this thesis to promote a more dynamic perspective of reflected appraisal that is based on individual agency and shows how different workplace manifestations of reflected appraisal develop, interact and impact employees. Each takes a different approach to answering the question "How do employees manage the bombardment of myriad reflected appraisals they experience in their daily organizational lives?" Together they advance the identity literature by demonstrating the value of examining how individuals manage multiple reflected appraisals about a variety of referents and, in a break from past research, the three articles are guided by the idea that these manifestations are part of the same family of perceptions, are interdependent, and may enhance or constrain one another as a result. I approached this idea by examining the phenomenon from a theoretical, quantitative and qualitative perspective, each of which provided different insights. My hope is that this multi-method framework, and the examination of multiple reflected appraisals as a set rather than discrete perceptions, will promote a dynamic and holistic approach to images within the workplace that will bring together and advance diverse streams of research.

ARTICLE 1

House of Mirrors:

A Contextual Model of Reflected Appraisal in Organizations

ABSTRACT

Reflected appraisal refers to what individuals believe others think of them and has been studied under different guises in the organizational literature that includes (but is not limited to) perceived respect, perceived external prestige, perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support. Given the many reflected appraisals individuals encounter in everyday organizational interaction, we explore the factors that impact which reflected appraisals employees are more likely to focus on and when. To do so, we use Johns' (2006) heuristic approach and ask questions of where, when, and why about reflected appraisal. In doing so, we argue that self-motives drive individuals to focus on some reflected appraisals over others under the constraint of accountability and interdependence in organizational structure. We use employees' work roles as the key to linking these factors and suggest streams of research that organizational scholars can follow in the future to explore patterns of reflected appraisal across jobs and organizational contexts.

ARTICLE 1

House of Mirrors:

A Contextual Model of Reflected Appraisal in Organizations

The organization is a veritable house of mirrors where employees see themselves reflected in the eyes of many others: Employees care deeply about what others think of them (Goffman, 1967) and are fundamentally concerned with judgements they believe internal and external stakeholders (e.g., supervisors, the work team, clients, the general public) make about them (de Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Dutton et al., 1994; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). The availability of so many reflections informs the key puzzle we seek to address in this paper: What factors help predict the mirrors employees gaze into as they manage a barrage of perceived judgements confronting them in daily organizational interactions?

To answer this question, we invoke Cooley's (1902) concept of the looking glass self, commonly called *reflected appraisal* in the organizational literature. The construct refers to individuals' imagination of others' views of them, a mirror they hold up to themselves to monitor who they are during interactions with others (Dutton et al., 1994; Goffman, 1967). In this paper, we develop several theoretical ideas about how reflected appraisals become more or less salient mirrors during employees' every-day organizational encounters as a function of their self-motives and their location in organizational structure.

A variety of organizational behavior constructs capture the notion of reflected appraisal in organizations, among which perceived respect, supervisor support, organizational support and external prestige are the most prominently studied. Past research has shown that these constructs are related to important organizational outcomes like identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), turnover intentions (Allen & Shanock, 2013), newcomer adjustment (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007), team performance (Gundlach et al., 2006) and organizational citizenship behavior (Carmeli, Gilat, & Weisberg, 2006), a list that underscores reflected appraisal's importance in organizational life. However, this work has focused on each type of reflected appraisal as singularly and persistently salient for all employees. We argue that this assumption of unqualified construct relevance falls short in its ability to address how the various forms of reflected appraisal exist simultaneously or wax and wane across multiple episodes of workplace interaction and behavior.

Once we consider that multiple forms of reflected appraisal may exist concurrently, we need to ask what forces affect their importance for employee self-views in a given context. For example, if an employee is negotiating an agreement about production plans with a member of another department, the respect she believes is accorded to her by that other employee (Rogers & Ashforth, 2014) or the image she construes the other department to have of her own department (Kulik & Perry, 2008) may become more salient mirrors for a reflected appraisal than would her perceptions of the organization's support. Although we do not question the unique relevance of organizational support, respect, or prestige, our argument is that they all have a common connotation as reflected appraisal, which raises our question about the contextual forces that create an ebb and flow of salience in individuals' minds. Even research that has examined multiple mirrors (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009) does not address such fluctuation, assuming instead that employees process the various mirrors equally as passive recipients of others' evaluations. Therefore, the literature requires a theory that helps scholars and organizations anticipate when and why workers will choose one form of reflected appraisal over another.

Our consideration of multiple reflected appraisals contributes to the identity and role-theory literatures in several ways. First, we elucidate the nature of reflected appraisals in organizations by reviewing past research and developing a categorization system to drive future inquiry. We argue that, although reflected appraisal is a central idea in discussions of identity, it lacks clarity, which we believe has affected this construct's development and its connections to the broader literature on organizational behavior construct's. Second, we introduce the notion of reflected appraisal salience to the identity literature, explaining how identity motives are shared by all reflected appraisals and that these drive employee agency in the effort to navigate among competing appraisals at the workplace. Third, we use the concept of work-role (Katz & Kahn, 1978) as a theoretical linchpin to examine how employees balance identity concerns with the social structural constraints of the workplace through the active construal of different reflected appraisals. Thus we provide a new theoretical lens through which scholars can commonly understand previously established phenomena (i.e., perceived organizational support, supervisor support, respect and prestige) as a product of the interaction between context and personal agency (Blumer, 1969; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). While we present these analyses separately, we assume that an employee's experience of reflected appraisal is a function of the combined forces that originate outside and inside the individual (Lewin, 1946), identifying accountability

and interdependence on the one hand, and self-motives on the other. Lastly, we propose a more dynamic view of reflected appraisal than has been presented in the past, considering fluctuations of salience as employees interact with multiple others over time and across events. Toward that end, we illustrate the ebb and flow of reflected appraisal salience through an example of workplace interactions, casting aside the common assumption that reflected appraisals are continuously important to employees. We argue that scholars must account for the fact that employees form a multitude of reflected appraisals about their organizational environment and that they use those appraisals to manage their workplace identity.

WHAT IS REFLECTED APPRAISAL?

Defining reflected appraisal

The construct of *reflected appraisal* can be interpreted as either a process or a belief (Wallace & Tice, 2012). On the one hand, reflected appraisal refers to a recursive process where an individual's perceptions of how others view her are integrated into her self-concept, which she then projects back onto new iterations of that perception. More narrowly, reflected appraisal simply refers to an individual's current belief of what others think of her. In this second interpretation, the focus is on the nature of that belief rather than on its recursive interaction with the self-concept. For our purposes, we focus on reflected appraisal as a belief, using its connection to the self-concept only as a conceptual tool to help us explore the transitory and oscillating salience of such beliefs across different contexts of role performance.

According to Cooley (1902: 184), reflected appraisal has three components: “the imagination of our appearance to [a referent]; the imagination of [the referent's] judgment of that appearance; and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification”. As a whole, reflected appraisal answers the question “what do others think of me?” and concerns how individuals believe others view and evaluate aspects of their identity, which includes their role performances, self-definitions, feelings, values, goals, beliefs, traits, knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviours (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Reflected Appraisal and Workplace Role Performance

While reflected appraisal may be about many different aspects of a person's self, our concern with reflected appraisal in organizations directs attention to the individual's work role as a key analytic concept. People's constructions of workplace identity derive in part through the reflections they construe of their work role performances from the perspective of their interaction

partners (Dutton et al., 1994). Workplace identity refers to a person's self-understanding about who he is in an employer organization (Ashforth et al., 2008). Work role connotes a set of social expectations for workplace-related behavior that links organizational members in interaction with each other (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Identities and roles are linked because the latter serve as resources for identity work, the ongoing social process through which an individual makes sense of "who she is" (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth, 2001). Work roles "guide and constrain incumbents' view of self" (Leung, Zietsma, & Peredo, 2014: 425) and enable others to "classify, understand, and anticipate" the incumbent (Baker & Faulkner, 1991: 284). According to our conceptualization, a role is a flexible resource which signals abstract meanings about behavioral expectations that are collectively, but only loosely, shared among participants in social interaction (Baker & Faulkner, 1991). At the same time, roles also involve local enactment, through which people actively abide by, reject, and compromise shared expectations into an emergent improvisation that allows them to manage their subjective understandings of those expectations during interaction with others (Simpson & Carroll, 2008).

During role enactment, the role performer materially and ritually interacts with others who themselves enact the same or other roles in relation to her. Following convention in the organizational behavior literature, we will call those other people role senders (Katz & Kahn, 1978). The role performer anticipates and monitors information cues about expectations for her behaviors by the role sender and combines that information with her own desired projection of the role into a presentation that socially constructs her identity in the social interaction. The resulting role performance is thus characterized by the role performer's experience of pressure "emanating from self and [from the role sender] to be socially appropriate and acceptable for each audience and relationship" (Simpson & Carroll, 2008: 42; see also Goffman, 1967). Role enactment is thus highly plastic and roles themselves are seen as malleable, allowing the individual role performer to manage enactment of multiple roles that may merge into each other.

To illustrate, consider a senior accounting manager who performs the role of financial analyst, which she can employ as a resource to request information about costs from other managers in various departments and leads her to anticipate that those managers, as role senders, expect such requests to be made. As role performers themselves, the other managers may experience pressure to respond to the requests by supplying the relevant information and present

themselves as competent role performers. Illustrating the locally negotiated nature of roles and their potentially varying effects on the role performer in different work place relationships or encounters, the senior accountant may formally request information to be returned by email at a deadline to signal authority toward one manager but request the same information casually during personal visits to another manager, to be returned at her convenience. In each case, a unique role agreement is enacted vis-à-vis each manager that sets different local expectations around the same abstract role template. In addition, the senior accountant delicately balances performance between multiple roles for her *self*, bridging between task role and supervisory role for the first manager, while blurring task role with collegial role for the second.

IDENTIFYING THE ‘WHO’ OF REFLECTED APPRAISAL

Survey of the literature

We examine the *who heuristic* by identifying different kinds of referent others that have been employed in various organizational behavior constructs related to reflected appraisal. Figure 1 summarizes these referents according to two dimensions that we develop: 1) The nature of the referent’s aggregate level and 2) the location of the referent relative to the focal employee’s social group. We then identify different workplace roles and implied role-relations that individuals enact during interaction with those referent others.

Figure 1
Categorization of Organizational Referents According to
Location and Aggregate level

Aggregate Level Social Location *	Particularized	Generalized	Personified*
Internal to the social group	Internal Particularized <i>“My department manager respects me”</i>	Internal Generalized <i>“All the managers respect me”</i>	Internal Personified <i>“My organization values me”</i>
External to social group	External Particularized <i>“The department manager from our supplier respects me”</i>	External Generalized <i>“All my friends respect me because of where I work”</i>	External Personified <i>“The supplier values our organization”</i>

Note: Italics represent examples of each category; * indicates our theoretical extensions of Cooley’s (1902) original framework.

To begin, our first dimension is based on Cooley's (1902) distinction between particular and generalized referents, which provides the groundwork for identifying different types of referents in the organizational environment. Reflected appraisal about a particular referent focuses on an individual's imagination of a single referent's opinion of her (e.g., what does my secretary think of me?) whereas reflected appraisal about a generalized referent depicts the individual's imagination of the broad opinion shared by multiple referents in a social group (e.g., what do all the managers think of me?). Together, these represent two different aggregate levels at which a referent can exist and which have played out in management research.

Historically, organizational behavior scholars have examined generalized referents such as an employee's reflected appraisal about her relation to the work team (Gundlach et al., 2006) or the collection of all organizational members (Kurtessis et al., 2015). Particularized others have also been studied, typically in terms of the referent's location in the formal hierarchy, such as an employee's supervisor (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 2010; Sturm et al., 2014). In this research, scholars have implicitly focused on the work roles an individual employee performs in formal organizational relations, such as team membership or reporting relationships. For example, perceived supervisor support refers to employees' global impressions of the extent to which supervisors evaluate them positively or negatively, value their contributions and are concerned for their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2002). The construct refers to the immediate supervisor as the referent for an employee's reflected appraisal during enactment of the supervisor-subordinate work role relation, in which the supervisor makes important outcomes and rewards available to the subordinate contingent on her appropriate role performance (Chen, Li, & Leung, 2015; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). This appraisal represents the employee's subjective evaluation that the referent has absolved his role obligation to support and validate the employee's own competent and appropriate role performance.

A good example of reflected appraisal that has been studied in terms of both particular and generalized referents is perceived respect (e.g., Grover, 2014; Lin & Leung, 2014). Respect refers to employees' perceptions that a referent other values her and accords her worth (Spears, Ellemers, Doosje, & Branscombe, 2006). This appraisal of value and worth is based on the employee's ability to act as a prototypical performer in a specific work role or as a prototypical member in an organizational group (Rogers & Ashforth, 2014), suggesting that the yardstick for respect is employees' perceptions that the referent views their own performance of prototypical

role or member behaviors as competent and appropriate. Researchers have also examined respect in vertical role relations to particular referents like one's supervisor and generalized referents such as groups of supervisors (Bartel, Wrzesniewski, & Wiesenfeld, 2012; Fuller, Hester, Barnett, & Relyea, 2006). In addition, respect has been studied in employees' lateral work role relations to their co-workers as team members (Ellemers, Sleebos, Stam, & de Gilder, 2013; Gundlach et al., 2006). The above examples nicely illustrate the variety and cross-role relevance of respect as a form of reflected appraisal in addition to perceived supervisor support.

Theoretical extensions

Although Cooley's (1902) distinction between particular and generalized referents provides a useful, if rudimentary, framework for classifying the nature of different referents, our survey of the organizational literature led us to uncover two features of reflected appraisal referents not captured by his typology. We present these in Table 1 as two theoretical extensions of his classification system that further address the *who* of reflected appraisal

First, Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) seminal work on organizational support identifies the personified organization as a unique referent that individuals anthropomorphize and treat as a social actor (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' general impressions about whether the organization appreciates their work and is concerned for their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). As a form of reflected appraisal, POS invokes an employee's role as a member in relation to the organization (Cole, Schaninger, & Harris, 2002), alluding not just to the employee's role in the formal organization but also to his rights and responsibilities as a legitimate and valued member in the civil, political, and social systems of that organization (Graham, 1991). The idea that POS constitutes a reflected appraisal in the performance of an organizational member role is supported by evidence linking the construct with organizational citizenship behavior (Shore & Wayne, 1993) and organizational justice (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Given this, the personified organizational referent connotes a distinct role relation for which enactment may involve reflected appraisal from the perspective of an anthropomorphized social group that an employee treats as an independent social actor with collective thoughts and intentions.

A second extension of Cooley's (1902) referent categories can be found in Dutton et al.'s (1994) work on perceived external prestige, which identified organizational outsiders as the referent for employees' reflected appraisals in relation to organizational membership. This

provides the basis for our second dimension, which we call ‘social location’ and define as whether a target referent exists inside or outside an employee’s social group (e.g., one’s team, department, or organization).

In perceived organizational prestige, the referent of prestige is generalized (typically limited to the general public), although there has been some work identifying different stakeholder groups as referents, such as clients and suppliers (Carmeli et al., 2006). Prestige focuses on organizational membership of the perceiver and highlights the importance of organizational boundaries. Unlike the other constructs discussed above, the appraisal construed through prestige reflects indirectly onto the employee through membership in a social group (i.e., the organization) rather than directly onto the individual. In this indirect form of reflected appraisal, nominal group membership plays a key role in how employees view themselves and others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), contrasting in-group members with out-group members as the basis for appraisal (Frey & Tropp, 2006).

Second, the group distinction between organizational insiders and outsiders makes the organizational member role salient because it implies a boundary spanning perspective (Korschun, 2015). The idea that enactment of an organizational member role underlies this form of reflected appraisal is supported by research showing that perceived external prestige is related to perceptions of organizational success and the average status of its employees (Fuller et al., 2006), as well as to in-group identification (Frey & Tropp, 2006).

We note that specific boundary spanning organizational roles, rather than an organizational member role, may involve additional types of reflected appraisals that mirror an employee’s concern with enactment of such a role vis-à-vis a specific stakeholder. A boundary spanner role may include behaviors such as passing out business cards to the general public (Korschun, 2015), maintaining the organization’s image or negotiating its interests (Aldrich & Herker, 1977), and providing support to stakeholders (Bartel, 2001). However, because the target of prestige is the organization as a whole, and its members only by association, the boundary role performer may experience reflected appraisal indirectly, depending on which role identity is most salient in a given context (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Morris, 2013). We note further that the case of indirect reflected appraisal has also been applied to both prestige and respect for an intra-organizational context. Thus, an employee may feel valued or esteemed indirectly by virtue of being part of an

organizational sub-group she believes is accorded respect (Rogers & Ashforth, 2014) or prestige (Kulik & Perry, 2008) by a referent other individual or sub-group.

Proposition 1: (a) Perceived respect, supervisor support, organizational support, and external prestige are all manifestations of an underlying phenomenon – Reflected Appraisal; (b) All manifestations of reflected appraisal can be categorized according to the referent’s social location vis-à-vis the focal employee and the aggregate level of that referent.

Summary

The above review shows that several constructs frequently used in organizational behavior studies can be seen as instantiations of different forms of reflected appraisal in organizational settings, justifying the metaphor of a house of mirrors: (1) Referents of reflected appraisal can be particular individuals, generalized social groups, or a personified social group, (2) such referents can be understood in various organizational role relations, such as supervisor and subordinate, organizational membership, and organizational sub-group membership, (3) appraisals by referents may be reflected directly on the employee as an individual or indirectly as the member of a social group. Figure 1 summarizes these ideas according to our dimensions of the referent’s aggregate level and social location. In addition, Figure 2 (in the following section) provides a visual representation of these ideas in order to demonstrate how these dimensions combine to create multiple reflections from an employees’ point of view, emphasizing the importance of an employee’s location within the organizational structure.

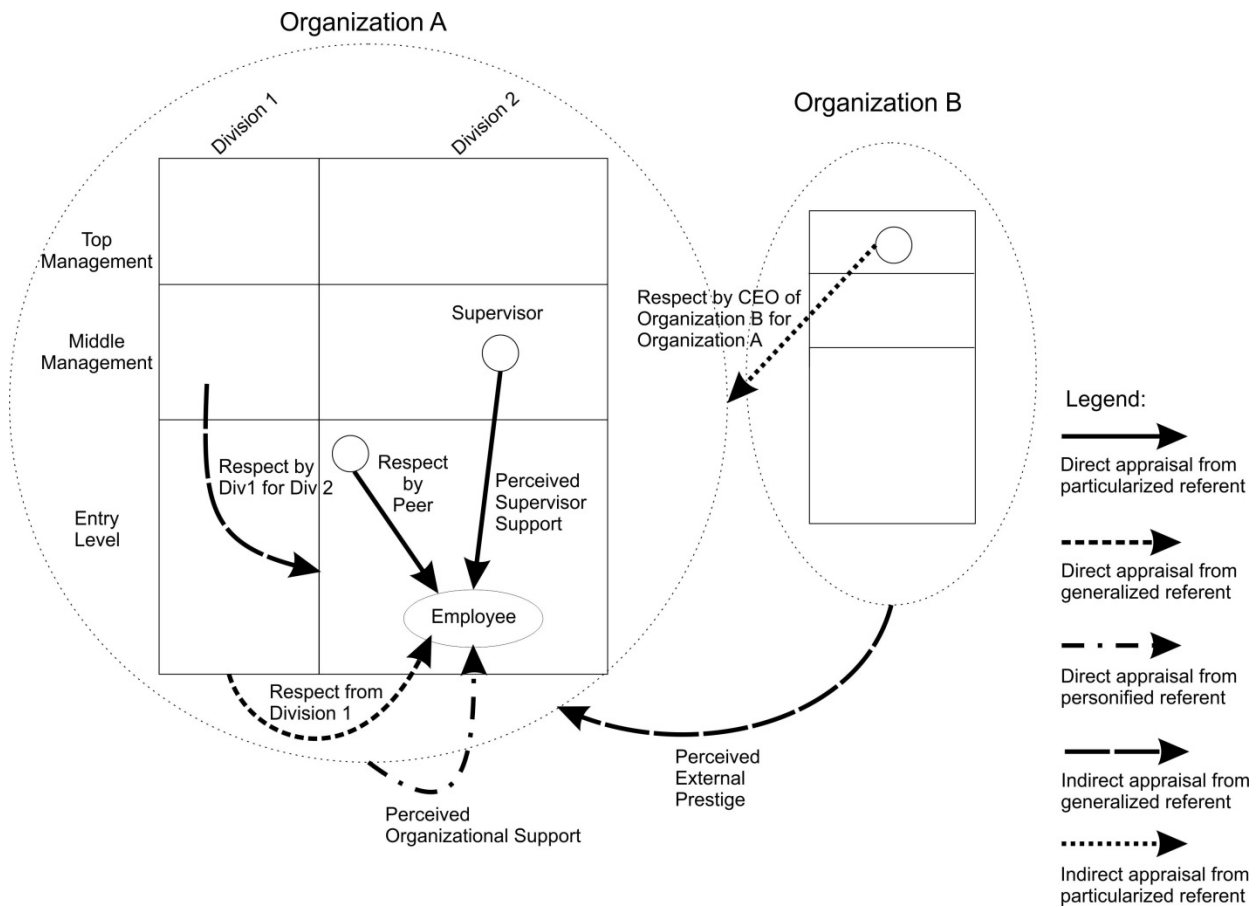
LOCATING THE “WHERE” IN REFLECTED APPRAISAL

Having examined who the referent others are in different forms of reflected appraisal, we now hone in more closely on our ambition to delineate the contextual contingencies that make those others a salient referent for appraisal. Context refers to different factors that make organizational life subjectively meaningful for an employee (Johns, 2006). We focus on forces that bring other organizational actors or groups into an employee’s focus as salient sources of self-knowledge and self-awareness through the work roles she enacts in their presence. We define salience as the extent to which a given type of reflected appraisal is active in an employee’s mind during a given interaction, characterized by the amount of time, effort, and resources she spends towards constructing, updating and maintaining that appraisal (Morris, 2013). The objective in the ensuing section is to work out how the location of an employee in an

organizational structure places her in relation to relevant others. We focus on accountability toward and interdependence with those others during role enactment as forces that make them salient referents for reflected appraisal.

Figure 2

Different Forms of Reflected Appraisal in Organizational Structure



Broadly speaking, organizational structure comprises two elements: (1) a formal blueprint for prescribed activity and interaction that partitions the organization into impersonal jobs, groups and strata, (2) the actual patterns of personal interactions and activity that organically coalesce into informal relations and cliques (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). While these two elements refer to the distinction between formal and informal organizational structure, we follow other scholars who view structure as a confluence of the formal and the informal (e.g., Lundholm, Rennstam, & Alvesson, 2012; McEvily, Soda, & Tortoriello, 2014). We adopt that perspective because we wish to emphasize how organizational structure positions individual employees *in relation to*

each other by virtue of where they are located in the formally designed blueprint or in informally emergent networks. Relational positioning furnishes opportunity and constraint through which expectations for role enactment are negotiated between role performers and role senders. These may involve a work role that comprises enactment of behaviors strictly prescribed to the individual by formal design or a role that involves enactment of behaviors to supplement, subvert, or augment formally prescribed behavior (McEvily et al., 2014).

Organizational structure allows us to sharpen our understanding of how work roles relate to reflected appraisal through contextual positioning (See Figure 2). This can be seen most clearly in reference to (1) the horizontal division of organizational tasks into jobs and groups and, (2) the vertical layering of formal authority (Galbraith, 1974; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969). Horizontally, each employee is positioned as a member in a formal in-group and as an in-group member vis-à-vis various out-groups (e.g., departments, branches, divisions). Vertically, employees are positioned individually or as a group in formal relation to management in general. The individual employee is also horizontally positioned relative to other employees within their in-group as colleagues, and vertically above or below individual others in the formal chain of command. In addition, we can conceive of the individual's position inside the organization as a whole relative to organizational outsiders across the organizational boundary. Internal boundary spanners are positioned as representatives of their in-group, such as departments, in relation to individual members of out-groups with whom they interact. The formal role is defined as the specific bundle of tasks to be performed (i.e., a formal job description), which outlines (1) work specialization within the employee's in-group or across horizontal group boundaries and (2) decision making responsibilities across the formal hierarchy (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

In addition, most organizations are divided into informal cliques of people who share common personal interests or are united by relevant personal attributes, such as gender or ethnicity (Alderfer, 1983). Informal networks that develop between individual employees and managers through their personal interactions can be also aggregated and classified into network positions that are defined by patterns of relations, such as network prominence or bridging (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Lamertz, 2006). These informal sources of organizational differentiation may exist within or across formal horizontal and vertical partitions, and they may supplement formal relations by affecting the quality of inter-personal interaction between specific individuals (e.g., McEvily et al., 2014). Informal networks thus provide a basis for the

negotiations of unique role enactment toward specific others or across roles, as described above, and furnish a context for the performance of informal organizational roles, such as good citizens, unofficial leaders, go-to experts, and mediators (Lamertz, 2006).

Role performances thus take place in or across horizontal, vertical, or external boundary traversing relations to in-group or out-group members, and they may focus on the enactment of individual roles as well as the enactment of roles that are representative of groups. Using our example, one work role of the senior accountant involves collecting financial information from other managers who relate to her from within the same or across different horizontal groupings, and they may relate to her vertically from an equivalent or a lower hierarchical level. In another work role the accountant supervises her book-keepers, who relate to her within the same grouping and across hierarchical levels. The accountant also performs a role in relation to the organization as a whole, such as projecting herself as a responsible member, a role that she employs to participate in the governance of the overall organizational system or represents it to outsiders (Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995).

The multiple roles an individual enacts in an organization are called his role-set (Merton, 1957). In this role-set, individuals construct their workplace identity through role performances that they negotiate in relation to other role players (i.e., senders) and by merging their performances of multiple roles to combine anticipated expectations and desired projection of the self vis-à-vis those others, as illustrated above. This array of others toward whom the individual enacts the role set captures the way multiple workplace roles are employed in organizational structure, creating a context in which multiple reflected appraisals bounce across employees' vertical and horizontal location and connectedness. In keeping with the main thrust of this article, we believe that discussing one form of reflected appraisal separately loses sight of the complementary and concurrent experience that other forms of reflected appraisal, which are no less relevant to the role-set, provide for the employee. The implication is that one can talk about a network or set of reflected appraisals that compete for salience as the employee manages her everyday experience of interacting with others in the organization. We use the term *appraisal kaleidoscope* to refer to the notion that an individual employee's location in the organization's social structure is associated with an array of mirrors for reflected appraisals that are linked to that employee via his role-set (see Figure 2).

Accountability

We propose that accountability and interdependence in an employee's relations to others in the role set influences the salience of those others as referents for reflected appraisal.

Accountability refers to a role player's expectation that she must explain and justify to others the performance of her role in accordance with the legitimate rules for instrumental and symbolic work role enactment of the social system (Tetlock, 1985). In line with our integrated view of organizational structure, we focus on the subjective perception of accountability (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). An accountable role performer is concerned with the projection of competence and the appearance of appropriateness in the context of organizational authority relations, task prescriptions, interdependencies, and interpersonal norms (Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Goffman, 1967; Tetlock, 1985).

Experiencing accountability makes reflected appraisal salient because the role performer anticipates evaluation of role performance by role senders. This anticipation raises the salience of a given role sender as referent for appraisal because an accountable role performer monitors evaluations of his role performances in search of "approval and respect" (Tetlock, 1985: 308). Reflected appraisal also provides essential information about the amount and type of accounting that the role performer may deem necessary to perform in order to repair any damage to her identity experienced as a result of a perceived failure to meet a role sender's expectations (Goffman, 1967).

The most direct application of accountability in organizational structures likely operates through the formal chain of command. Accountability in formal work role enactment may involve perceived expectations for knowledge, skills, and ability by an immediate superior or another referent at higher organizational strata (e.g., formal reporting or performance evaluation), as well as the deployment of a role performance to make decisions that project an identity of competence. Perceived support by the supervisor or the organization may therefore become a salient type of reflected appraisal. Accountability may also be experienced toward one's coworkers and peers in reference to the unique role relations negotiated with them (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). This type of accountability links employees through the mutual enactment of informal organizational roles, where the performance of interpersonal support, teamwork, forbearance, dedication, and other types of citizenship or contextual behaviors constitute relevant aspects of appropriate performance (Goffman, 1967; Hall & Ferris, 2011; Lamertz, 2006).

Reflected appraisals that become salient through accountability in this type of role enactment are likely to involve respect and prestige perceptions within and across organizational groups and cliques.

In addition, an employee may engage others in routinized and ritualized interactions that raise accountability for role performance, deference and demeanor on the basis of common identification with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Goffman, 1967) or the attendant expectations that are associated with typical organizational members (Hogg & Terry, 2000). An individual employee's experience of accountability toward these normative or personally negotiated aspects of role performance is likely to involve respect or prestige and identify other individuals, or the groups they represent, as salient referents for reflected appraisal.

Finally, employees may also perceive formal or informal accountability toward organizational outsiders (e.g., customer evaluations or a regulator's approval). In such cases, reflected appraisal becomes salient in reference to multiple performances, such as 'organizational member' and 'boundary spanner' (Bartel, 2001; Goffman, 1967). Such multiple role performance may impose conflicting expectations and corresponding appraisals that employees will seek to resolve (Bartel, 2001). Accountability in work role performances may also blur with accountability in personal relations employees develop toward specific outside clients (Ashforth et al., 2008), thus raising a dilemma in which the same referent for reflected appraisal may generate incompatible judgments of respect or prestige.

Proposition 2: Reflected appraisal salience regarding a specific referent is positively associated with an employee's perceived accountability toward that referent.

Interdependence

Organizational structure is also characterized by *interdependence*, which means that a person's role performance relies on the provision of resources or the performance of work role behaviors by another person or group (Pfeffer & Salancick, 1978). Organizations are differentiated systems that produce structural interdependence because different groups perform distinct tasks, have non-substitutable expertise, procure needed resources, or manage outside stakeholder demands (Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971). Interdependence foments status stratification along the horizontal dimension of structure when effective performance by members in one group or enacting one role relies on the task accomplishment,

expertise, resources, or uncertainty management provided by members of another group or enacting another role (Lundholm et al., 2012) .

Thompson (1967) identified three types of interdependence in organizational structure: (1) Pooled interdependence means that groups or individuals perform independently but rely on the support and infrastructure of a common superordinate unit (e.g., bank branches operate independently under the auspices of corporate headquarters); (2) Sequential interdependence means that the outputs of one group or individual are necessary inputs for another (e.g., restaurant servers on the dining room floor are dependent on the bar staff for serving drinks to patrons); (3) Reciprocal interdependence means that two groups or individuals rely on each other for the mutual supply of expertise and resources (e.g., a production department relies on the sales department for accurate forecasts and a stream of orders, while the sales department, in turn, relies on the production department for the supply of quality goods made in time to fill customer orders). In each case, dependence and the value of a group's expertise and resources for the organization as a whole, creates power differences across horizontally differentiated organizational groupings (Hickson et al., 1971).

Interdependence is a structural feature that not only leads an employee to experience accountability to others with whom a person is interdependent (Frink & Klimoski, 2004), but also is likely to stimulate multiple role enactment and involve concerns about power and control (Simpson & Carroll, 2008). It is likely that inter-group prestige and respect are relevant forms of reflected appraisal that are made salient in all forms of task inter-dependent relations, albeit for different reasons. We surmise that accountability is a key factor that leads people to seek reflecting respect from others and prestige vis-à-vis other groups in relation to their competent task role performance in upstream sequential inter-dependent relations. Conversely, the salience of such reflected appraisals may be reduced when the role performer seeks to take advantage of his upstream position over the dependent role sender for political reasons or in status competition. In pooled interdependent relations, competition for status and concerns with impression management may make respect in the eyes of pooled others a particularly salient type of reflected appraisal. This type of dynamic is likely to arise in conjunction with the performance of not just a task role but also an organizational citizen role (e.g., Bolino, 1999). Accountability for task role performance, in contrast, is likely to raise the salience of perceived support from the

superordinate unit (i.e., organizational headquarters) or person (i.e., supervisor) that provides common resources to all pooled others.

In cases where two role performers are reciprocally interdependent on each other's task accomplishments, their respective resources and expertise accord them a balance of power. As a result, we argue that in addition to accountability for competent role performance, enactment is likely to feature the performance of secondary roles that are used to construct identity, such as colleague, rival, citizen, or tyrant. For example, enacting a role of expert in conjunction with a role of colleague might involve displaying the requisite demeanor (Goffman, 1967), such as a confident display of technical know-how and concern for personal support. Enactment of the two roles is likely to make respect a salient reflected appraisal but involve scanning for different information cues from the role sender. As a result, the way reflected appraisals are perceived to meet potentially conflicting anticipated expectations from the role sender involve not just the assertion of power but also the accordance of esteem, in line with the role performer's identity project (Simpson & Carroll, 2008). In addition, perceptions of respect are likely to be made salient by both role performer and role sender in reciprocal task inter-dependent relations, where one's demeanor of expertise in a unique domain of knowledge may be countered by the other's deference to that expertise (Goffman, 1967). This situation illustrates the distinction between instrumental and symbolic role expectations and how they may simultaneously affect the salience of appraisal referents. Since inter-dependence operates at both the individual and group levels, the resulting subjective accountability may involve personal or representative role performances. Consequently, appraisals may involve individual or generalized referents, whose imagined evaluation is reflected either on the individual or on the group in which she is a member. Interdependence thus raises the salience of reflected appraisal for either party in a relation, for different reasons and in varying degrees, as well as at different levels of analysis.

Proposition 3: Reflected appraisal salience is contingent on the nature of the task interdependence between individuals or groups in the organization

Having outlined the architecture of positions and role relations that place employees in accountability and interdependence toward referents of various mirrors for reflected appraisal, the final question is: How do employees choose between different facets of this kaleidoscope as active agents that manage their identity?

REASONING THE “WHY” OF REFLECTED APPRAISAL

Reflected appraisal helps employees protect and validate their self-concept while satisfying fundamental human needs and motives (Rogers & Ashforth, 2014). Structural location furnishes the “constraining” side of the contextual forces that we argue make different referents salient for employees’ reflected appraisals. On the other side, we propose that employees also actively create and manage those appraisals by responding to structural constraints according to their self-motives. Since structural constraints erect what we have called a kaleidoscope of reflected appraisals, we propose that employees will navigate in which facet of that kaleidoscope they gaze based on the extent to which different role performances help satisfy their identity needs (Blumer, 1969). Drawing from past literature, we focus on the motives for control, self-enhancement and belonging, which are central to reflected appraisal formation (Dutton et al., 1994; Reis, 2008; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014). Following recent identity research we assume that there is no “master” motive (Kwang & Swann, 2010) in favor of the view that self-motives play out simultaneously during an encounter with a role-sender such that they interact with employees’ subjective experience of accountability and dependence upon that role sender.

Reflected appraisal enables greater control over the work environment

The motive for control concerns the ability to predict and influence referents in one’s social environment (Vorauer, 2006) and drives many applications of reflected appraisal, including perceived supervisor and organizational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), HR attributions (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015) and intergroup interaction (Vorauer, 2006). One advantage of reflected appraisal, from the employee’s perspective, is that knowing how a referent views him allows him to infer that referent’s intentions towards him (e.g., hostility) and to know where he stands relative to others in the social environment (Reis, 2008). In turn, this allows him to anticipate probable actions and events, thus reducing uncertainty. For example, organizational support theory argues that employees form reflected appraisals about the organization to determine the likelihood that they will be rewarded appropriately for the amount of effort they give (Eisenberger et al., 1986), using this information to validate their organizational membership and decide whether to continue performing the corresponding role. In addition, reflected appraisals, such as perceived supervisor support, help employees navigate situations in which organizational uncertainty is high because they can use it to infer the likelihood of receiving clarification about role expectations, for example during times of change or during a

crisis (Cole, Bruch, & Vogel, 2006; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994). In another context, if an employee in the sales department believes that the HR department (as a generalized referent) looks down upon her department, she may anticipate some difficulty in getting resources, new hires, or support from HR. Based on this belief, she is likely to change how she goes about trying to get the resources her sales department needs.

Reflected appraisal allows employees to protect their self-concept

The self-enhancement motive refers to individuals' desire to see themselves positively by affirming their self-concepts or by engaging in behavior to guard the self-concept against negative information (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Individuals seek out referents that will help them form positive appraisals while avoiding referents that foster negative ones. Individuals want to be part of groups, organizations, and roles that have high prestige and are widely well-regarded (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). At the same time, individuals value in-group member's opinions of them because it reflects their status within the group, enhancing their self-esteem (Fuller et al., 2006). In terms of the organizations' social structure, departmental and hierarchical divisions allow employees to differentiate themselves along such groupings which may be associated with different degrees of status. For example, being a member of the R&D department at a technology firm like Apple can be self-enhancing to the degree that employees believe other departments look enviously upon their department as central to the company's success. At the same time, members of other departments may be motivated to change their reflected appraisal if they believe that their department (e.g., accounting) is looked down upon by R&D or other referent departments.

Reflected appraisal helps employees feel accepted by their groups

The need to belong reflects the yearning for acceptance. It is a universal desire to have enduring positive and fulfilling interpersonal relationships in which individuals feel they are accepted and belong to the group or relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Reflected appraisal is central to felt belonging because it stems from a person's belief that referents like, respect and accept them. Reflected appraisals, such as perceived external prestige, satisfy belonging because they assess the extent to which organizational members feel accepted and esteemed by organizational outsiders. By contrast, employees of stigmatized organizations like arms dealers (Vergne, 2012) tend to experience negative prestige because they expect the public to disapprove of their organization. Negative appraisals undermine the need to belong because

individuals cannot form regular and meaningful relationships if they expect universal rejection (Matera, Verde, & Meringolo, 2015). Thus, if an employee believes that his Sales department is disparaged by the HR department or seen as inadequately performing by the production department, he may still satisfy his need for belonging by focusing on the respect he experiences by members of his own department.

DISCUSSION

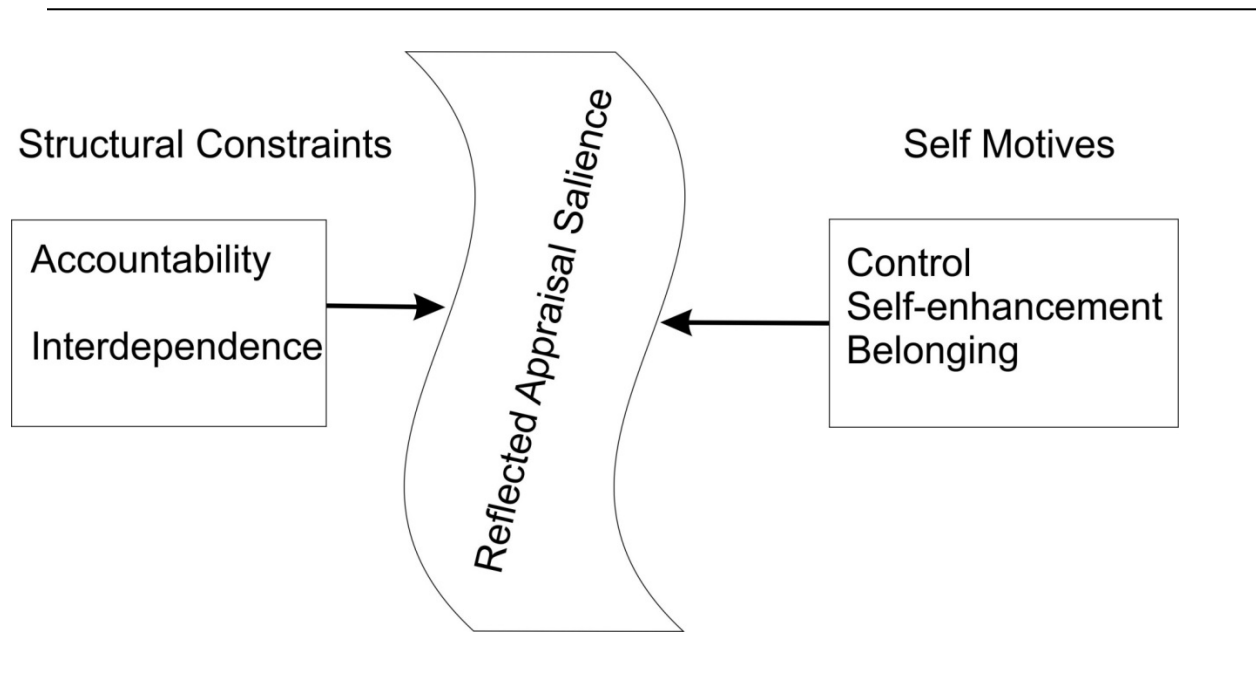
In attempting to answer our original question of which reflected appraisals are most salient and when, we conclude that there is no simple answer. Our work suggests that reflected appraisal is a product of forces external and internal to a given employee, represented by the structural constraints of the organizational environment and individual self-motives respectively (See Figure 3). These forces interact to make reflected appraisal salience dynamically tied to an employee's work role enactment which, we argue, is the key link between the person and the environment as a given employee interacts with diverse others in uniquely patterned interactions. Our main contribution to the organizational literature is the implication that reflected appraisal salience cannot be assumed stable across persons and situations, and that scholars must consider both forces simultaneously to understand how reflected appraisals function in organizations. In addition, this perspective on reflected appraisal represents a move from focusing on characteristics of the referent (e.g., the referent's leadership style or accessibility to resources) towards a more global consideration of contextual factors. As a result, we suggest the below propositions as a summary of the main thrust of our work:

Proposition 4: Reflected appraisal salience is not stable and varies as a function of an employee's role-relationship vis-à-vis multiple referents (i.e., accountability and interdependence) and the self-motives that those role-relationships satisfy.

Proposition 5: An employee is more likely to choose reflected appraisals about a specific referent when 1) she is accountable and dependent upon the referent, 2) she perceives that the referent's appraisal of her is positive, reduces uncertainty and communicates acceptance of her.

We suggest two streams of future research that can stem from our work. One possible stream concerns examining the relationship between routinized interactions at work and the salience of different reflected appraisals across work contexts. For example, service employees and internal boundary spanners may experience greater salience in their perceived respect or prestige because of their interactions with and anticipated role expectations from multiple internal or external organizational groups. Thus, these reflected appraisals may be more central to an employee's evaluation of her work-role performances than perceived supervisor or organizational support. By contrast, blue collar shop-floor-level workers may be more likely to focus on perceived

Figure 3
Force Field of Reflected Appraisal



supervisor support, while middle managers and administrative employees may be more oriented toward perceived organizational support given that their role expectations make different reflected appraisals about different referents more relevant to the evaluation of their role-performances. As a result, we encourage organizational scholars to conduct comparative studies of how select reflected appraisals relate to relevant outcome variables across occupational or professional groupings, at different times of the administrative cycle, or in the context of inter-group organizational relations. We consider the latter context particularly fruitful for an expanded investigation of respect and prestige, providing a vehicle for more thoroughly

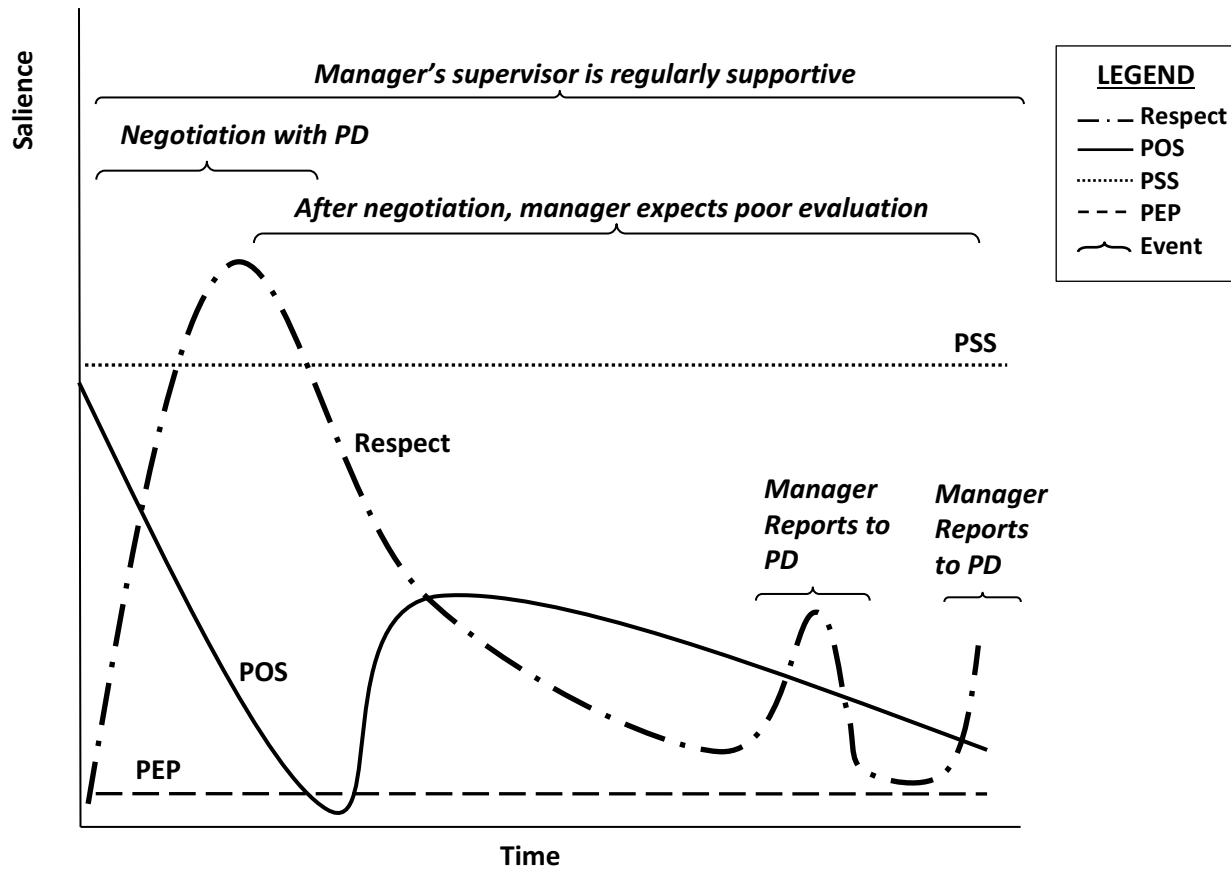
exploring what we have called indirect reflected appraisal and generalized referents *within* organizational settings. This approach has been recently advocated by Rogers and Ashforth (2014) for better understanding respect, however we encourage doing so for all reflected appraisals discussed in this paper.

Second, we advocate closer attention to the micro-foundations of reflected appraisal, encouraging OB scholars to consider the daily or weekly waxing and waning of different perceptions. The conceptual tools we have furnished in this paper can serve as a foundation for such an analysis, directing attention to task flows, chains of accountability, or situationally transient motivation as key factors that may influence toward whom employees will look for self-relevant appraisals, where they are located when doing so, and why they choose between competing alternatives in a given situation.

To end our discussion, we illustrate these points by re-considering our earlier example about the senior accounting manager, for which we provide a visual representation of how her reflected appraisal salience might vary as a function of interactions and events (see Figure 4). To begin, if the manager is negotiating an agreement about production plans with a member of the purchasing department (i.e., a particularized referent), the respect she believes is accorded to her by that role-sender and the image she construes the purchasing department (i.e., as a generalized referent) to have of her own department may become more salient mirrors for a reflected appraisal than her perceptions of the organization's support (i.e., personified referent), assuming she perceives a greater dependence upon the purchasing department for resources than upon her organization during the negotiation time. In Figure 4, we present this as a gradually increasing respect salience (under the event "Negotiation with PD"), which decreases as negotiations near completion. Furthermore, given that the accounting manager may perceive herself as part of the organization, the purchasing department's status as an out-group may threaten the manager's perception that she can understand and predict the behavior of members in that department as well as their opinions of her during negotiations (Frey & Tropp, 2006). Imagining how the purchasing department sees her role-performance allows the accounting manager to infer that department's intentions towards her and her own department (e.g., hostile versus friendly) as well as where she stands relative to others in the social structure (Reis, 2008). Thus, although Figure 4 shows a decrease in salience of respect, the resource dependence inherent in her role

enactment may interact with her motive for control to uphold that salience such that it dips later than what is presented in the figure.

Figure 4
Fluctuations in Reflected Appraisal Salience Across Time
as a Function of Interactions and Events



Note: The following acronyms were used: Purchasing Department (PD) Perceived Organizational Support (POS), Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS), Perceived External Prestige (PEP)

Other structural conditions may also motivate the accounting manager to instead focus on positive mirrors in the organizational kaleidoscope outside of the purchasing department simply for reasons of self-enhancement. The figure shows this in terms of perceived organizational support's increased salience, which levels off as other events occur. Specifically, if the accounting manager expects the organization to evaluate her role performance positively, she may favor this mirror over that of the purchasing department if the evaluation is performed as part of a formal departmental assessment with diminished identifiability, as opposed to a more

intimate in-person inquiry with an upper management representative. Under other conditions, it is also possible that the accounting manager neglects her reflected appraisal about the other department member altogether in order to preserve her self-concept. This may occur if (1) she expects that the purchasing department's evaluation of her role is negative and, (2) there are no organizational mechanisms that require her to formally account for her role performance to members of the purchasing department. Thus, in Figure 4, respect salience spikes quickly but dips once the manager expects poor evaluation from the purchasing department. Having said this, it is important to note that we present the salience of perceived external prestige as stable and low because all interactions are internal to the organization. Furthermore, we also present the salience of perceived supervisor support as stable under the assumption that her superior is regularly supportive throughout their interactions. Therefore, perceived supervisor support is generally more salient in the manager's thoughts than perceived organizational support (Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, & Allen, 2007).

Finally, after negotiations have been concluded, a policy change in the accounting manager's role may require her to formally document and provide detailed reports of how she used the purchasing department's resources. We suspect this would undermine the intimacy of her role enactment vis-à-vis the department member while also increasing frequency of interaction. The change alters the structural constraints within which the accounting manager can develop and negotiate a meaningful relationship with the purchasing department, affecting the way she may satisfy her need for belonging. Figure 4 illustrates this by showing that, despite the manager's expectations of a poor evaluation, the respect-salience spikes twice more with each formal reporting event. Overall, we illustrate that how accountability is implemented in the organization will undermine or encourage the accounts manager's sense of belonging, where she can best satisfy that motive within the structural limits imposed on her role performances and, how she can obtain information about her role performance (e.g., formally versus informally).

Conclusion

Our work raises new challenges and opens up new possibilities for OB scholarship on some of the selected constructs discussed above, as well as for other types of reflected appraisals. Figure 4 implies that reflected appraisal salience is a very personal experience for employees, such that no two salience diagrams will be alike. Moreover, the illustrations we provide suggest the potential importance of tracing temporal variability in reflected appraisal salience during

interactions that can have significant implications for organizational costs and employee psychological well-being. Thus, we believe that plotting salience diagrams for specific occupations or roles will show important patterns, allowing scholars to make general predictions related to specific outcome variables and bring to light new insights for organizational behavior. Scholars who prepare their research designs for investigating such constructs as perceived organizational support or perceived external prestige should ask contextual questions about where or when they obtain their measurement, and who constitutes their study population, as previously advocated by Johns (2006). In addition, we suggest that OB scholars adopt different types of research methods, such as diary studies, ethnographies or event-studies to more thoroughly explore the empirical implications of our ideas.

ARTICLE 2

“I Am how You See Me”, “I Am how They See Us”: Viewing Identification through Respect and Prestige

ABSTRACT

We examine the concurrent impact that employee perceptions of respect and external prestige have on identification with the supervisor-subordinate relationship and organizational identification. Separating measurement for each focus and collecting data from student athletes in varsity sports teams, we find that the matching principle largely prevails: prestige and respect focused on the relationship focus predicts relational identification while respect and prestige focused on the collective predict organizational identification. While prestige was the better predictor for both foci, relational respect also directly affected organizational identification. We conclude that cognitive categorization and impersonalized bonding make prestige an important, if largely overlooked predictor of identification in organizations. In addition, we deduce that affective personalized bonding through respect contributes to identification convergence.

ARTICLE 2

“I Am how You See Me”, “I Am how They See Us”: Viewing Identification through Respect and Prestige

Organizational scholars have long been interested in identification because people’s sense of who they are is inexorably linked to how they relate to collectives in which they work or other people with whom they perform tasks (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). At the same time, people’s sense of who they are is partly a function of how they see themselves appraised in the eyes of the social world around them, including collective and individual others (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Frey & Tropp, 2008). Indeed, classic theory suggests an intricate connection between the social units with which people identify and how they believe evaluation of those social units reflects back onto them by virtue of identification (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934).

A key aspect of identification in organizations is the focus that people seek out for attachment. A focus can be any human social aggregate such as a dyad, a work group, an organization, or a profession. In a given social system, different social aggregates tend to be nested within each other, such as a worker dyad is nested within a department, which is nested within the organization (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). We can then imagine multiple foci of identification within an organization that make up a montage of looking glasses in which individual members see reflections about who they are at increasing aggregates of inclusiveness. Given this image, we ask our key research question about the nested nature of different reflected appraisals that mirror identity-relevant information from inside and outside various social units with which individuals identify.

Two different sources of such information are prestige and respect. Research has shown that information about what we believe others think of our work organization can lead us to bask in the reflected glory of perceived *prestige* or feel the signified indignity of imputed disrepute (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Dutton et al., 1994). Similarly, information about the degree of *respect* one believes exists in the eyes of work colleagues and superiors is associated with feelings of pride or ignominy (Bartel et al., 2012). We therefore ask 1) How are the prestige and respect experienced at multiple nested foci of identification related to each other? 2) Do reflected appraisals about a given social aggregate relate only to a person’s identification with that same social aggregate or do they spill over across nested foci?

To answer these questions, we turned to the literature on convergence, an emerging area of research that examines how multiple foci of identification in organizations are structurally nested. For example, one's supervisor-subordinate relationship is nested within one's membership in the employer organization (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). A central idea of convergence is that identifying with the former can foster and be fostered by the latter because of the structural connection between the two foci. However, there are conflicting findings about how nested foci of identification relate to each other (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008) and qualitative differences in how people identify with different foci (Vough, 2012).

The work presented in this article contributes to the identification literature by showing how respect and prestige act as different pathways for identification within and across foci. We build on recent work that explores respect and prestige together (Hameed et al., 2013) and expand on it by specifying that different forms of prestige and respect must also be included. A second contribution is that we examine the simultaneous impact of prestige and respect on two nested foci of identification in organizations: the supervisor-subordinate relationship and the organization as a whole. We therefore directly address He and Brown's (2013) concerns about the lack of knowledge regarding how organizational identification relates to different individual identities (in this case, the relational identity). Toward that end, we introduce an innovation in reflected appraisals by conceptualizing relational prestige as the perception individuals have about how their involvement in the superior-subordinate relationship reflects back upon them by virtue of how others think about that relationship. A third contribution is that we shed light on the fundamental question about whether organizational scholars need to distinguish between foci in the first place (Ashforth et al., 2008) and what this means for understanding identification.

In the following sections, we discuss the two foci of identification being studied, followed by an explanation of perceived prestige and respect, and finally how reflected appraisals about each focus relate to identification. We then present an empirical inquiry into prestige and respect with multiple foci of identification in the context of university varsity sports teams.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identification in Organizations

Social identification refers to a person's "perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21), and is a source of important cognitive, emotional and motivational outcomes, such as self-knowledge, self-esteem, and affiliation

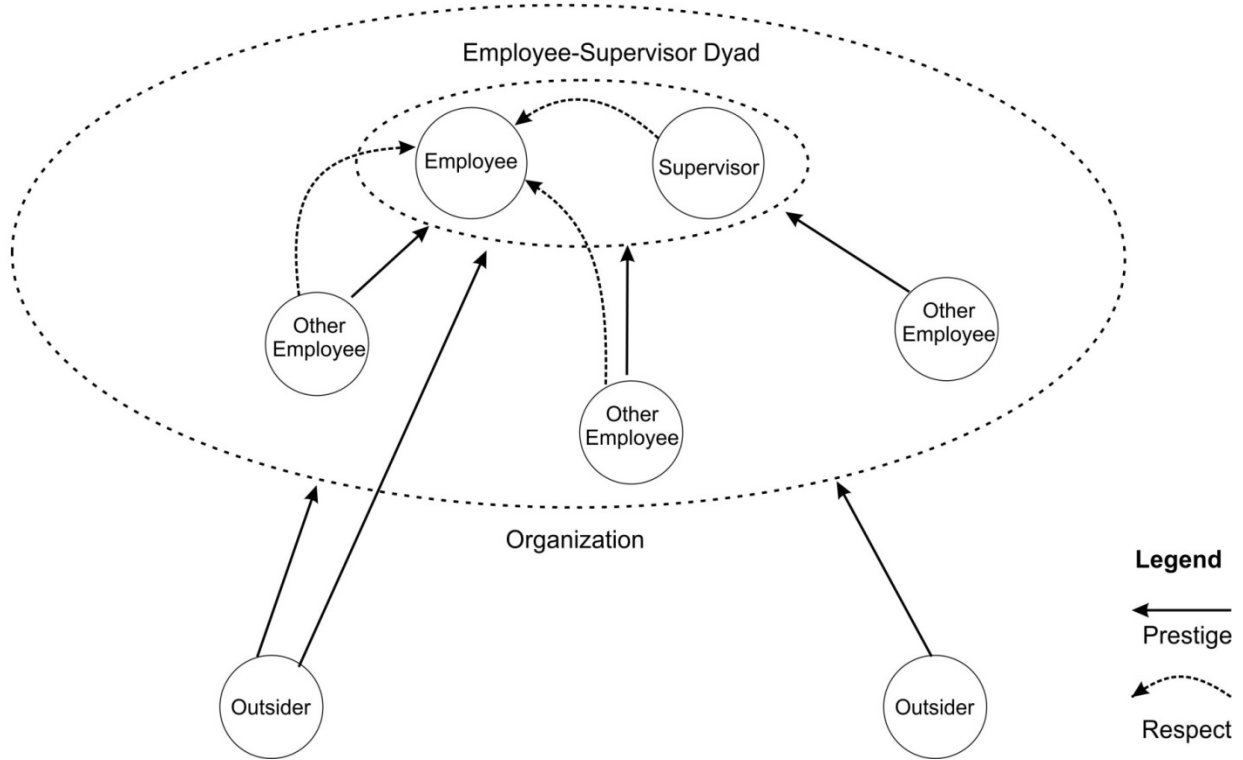
(Ashforth et al., 2008). Organizations comprise multiple human aggregates that provide individuals with a focus for social identification and self-definition. The two structurally nested foci of identification we examine are the superior-subordinate relationship and the organization. Figure 1 presents the structural relationship between the two foci, showing how each focus is a separate target for respect and prestige perceptions by individuals who are not part of the focus (i.e., other employees and organizational outsiders). These foci also parallel the relational and collective elements of identity specified by Brewer and Gardner (1996). Individuals can identify with each focus separately or easily switch between them (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). For example, a worker can identify with her manager in a performance review or with her organization when dealing with external stakeholders.

Relational identification is “the extent to which one defines oneself in terms of a given role-relationship” (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Here, the focus of identification is not the other person but the interpersonal aggregate formed by the role each person plays vis-à-vis the other. This keeps each individual’s personal identity intact while expanding on it (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). At the workplace, any relationship can be the focus for identification, but not all relationships are valued equally and the relationship with one’s supervisor is among the most prominent.

Organizational identification refers to one’s self-definition as an organizational member, involving a cognitive categorization in the collective and a positive evaluation of membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Organizational identification thus involves nominal group membership: The individual employee sees herself in a depersonalized way as one of many other members in the organizational collective and defines herself in terms of what it means to be a prototypical member of the organizational group (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Organizational identification also involves inter-group comparison in the sense that the value of organizational membership is derived in part from the contrast the organization provides to other organizations.

Altogether, by defining themselves in part as role players in a relationship and as members in a collective, individuals construct a sense of who they are, where they belong, and what their place is in the social world. Of course, there are many different organizations and a myriad of relationships within them that can serve as a means for self-definition. We next consider some of the factors that influence how attractive a given focus is to the individual, making it a potential candidate for identification.

Figure 1:
Prestige and Respect as Internal and External Sources of Reflected Appraisal for two Foci of Identification



Antecedents of identification

Perceived external prestige. An established construct in organization studies, perceived external prestige (henceforth called prestige) refers to how an individual organizational member believes outsiders view his organization (Dutton et al., 1994). The construct does not refer to an aggregated perception by all organizational members but how each member independently views the reflected appraisal mirrored onto the collective. Thus, Figure 1 shows that individual “outsiders” perceive the organization as prestigious. Research has shown that prestige satisfies several self-motives and is an important antecedent of identification (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Carmeli, 2005).

First, prestige satisfies the motive for self-enhancement because individuals seek to be part of a collective that helps them maintain a positive self-image and esteem (Dutton et al., 1994). When prestige is high (i.e., the belief that outsiders see the organization as attractive) individuals can bask in the reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976), which makes them more likely to integrate organizational membership into their self-concept. Second, prestige satisfies the need for self-

continuity because alignment between outsider assessment and one's self-perceptions permits the maintenance of a coherent self-concept under the assumption of positive organizational identification (Dutton et al., 1994). Third, prestige satisfies the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) because it reflects whether individuals feel they can maintain regular and quality relationships with outsiders and the general public due to their association with the organization.

In sum, individuals use prestige perceptions to learn about themselves through others' eyes as they make sense of who they are and want to be. Prestige can have both positive and negative implications for the self because individuals often take for granted that it reflects upon who they are regardless of the reflected appraisal's accuracy (Wallace & Tice, 2012).

However, prestige research has been generally limited to the organization as the primary focus of interest (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006). Other human aggregates that serve as foci of identification have rarely been used to model prestige, a notable exception being the work by Kulik and Perry (2008). These scholars examined HR managers' prestige perceptions, focusing on how their HR unit was seen by department outsiders, before and after strategic initiatives were instituted in the organization. Given the burgeoning work on multiple identifications, we believe the basic premise behind prestige applies to the relational level as well (See Figure 1). We propose that individuals form perceptions about how their important relationships (e.g., with the supervisor) are seen by others outside that relationship (i.e., relational outsiders).

Perceived relational prestige is a relatively new idea that, while implicit in some works (e.g., Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), is under-explored in the organizational literature. However, evidence suggests that it is just as important to identification as perceived collective prestige and deserves more research attention. Given that roles are socially constructed, part of how individuals understand what it means to be in a role-relationship depends on how they believe others evaluate this role-relationship in terms of prototypical role behavior (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Moreover, identification with a focus increases a person's expectations that others will judge them in terms of their connection to that focus, whether it be a collective (Frey & Tropp, 2006) or a relationship (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Relational prestige also provides an alternative route to self-enhancement by basking in the reflected glory (Cialdini et al., 1976), particularly when one's relationship partner maintains a high status. Anecdotally, PhD students often identify with

the supervisor-student relationship in reference to their supervisor's reputation for providing supportive graduate training, facilitating academic achievement, and a collaborative rapport.

We offer a working definition of *relational prestige* as a reflected appraisal that concerns what individuals believe focal outsiders think about the role relationship they maintain with their supervisor at work. Like perceived external prestige, this reflected appraisal is conceptualized at the individual level and emphasizes the generalized nature of role relationships: Relational prestige is the reflected appraisal an employee casts onto herself by virtue of the type of supervisory relations she believes the manager is seen to maintain with all of his subordinates.

We assume that the motivational underpinnings of perceived prestige function and foster identification similarly for different foci. Given the matching principle that antecedents at one level tend to be more strongly associated with outcomes at the same level, we expect that prestige associated with one focus will positively correlate with identification at that same focus.

Hypothesis 1a: Relational prestige will positively correlate with relational identification

Hypothesis 1b: Organizational prestige will positively correlate with organizational identification

Respect. Like prestige, perceived respect is a type of reflected appraisal in which individuals form beliefs about how others see them. We derive our view of perceived respect [henceforth called respect] from Grover's (2014: 10) definition of "respectful behavior [as] the manifestation of believing another person has value. In organizations, appraisal respect is the approbation from work performance and recognition respect is the quality of interpersonal treatment". Therefore, we define perceived respect as an organizational insider's perceptions that one or more other organizational members believe she has value because of her performance-based contributions to the workplace. Respect may be experienced as being accorded from specific relationship partners - *supervisor respect* in our study - or from organizational members, called *organizational respect* (Grover, 2014). Hence, Figure 1 shows that an employee can be respected by the supervisor as well as "other employees" who are outside the focal relationship.

Respect impacts identification because feelings of respect signal acceptance by others and spawn the expectation of recurring quality interactions with them (Bartel et al., 2012; Blader & Tyler, 2009). As a correlate of identification, respect thus plays a part in meeting people's need to belong (Bartel et al., 2012). We argue that respect augments attachment to a relationship or

collective because it mirrors to the individual that one or more other members of the focal human aggregate share a positive assessment of his involvement, thus encouraging self-categorization.

Respect is an evaluative construct that assesses an individual's sense of reflected worth based on her unique performance and contributions, independently of the performance attributable to the larger social aggregate in which the individual works. This independent reflection of worth makes a supervisor relationship or an organization a likely focus for identification because it obtains from the perspective of someone who is herself part of the social aggregate. Given that respect also builds the anticipation of high quality interaction with those other members of the relationship or organization, it should encourage identification because it builds a self-schema of high involvement with other members of the focal aggregate (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Following the matching principle, feeling respected by one's supervisor should foster relational identification, whereas feeling respected organization members in general should foster organizational identification.

Hypothesis 2a: Supervisor respect will be positively correlated with relational identification

Hypothesis 2b: Organizational respect will positively correlate with organizational identification

Looking back at our discussion of reflected appraisal for different foci, we distinguish between prestige and respect in terms of whether the source of identity-relevant information is internal or external to the focal social aggregate. Respect concerns how individuals believe they are seen by others who are also members in the focal aggregate (henceforth called focal insiders) whereas prestige concerns how non-members view the human aggregate, including all of its members (henceforth called focal outsiders). Respect thus mirrors the view from inside a relationship or collective while prestige mirrors the view from the outside.

Thus far we argued for the effects of prestige and respect on identification, and that these perceptions can be about multiple foci. However, the literature lacks an explanation of whether identification can be fostered through reflected appraisals targeted at different foci. Here, the notion of convergence helps explain the cross-focal impacts on identification.

Convergence of identifications

Convergence refers to the phenomenon by which identifications at multiple foci - that are structurally nested within each other - are positively correlated (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). It

furnishes an alternative to the matching principle for theorizing about why and how strongly a person's identification with the supervisor relationship and the organization may be related to each other. Sluss and Ashforth (2008) proposed social, cognitive, affective, and behavioural mechanisms to explain convergence.

First, relational identification may generalize to collective identification because of *social influence*. When individuals identify with the subordinate-manager relationship, they become susceptible to the manager's perceptions and values, which are assumed to represent those held by the organization (Blader & Tyler, 2009). Once individuals identify with the manager-subordinate relationship, they are more inclined to identify with the organization, provided they believe the manager identifies with it as well. Second, individuals may anthropomorphize from the relational partner (i.e., the manager) to the collective, which will increase collective identification because individuals "*cognitively* transpose qualities of the role relationship [...] onto the organization" (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008: 813). Giving human-like qualities to the organization allows individuals to feel that they can control their own fates by predicting how this otherwise abstract entity will behave towards them (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007). Third, and using the same logic, individuals transfer *affect* from a relationship to the collective when the two are connected through structural nesting. Relational identification should increase the chances that individuals perceive and feel positively toward the collective, fostering organizational identification. Finally, Sluss and Ashforth (2008: 814) refer to *behavioral sensemaking*, in which "the individual must 'sensemake' (i.e., engage in a reflective process) and attribute the meaning and alignment of behaviors across the identification [foci]." By engaging in sensemaking, individuals interpret their behaviors that enact identification with one focus by reference to how they should act toward another focus. Because the individual is motivated to maintain self-consistency, this sense-making thus gives rise to a mutual reinforcement of identification across different foci by making behaviours enacted toward them consistent with each other. Taken together, the conceptual ideas underlying the convergence framework suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Relational identification is positively associated with organizational identification

Sluss and Ashforth's (2008) mechanisms emphasize the forces that encourage convergence and compatibility of identification across foci. Given our focus on identification with the

superior-subordinate relationship and with the organization, we argue that the association between them proposed above may be predicated on the prior occurrence of relational respect and relational prestige. That is, following our first two hypotheses, we argue that relational identification may mediate an association between relational respect and relational prestige with organizational identification.

We propose that the experience of supervisor respect may stimulate relational identification as well as organizational identification because respect raises the simultaneous awareness of both the relationship and the collective in which the relationship is nested. When an individual believes that her supervisor respects her, she experiences acceptance by an important representative of the organizational collective (Spears et al., 2006). Respect perceptions may encourage a cognitive association and affective transfer between nested identity foci because one perceives personal enhancement through acceptance by and positive anticipated interaction with that representative. Recall further that personal identities are integral to the role performances underlying relational identification and, as a result, identifying with a supervisory relationship expands on that personal identity (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). The individual can now see herself as both an individual in the relationship and as an individual member in the collective (Frey & Tropp, 2006), activating a connection between the two foci of identification and encouraging behavioral sense making. Hence, an effect of relational respect on organizational identification should be mediated by relational identification.

Hypothesis 4a: Supervisor respect is positively associated with organizational identification

Hypothesis 4b: Relational identification mediates the association between supervisor respect and organizational identification

We premise convergence through relational prestige in reference to social attraction created by depersonalized belonging (Hogg & Hardie, 1991). Individuals experience two kinds of complementary belongingness (Ashforth, 2001; Hogg & Hardie, 1991). First, personalized belonging is based on interpersonal attraction with other individuals and derives from a sense of being liked and having strong personal bonds. Second, depersonalized belonging is based on categorical social attraction, created by sharing a common identity with others, regardless of any interaction with them. A depersonalized bond is based on the assumption that others in the shared identity category are similar and share the same beliefs and values as the self.

Relational prestige may thus promote organizational identification by fostering a sense of depersonalized belonging to the collective. Both the superior-subordinate relationship and the organization within which that relationship is nested have an identity that is separate from the individuals that comprise them. This structure allows individuals to bond with either identity by virtue of nominal association and without the need to build interpersonal bonds. Positive outsider appraisals that reflect onto the supervisor relationship should foster relational identification that is then transferred cognitively and affectively to the collective focus because supervisors are often seen as representative of the beliefs and values of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

Hypothesis 5a: Relational prestige is positively associated with organizational identification

Hypothesis 5b: Relational identification mediates the relationship between relational prestige and organizational identification

METHODOLOGY

Sample

We tested our hypotheses in a sample of varsity sports teams at a large Canadian University. We believe varsity sports teams provide an interesting and relevant context for our purposes because (1) Student athletes are in their prime of socialization, a time at which interpersonal relationships to peers and mentors are very important; (2) varsity teams compete against other schools, creating a status system in a well-defined community that serves as reference points for inter-group comparisons; (3) varsity teams have a clearly defined role structure and operate relatively independently, representing a well-structured system of nested human aggregates; (4) the interdependent nature of team sports should raise the salience of connections between relational and collective social structures.

We collected data from eight different teams of male or female student athletes on two occasions of team practice during the off-season. The delay between the first and second survey was between 3 and 15 days, depending on practice schedules. Of the original 196 players that completed the time 1 survey, 131 players (67%) completed the time 2 survey and another 13 participants were deleted due to incomplete data. The final sample comprised 118 players (60% response rate), including 27 women and 91 men. In order to ensure attrition did not compromise the data we compared players who responded at both time 1 and time 2 with those players who

only responded at time 1 (Goodman & Blum, 1996) and found no differences in demographics or in their responses to the time 1 survey (i.e., relational identification and perceived coach respect).

Procedure

Surveys were administered on-site and in person by the lead investigator at the beginning or end of a practice session. To minimize common method bias, we separated measurement of variables conceptualized at different foci of identification temporally into two administration times (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). The survey at Time 1 measured players' perceived coach respect, perceived relational image, and relational identification. The Time 2 survey measured organizational identification, perceived external prestige, and perceived organizational respect. In addition to the main variables, the Time 1 survey also collected information about demographic and player status (e.g., whether they were regular starters in games). We also varied the scale properties whenever possible, using different scale anchors or number of scale points. All data were collected anonymously, using players' birth dates on both measurements to match surveys across time 1 and time 2. We emphasized that the University would not have access to individual surveys.

Measures

Specifying foci of Identification. All teams were united under the same organizational banner, which we call "The Canadian Juggernauts" in order to preserve anonymity. According to the coaches and the head of the university's Athletics Division, The Juggernauts had an umbrella identity that was separate from the university and included all teams. The nested structure of separate foci was confirmed by the language players and coaches used to describe their team, using such terms as "Men's Juggernauts Hockey" or "Women's Juggernauts Soccer", but referring simply to the "Canadian Juggernauts" when speaking of the organization as a whole. This linguistic distinction reinforced our belief that the coach-player relational identity was nested within each team and within the overall organizational identity, and that the organization as a focus for identification was defined and separate from the team-based group identities. Because our focus was on organizational identification, not work group identification, we operationalized our measurement of all key variables focusing on the collective in terms of the "Canadian Juggernauts" as a whole, rather than individual teams.

Organizational identification (Time 2). We measured organizational identification using Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item measure. Participants rated statements on a 5-point scale

ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). A sample item was “the Canadian Juggernaut’s successes are my successes”. One item was removed because it did not apply well to the sports context. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measures was 0.85

Relational identification (Time 1). We measured relational identification by adapting Sluss et al.’s (2012) four-item measure. Participants rated their agreement with statements about their relationship with the head coach on a 5-point scale. An example item is “my relationship with my head coach is important to how I see myself”. The Cronbach’s alpha was .80.

Perceived external prestige (Time 2). We adapted Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) measure of perceived external prestige to make it appropriate for varsity sports organizations. The measures consisted of eight items on a response scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). An example item is “People in the sports community think highly of the Canadian Juggernauts”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.78.

Perceived relational prestige (Time 1). We adapted six items from Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) measure of perceived external prestige by changing the focus of the original measure from the organization to the working relationship players had with their head coach (see Sluss et al., 2012). We excluded two items because they were semantically or theoretically inappropriate for the relational focus. Two example items are “People in the sports community think highly of working with my head coach” and “Having a working relationship with this head coach does not have a good reputation in the sports community.” We removed two additional items from the scale that did not cluster well with the others, possibly because they referenced a different outside audience (i.e., the general public, rather than the sports community). The final four item scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78.

Perceived supervisor respect (Time 1). We adapted Blader and Tyler's (2009) measure of respect, which measures perceived respect for one’s contributions to the workplace and is consistent with our focus on appraisal respect (Grover, 2014). Players rated the extent to which their coach held particular beliefs about the player. An example belief was “The head coach thinks it is difficult to replace you”. Responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal). The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.93.

Perceived organizational respect (Time 2). Similarly, we adapted Blader and Tyler's (2009) measure of respect using the Canadian Juggernauts as the focus. Therefore, we assessed whether players felt respected by the members of the organization as a whole and asked respondents to

rate the extent to which players and staff members of the Canadian Juggernauts held specific beliefs about them. An example belief was “Players and staff members of the Canadian Juggernauts appreciate your unique contributions to the Canadian Juggernauts”. Responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal). The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.92.

Control variables. We measured several variables that we believed might affect players’ identification and reflected appraisals, including seniority on the team measured as the number of seasons played, team status as a regular starter, age, and gender.

Data Analysis

The structure of the varsity sports organization and the way we collected our data created the strong possibility that team-level factors may have systematically affected the athletes’ responses to our questions. However, several factors led us to conclude that a multi-level analysis was not appropriate for our study. Most importantly, our theory is conceptualized at the individual level, with identification and reflected appraisal being premised on personal cognitive and affective forces. Second, even if some aspects of external prestige reflect a collective level construct, differences in visibility between teams were too large (e.g., men’s football versus women’s rugby) for collecting adequate data using unobtrusive measures, such as news coverage. While aggregation within teams was still a possibility and some differences in means and variances of our study variables existed across several teams, response rates varied greatly and were small for some teams (e.g., men’s rugby response rate was 16 %). Given that we had only eight teams participate in the study, a multi-level analysis would have significantly suffered from lack of statistical power and inadequate collective level representativeness.

In order to carry out analyses at the individual level, despite team level differences in the data and the threat of within-team autocorrelation of error terms, we standardized all variables within teams by computing z-scores to use in all subsequent analyses (Lamertz, 2006). This normalization removed differences in means and standard deviations that were attributable to team membership while still retained the within-team variability of individual responses. Table 1 presents the final means and correlations of the variables.

We used structural equation modeling (AMOS 23) to simultaneously test multiple hypotheses. Due to concerns with the size of our sample ($n=118$) and the number of manifest indicators to be used (36 items), we used aggregate individual scale scores for all our study variables and estimated latent factor loading as well as residual error variance parameters using

data from the reliability analysis. Following Settoon, Bennett, and Liden (1996) and Moorman, Blakely, and Niehoff (1998), we first averaged respondents' individual scores on all items for each of our variables' scales. We then treated each average as a single manifest indicator in the path analysis. Second, we set each manifest indicator's factor loading on its corresponding latent factor to the product of (one minus the square root of the reliability coefficient) and the variance of observed means of the items in each scale. Finally, we set each manifest indicator's error term to the square root of the corresponding scale's reliability. This procedure fixes the measurement-error-related terms of the latent construct in line with the scale's reliability estimates. Given our small sample size, this helps reduce the number of parameters the program must estimate.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients and Correlations

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Relational identification (time 1)	3.31	.91	.80					
2. Organizational identification (time 2)	4.1	.03	.19**	.85				
3. Perceived relational prestige (time 1)	3.61	.83	.34**	.16	.78			
4. Perceived external Prestige (time 2)	3.56	.57	.10	.40**	.18	.78		
5. Perceived supervisor respect (time 1)	4.78	1.25	.24**	.30**	.12	.11	.93	
6. Perceived organizational respect (time 2)	5.16	1.03	.17	.36**	.13	.21*	.24**	.92

Note. The means are taken from the untransformed data to show differences between measures; ** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed).

RESULTS

The first model examined the matching principle and tested hypotheses one and two that reflected appraisals on the relational and collective focus predicted identification with the supervisor and the organization, respectively. *A priori*, we included the control variables of *starter* and *seasons* played in order to account for differences in identity concerns related to socialization (Zhu, Tatachari, & Chattopadhyay, 2016), and intragroup status (de Cremer & Tyler, 2005). After an initial run of the data, we examined the modification indices and residual covariances, identifying several correlations among and between latent factors and control

variables that we decided to free, given a reasonable conceptual justification. We flagged modification indices greater than 10 because these were most likely improve model fit (Byrne, 2010). We also examined statistically significant residual covariances (i.e. $p < .05$) for overall impact on fit. As a result, we included an association between starter *and* relational prestige, and starter *and* supervisor respect, given that a coach’s decision to start a player signals respect and status (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). In addition, we let the path between supervisor respect and organizational respect vary freely based on the assumption that, in employees’ minds, a supervisor’s respect for an employee symbolizes how other team members will view him (Tyler, DeGoey, & Smith, 1996).

Testing alternative structural models

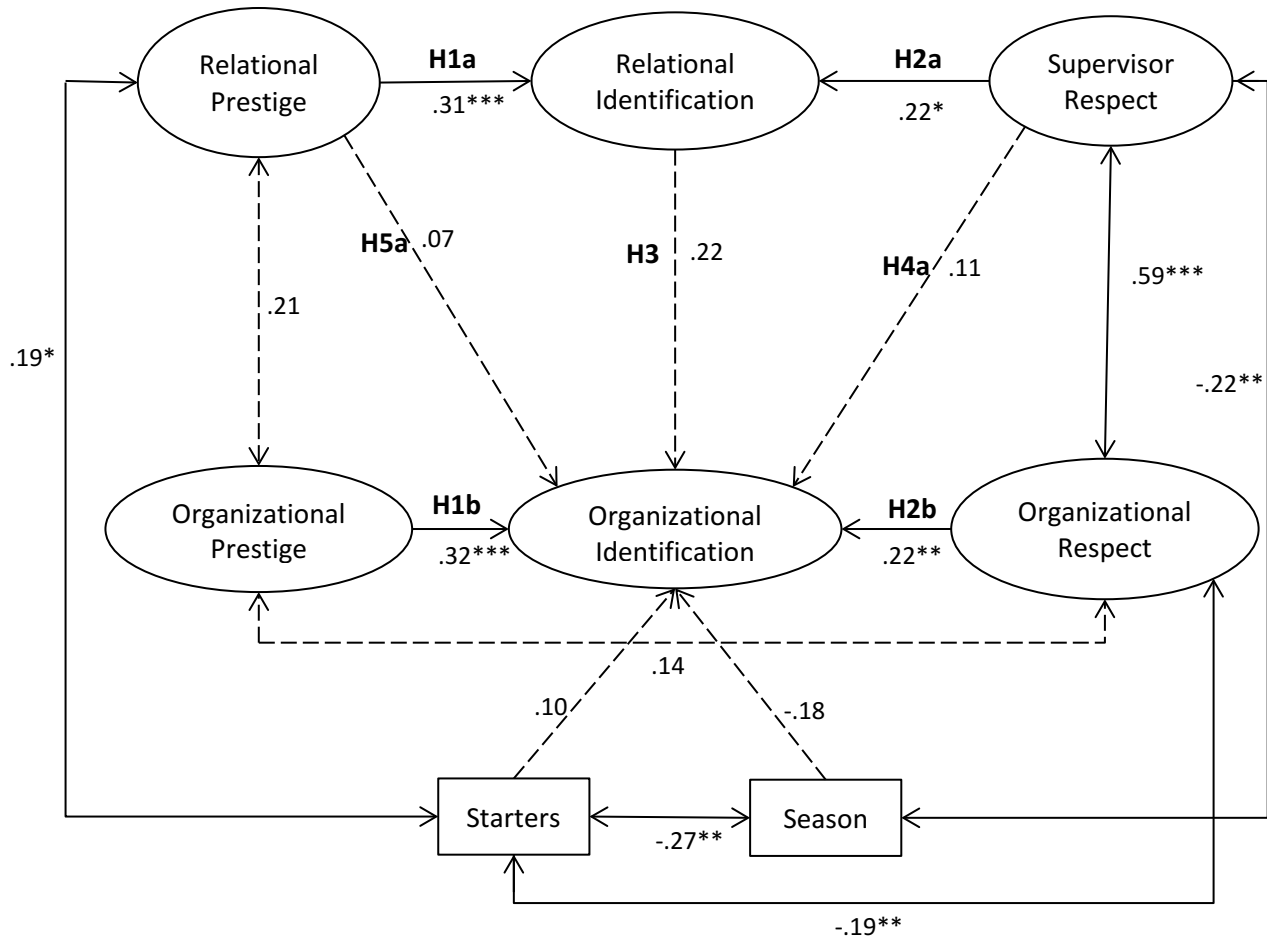
Table 2 presents the goodness of fit indices for the first and all subsequent models we tested. Figure 2 presents the results of the final model, which included all hypothesized paths. Table 2 shows that Model 1 yielded excellent fit indices, providing full support to hypotheses one and two and supporting the matching principle for predicting multi-foci identification. All direct effects in this model were significant: (1) Relational prestige to relational identification ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$) (2) supervisor respect to relational identification ($\beta = .22$, $p < .05$) (3) organizational prestige to organizational identification ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$) (4) organizational respect to organizational identification ($\beta = .29$, $p < .01$).

	χ^2	<i>df</i>	GFI	CFI	SRMR	TLI	RMSEA
Alternative Model 1 (<i>Matching principle</i>)	10.07	15	.980	1.00	.061	1.08	.00
Alternative Model 2 (<i>Convergence</i>)	7.70	14	.984	1.00	.055	1.10	.00
Alternative Model 3 (<i>Cross-level dynamics</i>)	8.02	13	.984	1.00	.054	1.09	.00
Alternative Model 4 (<i>Full Hypothesized model</i>)	6.76	12	.986	1.00	.052	1.10	.00
Independence model	149.30**	28	.742	.00		.00	.19

** $p < 0.01$

GFI, goodness of fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; SRMR, Standardized root mean square residual; TLI, Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation

Figure 2
Overview of Alternative Model 4 With All Paths Included



*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001;
 significant path —>, non-significant path - ->

We examined all subsequent models in comparison to the matching hypothesis from Model 1 using a nested-models logic by sequentially freeing additional parameters to examine our other hypotheses and using chi-square difference tests to verify significant improvements in fit. Model 2 in Table 2 introduced the convergence hypothesis into the analysis and tested hypothesis 3 that relational identification is positively associated with organizational identification. Model 2 did not significantly improve fit ($\Delta \chi^2=2.37, \Delta df=1; n.s$); the direct effect of relational identification on organizational identification was not significant ($\beta = .122, p > .05$) and Hypothesis 3 was therefore not supported. In Model 3 we added direct effects from relational prestige and supervisor respect separately to organizational identification, testing hypotheses 4a and 5a.

Model 3 did not include a direct effect from relational identification to organizational identification and also did not significantly improve fit beyond model 1 ($\Delta \chi^2=2.05$, $\Delta df=2$; n.s). Both direct effects were not significant (relational prestige, $\beta = .07$, $p > .05$; supervisor respect, $\beta = .11$, $p > .05$) and did not support hypotheses 4a and 5a that supervisor respect and relational prestige are positively associated organizational identification.

Finally, hypotheses 4b and 5b stated that that relational identification mediates the association between organizational identification and supervisor respect (H4_b) and relational prestige (H5_b). Model 4 specified all the hypothesized direct and indirect effects, including the mediation pathways of the reflected appraisals of supervisor relation to organizational identification through relational identification. This model also did not significantly improve fit above model 1 ($\Delta \chi^2=3.3$, $\Delta df=3$; n.s), and none of the parameters for the mediation paths reached conventional levels of significance. We did use bias-corrected bootstrapping (Byrne, 2010; Hayes, 2013) to test if the indirect effects differed statistically from zero. The confidence interval was set at 95% bias-corrected. For relational prestige the interval ranged from -.003 to -0.088. For supervisor respect, the interval ranged from -0.003 to 0.075.

Overall, the mediation hypotheses were not supported, and relational identification did not mediate the impact of relational prestige and supervisor respect on organizational identification. However, we note that (1) the confidence intervals were quite wide, which is a common problem with smaller sample sizes (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), and (2) the confidence intervals included -.003, which is extremely close to zero.

DISCUSSION

This study adds to the literature by integrating internal and external perspectives of organizational foci to address the need for greater exploration of identification convergence and cross-level identity dynamics. The relational identification literature has focused on internal antecedents such as leader-subordinate similarity or relationship quality as factors that lead individuals to integrate relationships into their identities (Mitchell, Eby, & Ragins, 2015; Schaubroeck, Peng, & Hannah, 2013; Shapiro, Hom, Shen, & Agarwal, 2015). However, our study suggests that relational identification is also fostered through individuals' perceptions that a relationship is positively viewed by outsiders. We took an expanded view of reflected appraisal as construct relevant to all foci - with our findings showing that perceptions of respect and prestige are not antagonistic with each other but are simultaneously relevant to individuals'

identity needs. The significant correlation between supervisor respect and organizational identification, together with the lack of an observed relationship between the two variables in the structural model, suggests a complex relationship between them. We also observed a strong significant relationship between supervisor respect and organizational respect, which adds to the need for future research to examine mediating variables for respect and prestige. For example, when do individuals take supervisor respect as a prototype for organizational respect? What is the link between relational and organizational prestige?

The evidence also suggests that the effects of relational prestige and supervisor respect are very subtle and highlights the differences in how past research has measured respect [sometimes at the organizational focus (Bartel et al., 2012) and sometimes at the individual focus (Blader & Tyler, 2009)] while neglecting the possibility that these may be different forms of respect because they reflect different foci. In sum, this study acts as a call for scholars to explicitly distinguish the foci of reflected appraisals they examine while also taking a more integrative approach to these constructs as collaborative rather than competitive (see Sluss et al., 2012).

Implications for Theory

Previous work on identification has supported the idea that respect and prestige both contribute to individuals' connection to their organization (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Fuller et al., 2006). However, the majority of work has examined respect and prestige as independent perceptions about one's identity rather than two sides of the same coin, effectively overlooking what the two reflected appraisals have in common. This same research typically does not examine reflected appraisals about foci other than the organization. In this study, we have explored how identification is simultaneously shaped by reflected appraisals at multiple foci: Relational respect, organizational respect, relational prestige, and organizational prestige. Using ideas about identification convergence, we now discuss the implications of our findings for how prestige and respect may impact identification through different pathways.

Scholars across social psychology and sociology have extensively debated which referents' opinions are most important for individuals' identities (Rosenberg, 1979; Vorauer, 2006). However, the current scholarly approach to investigating the importance of prestige and respect tends to examine their independent effects on identification (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2010; Ellemers, Doosje, & Spears, 2004; Gioia, Hamilton, & Patvardhan, 2014). Our results support Ricketta and Nienaber's (2007: s61) observation that "the most important finding to emerge from

[past] research is that identification with a particular focus correlates more strongly with those potential outcomes (attitudes, intentions, behaviours) that are directed at the same focus rather than at a different focus”.

Our work proposed and empirically showed that respect and prestige serve as separate yet complementary pathways for identification for two separate foci, the superior-subordinate relationship and the organization as a whole. Respect from one’s supervisor and perceived prestige of the relationship with one’s supervisor were significantly and positively associated with relational identification, while respect from all organizational members and perceived organizational prestige were significantly and positive associated with organizational identification. Therefore, the findings support Ashforth et al.’s (2008) speculation that the identity matching principle applies to antecedents of identification as well.

Our findings also have implications for the role of personalization versus depersonalization. The table of correlations shows perceived supervisor respect was significantly correlated with organizational identification while relational prestige was not. This suggests that organizational identification was shaped in part by individuals’ need for belonging through personal rather than depersonalized bonds with the supervisor. In conjunction with the finding that relational identification did not mediate any indirect effect of relational respect on organizational identification, our findings suggests that convergence of identifications can, under some circumstances, result from spurious correlations with a common antecedent rather than any direct connection between different foci. In our study, the effects of relational prestige on identification were restricted to the relational focus, which suggests that reflected appraisals of foci at the dyadic level do not generate sufficient cognitive, affective, social, or behavioral forces to produce convergence (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). Of course, it is also possible that coaches of varsity teams simply do not generate the requisite recognisability that would encourage a transfer of identification between the foci in our study. Collecting similar data in other contexts would be an avenue of future research to verify our results such as athletes in prominent professional sports leagues or organizational newcomers working with high-status mentors. These contexts are necessary to examine the status and prestige dynamics of dyads.

Recent work has begun to recognize the importance of relationships for identification in organizations (Besharov, 2014), although the concept of prestige has been reserved for higher level foci, such as the organization or departments within organizations. We observe this

particularly in studies that frame respect as something internal to the organization and prestige as something external to it (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Fuller et al., 2009; J.B. Fuller et al., 2006). Our study takes a different approach by suggesting that prestige and respect are relevant to all foci and worthy of investigation. Thus, our efforts to conceptualize the working-relationship with the supervisor as having its own perceived prestige in the eyes of others represents an important extension of the recent emphasis on how relationships foster identification. We also believe that thinking about respect and prestige as two windows to reflected appraisal (one from inside and one from outside a given human social aggregate that is the potential focus for identification) will help future identity researchers expand their toolkits for analysis, particularly in multi-level research (Ashforth et al., 2010, 2011).

Our findings also demonstrate that, compared to respect, prestige had the stronger predictive power on identification. The difference in regression coefficients presented in Figure 2 are almost identical despite the fact that the data were collected on separate occasions and that previous research has shown how closely respect is tied to identification (e.g., Bartel et al., 2012). This may mean that cognitive categorization and impersonal bonding with groups are a potentially more efficient means of encouraging identification than fostering respectful personal relations. Taken a step further, the relative strength of effects in our study suggests that the impact of prestige has been underestimated. This may also reflect a shortcoming of how scholars study prestige in the context of identification. Typically, perceived prestige is conceptualized as a perception about how organizational outsiders in general view the organization, yet it is clear that a relationship's prestige should not be relegated to a second-class construct. We propose that the depersonalized belonging stemming from relational prestige may occur simultaneously with the personalized belonging arising from perceived supervisor respect and that this process is similar for organizational prestige and respect. Therefore, given the scholarly focus on respect as a key contributor to identification, prestige may be just as important to relationships as it is for organizations. Our findings are in line with Gioia et al.'s (2014) conclusion that perceptions of how we are mirrored by others matters at all levels within and outside the organization. Thus, our exploration of how different aspects of our identities (whether this be our relationship or our organizational memberships) are viewed by other members of specific referent communities or by society in general merits further exploration. If, as many identity scholars propose, myriad images of our selves exist and circulate within the social environment, then understanding how

employees manage these images and the pathways to identification they produce should become key issues in future organizational scholarship.

Avenues for Future Research

Our results suggest some avenues for future work. We first suggest that, despite the prominence of perceived external prestige and supervisor respect in identification research, reflected appraisals about relational foci offer promising new areas of study within and across organizational boundaries. For example, boundary spanners' work-roles require them to engage with external stakeholders such as clients, the general public, and other organizations, which presents opportunities to examine perceived external and relational prestige because employees' inter-organizational interactions may make them more conscious of how their relationships and their organization are seen by said outsiders (Bartel, 2001). Boundary-spanning work (e.g., secretaries) may enhance relational prestige's effect on relational identification if that relationship is important to boundary-spanner's activities (e.g., a mentoring relationship). In turn, if the supervisor embodies the organization, this may blur the line between relational and organizational prestige when it comes to outsiders' evaluations of the supervisor-employee relationship. Similarly, work-roles that stay within organizational boundaries but cross departments or teams may emphasize relational prestige vis-à-vis other members while minimizing external prestige's relevance. Indeed, within-boundary roles reduce employees' exposure to external information that conflicts with their perceptions (Gioia et al., 2014). Thus, the context in which scholars study prestige is important for future research on any focus.

In addition, scholars can explore the nature of relational prestige to develop more robust measurements of the construct. In adapting Mael and Ashforth's (1992) measure of organizational prestige, we assumed that focal outsiders also see the relationship as a distinct focus. This leads us to ask whether prestige is indeed the same across foci. Supporting our assumption, scholars have argued that all reflected appraisals are underpinned by the desire to know one's own identity; individuals take the perspective of others in order to judge how well they perform their roles related to that focus (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980). Thus, individuals do not judge the focus itself but the performance of role expectations associated with that focus. This suggests that perceived prestige across foci share fundamental attributes that justify expanding the concept to other foci in the same way that scholars have expanded the concept of identification from the organization to the profession, the relationship and, most recently, to the

person (Ashforth, Schinoff, & Rogers, 2016). We advocate that future research examine the similarities and differences between prestige across foci. For example, 1) Do they share similar antecedents? 2) Are relationships and organizations prestigious in similar ways?

Lastly, future research can continue to build on Sluss and Ashforth's (2008) suggestion of testing mediators in convergence. We recommend future work do so by examining the role of mediators in the convergence between relational and organizational identification with regards to relational prestige and supervisor respect specifically. Sluss and Ashforth (2008) identified several mediators such as the supervisor's social influence upon the subordinate. Given that convergence did not occur in this study, it is possible that these mediating variables undermined convergence. It is intriguing that, despite supervisor and organizational respect contributing to identification at their respective foci, this did not engender convergence of identifications; we had suspected that relational prestige and respect would foster a personalized belonging that would affect collective identification, as past research has demonstrated (Bartel et al., 2012). However, it is possible that the same mediators of convergence determine whether or not relational variables impact organizational identification. For example, if a player in our sample showed high supervisor respect and relational prestige, she may still not have valued her supervisor's opinions about the Canadian Juggernauts (i.e., low social influence). Therefore, future research can explore whether relational identification's antecedents impact other organizational variables through such mediators. Scholars may examine if these mediators apply to the association between supervisor respect and organizational respect, which we found only predicted identification at their respective foci despite being correlated with one another. Therefore, it will be important to understand what factors predict generalizing from an individual supervisor to all supervisors for respect.

Limitations and Implications for Practice

We highlight two methodological concerns in the current study. First, we measured respect and prestige in the context of varsity sports teams, which may limit generalizability to other organizations. Nevertheless, we chose this context specifically because the social and organizational structure of varsity teams better lent itself to studying respect and prestige. As we noted above, varsity teams have a clearly defined role structure that made this setting an ideal context for measuring our variables as cleanly as possible. Second, the small sample size may raise concerns about the robustness of our results. However, we used statistical techniques such

as bootstrapping to account for this. Furthermore, we note that our small sample size decreased the likelihood of finding significant results, which makes our observation of the effects of relational prestige more interesting and warrants future investigation.

Beyond these limitations, our results also have practical implications for how organizations promote identification at the workplace. The findings suggest that supervisors and coaches must think beyond the quality of their subordinate relationships and begin considering how others might perceive that relationship. The prestige associated with a particular relationship is just as important as feeling respected in that relationship. Supervisors must manage team members' perceptions of that relationship so that this does not undo the relational bond that they have built with a specific employee. As mentioned earlier, individuals want to belong to a focus that enhances their self-esteem and one way of doing so is to be part of a relationship that is well-perceived so that one can bask in the reflected glory. Therefore, supervisors can actively make specific relationships unique and prestigious to strengthen their bond with a subordinate. For example, a supervisor might develop rituals that are unique to each of her relationships, yet observable to outsiders. Moving to the dark side of prestige, organizations must also pay attention to individuals who remain in prestigious yet dysfunctional relationships. Given that respect and prestige independently contribute to relational identification, a high-status relationship might offer identity benefits that, for some individuals, outweigh abusive or low-quality interactions with a supervisor. This can help explain why some employees continue in an abusive or bullying relationship with high-profile mentors. Finally, our findings on organizational respect suggest that it will be important for organizations to demonstrate to employees that other organizational members, as a whole, respect and value their contributions to the organization. This cannot be achieved simply by emphasizing supervisor respect for the employee. Both are separate conduits toward identification. Just as organizations project organizational images of prestige to their members (Gioia et al., 2014), organizations may also consider telling employees about who values them in the organization (e.g., 'all the staff appreciate what you do for them').

Conclusion

In this study, we examined prestige, respect and identification at the relational and organizational focus. Our findings supported the matching principle that identity variables at one level of analysis are more strongly related to variables at the same level than variables at a

different level. Therefore, we did not find evidence for convergence of relational and organizational identification. Our study empirically tested the notion of relational prestige, finding that it more strongly predicted relational identification than did supervisor respect. Overall, we show the value of examining different forms of reflected appraisal at different foci.

ARTICLE 3

Splitting Images:

How employees construe organizational stigma in the Montreal construction industry

ABSTRACT

In this Qualitative study, I investigate how individuals respond to perceived organizational stigma and present empirical evidence that the construed external image comprises multiple conflicting perceptions rather than a single cleanly defined image. Using grounded theory, I explored how individuals are bombarded by multiple competing stakeholder evaluations in a stigmatized organizational context. To understand how employees manage these evaluations, I interviewed employees of Montreal-based general contractor companies between 2010 and 2015, which were marked by provincial scandal spanning the Quebec construction industry. During this time period, audiences stigmatized general contractors as corrupt and untrustworthy organizations. The findings show that interviewees negotiated tensions between two types of images, which I term particularized and generalized images. These images respectively embody an individuating and de-individuating image of one's organization in the eyes of external audiences. I further unpack the multiple images and referents that organizational members stitch together to make sense of their environment. Employees receive many stigma-laden cues from external audiences, using various cognitive tactics to negotiate the dance between perceived individuation and de-individuation in the eyes of outsiders.

ARTICLE 3

Splitting Images:

How employees construe organizational stigma in the Montreal construction industry

Scholars have established that the construed external image - employees' perceptions of how their organization is evaluated by external audiences— is central to how employees bond with their organizations (Dutton et al., 1994). The construed external image (CEI) is powerful because stakeholders' judgments act as a mirror that reflects upon employees' identities as they ask themselves “How do outsiders think of me because of my association with this organization?” (Dutton et al., 1994: 248) Furthermore, images that diverge from employees' perceptions of their organization trigger a process of self-questioning that motivates them to change outsiders' views (Gioia et al., 2014).

In cases where employees perceive that stakeholders stigmatize their organization (i.e., , demonize, deindividuate and discredit it), they will experience a similarly reflexive process as they decide how to respond to that stigma (Devers et al., 2009). Scholars have documented a variety of responses that include shame, downplaying one's association with the company and leaving the organization altogether (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009; Semadeni, Cannella Jr., Fraser, & Lee, 2008). These responses occur because the perceived stigma acts as a debilitating negative CEI that reflects upon employees. This in turn threatens employees' identities because they are seen as representatives of the devalued organization, thwarting their needs for esteem and distinctiveness (Dutton et al., 1994).

Yet many employees continue to work for, and in some cases, identify strongly with, stigmatized organizations despite their perception that outsiders devalue the company they work for. For example, NASCAR fans strongly identify with the collective even though they are keenly aware of its low social status in the eyes of outsiders (Elsbach & Cable, 2014). In addition, not all employees jump ship when an organization is stigmatized – in fact, many remain with stigmatized firms up until failure (Semadeni et al., 2008). This suggests that individuals do not necessarily perceive stigma the same way. Some may be unaware of the social costs associated with staying while others are willing to remain despite said costs. Therefore, this study was guided by the following research question: How do organizational insiders construe and manage their interpretations of organizational stigma? Specifically, I examined employees' CEI in general construction contracting organizations (henceforth called general contractors),

which became stigmatized through public inquiries and media attention regarding corruption and collusion in the Montreal construction industry between 2010 and 2014. This context provided a unique opportunity to explore variations in how employees interpreted their company's image when they perceived that the media and general public deemed general contractors the enemy.

In this study, I make several contributions to the literature. First, this is the first study to examine organizational stigma through the lens of CEI - a construct normally studied in the context of non-stigmatized organizations - and thus responds to the growing need to understand stigma from insiders' perspective (see Tracey & Phillips, 2016). The findings show that insiders do not passively receive stigmatized organizational images from external audiences but instead re-interpret and re-work images as they make sense of their organizational environment. This adds to previous work on the origins of organizational stigma (Devers et al., 2009) by suggesting that insiders play a crucial role in propagating stigmatized images among its members. Second, the findings extend our understanding of organizational images by treating stigma as a key triggering event for reflexivity. Specifically, by combining this study's findings with theory on organizational image and stigma, this study develops a framework for understanding how individuals receive, interpret, and respond to stigmatized images of their organization. Third, I develop a model of image-splitting that describes the sources individuals use to construe organizational stigma, the types of images they derive from stigmatizing audiences, and the tactics they use to manage the images they receive from that audience.

IMAGE IS A CATALYST FOR REFLEXIVITY

Why does image matter to identity?

In the past thirty years, researchers have examined how employees react to, interpret, and change their organization's perceived image (Gioia et al., 2014). The relationship between image and identity is such that "in its various guises [image] provides a catalyst for member's reflexive examination of their organizational self-definition. Image often acts as a destabilizing force on identity, frequently requiring members to revisit and reconstruct their organizational sense of self" (Gioia et al., 2000: 67).

Mead (1934) argued that individuals construct their identities by first imagining how others perceive them; individuals are perpetually defined by others' perceptions of them because they constantly monitor the environment for clues to who they are (Stryker, 1980). These identity concerns are expressed as an ongoing balancing act between the questions "Who do we think we

are?” and “who do they think we are?” (Gioia et al., 2000: 69). Humans also have a fundamental need to belong to groups that reflect positively on their own identities, driving the need to imagine how others perceive them. This is why believing one’s organization is attractive to outsiders satisfies identity motives such as esteem and distinctiveness (Dutton et al., 1994). Despite these benefits, outsiders’ perceptions of the organization can be a source of tension. Discrepancies between CEI and perceived organizational identity are identity-threats that force members to reconsider their views of the organization and the views of others.

How do employees respond to images?

Gioia and colleagues (2014, 2000) posit three scenarios centered around how employees manage a discrepancy between organizational identity and CEI. While the first two imply that employees take no action to deal with the discrepancy, the third scenario proposes that organizational members attempt to change how others view them¹ or attempt to change how they think of themselves. This third scenario includes several possible actions, all of which focus on aligning CEI with outsiders’ views. However, their work considers employees’ responses to images in general. Recent work suggests that stigmatized organizations may not fit the typology of responses developed by Gioia and colleagues given that several features distinguish stigma from other organizational images (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009).

Whereas many organizational images individuate a firm, organizational stigma is “a label that evokes a collective stakeholder group-specific perception that an organization possesses a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that deindividuates and discredits the organization” (Devers et al., 2009: 155). A firm can be stigmatized because of core attributes that violate social norms (e.g., abortion clinics) or because of unusual events associated with it (e.g., the 2010 BP oil spill) (Hudson, 2008). In addition, stigma is a contagion “in which others are stigmatized by association, including those, such as suppliers and regulators, who are not direct participants in [the organization’s] activities” (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009: 137). Current models of image and identity do not account for these aspects of organizational stigma (e.g., Dutton et al., 1994; Gioia et al., 2014) because the image literature has been founded on research about non-stigmatized organizations. For example, some of the classic studies on image have focused on schools (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and health systems (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002) to conclude that

¹ Gioia et al (2000) imply that CEI corresponds to how outsiders view them and so do not consider changing CEI as possible response in their model

perceived negative images hinder organizational identification. However, research has found that in stigmatized contexts strong identification reinforces the perception that outsiders' devalue one's social group (Frey & Tropp, 2006).

Furthermore, the little research that has examined CEI in stigmatized industries has been limited to traditionally studied sectors such as sex-work (e.g., Grandy & Mavin, 2012). Hence, there is a need to examine whether existing theories about image-identity processes generalize to stigmatized contexts. In particular, Gioia et al.'s (2014) model of identity-image interdependence does not account for the role of stigma in an individual's response to image, nor do current stigma models account for individual-level perceptions of stigma (Tracey & Phillips, 2016). This raises the possibility that members of stigmatized and non-stigmatized organizations engage in different behavioral and cognitive responses related to image formation that go beyond the historically accepted view that positive images are good and negative images are bad for employees' identities (Dutton et al., 1994). For example, research on stigmatized occupations suggests some ways in which individuals may engage with stigmatized images: Gusterson (1996) observed that Nuclear scientists reframe their work as providing an important service to humanity and promoting world-peace. Tyler (2011) found that sex-shop employees in Soho, London, refocused their jobs away from its 'seediness' in favor of features like advice-giving and helping uninformed clients make decisions. These examples show that individuals "transform the meaning of the stigmatized work" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999: 421) and suggest that, rather than being passive recipients of audiences' images, employees will actively engage with and reshape their understanding of an organization's stigmatized image. As it stands, organizational stigma scholars have yet to explore whether employees similarly re-shape their organization's image.

In the same vein, the CEI and stigma literatures have yet to address the problem of scattered images in which organizations and audiences project conflicting images into the environment from which employees cobble together pieces to create a patchwork of composite images (Price, Gioia, & Corley, 2008). As Hudson and Okhuysen noted (2009: 135), the assumption that individuals perceive a singular, cohesive image about their organization "fails to recognize that the social standards on which evaluations hinge are both fragmented, reflecting multiple constituencies, and uneven, reflecting different levels of concern across society". Employees, therefore, will associate different and often contradictory images with their stakeholders, which

places a premium on their ability to rework and stitch together stigmatized and non-stigmatized images as they try to make sense of it all.

Taking these issues together, I submit that employees' interpretations of stigma play a central role in how they respond to stigmatized images that audiences project into the organizational environment. This led to my central research question "How do employees construe and manage organizational stigma?" To explore this, I used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to discover and categorize employees' individual-level responses to perceived stigmatized organizational images.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Charbonneau Commission

The time between 2010 and 2014 represents an intense period of disapproval by the media, government, clients, and general public in the Montreal construction industry. As news outlets remarked, "players in Quebec's construction industry say hundreds of companies teeter on the brink of bankruptcy as mistrustful public sector clients withhold payments and challenge every unexpected expense with a wary eye" (Perreux, 2013). This disapproval coincided with the creation of a four-year government-funded public commission on corruption and collusion (CBC news, 2015), headed by Justice France Charbonneau and referred to as the Charbonneau Commission. This investigating body held publicly televised inquiries with testimony from members of industry, whistleblowers and implicated individuals that included engineers, contractors, political members and heads of organized crime. Media outlets heavily publicized and criticized the continuous revelations that came from the commission. Daily revelations of bribery and illegal schemes permeating the industry led to public trepidation and loss of trust. In 2015, the Charbonneau Commission concluded with a report proposing government changes to reduce industry corruption and collusion (Dalton, 2015).

The Impact on General Contractors

The Charbonneau Commission's revelations provided the backdrop against which many organizations in the construction industry suffered public disapproval by association. General contractors were particularly stigmatized as they experienced financial and social costs by virtue of their category membership. These costs included contract losses and long payment delays by distrustful clients (Perreux, 2013). Within the industry, general contractors have a particularly central boundary spanning role because they deal with and coordinate activities between multiple

stakeholders. Despite the Charbonneau commission's findings that many other types of organizations were involved in corruption and collusion, general contractors' role in managing multiple parties involved in private and public contracts made them a visible target.

Public contracts are entered into with a public body such as school boards, hospitals, or municipalities. These contracts involve building structures such as bridges, roads or schools. The public body begins the process with an open call for bids that invites willing organizations to submit a proposed contract. In Quebec, the public body must then enter into a contract with the organization that submitted the lowest-priced bid. Whereas public contracts involve open calls for submissions, private contracts function through word-of-mouth. Specifically, contractors are involved with a private non-government client who is not obligated to engage in public bidding and can choose a contractor as they wish. Such contracts typically involve building or renovating structures like houses or condominiums.

During the completion of these contracts, general contractors play a central role in which they delegate, coordinate, and manage the activities of all parties involved. One participant described the general contractor's role as follows:

The "Turnkey" project is one where the contractor receives technical specifications, let's say, and it then prepares an estimate for the client [...] It's the contractor who hires the professionals, who prepares an estimate, and presents all this to the client [...] In "project management", it's a project where the general contractor is hired by the client as a specialist in construction and [...] it participates in design development and often participates in hiring professionals and then you form a team (P025)

In terms of the theoretical value to the literature, the nature of general contractors' role in the industry informed my decision to focus on this group (detailed further in the section on data collection). General contractors' role-responsibilities required employees to navigate role-expectations with multiple stakeholders, which in turn necessitated taking the perspective of these others (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). In addition, the social and financial costs associated with wide-spread stakeholder disapproval made general contractors an ideal case for theory building because it exposed image-identity processes more clearly than would have been the case for organizational categories that did not have similarly high costs and multiple role-responsibilities associated with their image (Charmaz, 2006; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

METHODS

Sampling

Following the logic of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006), I chose participants purposefully as I sought out organizations in which CEI would be highly salient for its members (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Studying uniquely difficult circumstances is a valuable method for understanding identity processes because the way individuals respond under threat provides key insights as they work to preserve and reconstruct aspects of the threatened identity (see Kreiner et al., 2006). I therefore conducted interviews during the years of the Charbonneau Commission between 2013 and 2015 at the height of public attention to the construction industry.

I interviewed individuals from a variety of occupations (e.g., foremen, receptionists), sectors (e.g., residential, institutional) and type of contracts engaged in (e.g., private and public) to identify which types of organizations were most susceptible to outsiders' perceptions; it quickly became clear that employees of general contractors showed the greatest concern for outsiders' judgments. Interviewees included high-level members of associations and organizations with detailed knowledge of their sector: They were well-connected and aware of the political, organizational and personal ramifications of the industry's public disapproval. Interviewees were also divided according to the nature of the contracts their organization engaged in (i.e., public contracts, private contracts, or both), gender and hierarchical position.

Overall, 23 of the 31 interviewees were employed by a general contractor. The other eight participants were employed by associations, subcontractors, or engineering firms. Of the General contractors in this study, six focused solely on private contracts, with eight participants employed by these organizations; two general contractors focused uniquely on public contracts, with six participants employed by these organizations; five general contractors were involved in both public and private contracts, with eight participants employed in these organizations. Members of these general contractors came from diverse backgrounds. Occupations included accountant, mechanical engineer, plumber, architect, plasterer, and carpenter while organizational positions included project manager, controller, secretary, president, vice-president, superintendent. This increased the variety of experiences and stakeholders, which helped develop a robust and rich picture of CEI.

Furthermore, 13 of the 31 interviewees were women. Following past research (see Kreiner et al., 2006), women were oversampled in order to gain richer and theoretically relevant insights

into their experience of the organization and industry image² - examining women's understanding of CEI was a rare opportunity to explore individuals' experience of image under multiple negative social evaluations – that is, one based on organizational membership and the other based on gender identity. Therefore, women's experience as employees of general contractors during a uniquely negative period in the Quebec construction industry represented an extreme case that provided an important comparison point to understand whether or not men's experience of CEI in the construction industry was idiosyncratic. Commonalities between the two strengthened the applicability of discovered themes to other industries.

Date Collection

Archival data and informal interviews. I attended 6 hours of industry networking sessions that included individuals from different professions, hierarchical levels, sectors and organizational types. During these sessions, I observed and conducted short informal interviews with attendees. I also collected archival data from local newspapers and media outlets, looking for articles that expressed CEI. Such articles contained quotations from industry insiders along with journalistic interviews with industry members.

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted a total of 31 semi-structured interviews that averaged one hour, and were done in French or English, in-person, or on the phone according to interviewees' preferences. Follow-up questions were conducted through email or phone. All interviews contained several required questions focused on background information and images. Interview questions were refined throughout the study to best target the themes and concerns raised by general contractors. The appendix shows key image-related questions included in the interview protocol. Adapting Brickson's (2005) methodology, I asked interviewees to list all the qualities they believed organizational outsiders associated with their organization and with general contractors. These lists anchored each interview and were followed by probing questions that explored employees' reasoning behind their choice of specific traits such as "Why do you think clients associate this quality with your organization?" or "Why do you believe this to be the case?" This challenged surface-level responses and led interviewees to ponder why they listed the traits, separate their beliefs from others' beliefs, reflect on key moments in past stakeholder encounters, and present implicit rules for intuiting stakeholder beliefs. Conversations

² In 2015, women represented 1.38% of workers in the Quebec construction industry. That number has been increasing given several industry initiatives to raise that proportion over the last several years (Lévesque, 2015)

were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed in their original language. When interviewees preferred no recording, notes were taken and transcribed in Microsoft word.

Data Analysis

Following Charmaz's (2006) approach to grounded theory, I analyzed the data in three stages comprised of initial line-by-line coding, focused coding and axial coding. Initial coding began the process of deriving categories by being open to many possibilities while comparing the data together. These codes comprised discrete chunks rather than fully-fledged larger themes. I used line-by-line coding to capture nuances in individuals' descriptions of images and cognitive or behavioral responses to these images. Next, focused coding refined the initial codes to develop broader themes in order to sift through larger amounts of data. The first six interviews were coded line-by-line and the remaining interviews were analyzed with focused codes.

Consistent with constant comparative methods, I collected and coded data iteratively such that categories were continuously refined as I sought out data that confirmed or disconfirmed developing ideas. Coding began early on during data collection in order to refine concepts and interview questions in accordance with emerging findings. I then used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) to understand the relationships between the larger themes. In keeping with the original research question, my goal was to explain participants' responses as a product of their construed external image such that image management strategies were the major outcome of the axial coding analysis. Once I examined the data for the nature, structure, content and sources of the construed external image, the relationships between these themes formed the basis for defining and distinguishing image management strategies. To increase the trustworthiness of the data, interviewees were contacted and asked about whether the codes accurately represented their experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, I prioritized developing in-vivo codes because nuances in French language, as well as Quebec and industry culture were central to how individuals' understood stigma.

FINDINGS

What is the stigma of general contractors?

The first task was to ascertain whether informants perceived a stigma at all. Having avoided any language that might bias respondents, I evaluated their responses in reference to Devers et al.'s (2009) definition of stigma as a label that 1) deindividuates the organization 2) implies a deep-seated flaw, 3) discredits the organization.

First, many informants were angered at being “put all in the same basket” by clients. Some informants felt that the term “general contractor” was loaded with negative imagery that changed its meaning: “I got a comment from someone who told me that I can’t use just the word ‘contractor’ because there are people who associate that with construction and contractors have a bad reputation because people mix that up with contractors in construction” (P013). Interviewees explained that the negative and deindividuating image associated with the “general contractor” label was so strong and pervasive that the term now inspired mistrust and antagonism in clients, leading to a toxic social and economic climate: “What the Charbonneau commission did was turn the title of general contractor into public enemy number one!”(P023).

Second, the general contractor label evoked the idea that these organizations possessed deep-seated flaws, expressed by the Quebec slang “crosseur”, which 9 of the 23 general contractor employees mentioned without provocation from the interviewer:

Interviewee: I don’t like using words like this. The official word is “crosseur” [...] It’s the first word that comes to mind

Interviewer: You used the word “official”, why do you say that?

Interviewee: Because everyone says it: Between us [general contractors] we say “oh! Clients all think we’re a bunch of “crosseurs”. And, that’s not something we want to look like. This is not who we are. But we have a hard time getting rid of it. It’s as if it’s written in the sky” (P021)

This term, informants explained, is a Quebec-specific French-language slang that is at once sexually vulgar (i.e., it refers to masturbation) and implies morally questionable qualities and behaviors that include dishonesty, untrustworthiness, screwing clients over, making false promises, and sneaking in ways to charge extra fees whenever possible. Although there is no exact English equivalent, possible equivalents are swindler, wanker, jerk-off, fucker, and scumbag, in addition to the American idiom *fly by night*. The preceding exchange exemplifies the deindividuation and deep-seated flaw implied in the word’s use when informants discussed how they believed clients viewed general contractors. They bundled the general contractor label with the crosseur label into a simplified negative image that held cultural significance. Third, informants reported toxic social and economic impacts that exemplified being discredited: Interviewees reported that clients constantly questioned contractors’ procedures, decisions, expenses and bills:

“I feel it... I don’t know ... they have something against general contractors. Whether it’s from the Charbonneau commission or it was there before [...] they have something against

general contractors [...] There's a hatred... They hate us. [...] It's not an aura... It's a mood... every single step towards the construction, starting from when you ask for a deposit" (P014)

Interviewees also described a climate of suspicion in which clients severely delayed paying contractors for many months after the work had been completed. The president of a construction association explained that this was now the norm and that if a general contractor reported client relationships were proceeding well, the general contractor community saw this as suspicious. Interviewees also reported that clients were hesitant to hire general contractors out of mistrust, which decreased jobs and led to many business closures. Together these features showed that general contractors perceived their organizations as stigmatized by stakeholders.

Dimensions of CEI

Interviewees' perceptions about different audiences (e.g., friends, clients, and the general public) were divided into two types of images. The first, called the particularized image, refers to the unique and distinguishing traits organizational members believe external stakeholders associate with the organization. Interviewees believed this image was earned through the organization's conduct and achievements. Second, the generalized image refers to the deindividuating characteristics members believe stakeholders associate with the organization because of its category membership. Members assume stakeholders see the organization as an interchangeable exemplar of that category, believing that the image stems from external sources such as the media. Interviewees used both images to answer the question "what do others think of my organization?" (Dutton et al., 1994) as they negotiated tensions between individuation and deindividuation inherent in the two images. These tensions fell along the dimensions of capability and character, described in detail below. Figure 1 shows the data structure of the findings while Table 1 shows example quotes.

Perceptions of Capability and Character

Capability refers to perceptions about the organization's quality of work and degree of knowledge. First, quality of work includes the organization's reliability in a contract (e.g., a school built on time) and features of the final product (e.g., a well-built school). The generalized and particularized images were often at opposite ends: Interviewees expected stakeholders to see their organization's work positively but general contractors' work negatively. The particularized image included traits such as *efficient* and *well-organized*, whereas the generalized image

FIGURE 1
Data structure

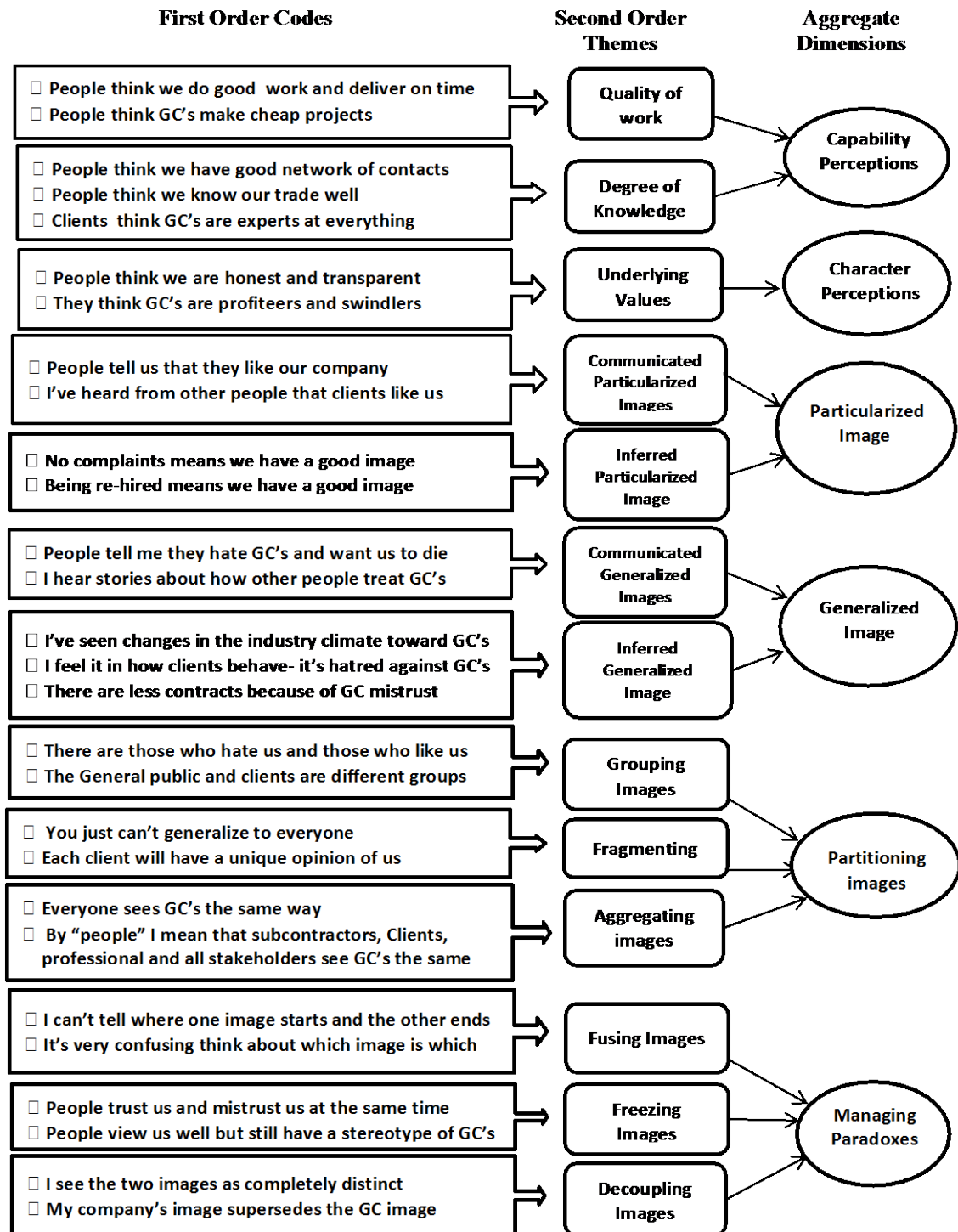


TABLE 1
Dimensions, Sources, and Responses to Image

Code	Illustrative Quote
Dimensions of CEI	
Capability Perceptions	
<i>Quality of Work</i>	<p>‘Unorganized’ ... That’s not something that they tell us directly but that’s something that I, .. for sure they feel [...] Sometimes there are errors, sometimes guys don’t show up. So the impact on the client is ... for a day, nobody’s gonna be at his house. So, this I know they will not feel comfortable with, and for sure they think in their mind ‘these guys are unorganized’ (P014)</p> <p>We say [that the pipes we installed will last about] 5, 10 years and [the customer] says ‘you sure it’s not gonna last 1 year like all those guys in the Charbonneau Commission?’ It’s like everyone who works in construction... all the customers think that everyone’s doing a botchy job or doing something so that it doesn’t last as long so you’ll have to come back and redo it. Everyone [...] jokes about it (P02)</p>
<i>Knowledge</i>	<p>[Being seen as] professional means that we are an organization that knows how to manage a project with diligence based on the plans, estimates, addendums and changes, all the while assuring coordination between all the disciplines (P030)</p> <p>You’re the expert’, we get told that a lot [...] they ask our advice like ‘What color should we choose?’ I’m not a freaking decorator! I’d paint it all brown! [...] they think we’re superheroes – We have to do everything” (p027)</p>
Character perceptions	
<i>Underlying Values</i>	<p>My private sector client would say “Your company is honest” for sure [...] I would say “generous” but it’s not exactly that but... “Transparent” (P021)</p> <p>There are new stereotypes I find of the general contractor being corrupted. Everyone is corrupt. [...] we’re all crooks, we’re all stealing from the system, we all run mob-infested businesses (P08)</p>
Types of Images	
Particularized Image	
<i>Communicated Particularized image</i>	<p>I imagine that... Well, we’ve already had positive comments like that we were professionals, that we know our trade (P015)</p> <p>[The client said to us] ‘The previous project didn’t go well. However, that wasn’t the image we had of you because the other projects before that one went really well. So, What happened? Was it because of a bad project manager?’ (P023)</p>
<i>Inferred Particularized image</i>	<p>The minute the owner asks their professionals to look for any little thing in the estimate that could look like something else to make use do work for free, that, we start off on a dishonest footing. Moreover, taking notes on little things that are not relevant at all, that are not even in the right section of the documents concerned [...] We size them up right away. It doesn’t take long to figure them out. After a 10 minute conversation, we already know who we’re dealing with (P030)</p>
Generalized Image	
<i>Communicated Generalized image</i>	<p>It will always come out as a joke [...] You always have people who will say “Ah, we know about you general contractors [said with a suspicious tone]”. That’s all. So, it’s comments like and they say them as a joke but we all know that there’s a bit a truth in that. So, “Oh, we know about you general contractors, you’re like that” (P029)</p> <p>I still talk to a lot of general contractors [...] For the last 2-3 years they’ve all said that like it’s very hard to get good business because clients don’t want to pay, they don’t trust them at all. And everyone is struggling to get contracts. So that’s something that I notice but I did not experience... (p014)</p>
<i>Inferred Generalized image</i>	<p>A satisfied client sometimes over the course of time, they’ll try a new general contractor and then if they have a better experience with [us], they return with us. Usually they’re faithful clients and they do come back. And my satisfied clients have referred me to other clients, which is helpful. So clients come to me or are referred to me are clients who know we do excellent work, so there’s less of that antagonism (P08)</p>

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Code	Illustrative Quote
Identity work strategies	
Partitioning images across stakeholders:	
<i>Dividing Images</i>	<p><i>Interviewer:</i> So when you say public, who's included in the public- just clients? <i>Interviewee:</i> People. People out there who are indirectly involved in construction (P017)</p> <p>To me, the general people is the populace. It's the people who aren't part of the industry. It's their way of thinking... their thinking, which is related to the fact that they don't know the area of construction. Someone who knows the industry, who are some sort of link to it, will be able to make a distinction [between companies] (P026)</p>
<i>Aggregating images</i>	<p><i>Interviewee:</i> So, what others think is the reality in construction is in fact completely different from what we live in the construction industry. <i>Interviewer:</i> And when you say "others", who are you talking about? <i>Interviewee:</i> Well, I'm taking about all the other stakeholders like the client, the people who give us work, the engineers, the architects and all that (P024)</p>
<i>Fragmenting images</i>	<p>It's unique for each client, so it completely changes from one to the other [...] Plus things could be perceived very differently if it's me or another party. So, it depends on the party involved (P30)</p> <p>It's complicated to put a label on something, I'll always come back to... In the end, we are all individuals. So, when we sit down at the table for a meeting... it's all in the way you frame a problem, the way you react to things... regardless of the Charbonneau commission. (P011)</p>
Managing Paradoxes	
<i>Freezing Images</i>	<p>The clients who we're working with presently, they're actually interesting, they're fun. They're not... some clients are very rigid and cold, but with these clients we can make jokes. We have certain enjoyment on the work site. However, it will always come out as a joke [...] "Ah, we know about you general contractors" It's a comment that simply proves that the image clients have about general contractors is generalized (P029)</p> <p>They see [our company] as being progressive[...] yet there's still that stereotype (P017)</p>
<i>Decoupling Images</i>	<p>They start with a very negative image of contractors. As the work progresses, well there, they realize that the image isn't really generalized and that, you know, there are really some good organizations out there. So, by the end of the job, they say "Dang, this is a good company" (P021)</p>
<i>Fusing Images</i>	<p>Look, one [image] doesn't go without the other, okay, because I thought I was responding to one but in fact it's a little in everything that I've said to you" (P030)</p>

included traits such as *cheap materials* and *always late*, which were infused with a perception that general contractors did so intentionally. Second, knowledge refers to whether an organization is skilled and well-informed about its trade. In the particularized image, interviewees believed stakeholders viewed their organization as possessing specific forms of knowledge such as a network of contacts, or access to resources while in the generalized image, knowledge traits manifested as exaggerated expectations. For example, one interviewee reported that clients saw them as 'superheroes, expecting contractors to be able to do anything that was asked. In contrast to capability, character perceptions centered on interviewees' beliefs that

audiences perceived shared underlying values with their organization. Traits such as honesty were central to the particularized image as interviewees touted the fact that many clients believed the organization was transparent would keep to their word. By contrast, the generalized image contained labels such as *criminals*, *enemy*, and a *necessary evil*, which painted general contractors as “an organization whose only goal is to make profit” (P025).

Axial coding revealed differences in how capability and character traits varied across the two images. The generalized image mainly contained character traits with few capability traits while the particularized image comprised both traits equally. In the generalized image, contractors were seen as experts and therefore possessing the skill to perform the work, yet they were seen as untrustworthy experts who would abuse that skill. Thus, a trait that is positive on its own must be considered in the context of an organization’s underlying values, which can fundamentally change that feature’s meaning and valence. It is also important to note that, in this study, the generalized image implied that a contractor would intentionally build cheaper products for financial gain. Therefore, although capability traits were not explicitly central to the generalized image, they were implied by the nature of the organization’s underlying values. Finally, interviewees often included character traits (e.g., honesty) in their particularized image in response to the negative character traits that made up the generalized image (e.g., liars). As a result, although I present the two images separately, their content is intertwined.

Generalized and Particularized Image Sources

Next, I uncovered the sources of information individuals used to decide what character and capability traits make up the particularized and generalized images. These were communicated and inferred sources. A communicated source is any instance (verbal or written) in which an organizational member receives a comment explicitly specifying what a stakeholder thinks of that organization. An inferred source is any case where an organizational member deductively uses information other than direct comments (e.g., intuition, circumstantial evidence, and non-verbal behavior) to determine what a stakeholder is thinking. All interviewees reported communicated sources for the particularized image, quoting comments by stakeholders. This included instances where a stakeholder told the organization that they were satisfied with the work and were happy to hire them again. In contrast, inferred sources included instances where interviewees cited the lack of complaints and recurring rehires as evidence that clients had a positive image of the organization. These relied on deductive logic rather than direct comments:

One interviewee believed clients saw the organization as “unorganized” despite the lack of direct comments explaining “that’s not something [clients] tell us directly but that’s something that for sure they feel”(P014). Regarding the generalized image, individuals reported receiving many stigmatizing comments in the form of casual jokes or phone calls urging death threats to organizational members, calling them crooks. Interviewees also said they “felt” a tension with stakeholders, reinforcing the importance of inferred sources in image construction. Behavioral cues such as a certain look or sarcasm were important to how individuals constructed the generalized image. One interviewee said that clients “always seem like they’re looking at you with eyes that say “what are you plotting over there?” even when you’re super honest” (P021). Interviewees also believed that behaviors such as asking for bill and contract revisions signaled that the stakeholder stigmatized their organization.

Managing particularized and generalized images

Up to this point, I have focused on the properties of the particularized and generalized image along with the sources individuals use to construct them. In the following sections, I focus on organizational members’ agency in manipulating these images such that they are more than just passive receivers of what audiences communicate; interviewees actively responded to tensions between the particularized and generalized images by reworking and reshaping how they understood the relationship between images. The data revealed two broad categories of tactics: Partitioning images across stakeholders and managing paradoxes.

Partitioning images across stakeholders

Interviewees used terms such as *they*, *people*, and *the public* to describe audiences but had different understandings of who these audiences included, moving away from stakeholder distinctions such as subcontractor or client. Instead, they re-grouped stakeholders into higher-order categories by the type of image each had of the organization. Such partitioning turns the myriad images interviewees receive into discrete, manageable chunks that diffuse image tensions because it allows interviewees to focus on and appreciate stakeholders who hold positive images of the organization. As one interviewee noted, “We have a niche clientele and we do business with clients who appreciate the reputation we built [...] and what we’ve delivered” (P08).

Aggregating images. This tactic falls on the extreme end of partitioning such that individuals paint a picture of the organization versus “everyone”, thereby creating a single aggregated image that applies to all stakeholders as a singular referent. Interviewees used this tactic to make

sweeping statements about all stakeholders, extending to both industry insiders and outsiders alike. For example, one manager lamented:

According to the architects, the engineers, clients, subcontractors, suppliers... Us, the general contractor, we are the guy in a cycle of projects [...] If I have ten subcontractors, I take the responsibility of all ten subcontractors. It's my name that will support those ten subcontractors. So [we're] the one targeted as being "THE CROSSEUR" (P023)

In using this tactic, the manager reduced the number of different organizational images, which allowed him to create an overarching perception against which to defend himself. This tactic makes the organization's place clear vis-à-vis the aggregated referent and is reminiscent of Cooley's (1902) notion of the *generalized other*, in which individuals try to intuit the appraisals of a whole group such as society as a whole. Unlike the *generalized other*, aggregating images may not be neutral because it can imply an adversarial relationship between the self and the generalized other.

Fragmenting. Other interviewees refused to aggregate images and chose to view each individual as a unique entity with a distinct view of the organization. In fragmenting, individuals do not consider it possible to associate an overall image with whole groups of stakeholders and view audiences as collections of diverse individuals with unique perceptions of the organization. An apt metaphor is that of a mirror. In aggregation, individuals have a whole mirror in which they see only one reflection of themselves. In fragmenting, the mirror is shattered into pieces with unique shapes, reflecting different parts of the organization. Although there is a sense of the whole image, each fragment is independent and contains a reflection of its own depending on where it lies on the floor relative to the person. For example, one interviewee declined to comment on clients' perceptions of general contractors explaining "I don't want to generalize [...] It's not all the clients that think like that" (P015)

Fragmenting also manifested itself subtly when several interviewees split the physical page into multiple referents, listing several distinct particularized images for each client; this showed how the notion of a *generalized other* went against the way these individuals construed organizational outsiders. This understanding of images also affected interviewees' responses and emotions as I observed that interviewees who fragmented were more satisfied and relaxed about their organizational images. Those who aggregated tended to feel victimized by stakeholders. Therefore, fragmenting can diffuse image discrepancies by treating them as exceptions that do not apply to all stakeholders, which is a possible coping benefit for this type of partitioning.

Grouping. Continuing with the mirror metaphor, individuals can act like a smelter and cobble together multiple images into fewer but larger chunks. Grouping is distinct from fragmenting because it does not reject aggregation outright but embraces it by creating multiple discrete categories of stakeholders, associating each category with a specific and distinct perceived image of the organization. As one interviewee said,

I would say there are two categories: [...] Those who have a good opinion of [our company] and those who have a lesser opinion of [our company]. The good opinion, it's those who have worked with us for a long time. So they know us. Those who might have a bad opinion are those who are often in the list of subcontractors and have unfortunately been involved in a project that didn't go well (P011)

The lines along which individuals grouped stakeholders were arbitrary, which explains the wide variety of groupings I observed, such as industry membership (e.g. industry insiders vs. industry outsiders) or stakeholder role (e.g., client versus the general public). Sometimes this was done consciously; one interviewee was proud of her experience in the industry and touted the ability to take multiple perspectives

The perception [...] that the professionals had of general contractors is “We’re going to monitor them but they are here to do a job and they do the best they can. But, when I went to the client’s side, them... it was “No, no, general contractors are here just to steal our money” [...]. So, I also have subcontractors’ perspective about general contractors, who I hear a lot from [...]. So, it’s super interesting to me because I see the differences between all the different stakeholders (P029)

In sum, individuals can use various partitioning tactics to understand how images are held by audiences. Fragmenting involves rejecting the possibility of generalizing to outsiders and treats individuals as unique entities, which precludes grouping audiences into larger categories. Aggregation embraces creating a single entity out of all stakeholders into one generalized other whereas grouping exists between aggregating and fragmenting because it involves creating digestible chunks of stakeholders based on the individuals’ experiences.

Managing Paradoxes

Interviewees used paradox management tactics to negotiate the coexistence of, and contradictions between, the particularized and generalized images. Interviewees used these tactics to weave individuating and deindividuating images into a coherent narrative and situate them into an overall story about the organization. As a result, individuals often spoke about the two images as if they were one and the same, blurring the lines between them. They perceived

both images as simultaneously attached to their organization and focused on the content of the images such as ‘they see us as assholes’ or ‘they like our work’. As a result, the distinction between particularized and generalized images reflects deep assumptions that are lost when researchers fail to go beyond employees’ surface level impressions of being seen as prestigious or non-prestigious (e.g., Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). By probing into employees’ discourse, I distinguished the three paradox management tactics of fusing, decoupling and freezing.

Fusing. Several interviewees fused the particularized image with the generalized image into a single composite image. In this tactic, individuals fluidly move between the particularized and generalized image without distinguishing between them. The tactic was expressed by individuals’ inability to separate the two images rather than the active attempt to merge them. For example, when asked to identify which image they were referring to, one interviewee was confused by the question: “ Look, one [image] doesn’t go without the other, okay, because I thought I was responding to one but in fact it’s a little in everything that I’ve said to you” (P030). Individuals felt that the connection between the two images was so deep that they could not sensibly pull them apart. Therefore, fusing shapes how individuals construct their narrative of how they interact with stakeholders and try to explain their behaviors. One interviewee was overwhelmed by the attempt to separate the two images: “I want to believe that maybe that specific client had bad experiences in the past or that maybe the fact that they heard that industry there are only *crosseurs* [...] it’s very confusing for me. But, I see that, as soon as you bring up extra costs [...] that’s when things get emotional” (P011).

Therefore, fusing represents one end of paradox management in which individuals remove the boundaries between the images.

Decoupling. In contrast to fusing, other individuals drew clear and ridged boundaries around the particularized and generalized image. In decoupling, individuals treat the two images as mutually exclusive perceptions under the belief that a stakeholder can only hold image at a time. As one participant said, “our image is generally good [...]. How clients perceive general contractors is one thing and how clients perceive our company is another thing. So, it’s very distinct” (P030). However, it is interesting to note that this same participant used the fusing tactic later on in the interview saying that “one [image] doesn’t go without the other, okay, because I thought I was responding to one but in fact it’s a little in everything that I’ve said to you”

This underscores the fact that image work is not a clean process and that individuals may engage in contradictory tactics to maintain their narrative. The manager of another organization argued that their organization's image was at odds with the stigmatized image of general contractors (i.e., GC's):

It is two conflicting images of general contractors. Yet luckily [our] branding is so strong that [our] reputation supersedes that of general contractors. When I meet new clients who make jokes about GCs being crooks with their feet deeply planted in corruption, I smile at them and say: "YOU are in the presence of a leader who is extremely respected" [...] That usually shuts them up and then I see their jaws drop. That is my way of dealing with these issues (P08)

Thus, decoupling manifests itself when individuals treat particularized and generalized images as mutually exclusive, claiming that stakeholders either recognize the organization for its merits or see the organization as corrupt. One interviewee described the all-encompassing nature of the stigmatized image as follows: "All [the client] sees is a general contractor who charges extra costs which, according to the client, are way too high. That's how it is. They don't stop to think 'Ah yes, it's Company XYZ, it's justified' " (P029). This all-or-nothing thinking can have positive benefits when individuals believe that the generalized image has disappeared. One worker stated that the negative impressions only exist at the beginning of a contract and can then be eradicated afterward: "The image doesn't reflect on me. Their [negative] impressions disappear once we've convinced them" (P028). By contrast, fusing images would not allow the stigmatized image to be replaced because the boundaries are not clearly delineated.

Freezing. Where decoupling implies that audiences can only hold one image at a time, freezing means that an individual believes stakeholders necessarily hold both images simultaneously. In a sense, all images are seen to be temporally frozen in a stakeholder's mind, which makes them continually salient for organizational members. One secretary noted that, despite having a positive particularized image, the generalized image was ever-present: "They see [our company] as being progressive [...] But yet, there's still that stereotype." (P017). Compared to decoupling and fusing, freezing multiple images does not allow the particularized image to flourish in its own right and in a way taints its existence because the stigma is believed to always be in the back of stakeholders' minds. The effect is that organizational members assume the stigma is constantly in the background so that there is a possibility that they are judged as general contractors rather than on the organization's merits. However, it is important to

note that the freezing tactic takes both images as valid. For example, one interviewee was puzzled by the contradiction that she believed clients had about general contractors: “It’s like paradoxical – clients don’t have a good image of us but they still have confidence in us” (P013). She observed that despite the negative image of general contractors, clients sent mixed messages by continuing to do business with the organization. The following statement by a plumber working for a subcontractor provides a useful contrast to the freezing tactic.

A lot of people say ‘you guys are professionals, I trust you, do what you have to do [...] Well that’s what they say to us to our face. They always have a mistrust. They always say ‘oh yeah you’re here to do the job so do it; I trust you’ [...] and they say that, but I don’t believe them [...] because you’ll get clients who say that also asking me a billion questions about everything that’s going on (P002)

In this example, the individual employs a decoupling tactic because he believes that the stigmatized image negates what would otherwise be a positive particularized image. This allows the employee to reconcile the contradictory perceptions by projecting a stigmatized image onto the client and thereby supplanting one image for the other. By comparison, freezing embraces images at face value even when the two images conflict.

In sum, freezing and decoupling involve clearly defining the particularized and generalized image with the key difference that decoupling treats the images as mutually exclusive while freezing does not. Fusing ignores the boundaries between the images and merges them into a singular composite image from which an individual draws to understand his or her stakeholders. This tactic may lead to confusion on the part of individuals but allows more fluidity in their narrative by oscillating back and forth between different aspects of the composite image.

A MODEL OF IMAGE SPLITTING

Figure 2 presents a model of image splitting that summarizes the findings and shows the relationships between codes. Image splitting refers to the overall finding that interviewees separated CEI into particularized and generalized images, which they then maintained, merged, or reworked to understand cues from the external environment. To advance theory development in the fields of identity and organizational stigma, I adapted Gioia and colleagues’ (2014, 2000) model of identity-image interdependence. The primary purpose is to use the findings to refine our understanding of identity-image discrepancies as represented in their model. A secondary purpose is to generalize the model to images at the organizational and industry levels while highlighting tensions between them. Just as the theme of “me” versus “we” drives individual-

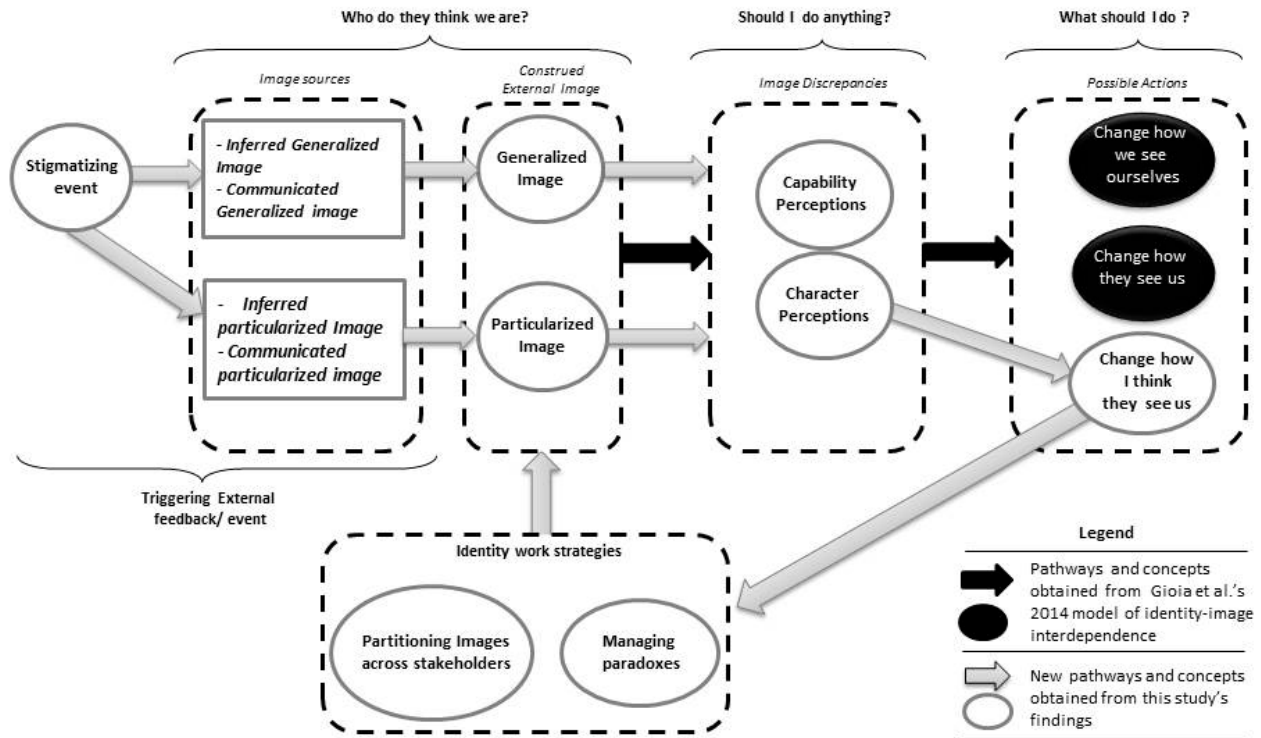
level identity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Kreiner et al., 2006; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014), the adapted model highlights similar tensions in CEI, hence the term *image splitting*.

Figure 2 is divided into four columns, each centered on a different identity question or event as defined by Gioia and colleagues (2014, 2000). The blackened components represent the literature's current understanding of responses to CEI while the grey components represent this study's contributions. Current theorizing proposes that individuals respond to a triggering event (column 1) by comparing a single monolithic CEI (column 2) to the perceived organizational identity. Discrepancies between the two are said to lead individuals to decide if they should react (column 3) and how they should react (column 4) to maintain congruence between identity and image. As shown in the black circles, reactions are said to be limited to changing the organization's identity or changing how others view the organization.

I build upon this framework by treating stigmatization as the triggering event that kickstarts the reflective process. Axial coding revealed that the triggering event had two features: First, interviewees believed that the Charbonneau Commission was the key stigmatizing event that introduced the idea of general contractors as crooks to the general public. Second, interviewees reacted to stakeholder feedback, which led employees to believe that outsiders stigmatized the organization. Thus, both the event and stakeholder feedback triggered reflexivity.

The model also highlights that, rather than a single CEI, the same information sources that trigger self-reflection help individuals distinguish between particularized and generalized images as they answer the question "who do they think we are?" Thus, I propose two concurrent pathways of image development that lead from the stigmatizing event to the column "should I do anything?" In this study, individuals compared the particularized and generalized image on the dimensions of capability and character. However, axial coding revealed that only character perceptions provoked reactions (e.g., the *croisseur* label). This is understandable if one considers that being knowledgeable and competent in one's field is required to swindle clients with guile and precision. Therefore, in place of the single blackened arrow leading to "what should I do?" I suggest that individuals differentially respond to image discrepancies based on which dimension discrepancies exist. Furthermore, different stigmatized images may highlight one or both dimensions. For example, the gambling stigma implies gangsterism (Galvin, Ventresca, & Hudson, 2004) while the 'made in China' stigma implies poor quality (Devers et al., 2009).

FIGURE 2
A model of image splitting in response to stigmatization



Finally, in addition to the two actions proposed by Gioia and colleagues (i.e., the black ovals), interviewees showed a third option of changing how they believe clients see them. This reaction is decidedly cognitive and represents a form of identity work by using “cognitive, discursive, and behavioral processes [to] engage, create, present, sustain, share, and/or adapt organizational [images]” (Kreiner, Hollensbe, Sheep, Smith, & Kataria, 2015: 985). Therefore, I suggest that individuals engage with particularized and generalized images in a way that is more nuanced than Gioia et al.’s (2014) proposed two-pronged response to image. This includes paradox management and partitioning across stakeholders, which I view as forms of identity work. Both aim to make sense of images in the organizational environment and act directly upon the particularized and generalized images and lead individuals to reinterpret the original images themselves, which provokes reflexivity once again. Overall, I suggest that individuals do not simply ask “Do we need to take action to resolve the discrepancy?” (Gioia et al., 2000: 68) but

employ more subtle tactics that re-shape images in a way that reduces tensions between images. From this model, I suggest three propositions for future research to test:

Proposition 1: Organizational insiders do not perceive a single CEI attached to their organization but simultaneously perceive an individuating image (i.e., particularized) and a deindividuating image (i.e., generalized).

Proposition 2: Discrepancies on the dimensions of character and capability differentially predict members' desire to respond to discrepant images.

Proposition 3: Organizational members will respond to image discrepancies by changing their interpretation of what audiences think about the organization.

DISCUSSION

In this study I invoked the concept of image-splitting to highlight organizational members' dynamic role in the social construction of stigma. In past theoretical models, scholars have taken an external perspective that focused on how labels gain a critical mass of audience acceptance before a category becomes stigmatized (Devers et al., 2009). By taking an internal perspective, this study supports Tracey and Phillips' (2016: 473) call for a greater understanding of how organizational members engage with negative social evaluations of their organization; they observed that "we have very limited understanding of the internal effects of stigmatization and how organizations respond to it". For example, in the proposed model, I suggest that although audiences project stigmatized images into the environment (i.e., communicated sources), this will not trickle down to organization members as intended. Instead, as Gioia and colleagues (2014: 147) note, "whatever the intent of outsiders, it is the insiders' construal of that image that matters in 'adjusting', 'adapting' (or in some cases, 'transforming') identity".

As an example from the current study, members who aggregate images and perceive that all stakeholders stigmatize the organization (e.g., family and clients) will be more likely to experience a sense of victimization and exhibit an adversarial relationship with all audiences than are members who fragment these images. Because aggregation constructs a single generalized other, organizational members may engage in adversarial relationships even with audiences who do not stigmatize the organization. Fragmenting should temper negative emotional and cognitive reactions because members who use this tactic reduce the perception that there is a critical mass of stakeholders that deindividuate their organization. These members

may perceive stigmatization as an exception rather than the rule. Several interviewees made this clear when they refused to discuss the possibility that audiences made generalizations about their organization – they favored viewing outsiders as individuals with unique and diverse opinions.

Furthermore, general contractors are but one organizational category with numerous stakeholders, and it is likely that members will aggregate, fragment and group stakeholders in other industries where organizations interact with multiple parties. I contend that, despite these images being grounded in the industry-specific character and capability traits, members of all organizational categories and industries will have similar themes in their CEI. Past research has documented that members of other organizational categories perceive individuating images that reflect capabilities in the army (Lievens, Van Hove, & Anseel, 2007) or health care industry (Carmeli, 2005), as well as deindividuating images in the gambling industry that carry the labels of “criminals”, “mafia”, “political bribers” (Galvin et al., 2004). These similarities support the transferability of such themes beyond this study’s research context and support the need to explore partitioning and paradox management as a useful perspective on members’ responses to stigma. Previous work has documented responses at the organizational level including impression management (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991), straddling organizational categories (Vergne, 2012), and concealing the organization (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009). The current study builds on these by exploring identity work tactics that attempt to intuit outsiders’ understanding of the organization rather than one’s own understanding of the organization

The model of image-splitting also highlights the fluid nature of stigma and other images by focusing on direct interactions with stakeholders; the findings suggest that audiences project stigma and other generalized images to organizational members through non-verbal communication. Interviewees remarked that they “felt” tensions with stakeholders and emphasized that a simple look in stakeholders’ eyes gave them the sense that they were hated while others submitted that simply saying “hello, how are you?” signaled a stakeholder’s positive attitude toward the organization. Previous studies have not documented this pathway to CEI. I posit that similar sources of inferred information are gleaned in other types of stakeholder interactions such as negotiations and phone meetings, which can indirectly communicate audience’s social evaluations. Although this study focused on general contractors for empirical purposes, I argue that inferred sources reflect fundamental attributes of how individuals interact with others and should be found in both stigmatized and non-stigmatized organizations in other

industries. We see similar themes echoed in symbolic interactionism, which argues that individuals observe and anticipate others' responses to them by taking their perspectives (Mead, 1934). Serpe and Stryker (2011: 232) also contended that "rooted in reactions of others, existing selves interact dialectically with others' responses to allow some independence from others' expectations, but the symbolic and subjective are constrained by persons' social locations". Therefore, the roles individuals play in their organization (e.g., foreman) may engender interactions with audiences, allowing them to extract images from their non-verbal behaviors.

Future Directions

The findings revealed that the literature's conception of *the* construed external image (Dutton et al., 1994) may be better conceptualized as *multiple* interconnected construed external images - some individuals could not clearly distinguish between them (i.e., fusing), others believed the images were distinct and mutually exclusive (i.e., decoupling), while still others believed the two images existed simultaneously in a non-competitive existence (i.e., freezing). This finding questions the validity of treating CEI as a single entity and mirrors recent advancements in other areas of research at the individual level. For example, Rogers and Ashforth (2014) argued that employees expect others to evaluate them both as unique individuals and as members of the organization, which reflect the particularized and generalized image.

This suggests some directions for future research. One avenue concerns how the two images interact in other stigmatized contexts. This is partly a question of transferability of the findings but also speaks to whether the specific nature of the stigma in the construction industry (i.e., of corruption, profiteering, and swindling) lends itself more readily to distinguishing between a particularized and generalized image than would other stigma. I believe that scholars will continue to observe the two images at play, although the specific content may differ. Research has long documented that individuals make similar distinctions at the individual level as they experience the tension between the desire to be seen as unique and the desire to belong to a group (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, several of the traits interviewees included in the images have been reported in previous research on non-stigmatized organizations such as the army (Lievens et al., 2007) and the health care industry (Carmeli, 2005). This suggests that the mechanisms behind these recurring patterns exist in other contexts beyond construction. If we look back at Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) foundational work on CEI, we see that the authors documented traits for the New York Port authority's image that are

strikingly similar to those found in in this study - perceptions of professionalism, expertise, ethical behavior, and a commitment to quality. Future work can examine whether the particularized and generalized image exist in other contexts and, if so, what features they share. Scholars might explore whether particularized and generalized images always contain character and competence traits or is it possible, for example, that a generalized image is based solely on competence while a particularized image is based solely on character for the same organization?

Research can also examine the circumstances under which particularized and generalized images are functional or dysfunctional. Scholars have assumed that perceived negative social evaluations, whether in stigmatized or non-stigmatized contexts, undermine employees' bond with the organization (e.g., Dutton et al., 1994; Hudson, 2008). However, some scholars have suggested positive outcomes such that that the process of introspection that stigma engenders pushes organizations to develop a clearer sense of who they are and what they represent (Tracey & Phillips, 2016). Similarly, future research can explore whether the generalized image leads members to redefine their particularized images and further protect their organizations. In this study, an interviewee reported that "we have a niche clientele and we do business with clients who appreciate the reputation we built [...] and what we've delivered" (P08). It is possible then, that stigmatization provides organizational members with a new appreciation of stakeholders who view their organization positively, strengthening those relationships in response to generalized images. This supports Tracey and Phillips' (2016: 761) suggestion that "the withdrawal of support by a stakeholder group because the organization is considered by that group to possess a fundamental flaw that discredits and deindividuates it may be more than compensated for by increased support from other stakeholder groups that perceive the organization to represent a set of values that they seek to uphold or promote." Therefore, the generalized image may enhance the particularized image in ways that provide long-term benefits.

However, a darker side to image also exists: Members may experience shame if their generalized image consumes their particularized image. For example, individuals who aggregate images across stakeholders may be less likely to perceive and reach out for help from audiences that have a positive particularized image, which could decrease members' identification. Future research would benefit from examining this dialectic between particularized and generalized images as well as the indirect costs or benefits associated with each image. One important avenue is to determine if a fragmented image, in which individuals assume all stakeholders have

unique images of the organization, prevents organizations from refining their stakeholder relationships in response to stigma as Tracey and Phillips (2016) suggest.

In summary, I explored CEI's nuances in a stigmatized context, highlighting that organizational members engage with and reconstruct their organization's images. This study detailed that organizational members' particularized and generalized images shared the dimensions of character and capability, which have been documented in past research on organizational trust (Mishina, Block, & Mannor, 2012). I believe that distinguishing between these images will provide a fruitful avenue for identity and stigma scholars to explore the internal dynamics of stigmatized organizations.

APPENDIX
Selected Interview Questions

1. What is the climate in the construction industry like right now?
2. What is your position at [INSERT COMPANY NAME] and whom do you interact with regularly?
3. Have you noticed any change in people's attitudes toward [INSERT COMPANY NAME] OR general contractors over time?
4. Imagine clients were given the following blank statements, "[Insert Company name] is _____". What do you think clients would write down about your company. (You do not have to fill all ten items):

According to clients....

1. [INSERT COMPANY NAME] is _____
2. [INSERT COMPANY NAME] is _____
3. *Items were repeated for a total of ten times.*

PROBING QUESTIONS:

- A. For each quality you listed tell me why you think clients would write that quality?
 - B. How did you come to conclude that that's what clients think about [INSERT COMPANY NAME]? For example, was it through hearsay, from direct experience, or something else?
 - C. Are there any other people like family or friends whose opinions of [INSERT COMPANY NAME] matter to you? What would they write down on that list of item?
 - D. Are there any other groups, or organizations like subcontractors or associations whose opinions of your company matter to you? What would they write down on that list of item?
 - E. Are there other people or groups that we haven't talked about whose opinions about [INSERT COMPANY NAME] are also important are just as important .
 - F. We talked about different images, how do these make you feel?
 - G. How do you deal with these images about
5. Now lets' turn to General contractors as a whole. Like we did for your specific company, imagine clients were given the following blank statements, "General contractors are _____". What do you think clients would write down about your company. (You do not have to fill all ten items):

According to clients....

1. General contractors are _____
2. General contractors are _____
3. *Items were repeated for a total of ten times.*

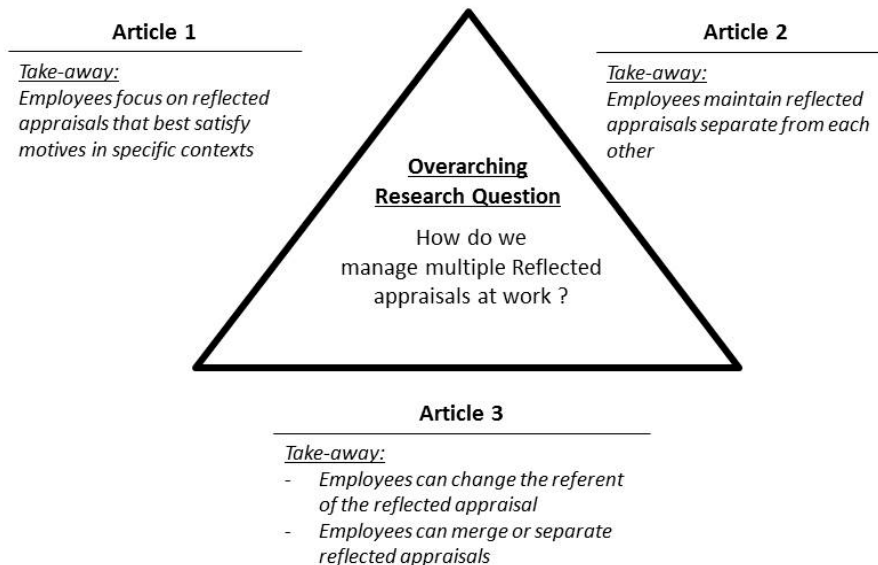
PROBING QUESTIONS:

Note: The same probing questions are used from question 3, wiith [INSERT COMPANY NAME] replaced by "General contractors"

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Recently, scholars have begun examining the concurrent impact of multiple reflected appraisals on various organizational outcomes such as identification. This comes amidst calls to study the cross-level dynamics of identities and the multiple perceptions attached to them. The three articles in this thesis address these calls by integrating the constructs of perceived organizational support, supervisor support, prestige, and respect as workplace manifestations of the same underlying phenomenon: Reflected appraisal. Scholarship on these constructs has been influenced by reflected appraisal's sociological roots, often treating employees as passive receivers of others' appraisals. This approach undercuts a valuable line of questioning that explores the dynamics and interrelationships between all forms of reflected appraisal at the same focus or across foci. I developed the three articles in this thesis to illustrate the different ways in which a holistic approach to reflected appraisal can advance the field of organizational behavior - by casting aside the assumption that the above constructs are unique and independent perceptions, the three articles embody a broader view of reflected appraisal in organizations. To illustrate this perspective, Figure 1 presents the main take-aways of each article and how they answer this thesis' overarching research question.

FIGURE 1
Main Take-Aways of the Three Articles



Article 1 explored the theoretical implications of viewing the four organizational behavior constructs above as part of the same perception. By breaking down the constructs into their common components (e.g., according to referent-type and social location), we proposed a framework for understanding how these constructs exist simultaneously. Mirroring the advances in social psychology (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Vorauer, 2006), we aimed to introduce individual agency as a key factor in predicting reflected appraisal salience. Article 3 expanded on the notion of agency by showing that employees actively engage with their reflected appraisals by managing the sources of the appraisal and the meaning associated with different organizational images. Specifically, the qualitative study uncovered that employees separate yet manage the dance between individuating and deindividuating reflected appraisals about their organizations. This mirrors advancements in social psychology that distinguish between similar constructs called group-based and individual-based metaperception (Frey & Tropp, 2006), which demonstrates the constructs' universality. Finally, article 2 explored prestige and respect about the organizational and relational foci in order to show that employees form multiple reflected appraisals about the same identities and across identities. These quantitative findings suggest that the cross-level dynamics between reflected appraisals are complex and likely involve mediating mechanisms that link them together.

Overall, we can conclude that, while employees succumb to a plethora of appraisals in their daily organizational lives, they are aware of and manage to separate these appraisals across referents in order to make sense of their environments. Perceived respect and prestige were related to identification at the same foci yet, in the face of stigma, employees distinguished different foci of prestige attached to their organization: One based on category-membership (i.e., general contractors) and one based on organization membership. Putting these results together, the theoretical article implies that work roles are likely central to how employees manage the reflected appraisals examined in both the qualitative and quantitative articles. For example, while the qualitative article focused on understanding the construed external image's common features across employees, I observed during interviews that different work roles exposed some employees to more or less referents than other employees. This is consistent with our theoretical work in which we argued that some referents are necessarily less salient because they are not relevant to the employee's established work role. In practice, this means that the foreman who works on a construction site will interact with different referents than the manager who works

from an office building. As these employees interact with outsiders (e.g., clients and professionals), each interaction imposes different work role expectations that outsiders establish with the employees during the course of the contract. Similarly, members of the Canadian juggernauts were likely subject to different role expectations depending on their position in their specific team as well as role expectations tied to being part of the Canadian Juggernauts as a whole. Given our finding that reflected appraisals tied to different foci (i.e., relational and organizational) were more strongly related to identification at foci of the same level, members' work role expectations with colleagues and outsiders may have helped them distinguish between these foci - team members' expectations may have contrasted with outsiders' or coaches' role expectations and thus accentuated the need for a player to distinguish between her role as a member of the Canadian Juggernauts and her role as a member of a relational dyad.

In the context of these findings, the looking-glass-self's notion that individuals passively incorporate outsiders' appraisals seems to fall short in explaining how and why team members distinguish foci in the quantitative study as well as the qualitative study. In this light, the metaperception literature discussed earlier provides a useful contrast to suggest ways in which organizational scholars can begin integrating the different workplace reflected appraisals more cohesively.

Returning to my earlier discussion of metaperception research, social psychology's approach to studying the self gives scholars the freedom to explore metaperceptions about a wide variety of traits that range from personality, leadership ability, competence and even sexiness (see Carlson, Vazire, & Furr, 2011 for an overview). By contrast organizational behavior research is much narrower due to its focus on only a few referents (i.e., the team, the supervisor, and the organization) and traits (i.e., competence at work and value as a human being). Although the four constructs of respect, prestige, and support are important for understanding the employee-organization relationship, the breadth of metaperception research demonstrates that the above organizational constructs represent a sliver of the potential reflected appraisals relevant to organizations and their members. A comprehensive and integrative theory is needed for organizational scholars to expand the types of reflected appraisals they examine. One need only turn to the construct of identity to recognize the value of having an overarching umbrella term that includes and unites multiple facets and manifestations into a robust theoretical framework. In contrast to the current state of identity research, the organizational literature's focus on

specific forms of reflected appraisal limits the empirical and theoretical tools scholars have to understand behavior at work. This is akin to studying professional, organizational and personal identity as three independent constructs with each being given a different name to obscure the fact that they are different forms of identity.

Unfortunately, the solution is not as simple as borrowing from other fields like metaperception because doing so requires a shift in how organizational scholars think about their constructs. For example, given that metaperception research partly developed as a reaction to the premise of the looking glass self, borrowing from this field may represent a merger of conflicting paradigms. This may explain why there are only a few instances of metaperception research in the organizational literature (e.g., Gundlach et al., 2006; Sturm et al., 2014): My informal discussions with organizational scholars also anecdotally suggest that there is a general apprehension from reviewers toward metaperception research because its relevance to the organization is not ingrained in the field and therefore requires more justification from authors for its inclusion. Thus, it is not enough to demonstrate that imagining others' opinions is central to the human experience - Scholars must also show its centrality to individuals' lives at work. I suggest that, in order to make inroads toward a more holistic perspective of reflected appraisal, we can use metaperception research to highlight the utility of viewing reflected appraisal as an umbrella construct central to identity.

Therefore, I situate this thesis in the context of research on identity foci that seeks to uncover different foci for identification and the properties of each focus (Ashforth et al., 2008, 2010, 2016; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008, 2008). In view of this, the three articles in this thesis shed light on identity foci by implying that all foci (e.g., the individual, the relationship, the organization) are legitimate targets for reflected appraisal. Each article was designed to unpack the different foci that were implicit in dominant organizational behavior constructs in order to show that these constructs share fundamental underlying features and are ultimately the same phenomenon. This thesis also contributes to identity foci research because it implies that, similar to Ashforth et al.'s (2008) view of identification as a fuzzy set, scholars can interpret reflected appraisal as a fuzzy set of features and traits that go beyond competence-based appraisals such as respect or prestige to include behaviors of identity (e.g., my colleagues think I do X), content of identity (e.g., My

supervisor thinks I care about Y), and the core of identity (e.g., my clients think I am Z)³.

Viewed this way, the three articles represent a broadened understanding of reflected appraisal that is based on identity.

In addition, each of the three articles shed light on the dynamics between the foci and fuzzy set of identity. In particular, the qualitative article uncovered images about the organization itself and its category membership as two foci for the construed external image as well as the fuzzy sets that are common to these images - participants included competence traits that corresponded to the behaviors of identity (e.g., “we do good work”), knowledge traits that corresponded to the content of identity (e.g., “we know our field of work”), and underlying values that correspond to the core of identity (e.g., “we value profit at any cost”) in Ashforth et al.’s (2008) fuzzy set framework.

In terms of identity dynamics, the qualitative study also demonstrated how participants actively merge and separate the fuzzy set of the images attached at one focus with the fuzzy set of images attached at another focus. This suggests that considering reflected appraisals attached to different foci is a valuable tool to understand the dynamics of identification and of the contents that inform that identification. For example, *the* construed external image is often conceived of as a holistic perception of how *all* outsiders are expected to view the organization (Dutton et al., 1994; Fuller, Marler, Hester, Frey, & Relyea, 2006; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Yet, the qualitative findings in this thesis imply that the reality is more complex and that individuals perceive multiple images while also merging them across some referents and not others. We also see evidence of this merging for perceived supervisor and organizational support, which have been found to be strongly correlated as scholars try to explain the causes of this relationship (Eisenberger et al., 2010). Overall, the implication is that convergence of reflected appraisals may be as common in organizations as the convergence of identifications.

The value of a holistic approach

The findings allow us to come full circle in our understanding of reflected appraisal as a holistic construct that transcends perceived organizational support, supervisor support, respect and prestige – Reflected appraisal, in its different manifestations, situates individuals within their social context, whether this be the organization, society, family or otherwise (Cooley, 1902; Epley & Waytz, 2009; Stryker, 1980). Consistent with the social cognition perspective from

³ These examples are based on the identity statements contained in Figure 1 of Ashforth et al. (2008)

social psychology, the three articles demonstrate that reflected appraisal affords individuals “the control of adaptive action, which frequently (if not always) involves regulating and coordinating actions with others” (Reis, 2008: 322). As Epley (2008: 1455) remarks, “the problem is simple, people directly experience their own but not others’ mental states and therefore cannot conclude with certainty that other people have any mental states at all”. Referred to as the Other Minds Problem, Epley’s observation defines the human experience beyond the organization and reminds us that reflected appraisal plays a central role in navigating through the social world – humans are forced to predict others’ intentions, behaviors and attitudes through their own eyes. Yet, as the articles in this thesis suggest, employees skillfully manoeuvre through myriad multiple reflected appraisals in what appears to be a smooth process in which employees solve the Other Minds Problem each and every day (Epley, 2008).

Returning to this thesis’ overarching question “How do individuals manage the bombardment of multiple reflected appraisals at the work place?”, the three manuscripts bring together important pieces of the puzzle. In the qualitative study, I observed that employees naturally separated and merged organizational referents into different categories as they managed individuating and deindividuating images of their organization. However, rather than being a struggle, this process was an implicit part of how they understood the world; as one participant said, “these aren’t questions I ask myself often” (P016). Similarly, in the theory paper, we portray the reflected appraisal process as a fluid and daily passage between referents. Hence, we focus on micro fluctuations of reflected appraisal salience under the perspective that employees effectively move through the different mirrors associated with their work-roles. As Reis (2008: 323) notes, “this [ease] is indicated by studies showing that environmental events, including other people’s presence, are characterized as hospitable within the first 150 msec of an encounter (e.g., Cacioppo & Berntson, 1999) or by research that reconceptualises self-esteem in terms of perceived relational value to others (Leary & Baumeister, 2000)”. Thus, reflected appraisal is simply a natural part of the human experience.

Furthermore, the quantitative study suggest that this ease pertains to different foci as well, ranging from the person, the relationship, the group and to the organization. Given that participants more easily connected perceived prestige and respect to same-level (i.e., relational or organizational) than to cross-level foci, we can speculate that different forms of reflected appraisal require more or less cognitive effort. For example, based on theoretical paper’s

arguments, accountability and interdependence may push individuals toward constructing more purposeful and strategic reflected appraisals in order to manoeuvre their particular situations. Indeed, research has found that when individuals' outcomes depend on others (e.g., when authority figures assign unattractive work tasks), they desire more accurate information and take greater pains to construct their reflected appraisals (Kaplan, Santuzzi, & Ruscher, 2009). In this study, reflected appraisals about the authority figure were more salient because participants relied less on default beliefs and placed greater importance on observing the authority figure's behaviors and reactions as means to constructing an accurate perception. In conjunction with the qualitative and quantitative study, this suggests that employees are not necessarily on continuous auto-pilot when constructing reflected appraisal. Rather, employees adapt their efforts according to the needs of the situation they find themselves in, moving through their social environment without intentionally constructing reflected appraisals but deliberately invoking them on occasions of perceived threat or when experiencing differential power relations.

The reflected appraisal construct stands apart from its organizationally situated manifestations as a central cognitive tool that defines the human experience inside and outside organizations (Epley & Waytz, 2009). The various pieces of evidence highlight that reflected appraisal formation has unique properties of its own that are worth exploring independently of the reflected appraisals that dominate organizational behavior research. Reflected appraisal, as a holistic construct, brings to these literatures an emphasis on interactions between levels of self and levels of referents. As argued in the theoretical article, we cast aside the assumption that the constructs of perceived support, prestige and respect are unique and independent perceptions. Like the concept of identity, the concept of reflected appraisal suggests that there is an overarching perception of how others perceive us while also raising new questions about whether the whole is greater than the sum of its parts - Are different reflected appraisals functionally additive or competitive in their effects? Is there a dominant reflected appraisal to which all others are subservient?

Tyler and Blader's (2003) work underscores the importance of these questions and hints at the notion of a holistic reflected appraisal. Specifically, their group-engagement model of organizational justice frames organizational image and respect as two manifestations of perceived status in the eyes of others that help employees construct positive identities.

Given that this provides scholars a tool for predicting and unifying two otherwise idiosyncratic perceptions, this emphasizes the potential value of examining the underlying currents of the different reflected appraisal manifestations. As a whole, the articles in this thesis suggest that, like identities and identifications (Sluss, Ployhart, Cobb, & Ashforth, 2012), the different workplace reflected appraisals are indeed related to each other and that a strict separation between them may not be theoretically warranted. As scholars begin to move away from functional antagonism (Gómez et al., 2011; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Swann Jr., Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009), the door is open to understanding how different reflected appraisals interact under different conditions.

Continuing Tyler and Blader's (2003) logic, the three articles also speak to the importance of accounting for how reflected appraisal (both as an overarching construct and in its various workplace manifestations) is a pragmatic tool for satisfying universal human motives. In particular, we used the theoretical article to highlight that scholars commonly argue that perceived support, image and respect satisfy the universal needs for belonging self-enhancement and control. For example, perceived organizational support allows employees to predict how organizations will treat them while also indicating whether the organization respects them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This exemplifies how individuals may use one reflected appraisal (i.e., perceived support) as a proxy for another (i.e., respect) with the common goal of constructing a positive identity. Therefore, it is fruitful to consider how reflected appraisal as whole satisfies these motives above and beyond contextually situated manifestations.

Indeed, the qualitative study suggests that, just as employees may satisfy motives through merging reflected appraisals, they may also protect the self by decoupling positive and negative perceptions of their organization. Although I observed this in a stigmatized context, scholars have reported similar cognitive strategies for stigmatized professions whereby employees distance themselves from a stigma or re-frame it in positive terms (e.g., Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Thus, a holistic perspective allows scholars to bridge the various motives, strategies, and properties documented in various literatures to understand the fundamental role that reflected appraisal plays in the human experience.

Future Research

While each article contains implications for future research, the thesis as a whole suggests that scholars will need to empirically separate the four constructs considered in addition to other

manifestations of reflected appraisal that scholars may uncover. This leads to two possible research avenues. One avenue focuses on exploring the extent of convergence between reflected appraisals. As mentioned above, the organizational literature has documented an important correlation between perceived supervisor support and organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 2010). However, scholars may observe convergence relationships with other reflected appraisals: It is possible that employees merge their perceptions of supervisor support and supervisor respect such that perceived respect becomes a key predictor of organizational support through its association with perceived supervisor support. It is also possible that, under some conditions, perceived supervisor respect and supervisor support predict the construed external image. Sluss and Ashforth's (2008) suggested mediators for convergence raise the possibility that supervisors' own construed external images rub off onto subordinates if they have sufficiently strong social influence upon their employees. This is important because it suggests a pathway for the construed external image that does not require interacting with outsiders. This also fits with the qualitative study's finding that some organizational images are communicated to employees from co-workers and not necessarily from outsiders, which suggests that scholars may be underestimating the importance of other organizational members in image construction. Convergence research also suggests the reverse relationship such that the construed external image may predict perceived organizational support or even perceived supervisor support because of the need to maintain self-consistency. Employees may assume that, because organizational outsiders dislike them based on their organizational membership, the organization itself will necessarily share similarly negative appraisals of its employees. This alludes to a complexity of reflected appraisal that has not yet been explored and to intriguing new relationships for current organizational behavior research.

Finally, the theoretical and qualitative article argued that individuals will form reflected appraisals about an aggregated set of referents and groups (i.e., the generalized referent). Future work can therefore examine whether such aggregated reflected appraisals act as an 'average' of all the appraisals a person has encountered across many referents. Members may form reflected appraisals about a generalized referent such as "Everyone in this company thinks I'm useless at work" as a way to sum up perceptions of respect, prestige, or support associated with past particularized referents that can include the manager, one's team members, the secretary and even the IT technician. Viewing the constructs of perceived support, respect and prestige as

manifestations of the same phenomenon implies that, as was observed in the qualitative study, employees may combine multiple appraisals into an overall perception about a generalized other. Thus, future work can develop and test whether measures of a generalized referent contribute to predicting constructs like identification above and beyond the reflected appraisal about a particularized referent. For example, where Bartel et al. (2012) examined perceived respect about all managers in the organization (i.e., a generalized referent), it may be fruitful to compare this appraisal to the predictive power of perceived respect about one's direct manager (i.e., a particularized referent).

Conclusion

Reflected appraisal is a valuable concept for organizational research because it ties employees' identities to the organization in a way that other constructs like identification do not – through the eyes of others. By taking the perspective of one's colleagues, supervisor or the organization itself, the individual indirectly merges herself with members of the social environment in an effort to understand them. Compared to identification, in which an individual perceives a oneness with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), reflected appraisal requires that an individual temporarily place herself in a referent's shoes and imagine what they would think and do. This requires such complex and abstract thinking that, to ignore it would be to ignore one of the most fundamental social tools that humans have for defining themselves (Cooley, 1902; Epley, 2008). The organizational literature supports this given that multiple reflected appraisal constructs have emerged over the last several decades. Yet, organizational scholarship has not integrated these separate constructs into a cohesive whole, often continuing to explore them independently. By looking back on reflected appraisal's roots in sociology, and its parallel construct from social psychology, we can better understand our own field's constructs and learn from them in order to advance reflected appraisal research as key part of understanding identity at the workplace.

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