

**LOYAL AFTER THE END: THE ENDURANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL  
IDENTIFICATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper develops and tests a model of the role of organizational identification in members' propensity to express loyalty to a defunct organization through participation in activities that sustain its most valued elements. It also identifies four antecedent factors to organizational identification that can explain its persistence after formal organizational membership ends as well as the effects of loyalty behaviors. Survey results were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling procedures. The resulting model demonstrated strong fit with the data according to several goodness-of-fit indices.

### **Keywords:**

Identification; loyalty; legacy; relational orientation; need for identification

This paper seeks to explain the role of identification in motivating individuals to express active loyalty to a defunct organization. For instance, more than a decade after the dissolution of Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), its former members continue to operate 26 alumni associations in 17 countries to maintain connections through a variety of networking activities. Others manage spinoff businesses that sell DEC-related products and services, including software applications and repair services. Participants in these efforts demonstrate a great degree of loyalty to DEC in the wake of its demise, staunchly defending and closely adhering to organizing principles and cultural values that defined the organization during its lifetime (Schein, 2003). In this paper, we develop and test a model that explains loyalty-driven responses to demise in terms of the strength of former members' organizational identification. We also suggest factors that might evoke such a durable sense of identification.

### **THEORY AND HYPOTHESES**

While scholars have characterized loyalty in many ways, in this paper we are focusing on it as a behavioral construct that takes an active form (cf. Graham & Keeley, 1992), one which represents energetic concern for protecting and championing organizational characteristics that are deemed culturally or materially important. We examine this active form of loyal behavior, which has relatively scant attention from scholars (Adler & Adler, 1988; Withey & Cooper, 1992), as an outgrowth of members' identification with a company that might endure beyond its demise. Actively loyal individuals are "not afraid to take risks or to develop novel ways to improve things" (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998:572) and thus may be particularly willing to participate in efforts to showcase and sustain the cultural characteristics that defined their organizations during their lifetimes.

In contrast to exit and voice, which are the more frequently studied forms of response to demise (Sutton, 1987; Hoffman & Müller, 2009), loyalty has sometimes been cast as an irrational behavioral choice (e.g. Farrell, 1983; Hirschman, 1970; Zhao & George, 2001). However, periods of drastic change such as demise can create a sense of loss that stirs up a “conservative impulse” (Marris, 1986: 5) among organizational members to restore their shared past, to maintain distinctive practices or artifacts that embody an organization’s cultural heritage (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). For instance, Hoetker and Agarwal (2007) studied the efforts of former employees to promote and spread innovations from their defunct organizations in new work environments.

### **The role of organizational identification in fostering loyalty**

We suggest that organizational identification is a primary antecedent of active loyalty. Drawing on prior research, Elsbach (1998: 164) defined organizational identification in terms of “how an individual perceives his or her self-concept in terms of...their organizational relationships.” Studies of identification have been typically set in intact organizational settings (e.g. Dukerich, Golden & Shortell, 2002; Fiol, 2002; Gutierrez, Howard-Grenville & Scully, 2010). However, identification bonds can be particularly durable and persist beyond the confines of a formal employment relationship (Fiol, 2002; Pratt, 2000; Rousseau, 1998).

As an organization becomes a more embedded touchstone in an individual’s self-concept, it also becomes a basis for directing their behavior (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008). Scholars have recognized a close relationship between high levels of identification and participation in a range of supportive activities, including cooperative behavior (Dukerich et al., 2002), extra role behavior (O’Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991), and organizational citizenship behavior (van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006).

Rousseau (1998) suggested that identification may demonstrate substantial durability following job loss or organizational death. Given that individuals' behavior is guided by the organizations with which they identify (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), those individuals who remain strongly identified with defunct organizations may be particularly inclined to engage in loyalty activities. For highly identified individuals, the demise of their organizations disrupts their systems of meanings and triggers efforts at innovation designed "to repair the essential thread of continuity" (Marris, 1986: 3). They seek opportunities to recover and sustain organizational elements that are construed as valuable not only for material purposes but also for their functions as bases for grounding and legitimizing their organizational identification.

*H1: Organizational identification following demise will be positively related to participation in loyalty activities.*

Many organizations that become defunct gradually recede and evaporate from the corporate landscape. However, the presence of loyal former employees creates a forum for keeping an organization's identity "alive." Loyal individuals seek to secure organizational attributes that embody their collective understanding of an organization's identity, or its central, distinctive and generally enduring characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth et al., 2008). These preservation efforts, and the efforts of participants to make sense of what they are doing, perpetuate a shared sense of organizational identity that persists outside the boundaries of an organization from which it was derived (Walsh & Bartunek, 2011).

After an organization's demise, a shared sense of identity may be best understood as a legacy organizational identity (Walsh & Glynn, 2008), a collective understanding of who we *were* as an organization. Legacy identities generally involve the same central and distinctive elements that defined an organization's identity during its lifetime (Albert & Whetten, 1985). For instance, Schein (2003) highlighted the role of DEC's highly capable employees and their

strong relationships in his characterization of its legacy. Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) suggested that organizational identities vary in terms of their strength, or how widely shared and deeply they are held by organization members. Through their close proximity and involvement in activities that sustain an organization's valued characteristics, loyal former members may be more likely to recognize the strength of a dead organization's legacy identities than their disinterested or uninvolved counterparts.

*H2: The degree of involvement in loyalty activities will be positively related to the perceived strength of a legacy organizational identity.*

Whether or not they elect to participate in loyalty activities, individuals who remain strongly identified with their defunct organizations will likely perceive a strong sense of legacy organizational identity. In their study of art museum patrons, Bhattacharya, Rao and Glynn (1995) found that individuals' identification with an organization remained strong even when they did not participate in social activities with other members. For former employees with a high level of organizational identification, their motives for cognitive consistency (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Fiske & Taylor, 1984) may make them particularly inclined to become attuned to others' loyalty behaviors and the legacy identities they promote.

*H3: Organizational identification will be positively related to the perceived strength of a legacy organizational identity.*

### **Antecedents to Organizational Identification**

This paper seeks to explain the role of organizational identification in individuals' propensity to express their loyalty to organizations that no longer exist. Rousseau (1998: 229) suggested that identification can take on a "deep structure" that makes it resilient in the "aftermath of employment." Understanding why identification endures in such situations

requires an examination of the *situational characteristics* and *individual traits* that undergird the creation of such a profound “perception of oneness” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989: 21).

**Situational Characteristics.** Most instances of death follow extended periods of organizational decline. Poor financial conditions often precipitate a closing decision or acquisition agreement. However, when an organization experiences a period of sustained success, its organizational identity tends to be more attractive, and more likely to lead members to identify with it (Ashforth et al., 2008; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Rousseau, 1998). Periods of success may produce a durable sense of identification that leads individuals to be particularly willing to remain linked with an organization, even if its identity later becomes stigmatized due to declining performance or perceived failure (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Crocker & Major, 1989). Individuals who were only organizational members amidst decline are unlikely to have ever been attracted to an organizational identity, so will be less inclined to continue identifying with it.

*H4: The degree of an individual's exposure to an organization's sustained success will be positively related to organizational identification.*

Organizations with relational identity orientations (Brickson, 2005; 580), which place “emphasis...on enhancing the welfare of particular others...and on maintaining these relationships,” may be particularly likely to foster a deeply rooted sense of identification. Relationally-oriented organizations encourage long-term, open-ended exchange relationships with their members and mutual expectations of support (Rousseau, 1995). These organizations may be more likely to offer particularistic rewards, such as love, status and service (Foa & Foa, 1974), and through such rewards, to cultivate positive evaluations of organizations and durable bonds with their members. These exchanges deepen individuals' bonds with their organizations that make them less easily broken when an organization dies (Rousseau, 1998).

*H5: The degree to which an individual perceives an organization to have a relational identity orientation will be positively related to organizational identification.*

**Individual Traits.** Glynn (1998: 238 - 239) proposed that individuals' propensity to identify with organizations may be understood in terms of their need for organizational identification (NOID). Characterized as a generalized personality trait, NOID represents "an individual's need to maintain a social identity derived from membership in a larger, more impersonal general social category of a particular collective." Some individuals are more predisposed than others to remain identified with their organizations, and high NOIDs may be particularly likely to remain identified due to their desire for social inclusion.

*H6: NOID will be positively related to organizational identification.*

Some individuals have a greater propensity to experience positive emotions on a consistent basis than others (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Positive affective states encourage more positive evaluations of social stimuli (Isen & Shalcker, 1982), influencing members to include these organizations in their own self-concepts (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Positive affect may encourage former members to continue to positively evaluate a defunct organization and their association with it.

*H7: Positive affectivity will be positively related to organizational identification.*

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Insert Figure 1 about here.  
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## **METHOD**

To test these hypotheses, which comprise the theoretical model depicted in Figure 1, we studied the experiences of former employees of DEC. Following the tailored design method (Dillman, 2000), we developed a survey that encompassed a combination of multi-item scales, open-ended qualitative measures, and demographic questions.

## Research Site and participants

The first author contacted leaders of DEC's 26 alumni associations with a request to distribute a survey to all former employees for whom they had contact information. He reached agreement with 18 of these organizations to issue an announcement with instructions for how to access the survey. Anyone who worked as an employee of DEC prior to its June 1998 acquisition by Compaq was eligible to participate in the survey.

Participants in the survey were encouraged to share the survey announcement with any former DEC colleagues with whom they were in contact. Of the 2,192 individuals who completed the survey, 757 respondents (34.5%) reported that they were not alumni group members, suggesting that the survey was broadly distributed beyond the initial group.

Since the total population of DEC employees is unavailable, a complete response rate cannot be calculated. However, many of the alumni groups provided counts of the former employees in their databases. Of the 3340 members in the six largest alumni groups, 748 completed the survey, for a partial response rate of 22.3%, which is consistent with prior published studies that relied on web-based contact (Kaplowitz, Hadlock & Levine, 2004).

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Table 1 provides a summary of descriptive statistics about the overall survey sample. Participants reported being an average of 55.4 years old, with a range of 34 to 80 years. On average, participants worked for DEC for 14 years and left 13.1 years before completing the survey. Men comprised 72.9% of respondents; this gender distribution closely tracks with the profile of new entrants to the computer industry in the 1990s, when DEC was still an active entity (Computing Research News, 1998). In addition, 70% of respondents reported having at least a college degree. Finally, 41.8% of respondents reported working for DEC outside the US.

## Measures

Many of the variables included in the theoretical model were measured using quantitative scales with Likert-type items. The scales included a minimum of three items in order to ensure reliability (Harris & Johnson, 2002) and appropriate stability for structural equation modeling (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1990). For those scales drawn from prior published research, the phrasing of items was adapted to reflect DEC's defunct status. For example, the item "I often think about the fact that I am a member of [company name]" was reworded to "I often think about the fact that I was a member of DEC."

**Organizational Identification.** Organizational identification was measured using a scale drawn from Cameron (2004, 13 items;  $\alpha = .90$ ). A sample item is "Having been an employee of DEC is an important reflection of who I am."

**NOID.** The NOID construct was measured using a seven item scale ( $\alpha = .71$ ) developed by Kreiner & Ashforth (2004). A sample item is: "An important part of who I am would be missing if I didn't belong to [DEC]."

**Positive Affectivity.** Positive affectivity was measured using a scale of ten affective states ( $\alpha = .90$ ) that comprise the pleasantness dimension of the circumplex model of emotions (Nezlek, 2005; Russell, 2003). To reduce the risk of social desirability bias, we also included ten items associated with unpleasant affect in random order.

**Exposure to Sustained Success.** Using archival records, we tabulated DEC's annual financial performance and employment totals for each year between 1960 and 1998. For each individual, we calculated exposure to sustained success with two measures. First, we summed participants' reported years of employment to determine each individual's overall tenure with the

organization. Second, we calculated the percentage of each individual's employed years that were marked by either an increase in overall employment or positive profit figures.

**Perceived Relational Identity Orientation.** We measured individuals' perceptions of DEC's organizational identity orientation using procedures recommended by Brickson (2005). We presented respondents with an adaptation of the Ten Statements Test (TST), derived from Kuhn and McPortland (1954), and asked participants to complete the sentence stem, "DEC was —," up to ten times. Respondents provided 13,070 separate responses, or an average of 5.96 responses per person. Each response was coded for its valence (positive, negative, or neutral) and the organizational identity orientation it reflected (individual, relational or collective). From a random sample of responses we created a coding scheme that outlined responses that corresponded with each category. Using the coding scheme, the first author and a second coder each coded 38% of the data for valence and identity orientation. Our kappa was .66, which meets common standards for interrater reliability (cf. Brickson, 2005; Landis & Koch, 1977). After meeting to clarify the coding scheme, the first author then coded the remaining data.

**Participation in Loyalty Activities.** Through an examination of several cases, we compiled a list of activities that are commonly associated with sustaining relationships among former employees of a defunct organization (cf. Withey & Cooper, 1989). Following procedures recommended by Devellis (2003), we created and pretested a scale of eight items ( $\alpha = .83$ ) that asked participants the extent to which they engage in specific behaviors. Items include: "I regularly keep in touch with other former DEC employees," "I organize activities with other former DEC employees," "I encourage others to join a DEC alumni group" and "I have been involved in the leadership of a DEC alumni group."

**Perceived Organizational Identity Strength.** The perceived strength of legacy organizational identity was measured using a four-item scale ( $\alpha = .62$ ) adapted from Kreiner and Ashforth (2004). An item for this scale includes “The vision of DEC remains clear and unique.”

### **Common Method Variance**

The design of this study introduces two potential sources of common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). First, the same respondents reported data for both predictor and outcome variables, which raises the risk of self-report biases. Second, many of the variables in the survey were measured using five-point scales that were measured with similar or identical scale descriptions (e.g. “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”).

Podsakoff et al. (2003) reviewed numerous procedural controls for mitigating common method variance, four of which were incorporated into the design of this study. First, we intermixed items related to different constructs in sections of the survey (Kline, Sulsky & Rever-Moriyama, 2000). Second, we used a relatively long scale to measure organizational identification (Cameron, 2004) to minimize the influence of respondents’ short-term memory of prior responses (Harrison, McLaughlin & Coalter, 1996). Third, we did not ask participants to provide their names and asked them to be completely honest in their responses. Finally, we provided specific labels for the midpoints of all scales (e.g. “sometimes”, “neutral”, etc.), which has been found to reduce acquiescence bias (Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinski, 2000).

### **Data Analysis**

We analyzed the data using structural equation modeling (SEM) procedures. While SEM does not provide a means to assess causality with cross-sectional data, it does allow testing of an overall model instead of just the individual relationships that comprise it. We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test a measurement model comprised of the latent variables in the

theoretical model and the indicators drawn from the survey data that were expected to measure them. We then developed a structural model that incorporates the theoretically derived relationships expected among the latent variables. Since several variables were skewed and/or kurtotic, we employed the bootstrap procedure in our analysis (Efron, 1982). The bootstrap procedure may only be used when the variables in the model have no missing values (Byrne, 2001), so we listwise deleted cases with missing values to create a compatible data set (n=1690).

## **FINDINGS**

Table 2 displays means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations for the variables in the model. While Table 2 provides some evidence of moderate correlations among variables included in the model (Lines 6 through 13), these values do not approach what researchers have considered problematic levels of multicollinearity for SEM procedures (Maruyama, 1997). Table 2 also provides mean values for the overall scales and individual items that are associated with the latent variables in the structural model. Of particular note, the mean individual item score for organizational identification was 4.1 (out of 5), indicating a fairly high level of organizational identification among survey respondents.

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### **Measurement Model**

Table 3 summarizes a series of goodness-of-fit indices that assessed the fit of the constructs to the data. While the  $\chi^2$  statistic has been used historically to assess fit, it represents an exceptionally conservative measure that is particularly sensitive to sample size (Burt, 1973; Hu & Bentler, 1995). Given this limitation, researchers have suggested that a relative chi-square statistic (Bollen, 1989; Carmines & McIver, 1981), which is measured as  $\chi^2$  divided by the degrees of freedom; a value of less than 5 is indicative of an adequate fit of the model to the data.

Hu & Bentler (1995) recommended the use of multiple indices in interpreting model fit. Table 4 thus includes four additional model fit indices, including the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the confirmatory fit index (CFI), the relative fit index (RFI) and the incremental fit index (IFI). RMSEA values of .06 or lower and values of .95 or greater for the other indices are traditionally recognized as indicating good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

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Table 3 also presents the CFA results for the scales included in the model. While the relative chi-square statistic for the organizational identification model slightly exceeds the range proposed by Bollen (1989), the RMSEA value of .95 and CFI and IFI values of .96 suggest good fit of the model to the data. The RFI value of .94 is slightly below .95, but it exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of .90 commonly applied in prior studies (e.g. Cable & Judge, 1997). The results for the other variables provided compelling evidence of good model fit.

### **Structural Model**

As noted earlier, we used the bootstrap procedure to address issues of nonnormality in the distribution of the data. We compared the standard errors produced through maximum likelihood (ML) estimation with those produced using the bootstrap procedure. In each case, the bootstrap procedure yielded extremely small decreases in the standard error values, which suggests that the ML estimates are not unduly influenced by nonnormality (Byrne, 2001). Second, AMOS provided the standard errors of the standard error terms produced through bootstrap estimation. Consistent with Byrne's (2001) criteria, these values are very small. Taken together, these tests provided evidence that analysis of the structural model using ML estimates would not be substantially biased by nonnormal distribution of the data. We thus proceeded with the analysis using the ML estimates.

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## **Hypothesis Tests**

Figure 2 summarizes the levels of support for the hypotheses that comprise the structural model. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, individuals' organizational identification was positively related to their level of participation in loyalty activities ( $\beta=.45, p<.001$ ). Hypothesis 2, which predicted a positive relationship between individuals' participation in loyalty activities and the perceived strength of their organization's legacy organizational identity, was also supported ( $\beta=.10, p<.01$ ). The results indicate support for Hypothesis 3; organizational identification was positively related to the perceived strength of legacy organizational identity ( $\beta=.73, p<.001$ ).

Hypothesis 4 was measured in two ways. First, Hypothesis 4a predicted a positive relationship between former members' length of service and the strength of their organizational identification, and this hypothesis was supported ( $\beta=.15, p<.001$ ). Second, Hypothesis 4b expected a positive relationship between the percent of individuals' employed years that were characterized by growth and their level of organizational identification. The results indicated a reverse relationship that was statistically significant ( $\beta = -.06, p<.01$ ). Former employees whose employment periods were more characterized by declining employment levels and financial losses were more likely to remain strongly identified with the organization after it had closed.

Hypothesis 5, which predicted a positive relationship between perceptions of a relational identity orientation and organizational identification, was supported ( $\beta=.11, p<.001$ ). Lastly, the results provided support for Hypotheses 6 ( $\beta=.26, p<.001$ ) and 7 ( $\beta=.62, p<.001$ ), demonstrating a positive relationship of organizational identification with higher levels of NOID and positive affectivity, respectively.

## **Overall Model Fit**

Figure 2 also presents the goodness-of-fit statistics for the structural model, which can be used to assess the overall fit of the model to the data. While the chi-square statistic was nonsignificant, other fit indices offered evidence of good model fit. The relative chi-square statistic was within the range associated with good model fit (Bollen, 1989). The RMSEA value of .03 and the CFI and IFI values of .95 were within the ranges to which researchers generally ascribe strong model fit (Byrne, 2001; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The RFI value of .92 was “close to .95 indicating superior fit” (Byrne, 2001: 83). In sum, the overall model fit statistics, together with 7 of the 8 path coefficients that were statistically significant, suggest that the hypothesized model fits well with the data.

### **Statistical Assessment of Common Method Bias**

In addition to the procedural controls noted earlier, we employed the single-specific-method-factor procedure as a statistical control against possible common method variance bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003; cf. Williams & Anderson, 1994). This procedure estimates method bias associated with a common factor and controls for measurement error by allowing measured variables to load on both their theorized construct and a latent variable that is suspected to cause method bias. If structural paths remain significant with the inclusion of these dual loadings, the suspected factor has not produced substantial common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Positive affectivity might have encouraged respondents to agree with statements related to different constructs in the survey instrument, thus causing common method bias. We thus assessed the extent to which positive affectivity influenced the relationships among the three identity-related constructs included in the model: NOID, organizational identification and legacy organizational identity strength. These relationships, which are represented in Hypotheses 3 and 6, were at particular risk to be affected by common method bias.

The factor loadings associated with H3 and H6 were .48 and .77, respectively, when the items were only loaded on their theorized construct. When the measured variables are also allowed to load on positive affectivity, the path coefficients decreased in size to .34 (H3) and .57 (H6) but remained statistically significant. These results suggest that common method bias has not unduly influenced the results.

## **DISCUSSION**

This research advances scholarly understanding of the relationship between identity and loyalty. In particular, the results point to the role of organizational identification as an individual-level generative mechanism that fosters active loyalty to a defunct organization. For highly identified individuals, loyalty represents an optimal alternative in the aftermath of demise. Neglecting or exiting the situation would deprive them of their access to the valued elements of organizational life, while seeking resolution through voice may be tantamount to calling a disconnected phone number. Highly identified individuals may direct their loyalty towards organizational elements that serve as situational cues which ground and thus legitimize their sense of belongingness with an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Carador & Pratt, 2006)

This study also provides evidence that participation in loyalty activities is positively related to the perceived strength of legacy organizational identity. The research suggests that members' involvement in activities that preserve valued elements of a defunct organization keep its central, distinctive and enduring characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985) prominent in their minds. Loyalty activities provide a collective forum through which legacy organizational identities are enacted, selected and retained as a retrospective, shared interpretation of prior organizational life (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). More than simple romanticized recollections of past successes, robust legacies serve a crucial function in inspiring

entrepreneurial activity and produce material and tangible benefits for involved parties and their constituents (Glynn, 2008; Walsh & Bartunek, 2011).

In addition, this study provides insight into the contexts in which individuals develop a durable sense of identification that encourages active loyalty initiatives. In particular, the findings of this study provide evidence that individuals who have higher levels of NOID and positive affectivity may be particularly inclined to become and stay deeply identified with an organization and thus become involved in loyalty efforts after it closes. While both factors have been previously found to relate to identification with intact organizations (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), these findings point to the particularly long-lasting influence of NOID and positive affect on individuals' patterns of identification.

Further, this study suggests that longer periods of employment and perceptions of an organization having a relational orientation may forge durable identification bonds. For long service members, the prospect of shedding identification with an organization with which they had developed a trust-laden relationship (Rousseau, 1995) and in which so much of one's personal life history is bound up, would likely provoke an experience of "identity dissonance," (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996) which motivates individuals to find ways to affirm the validity and valor of their social identities.

Individuals whose periods of employment were more marked by decline were more strongly identified with the organization on average than individuals whose tenure more closely overlapped with its "glory years." One plausible explanation for this unexpected finding can be derived from prior research on organizational decline and death. When organizations enter periods of decline, reduced resource and employment levels typically produce more complex and expansive work roles for remaining employees (Mone, McKinley & Barker, 1998). Sutton

(1987) found that work effort increased following an announcement of organizational death, and this increased task involvement may make members' identification indelible.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This paper clarifies scholarly understanding of the relationship between loyalty and identification (Ashforth et al., 2008). Commenting on prior scholarship on loyalty, Graham and Keeley (1992: 192) noted that "all [scholars] agree that loyalty implies some sort of positive affective attachment that binds participants to an organization." Loyalty behaviors have also been credited to an individual's more cognitively-grounded "sense of belonging" (Allen & Tüselmann, 2009: 544) to an organization. This belongingness shares considerable theoretical ground with scholars' contemporary understandings of organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ashforth et al., 2008; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Dutton et al., 1994). Further, recent scholarship on organizational identification has started to recognize the affective dimensions of identification (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al., 2008; Herrbach, 2006) originally envisioned by Tajfel (1978) and has likened identification to a form of attachment (e.g. Fiol, 2002).

This research makes important contributions to scholarship on organizational identification. It advances scholarly understanding of the dynamics of identification change by shedding light on individuals' pursuit of identification continuity. By participating in loyalty activities, individuals express and reinforce their identification with their defunct organizations. Rather than passively submitting to leaders' efforts to foster de-identification, former members may actively manage their existing patterns of organizational identification, thus allowing it to persist as individuals move to new contexts.

This research also illuminates the provenance of organizational legacies. While the functions and effects of legacies have become clear from prior research (Burton & Beckman,

2007; Schein, 2003; Wade-Benzoni, 2006; Walsh & Glynn, 2008), their causes have received relatively less attention from scholars. This research addresses this gap by recognizing the role of members' ongoing identification with a defunct organization in the perpetuation of an organization's legacy. In the aftermath of demise, high levels of identification provide a collective reservoir of energy for organizational sensemaking processes (Maitlis, 2005) that translate shared memories into contemporary understandings of legacy.

### **Limitations and Areas for Future Research**

The survey data used in this study were cross-sectional in nature, which prevents any definitive conclusions about causality in the relationships in the theoretical model. However, prior research suggests that many of the studied constructs emerge in a temporal sequence that implies a causal ordering. For instance, members generally become strongly identified with an organization while it is intact, while participation in loyalty activities as constituted in this study occurs after an organization has died. Therefore, while loyalty activities may reinforce pre-existing patterns of organizational identification, they are unlikely to cause them in the first place. Additionally, prior research suggests that individuals' levels of NOID (Glynn, 1998) and positive affectivity (Russell, 2003) are relatively stable over time and likely predate their participation in a specific organization. A study that follows a longitudinal design would provide an opportunity to test the implied causal relationships in this model.

While the high volume of responses to the survey certainly provided some degree of statistical power, this research does not provide a basis for making any claims about the generalizability of the findings. Distinctive, but unmeasured, factors in the DEC context may produce effects that are not representative of firms with different characteristics or environments.

This paper examined the role of organizational identification as an individual-level generative mechanism that explains former members' propensity to engage in loyalty behaviors that promote and sustain valued elements of defunct organizations. Future research on organizational loyalty might also examine a complementary, more macro-oriented question of why some defunct organizations have such robust "afterlives" while others fade into obscurity. For instance, the Studebaker Corporation has inspired decades of loyalty efforts that have produced a corporate museum, multiple collectors' associations and several spinoff companies. However, dozens of defunct automotive firms ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Defunct\\_motor\\_vehicle\\_manufacturers\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Defunct_motor_vehicle_manufacturers_of_the_United_States); accessed 1/8/11) have inspired negligible organizing efforts. A multilevel model would afford insight into a broader range of forces that contribute to the perpetuation of organizational loyalty, thus enabling more robust theorizing about its causes, processes, and effects.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, we have explored relationships between organizational identification and active loyalty behaviors. This research has shed light on the generative influence of organizational identification in circumstances when it would traditionally be expected to fade, as well as factors that foster such durable identification. By inviting closer scrutiny of the persistence of organizational identification and loyalty, we hope that this study will spur advances in scholarly conversations about an increasingly important topic.

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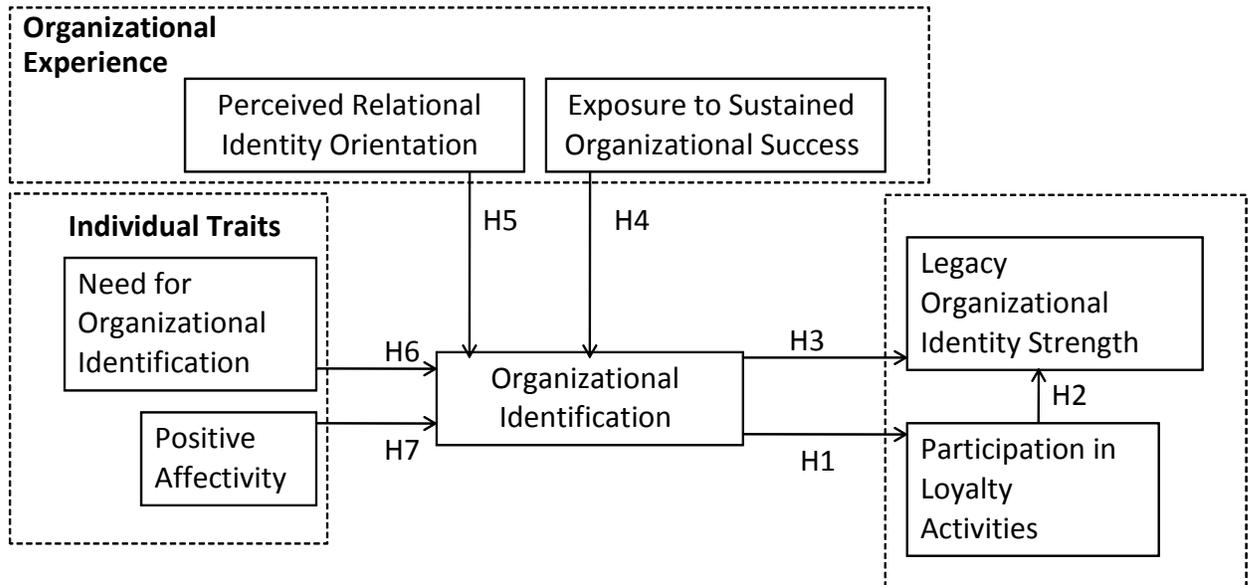
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**FIGURE 1**  
**Theoretical Model**



**TABLE 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	Total Sample (n=2192)		Alumni Group Members (n=1426)		Non-members (n=757)	
	Mean/%	S.D.	Mean/%	S.D.	Mean/%	S.D.
Age	55.4	7.7	55.8	7.7	54.6	7.6
Length of Tenure	14.0	6.5	14.2	6.5	13.8	6.5
Years since DEC departure	13.1	4.2	13.1	4.1	13.0	4.4
Reported Relationships	6.1	4.3	6.4	4.3	5.6	4.1
% who are male	72.9	-	74.8	-	69.5	-
% with bachelor's degree	70.0	-	73.0	-	64.5	-
% employed as manager/supervisor	45.4	-	49.0	-	38.5	-
% with non-US work location	41.8	-	49.2	-	26.9	-

**TABLE 2**  
**Means, Standard Deviations and Bivariate Correlations for Variables in Model**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Total Length of Employment (in years)	14.0	6.49	-							
2. % of Employed Years with Growth	.55	.26	.36**	-						
3. Perceived Relational Orientation	43.65	26.75	.12**	.07**	-					
4. nOID	20.19 (4.04)	2.60	.06*	.04	.08**	.71				
5. Positive Affectivity	27.87 (3.48)	6.08	.14**	.03	.22**	.29**	.90			
6. Organizational Identification	12.31 (4.10)	1.62	.22**	.03	.26**	.38**	.61**	.89		
7. Participation in Loyalty Activities	17.20/ (2.46)	6.10	.08**	-.04	.09**	.19**	.33**	.41**	.83	
8. Perceived Organizational Identity Strength	9.80 (3.27)	2.18	.05*	-.05*	.15**	.23**	.43**	.54**	.32**	.62

Cronbach alpha values reported on diagonal for scales.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

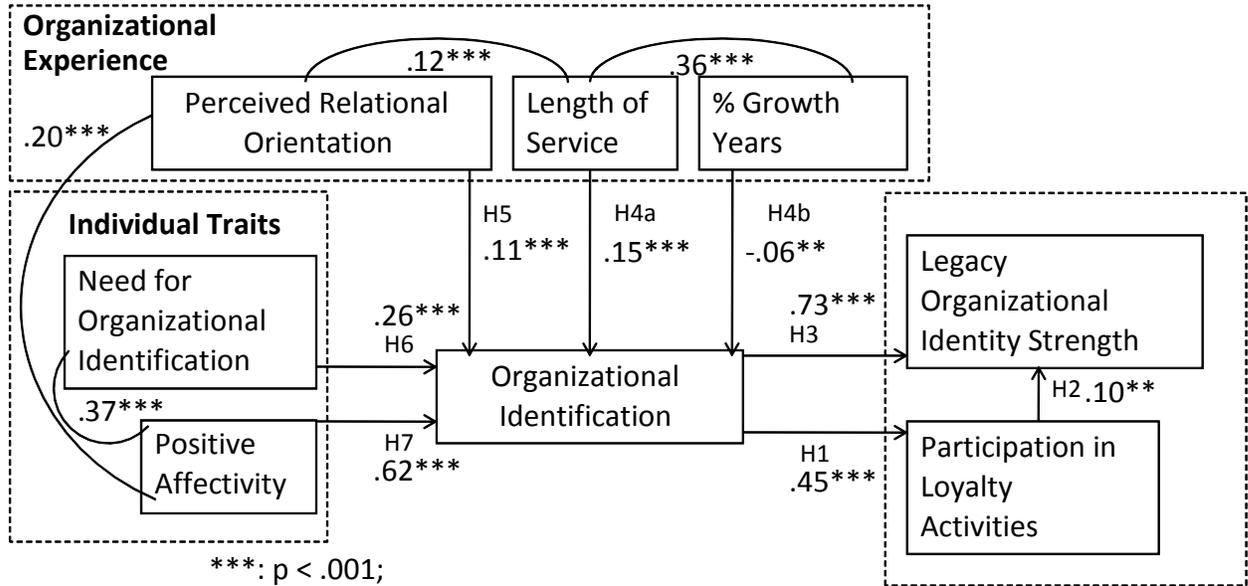
\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

<sup>a</sup> For scales, overall mean scores are followed by individual item means (in parentheses)

**TABLE 3**  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results**

	Organizational Identification	Loyalty Activities	Perceived Org. Identity Strength	NOID	Positive Affectivity
# of Scale Items	13	8	4	5	8
$\chi^2$	438.9	130.06	1.93*	2.90*	221.35
df	62	17	2	5	19
$\chi^2/df$	7.08	7.65	.97	.58	11.65
RMSEA	.06	.06	.00	.00	.07
CFI	.96	.98	1.00	1.00	.98
IFI	.96	.98	1.00	1.00	.98
RFI	.94	.96	.99	.99	.96

**FIGURE 2**  
**Summary of Structural Model**



\*\*\*:  $p < .001$ ;

\*\* :  $p < .01$ .

Reported estimates are standardized.

Goodness-of-fit Statistics						
$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	CFI	RFI	IFI
1810.6	646	2.8	.03	.95	.92	.95