

Recent Advances in Research on Personal Identity in Organizations: Construction and Refinement Based on a Process Framework

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Abstract

Personal identification is the process through which an individual establishes a sense of oneness with others and defines the self based on others. Research indicates that personal identification in organizations is closely related to employees' job performance and job satisfaction. Through a review and synthesis of the literature, this paper addresses the limitations of existing research, which has paid relatively little attention to the concept of personal identification itself and its evolutionary development within organizations. From a dynamic perspective, we classify personal identification in organizations into unidirectional and bidirectional types, preliminarily construct a process framework for personal identification in organizations, explore its contingent mechanisms in specific contexts (between superiors and subordinates and among colleagues), and finally propose directions for future research.

Full Text

New Advances in Research on Personal Identification in Organizations: The Development and Improvement of a Process Framework

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Abstract

Personal identification is the process through which individuals establish a sense of oneness with others and define themselves in terms of those others. Research demonstrates that personal identification in organizations is closely related to employee work performance, job satisfaction, and other outcomes. Through a comprehensive literature review, this paper addresses the limitations of existing research, which has paid insufficient attention to the concept of personal identification itself and its evolutionary development within organizational contexts. Adopting a dynamic perspective, we categorize organizational personal identification into two types—one-way and both-way identification—construct a preliminary process framework for personal identification in organizations, explore its contingent mechanisms in specific contexts (between superiors and subordinates and among colleagues), and finally propose directions for future research.

Keywords: personal identification; type; mechanism; process framework

“A self exists only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it” (Taylor, 2001).

Interpreting the self through reference to others is ubiquitous in organizations, representing a form of personal identification whereby individuals define themselves in terms of others (Ashforth et al., 2016). Personal identification has significant implications for the development of individual self-concept and organizational growth, attracting widespread attention from both academia and practitioners and becoming an important topic in organizational research (Kark, 2012; Gill, 2015; Ashforth et al., 2016).

Using keywords such as “personal identification” and “leadership identification,” we searched databases including EBSCO, Web of Science, Springer, and ProQuest, selecting nearly 60 papers published in management and psychology journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Annals*, *Organization Science*, and *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Our review reveals that existing research primarily defines personal identification and distinguishes its traits based on static perspectives of individual internal need differences, paying less attention to its dynamic development and evolution in organizations. Meanwhile, existing empirical studies emphasize leaders as identification objects, exploring the internalization effects of personal identification on leadership, but lack investigation into its specific mechanisms in particular contexts (e.g., between superiors and subordinates and among colleagues). Consequently, important practical questions remain: “How can we interpret the connotation and distinguish traits of personal identification from a process-oriented perspective? How do different types of personal identification exert their contingent effects?” Addressing these gaps, this study embeds different types of personal identification within a process framework, categorizing organizational personal identification into one-way and both-way types from a dynamic perspective. We then construct specific mechanisms for

personal identification under different leadership types and among colleagues, aiming to provide a new perspective for future research.

2. Overview of Personal Identification

2.1 Conceptualization of Personal Identification

Personal identification is rooted in various social sciences and mainstream social psychology, emphasizing the important role of other individuals in self-definition (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). It represents a process of establishing a sense of oneness with specific other individuals, whereby one defines oneself in terms of those others (Ashforth et al., 2016). In this process, both the identifying subject and the identification target are independent individuals. The identifying subject, driven by internal needs (identification motives), selects identification targets and establishes a sense of oneness, then processes and refines their self-concept by learning, imitating, and internalizing the traits and attributes of the identification target to satisfy their internal needs. These internal needs (identification motives) primarily include subordinates' self-enhancement, self-belonging, and uncertainty reduction (Ashforth et al., 2016), as well as leaders' self-expansion (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010).

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Personal Identification

Personal identification primarily originates from social identity theory and social learning theory. Social identity theory was developed to explain ethnocentrism in intergroup behavior, proposing that individuals categorize themselves into groups and develop identification with these groups based on shared characteristics among group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory distinguishes between personal identity and social identity, suggesting that personal identity is based on reference to an individual's specific characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Its branch, self-categorization theory, confirms this view and further proposes that people incorporate themselves into a category and assign the characteristics of that category to themselves, achieving a process of self-stereotyping (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Personal identity theory and its developments provide the basic framework for the formation of the personal identification construct.

Bandura's social learning theory represents a departure from traditional behaviorism and includes triadic reciprocal determinism, observational learning theory, self-efficacy theory, and self-regulation mechanism theory. Among these, observational learning theory explains the process of indirect learning through modeling, suggesting that this is a "psychological matching process" rather than simple demonstration and imitation. Observers transform the model's behavior into symbolic representations through observation, then reproduce these behaviors in similar contexts, with the reproduced behaviors showing differences from the model's behavior due to the observer's own characteristics. Social learning theory describes the process by which identifying subjects incorporate the char-

acteristics of identification targets into their self-concept, providing theoretical guidance for further exploring the specific mechanisms of personal identification. These two theories serve as the cornerstone of the personal identification construct, providing theoretical foundations for its conceptualization and development.

2.3 Distinction from Similar Concepts

To further clarify the definition and connotation of personal identification, it is necessary to distinguish it from similar concepts, including empathy, perspective-taking, and role modeling. Empathy refers to understanding what others experience and emotionally responding to their situations (Kanov et al., 2004). Therefore, the object of empathetic perception is primarily others' psychological states, producing corresponding emotional experiences or cognitive outcomes without involving changes or development in self-concept, fundamentally differing from personal identification. Perspective-taking involves imagining others' experiences and feelings in a given situation (Parker & Axtell, 2001) but does not require individuals to develop a precise sense of oneness with others. Role modeling is a cognitive process through which individuals actively observe, absorb, or reject attributes of other individuals worthy of being exemplars (Gibson, 2003). In this process, individuals exhibit behavioral attributes similar to the model by observing and imitating the model's attributes, but this does not involve the internalization of the other's behavioral characteristics. Therefore, role modeling does not necessarily require identification, but role modeling based on personal identification leads individuals to develop genuine, heartfelt perceptions of consistency with the role model, thereby generating internalization of desired attributes.

2.4 Measurement of Personal Identification

Personal identification is primarily measured using questionnaires. Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, and Popper (1998) initially developed a 6-item scale, with items including "I have complete faith in this person," "I fully trust this person's judgment and decisions," and "This person is a role model I would follow." Subsequently, Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) further refined Shamir et al.'s (1998) scale, developing a unidimensional scale for subordinates' identification with leaders. Reliability testing showed the scale's internal consistency coefficient reached .882. Connaughton and Daly (2004) extracted three items for subordinates' personal identification with leaders from organizational identification scales, including "I have no sense of loyalty to my leader," "I care about my leader's reputation and future," and "I would exert considerable effort to help my leader and organizational goals succeed."

Chinese scholars Chen, Tsui, and Farh (2002), based on the Chinese cultural context, distinguished between loyalty to leaders and organizational commitment, proposing personal identification with leaders as a dimension of loyalty to leaders. Chen et al. (2002) first asked employees from six different organizations in

mainland China to provide three to four items they considered most representative of loyalty to leaders. After expert analysis and discussion, they retained 25 items for exploratory factor analysis and ultimately selected 17 items with high factor loadings, constructing a 7-point Likert scale including personal identification. Items measuring personal identification included “When I hear others praise my leader, I feel as if I am being praised myself,” “When I hear others criticize my leader, I feel as if I am being criticized myself,” and “My leader’s success is my success.” Among these, the personal identification scale developed by Shamir et al. (1998) has been widely applied in domestic and international research, becoming a benchmark mature scale in the field.

3. Types: One-way and Both-way Personal Identification

Existing research has distinguished personal identification traits based on differences in individuals’ internal needs, lacking consideration for the contingency of its pathways. Therefore, this study attempts to construct a dynamic interpretation framework for personal identification based on differences in pathways during the establishment of oneness perception, categorizing organizational personal identification into two types: one-way and both-way identification.

One-way personal identification emphasizes a unidirectional identification pathway from the identifying subject to the identification target, where the identifying subject unilaterally internalizes the target’s characteristic attributes with weak exchange intention. Both-way identification emphasizes the bidirectional interactivity of the identification process, where both parties serve as identifying subjects and targets, exhibiting strong mutual interdependence and strong exchange consciousness in values, personality traits, and behavioral attributes. One-way personal identification includes threat-focused and opportunity-focused types, while both-way identification includes intimacy-focused and hybrid types.

3.1 One-way Personal Identification: Threat-focused and Opportunity-focused

Special events, encounters, or experiences in organizations can enhance individuals’ awareness of self-identity construction (Ashforth et al., 2016). When individuals find themselves in uncertain or ambiguous organizational situations, their existing cognition of organizational status and self-definition face challenges. At this point, individuals tend to attribute potential triggering events in two ways: identity threat or identity opportunity, and reconstruct their self-concept by selecting other identification targets and objects to reduce identity threat or achieve self-enhancement (Ashforth et al., 2016). This need to establish perception and seek identification originates unilaterally from the identifying subject without involving the identification target’s identity construction and development at that time, producing no direct impact on the target’s self-concept. Therefore, this one-way identification process emphasizes the direct effect of potential triggering events in organizations on the identifying

subject, who seeks to establish a sense of oneness with others (generally organizational managers or leaders) to perfect their self-concept. Based on differences in how identifying subjects attribute potential triggering events, organizational one-way personal identification can be further divided into threat-focused and opportunity-focused identification.

3.1.1 Threat-focused Personal Identification Threat-focused personal identification is a compensatory process through which individuals establish a sense of oneness with others and internalize their identity attributes to address perceived identity threats (Ashforth et al., 2016). This process emerges from a state of scarcity in existing personal identity, influenced by individuals' need to reduce identity uncertainty, and exhibits strong negative compensatory characteristics. Petriglieri (2011) conceptualized personal identity threat as individuals perceiving organizational triggering events as potential dangers to their values, meanings, and identities, proposing that when individuals' existing self-identity becomes ambiguous or potentially threatened, they seek identification with others as a response to current identity threats to eliminate negative emotions such as anxiety and threat. Particularly under the influence of prevention focus, individuals highly value security and duty compliance, emphasizing their ought self, and thus tend to view triggering events in organizations as hindrances to their duties, easily generating identity threat perception. Based on different response targets, individuals' identity threat responses mainly fall into two types: identity maintenance responses and identity reconstruction responses (Petriglieri, 2011). Identity maintenance responses target the threat source that may cause identity threat, aiming to reduce the possibility and intensity of such potential threats to maintain existing personal identity. Identity reconstruction responses treat the already threatened identity as the response target, emphasizing direct transformation of some aspect of the existing identity. Threat-focused personal identification emphasizes transforming the existing self-concept by internalizing specific objects' attributes to reduce threat perception, belonging to the category of identity reconstruction responses.

Notably, because threat-focused personal identification emerges from a state of personal identity scarcity, individuals experiencing anxiety, worry, and other negative emotions in the identification process due to their internal need to reduce identity threat and uncertainty. At this time, individuals are likely to forcibly absorb unsuitable identity attributes from the identification target without modification or indiscriminately absorb attributes that may not be beneficial or even include flaws. Although such identification processes can temporarily alleviate panic caused by threats to self-concept, they may produce adverse consequences for individuals and organizations in the long run, such as increased dependence on the identification target and loss of independent thinking ability.

3.1.2 Opportunity-focused Personal Identification Opportunity-focused personal identification is a supplementary process through which individuals establish a sense of oneness with others and internalize their

characteristics and attributes in response to perceived identity opportunities (Ashforth et al., 2016). Driven by self-enhancement needs, individuals add characteristic attributes beneficial to self-development to their existing basic identity, exhibiting strong positive supplementary characteristics. In this supplementary identification process, triggering events in organizations are often viewed by individuals as opportunities for self-enhancement. Particularly under high psychological safety, individuals can obtain organizational support and help in understanding and processing potential events, leading them to view these experiences as learning and growth processes, thereby forming opportunity-focused personal identification (Ashforth et al., 2016). At the individual level, promotion-focused individuals focus on self-growth and pursue higher goals based on their ideal self. They can often see the difference between their ideal self and actual self in perceiving and responding to work events, thus seeking opportunities for self-growth and generating opportunity-focused personal identification.

3.2 Both-way Personal Identification: Intimacy-focused and Hybrid

Unlike the single identification pathway to others (generally organizational managers or leaders) in one-way identification, both-way personal identification emphasizes the process where both parties learn from each other, mutually internalize identity attributes, and ultimately achieve identification consistency, with strong exchange consciousness in characteristic attributes. Organizational both-way personal identification can be divided into intimacy-focused identification among peers (colleagues) and hybrid identification between superiors and subordinates (leaders and followers) based on differences in the specific relationship between identifying parties.

3.2.1 Intimacy-focused Personal Identification Intimacy-focused personal identification is a process in which both parties internalize each other's identity attributes based on their respective needs for belonging (Ashforth et al., 2016). It often emerges among close colleagues, where both parties internalize each other's identity attributes and jointly experience a reciprocal identification fusion process, enabling more comprehensive development in values, beliefs, and identities and showing high consistency. This identification process is influenced by various organizational factors, mainly manifested at the individual level as relational self-construal and at the organizational level as relational climate (Ashforth et al., 2016). According to Cross (2009), relational self-construal is the general orientation of defining oneself based on close relationships. Individuals with high relational self-construal highly value relationship value, often placing others' interests before their own, encouraging others to express themselves and providing social support (Mattingly et al., 2011). Therefore, they are more inclined to seize opportunities to establish and develop intimate relationships, forming intimacy-focused personal identification. Organizational-level relational climate refers to employees' shared perceptions and evaluations of policies, practices, and behaviors affecting interpersonal

relationships in specific contexts (Mossholder et al., 2011). Positive relational climate features mutual respect, relationship coordination, interdependence, and shared social values (Mossholder et al., 2011; Reich & Hershcovis, 2011; Singh & Winkel, 2012). From a social psychology perspective, positive relational climate often forms closer interpersonal relationships, where both parties trust and commit to each other (Clark & Lemay, 2010), experience positive emotions (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006), and engage in shared social activities (Aron et al., 2002), thereby effectively establishing intimacy-focused personal identification.

It is worth noting that although intimacy-focused personal identification emerges among close individuals and both parties value the stability and quality of their relationship, it is fundamentally different from relational identification. The difference lies in that the object of relational identification is the specific relationship between the two parties, whereas the object of intimacy-focused identification is the individuals within the relationship, with the relationship merely serving as the bond connecting the identifying parties.

3.2.2 Hybrid Personal Identification Hybrid personal identification emerges from interactions between superiors and subordinates, exhibiting hybrid characteristics based on the asymmetry of identification motives between both parties. As organizational agents, leaders often satisfy their psychological need for self-expansion through the process of personally identifying with subordinates. In this process, leaders expand their resources and perspectives by identifying with subordinates' demonstrated skill levels and outstanding qualities, and hope to obtain corresponding support and identification from subordinates through their identification behaviors, enhancing consistency with subordinates and thereby effectively improving their leadership in the organization (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). On the other hand, in the interaction process between leaders and subordinates, leaders, with their excellent leadership and positive leadership behaviors, form positive exemplar effects in organizations and demonstrate personality characteristics and behavioral attributes more worthy of internalization than colleagues, thus often becoming identification targets for subordinates to reduce uncertainty, achieve self-enhancement, or seek belonging (Ashforth et al., 2016). At this point, both-way personal identification is achieved between leaders and subordinates, exhibiting hybrid characteristics based on differences in identification motives between both parties.

4. Mechanisms: One-way and Both-way Mechanisms

Based on differences in identification pathways in the personal identification process, this study further explores the construction and development of personal identification in organizations, categorizing its specific mechanisms in particular organizational contexts (between superiors and subordinates and among colleagues) into one-way and both-way types. One-way mechanisms emphasize

the unidirectional pathway from identifying subject to identification target, with weak exchange consciousness in identity attributes and personality traits, often manifested as subordinates' one-way identification with leaders in organizations, and thus are often studied as "leadership identification" in domestic and international research (Liu et al., 2010; Wang & Howell, 2012; Yao & Liu, 2013; Gao & Zhao, 2014; Li et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2015; Song et al., 2015). Both-way mechanisms emphasize that both parties learn from each other and internalize each other's identity attributes, with strong identification exchange consciousness.

4.1 One-way Mechanism

Organizational one-way personal identification is mainly manifested as subordinates' one-way identification with leaders. Research shows that compared with other organizational members, leaders, with their excellent leadership and positive leadership behaviors, more easily become ideal identification targets for subordinates, forming positive exemplar effects and role models in organizations (Ashforth et al., 2016). In this one-way identification process, subordinates learn and imitate their leaders' personality traits and behavioral attributes and further internalize them as part of their self-concept, thereby achieving reconstruction or perfection of self-concept. This identification process, influenced by different leadership types, shows differences in subordinates' identification content and behaviors, further producing different individual identification and organizational development outcomes. In view of this, this study attempts to explore the construction, development, and impact of opportunity-focused and threat-focused one-way personal identification in organizations by using different leadership types as subordinates' identification targets, thereby constructing a one-way mechanism for personal identification.

4.1.1 Opportunity-focused Personal Identification Opportunity-focused personal identification emphasizes individuals' positivity, proactivity, and selectivity in choosing identification targets and content. Organizational leaders, with their absolute advantages in resources and information channels, coupled with positive leadership behaviors and exemplar effects formed in organizations, often become the preferred identification targets for subordinates to perfect their self-concept.

Reviewing existing research, the main identification targets that can help subordinates construct opportunity-focused personal identification include: servant leadership, benevolent leadership, charismatic leadership, and pragmatic leadership.

Servant Leadership as Identification Target. Servant leadership becomes subordinates' identification target by committing to improving subordinates' knowledge and skills and creating an organizational environment for self-development and growth. Research shows that servant leadership emphasizes subordinate-centeredness (Gao & Zhao, 2014), focuses on improving subordinates' knowledge, skills, and internal motivation, and builds relationships

with subordinates through humility, authenticity, and enthusiasm (Owens & Hekman, 2012), encourages subordinates (van Dierendonck, 2011), and improves subordinates' work engagement (Liden et al., 2014). The personality characteristics and behavioral styles demonstrated by servant leadership can form positive demonstration effects in organizations and enhance subordinates' internal yearning and emotional attachment to leaders, thereby becoming identification targets and objects for subordinates to learn, imitate, and internalize their behavioral characteristics (Liden et al., 2008). Meanwhile, servant leadership emphasizes the motivation of positive emotions such as optimism, enthusiasm, and sincerity, focuses on creating an organizational environment for subordinates' self-development and growth, and enables subordinates to receive timely and effective help and understanding from the organization when dealing with potential triggering events. In this context, subordinates easily form identity opportunity perception in organizations, thereby generating opportunity-focused personal identification with leaders, which further increases subordinates' organizational citizenship behavior and other positive behaviors (Gao & Zhao, 2014).

Benevolent Leadership as Identification Target. Benevolent leadership becomes subordinates' identification target by creating a safe and inclusive psychological atmosphere. Benevolent leadership emphasizes providing care, support, and help to subordinates both within and outside the work domain (Wang & Cheng, 2010; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2012; Zhang et al., 2013), highlights employees' important role and value in the organization, and commits to creating a safe and inclusive psychological atmosphere to help subordinates achieve self-development (Zhang et al., 2013). Subordinates can develop a willingness to identify with leaders' beliefs, values, and behavioral attributes, and through learning and imitating leader behaviors, obtain rich knowledge and skills, demonstrate strong internal motivation for work and high creativity, thereby generating opportunity-focused personal identification with leaders and exhibiting high innovative performance.

Charismatic Leadership as Identification Target. Charismatic leadership becomes an identification target for subordinates to construct opportunity-focused personal identification through conveying stable positive emotions and other soft means. Charismatic leadership focuses on future vision and goals, advocating encouraging optimism and proactivity through emotional management (Burch et al., 2013; Humphrey, 2012). Under the influence of such positive emotions, charismatic leaders often view potential triggering events in organizations as opportunities or springboards for organizational progress, and based on their charisma (such as being knowledgeable, capable of taking responsibility, and well-liked by subordinates), adopt future projection, inspirational calls, and other soft strategies (Griffith et al., 2015) to stimulate subordinates' positive emotions and instill success concepts, encouraging subordinates to be enterprising and innovative, thereby enhancing subordinates' opportunity perception and generating opportunity-focused personal identification. In this relatively positive identification process, subordinates absorb charismatic leaders' blueprint

planning, thereby setting more ambitious personal and organizational goals, and their work enthusiasm and innovation continuously improve. Meanwhile, charismatic leaders' excellent leadership and influence are strengthened, enabling rapid decision-making and implementation, which benefits overall organizational performance improvement.

Pragmatic Leadership as Identification Target. Pragmatic leadership becomes an identification target for subordinates to generate opportunity-focused personal identification through objective analysis and reasoning and other rational means. Pragmatic leadership emphasizes taking direct measures to solve current problems based on objective facts, clues, and evidence (Mumford et al., 2008), advocating using logical reasoning and analysis and other rational means to truly restore objective facts. The main target of this leadership's influence is the elite group in the organization. These elite groups have sufficient knowledge, skills, and strong autonomy, and can quickly establish a relatively clear and feasible identification. However, based on differences in their positions and resources, they often have cognitive and goal disagreements and internal conflicts. Pragmatic leadership can effectively improve its ability in interest coordination, analysis, and reasoning by emphasizing the fundamentality and fairness of material and interest distribution (Mumford et al., 2008), prompting these elite groups to learn, imitate, and internalize pragmatic leaders' trait attributes based on their existing cognition, forming opportunity-focused personal identification. This identification helps reduce individuals' original goal differences, enables organizational members to cooperate based on common interests, and reach new goal consensus based on available clues and information, effectively improving work performance.

4.1.2 Threat-focused Personal Identification Threat-focused personal identification views subordinates' identification with leaders as a response to or coping with threat perception (Ashforth et al., 2016), thus lacking selectivity and criticality in identification target selection and content absorption, tending to comprehensively accept and forcibly internalize behavioral traits from leaders, often becoming identification subjects of negative leadership, causing serious negative impacts on individual behavior and organizational development.

Ideological Leadership as Identification Target. Ideological leadership mainly becomes an identification target for subordinates to form threat-focused personal identification through pressure and accusation and other hard measures. Ideological leadership values personal values and beliefs, often viewing events in the existing organization that do not conform to their value concepts as organizational hidden dangers or injustices. Therefore, they tend to express the need for organizational improvement by emphasizing negative events such as failures and personal value system threats in organizational planning and goal communication (Griffith et al., 2015). In this situation, potential triggering events in the organization are easily defined by ideological leaders as cognitive threats or injustices and other negative factors, and they forcibly instill their personal

views and value concepts into subordinates through pressure, responsibility, and attack and other hard means (Griffith et al., 2015). At this time, subordinates' threat perception is enhanced, and out of the need to reduce cognitive uncertainty, subordinates often accept and internalize the personal concepts instilled by ideological leaders, generating threat-focused personal identification. It is worth noting that ideological leaders overemphasize their own value concepts, having significant limitations in their mental model construction and treatment measures. Individuals under identity threat, out of their internal need to reduce identity uncertainty, tend to comprehensively accept or completely internalize guidance and commands from leaders, causing loss of independent thinking ability and increased dependence on leaders, which has significant negative effects on individual behavior and organizational development.

Table 1 systematically organizes the one-way mechanism pathways of personal identification in organizations.

Table 1: Mechanisms of Personal Identification in Organizations—One-way Pathways

Identification Type	Identification Motive	Identification Direction	Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
Threat focused	Reduce uncertainty	Subordinate → Leader	Hard measures (pressure, blame, attack); Forced instillation of personal ideology	Ideological Leadership	Increased subordinate dependence on leader; Weaker organizational innovation; Lower organizational performance

Identification Type	Identification Motive	Identification Direction	Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
Oppor- tunity- focused	Positive self- enhancement	Subordinate → Leader	Improving subordi- nates' knowledge and skills; Creating environ- ment for self- development and growth	Servant Leadership	Increased orga- niza- tional citi- zen- ship be- hav- ior; Higher orga- niza- tional identi- fica- tion
			Creating safe, inclusive psychologi- cal atmosphere; Work support	Benevolent Leadership	Increased work initia- tive; Higher inno- vative per- for- mance

Identification Type	Identification Motive	Identification Direction	Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
			Soft measures (vision projection, inspirational call)	Charismatic Leadership	Improved subordinate performance; Increased organizational citizenship behavior
			Rational measures (logical reasoning and analysis)	Pragmatic Leadership	Promotes employee cooperation; Improved work performance

Source: Compiled based on relevant literature.

4.2 Both-way Mechanism

Based on differences in specific relationships between identifying parties in the both-way identification process, this study proposes that both-way identification in organizations is mainly manifested as intimacy-focused personal identification among peers (colleagues) and hybrid personal identification between superiors and subordinates (leaders and followers).

4.2.1 Intimacy-focused Personal Identification: Among Colleagues

Intimacy-focused personal identification often emerges among close colleagues.

Both parties, based on the bond of their relationship, show relatively consistent perceptions and evaluations regarding policies and behaviors related to their relationship development. Driven by the internal need for belonging and the purpose of maintaining existing relationships, they learn from each other and internalize each other's identity attributes to achieve identification consistency (Ashforth et al., 2016). Research shows that interactions among colleagues within and outside the work domain are more frequent and common than those between superiors and subordinates, and can cultivate relationships of mutual trust, support, and cooperation in various organizational activities and extra social interactions, thereby establishing intimate interpersonal relationships (Li, 2016). This intimate relationship and good interaction atmosphere make it more likely for relatively equal-status colleagues to develop intimacy-focused personal identification (Ashforth et al., 2016). In this both-way identification process, both parties develop high levels of trust and strong emotionality, their perceptions of care and goodwill toward each other are strengthened, and they continuously adjust their behaviors to adapt to each other's needs. The willingness for interaction and identification exchange is stronger, thereby effectively promoting cooperative behavior and improving task performance (Li, 2016). Meanwhile, social identity theory suggests that such identification with other organizational members also increases altruistic behaviors, such as supporting colleagues' work (Li, 2016).

4.2.2 Hybrid Personal Identification: Between Leaders and Subordinates Hybrid personal identification is the product of asymmetrical identification motives between leaders and subordinates. Existing research has focused on subordinates' one-way identification mechanisms with leaders, emphasizing the premise of individuals' internal needs in the early stage of personal identification construction, with less research on leaders' personal identification with subordinates. In fact, leaders face personal bottlenecks in information or capabilities when controlling organizational development direction and formulating policies, thereby generating psychological needs for self-expansion (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). By continuously learning and absorbing subordinates' unique views and perspectives on organizational internals and their outstanding abilities and character traits, leaders can expand their perspectives and resources, improve their sense of control over the organization, and satisfy this need. Therefore, the author believes that in interactions between superiors and subordinates, both-way personal identification may exist between leaders and subordinates, presenting hybrid characteristics due to differences in identification motives. Typical leadership types that easily generate both-way identification processes mainly include the following three: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and self-sacrificial leadership.

Transformational Leadership and Subordinates. Transformational leadership achieves both-way personal identification with subordinates mainly through individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. On the one hand, transformational leaders focus on subordinates' personality traits and behav-

iors, provide targeted socio-emotional support for subordinates (Kark & Shamir, 2002), and demonstrate empathy toward subordinates. Due to this leadership type's behavioral characteristics, when making decisions or organizing collective activities, they consider the differences in subordinates' characteristics, show tolerance and understanding toward subordinates' unique behavioral attributes, and maintain an open and accepting attitude toward new opinions and methods proposed by subordinates (Qu et al., 2015). These behaviors themselves can be understood as transformational leaders' attempts to obtain more comprehensive perspectives and resources through personal identification with subordinates, enabling themselves to better understand subordinates' psychological needs, consider these needs in actual organizational operations, and make policies more easily accepted and executed by subordinates, thereby improving their sense of control over the organization. On the other hand, intellectual stimulation emphasizes leaders guiding subordinates to think, prompting them to examine their own assumptions. Under the stimulation of leaders' intellectual stimulation, subordinates more easily discover their own shortcomings. At this time, subordinates selectively screen and absorb individual characteristics and behavioral attributes of leaders, that is, they develop personal identification with leaders, and will continuously perfect their self-concept and identification under leaders' guidance, producing positive effects on organizational and personal development, such as increased innovative behavior and solutions, enhanced empowerment perception, and increased voice behavior (Wang & Howell, 2012; Eisenbeiß & Boerner, 2013). The achievement or enhancement of this mutual identification maintains and further develops the relationship between both parties. At this time, subordinates' identification with leaders is more susceptible to subjective emotions, thereby reducing the identifying subject's own judgment ability and thinking willingness, which causes a series of impacts on subordinates' behaviors, such as increased dependence on leaders (Kark et al., 2003), increased affective organizational commitment, and decreased innovation ability (Zhu et al., 2012). Therefore, this both-way identification is likely one of the key factors bringing dual effects of transformational leadership in organizations.

Authentic Leadership and Subordinates. Authentic leadership establishes an interactive identification mechanism with subordinates through role modeling and positive feedback from subordinates. Luthans and Avolio (2003) believe that authentic leadership emphasizes correctness and fairness, can recognize and value subordinates' differences and talents, and will to some extent learn and internalize subordinates' personality characteristics and behavioral attributes, easily generating leaders' personal identification with subordinates. At this time, leaders' channels for resource acquisition and perspectives are expanded, and they further obtain subordinates' support and personal identification. This feedback from subordinates is beneficial for improving leaders' self-construction awareness, thereby demonstrating more positive leadership behaviors (Kong & Zhao, 2010). Meanwhile, authentic leaders' value concepts (such as sincerity, integrity, and selflessness) and subordinate-oriented behavioral attributes (such as respecting subordinates and providing honest evaluations) form positive role

models in organizations, gaining subordinates' authentic followership and identification (Leroy et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2012), and are internalized into subordinates' own attribute characteristics through subordinates' positive imitation (López et al., 2015), that is, inducing subordinates to develop personal identification with leaders. In such a both-way personal identification process, the positive leadership behaviors demonstrated by authentic leaders and the positive feedback from subordinates interact, further enhancing leaders' positive self-construction and psychological capital (Kong & Zhao, 2010). Meanwhile, the influence and appeal of leaders' positive leadership behaviors on subordinates are further strengthened, and subordinates' authentic followership toward leaders increases. The improvement of identification consistency in positive self-construction between superiors and subordinates is beneficial for improving the authenticity of subordinates' behaviors and cultivating their positive organizational behaviors and commitment (Kong & Zhao, 2010). Meanwhile, subordinates' information processing ability is improved, and relationships in the organization become more transparent (Zhang et al., 2012).

Self-sacrificial Leadership and Subordinates. Self-sacrificial leadership forms mutual identification with subordinates through self-sacrificial behavior and attention to subordinates' needs. Self-sacrificial leadership values team and collective goals, missions, and interests, focuses on subordinates' behavioral performance, and shows high sensitivity to subordinates' needs (Li et al., 2015). They consider subordinates' interests and feelings in decision-making and other aspects, pay attention to subordinates' needs, and internalize them as part of their own interest pursuit, that is, they develop a certain degree of personal identification with subordinates. Meanwhile, leaders' self-sacrificial behavior demonstrates strong sense of mission and ethics, making subordinates focus on relationship development beyond material interests and produce a heartfelt sense of gratitude and indebtedness. At this time, subordinates' emotional dependence on leaders is enhanced, and they are more inclined to view leaders as their identification targets (Li et al., 2015), generating personal identification with leaders. In this both-way identification process between leaders and subordinates, subordinates continuously learn and imitate leaders' attributes and behaviors, showing high personal attachment to leaders and maintenance of the relationship (Zhang & Chen, 2013), thereby increasing similar positive organizational behaviors as gratitude and return for leaders' self-sacrifice, such as increased prosocial behavior, proactive responsibility-taking, and improved task performance (Li et al., 2015).

Table 2 systematically organizes the both-way mechanism pathways of personal identification in organizations.

Table 2: Mechanisms of Personal Identification in Organizations—Both-way Pathways

Identification Direction	Identification Motive	Identification Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
Colleague Colleague	Belonging seeking	Relatively equal status; Close relationship; Positive relational climate	Intimacy-focused identification	Increased consistency between both parties; Increased altruistic behavior; Increased cooperative behavior; Improved task performance

Identification Direction	Identification Motive	Identification Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
Leader Subordinate	Self-expansion; Uncertainty reduction; Self-enhancement; Belonging seeking	Access to more information and perspectives; Outstanding work ability and character traits; Hope to obtain subordinate identification	Hybrid identification	Leader's leadership is strengthened; Subordinate's personal attachment increases; Innovation ability decreases; Improved task performance; Increased organizational citizenship behavior

Identification Direction	Identification Motive	Identification Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
		Individualized consideration; Intellectual stimulation	Transformational Leadership	Increased personal attachment; Decreased innovation ability
		Positive role modeling; Positive feedback from subordinates	Authentic Leadership	Authentic follower-ship; Improved information processing; More transparent relationships

Identification Direction	Identification Motive	Identification Triggering Factors	Identification Target	Outcomes
		Self-sacrificial behavior; Attention to subordinate needs	Self-sacrificial Leadership	Improved task performance; Increased organizational citizenship behavior

Source: Compiled based on relevant literature.

5. Future Research Directions

5.1 Exploring the Explanatory Mechanisms of New Leadership in Organizations Based on One-way and Both-way Personal Identification

Research on “new leadership” represented by charismatic leadership and transformational leadership has attracted widespread attention from academia and practice since its proposal. Although the excellent leadership of charismatic leadership in organizations has been confirmed in many aspects (LePine et al., 2015; Baur et al., 2016; Gebert et al., 2016), most explorations of its influence on employee voice behavior have focused on theoretical reasoning, with less exploration of specific mechanisms. Meanwhile, although the potential negative effects of transformational leadership have received increasing attention (Wang & Howell, 2010; Eisenbeiß & Boerner, 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2013), there is still a lack of explanatory power regarding the specific causes of its dual effects. The author attempts to explore the differences in identification motives, targets, and content of different types of personal identification under the influence of charismatic leadership and transformational leadership based on one-way and both-way personal identification, hoping to provide ideas for future empirical research.

5.1.1 Exploring the Influence of Charismatic Leadership on Employee Voice Behavior Based on One-way Personal Identification The discussion on charismatic leadership’s influence on employee voice behavior has al-

ways been an important proposition in organizational research. Scholars hold different views based on different research perspectives, and no relatively authoritative and unified explanation has been formed. Currently, two completely different academic viewpoints exist in academia: support theory and inhibition theory (Kark, 2012). The author believes that the one-way personal identification induced by leaders in subordinates is an effective explanatory variable for charismatic leadership' s effect on employee voice.

Visionary inspiration is an important behavioral dimension through which charismatic leaders induce personal identification in subordinates. Charismatic leaders emphasize the conception and prospect of future vision, supplemented by positive emotional rendering and inspirational communication, making subordinates more inclined to view potential triggering events in the organization as opportunities for self-enhancement, thereby developing opportunity-focused personal identification with leaders. In this identification process, subordinates internalize charismatic leaders' proactive, innovative personality traits and grand blueprint planning, thereby setting more ambitious personal and organizational goals and improving their work engagement and innovation. In this situation, subordinates are more inclined to voice to leaders to ensure better achievement of goals. Subordinates at this time easily show high positive emotions and often put forward constructive suggestions regarding goal planning, with their voice behavior showing significant promotive characteristics.

5.1.2 Exploring the Dual Effects of Transformational Leadership on Employee Innovative Behavior Based on Both-way Personal Identification

From the perspective of both-way personal identification' s type characteristics and functional features, the reason why transformational leadership produces two completely different results is closely related to the hybrid personal identification it induces. Research shows that transformational leadership emphasizes individualized consideration for subordinates, showing tolerance and a certain degree of personal identification toward subordinates' demonstrated personality traits and unique relationships. Subordinates receiving individualized consideration at this time easily develop unique relationships shaped by mutual attraction, trust, and support with leaders (Wu & Tsui, 2010), showing strong identification and trust in leaders. Moreover, transformational leaders' unconventional behaviors and novel ideas often have positive demonstration effects, making them ideal identification targets for subordinates. Therefore, subordinates are more inclined to incorporate leaders' attributes into their self-concept, and both parties easily develop both-way personal identification. In this both-way identification process, transformational leaders effectively trigger subordinates' thinking through cognitive guidance and encouragement, prompting them to examine their own assumptions, making subordinates recognize their own shortcomings, thereby raising their expectations and demands for themselves and continuously strengthening self-enhancement awareness. At this time, subordinates improve their innovation and creativity by learning, imitating, and continuously internalizing leader traits. However, the both-way interaction pro-

cess between superiors and subordinates may strengthen subordinates' focus on maintaining and developing this superior-subordinate relationship, making them more susceptible to leaders' influence and more blindly following leadership, unwilling to easily deny or question leaders' decisions, causing negative results such as decreased subordinates' innovation ability.

Therefore, the author believes that the hybrid personal identification generated by transformational leadership is an effective explanatory mechanism for its dual effects in organizations. When transformational leadership generates positive personal identification, subordinates' self-enhancement awareness is strengthened and innovative behavior increases. However, when this both-way identification process brings both parties closer and makes subordinates more concerned about maintaining the relationship with leaders, subordinates' emotional attachment and dependence on leaders are continuously enhanced, which is not conducive to the cultivation and improvement of their innovation awareness, thereby causing a series of negative effects. Future research could attempt to conduct empirical studies using scenario simulation experiments and other methods, combined with moderating variables such as personality and demographic characteristics, to verify the validity of the above two propositions.

5.2 Conducting Indigenous Empirical Research on Personal Identification

Significant differences and limitations exist between domestic and foreign scholars in the field of personal identification research. Chinese society focuses on individuals' identification with collectives, organizations, and teams, while research on personal identification is limited to the aspect of leadership internalization, lacking interpretation of the connotation of the personal identification construct itself and its construction and development in organizations. Moreover, domestic research focuses on subordinates' personal identification with leaders, exploring it as "leadership identification" while neglecting the possibility of personal identification among colleagues and from leaders to subordinates. Future research should take a more comprehensive view of the personal identification construct, paying attention to currently underexplored areas such as personal identification among colleagues and leaders' identification with subordinates.

Ashforth et al.'s typology highlights the triggering role of differences in individuals' internal needs in the identification establishment stage, while this paper's process theory emphasizes the development and changes of identifying subjects in target selection and identification absorption in specific organizational contexts, and further divides personal identification into one-way and both-way mechanisms. Combining these two research perspectives is beneficial for analyzing identifying subjects' internal motivation in the early stage of identification establishment and the dynamic development and changes of personal identification in specific contexts, thereby effectively triggering individuals' self-enhancement motivation and providing positive guidance in identification targets and content,

promoting the development and perfection of individuals' self-concept. Future research could attempt to combine these two research perspectives, expand and supplement the connotation of personal identification based on the context of Chinese public organizations, such as adding culturally distinctive elements like "subordinates' loyalty to leaders" and "emotional attachment," and develop corresponding indigenous measurement tools to promote the conduct of indigenous empirical research on personal identification.

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