

Doing Only What They Like to Do?

Role Identities, Role Fit, and Role Verification as Predictors of Role Behaviors

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Abstract

Recognition is growing that the value-basis or ideology of the organization should be better incorporated into our understanding of what drives employee behaviors and performance. The setting for this study was an organization whose core mission focused on helping vulnerable children and thus was a workplace strongly infused with child-helping values. Our conceptual focus was on how two different role identities—one based on organizational ideology, the other grounded in self-views of routine work performance—differentially affect the expression of mission-critical role behaviors of client helping and routine work performance. Our key premise was that work role behaviors are more likely to be performed when they are consistent with central employee role identities, when these identities are validated in the workplace, and when employees feel their work role fits their sense of self. Based on a sample of 278 employees with matched supervisor data, results supported our ideas that identities enhance the performance of role behaviors consistent with those identities. We also found that a strong identity can interfere with the performance of role-inconsistent behaviors, highlighting a management paradox that relying on employee identity for high levels of organizational performance in one area may also lead to underperformance in other areas. Results showed that both a sense of overall role fit and task interdependence can serve as proxies for the positive effects of identity on role consistent behavior, suggesting that managers may deal with this “reliability” problem through careful selection and job design.

The fluid nature of the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1997) and the increased focus on discretionary employee behaviors (Organ, 1988) raise many contemporary work issues. Although traditional economic or utilitarian control systems (Etzioni, 1975) that emphasize satisfying workers' financial motivations are still a dominant means of enforcing compliance, they are no longer adequate to ensure organizational effectiveness in dynamic environments. As a result, interest in normative or symbolic control of employee behavior has grown in recent years (e.g., Barker, 1999). For example, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) recommended that models of employee behavior should be expanded to include organizational values or ideology as important motivating factors.

In this study (n = 278 employees with matched supervisor data), we investigate employee personal role identity as a critical motivating force that influences two employee role behaviors: client helping and routine work performance. We built our ideas on role identity theory (Ashforth, 2001; Burke, 1991; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Burke, 2000) and identity verification processes (Burke, 1991; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Swann, 1990) as key causal mechanisms that should influence role behaviors (Farmer, Tierney, & Kung-McIntyre, 2003) in ideologically-driven organizations. Our key premise is that work role behaviors are more likely to be performed when they are consistent with salient or central employee role identities, when employees receive role verification or validation for these identities (i.e., role support; Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004), and when employees feel their work role fits their sense of self.

This study aims to make several contributions to theory and practice. First, by focusing on the role of identity in value-laden employee relations, we examine a causal mechanism that

can explain when employees will (or will not) engage in particular forms of role performance. Second, we contribute to the nascent literature on employee role identity by investigating effects of multiple identities and multiple verification processes on two key aspects of role performance (client helping and routine work performance). Third, our study addresses a key management paradox: relying on employee initiative for high performance for some behaviors may also lead to underperformance of other aspects of the role. Finally, focusing on value-driven role behavior highlights the evolving nature of work relationships and suggests that traditional role distinctions (e.g., employee versus volunteer) do not adequately explain workplace behavior.

In the following sections, we describe contemporary individual-organizational relationships, role identity, and self-verification as the foundation for our hypotheses for why and how identities and verification processes differentially predict role behaviors. Next, we describe and hypothesize how perceived fit of self with role moderates the effects of role identity on role performance, and how perceptions of the social context (task interdependence) moderate the effects of identity verification on role performances.

Contemporary Work Roles and Relationships

Individual-organizational relationships are changing rapidly and dramatically as organizations increase their use of non-traditional (e.g., part-time, temporary, contract, outsourced, networked, foreign, and unpaid) work relationships (Ellingson, Gruys, & Sackett, 1998; Howard, 1995; Rousseau, 1997; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998; Van Dyne & Farmer, 2004; West & Bogumil, 2000). For example, research evidence suggests that the bond or social contract between worker and organization can differ dramatically depending on the nature of this relationship (Shore et al., 2004; Tsui et al., 1997). Another major change in organizations is increased emphasis on individual initiative (Campbell, 2000; Crant, 2000; Frese & Fay, 2001;

Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). Current competitive demands do not allow organizations to specify all desired behaviors in advance and instead, require individuals to use their good judgment in determining the best way to make contributions that help the organization and serve its long-term objectives (Organ, 1988). Simultaneously, many individuals emphasize their personal role identities (Burke, 1991; Stryker, 1980) and adjust their contributions to the organization based on the extent inducements provided by the organization serve their personal motives (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002).

In value-based organizations, ideology is used to attract and retain employees. When employee personal values are consistent with the organization's core ideology, this match serves as a control system that enhances employee motivation. At the same time, it raises a new set of problems. When employee personal identities are infused with values that are consistent with the organization's core ideology, aspects of the role (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997) that are most consistent with expressing this value-based identity become more salient (e.g., a focus on client service) and other, perhaps equally important parts of the role that hold less personal meaning (e.g., efficiency and paperwork) become less salient and may be neglected. The literature on unpaid employment relations refers to this paradox as the "reliability" problem (Pearce, 1993). Although volunteers provide many valuable services, organizations realize that volunteers are not subject to the same control systems as employees (e.g., performance-based retention and/or pay increases) and thus volunteer values and personal preferences can be particularly influential in determining what they do and do not do in their roles as volunteers. We suggest that this same paradox may occur for employees in work organizations where organizational values and mission are used to attract and retain employees and the employment relationship is based on values and ideology.

Role Identity and Identity Verification

Identity theory (sometimes called role identity theory; Stryker & Burke, 2000) asserts that the self is composed of an individual's various social roles, that personal identity emerges from social structure in society, and that roles represent stable and recurring patterns of social relationships that are recognized as legitimate or real aspects of community (Stryker, 1980). Since the self is multidimensional (Markus & Wurf, 1987), a person can have many role identities, each with an internalized set of role expectations based on distinct sets of social relationships (Stryker, 1980; 1987). For example, employee identification with a particular role creates a "role identity" that systematically organizes needs, desires, and goals associated with that identity (Cropanzano, James, & Citera, 1993; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Schlenker, 1985). The more central an identity to sense of self, the stronger the motivation to perform role-consistent behavior. In addition, the stronger the identity, the stronger the need for verification feedback from others (verbal or behavioral, intentional or unintentional) that confirms and reinforces this identity.

Verification is an interpretative, sense-making process that allows individuals to reconcile personal role identity with the perceptions of others as part of the ongoing, self-regulating process of verifying, supporting, and validating a particular identity (Riley & Burke, 1995; Swann, 1990). The verification process is reflexive because it is the individual's perception of how s/he is perceived by others. When employees think that the perceptions of others differ from a self-construed identity standard, this triggers feelings of distress — especially if the specific role identity is central to the individual. Both negative and positive discrepancies can be distressing (Burke, 1991). A negative gap, however, (a perceived lack of role support or worse, active resistance) can be especially stressful because individuals are

motivated to protect core identities from perceived threats (Farmer et al., 2003; McCall & Simmons, 1978).

Role identity theory focuses on predicting role-related behaviors. The more central a role identity, the higher the probability that role behavior will be consistent with that identity (Stryker, 1987) because behavior is based on how people see themselves and how they prefer to be seen by others (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). To date, the concept of role identity has been used successfully to predict volunteer activity (Grube & Piliavin, 2000), blood donations (Callero, 1985; Piliavin & Callero, 1991), task leadership (Riley & Burke, 1995), and employee creativity (Farmer et al., 2003).

Role Identities and Role Behaviors at Work

Because individuals generally want others to confirm their strongly held self-views (Swann, Milton, & Polzer, 2000), they create what Swann (1987) labeled *opportunity structures* and strategically engage in selective interaction with those most likely to provide visual and behavioral confirmation of their self-views. This is consistent with research that demonstrates that individuals seek to remain in workplaces with organizational cultures and values that seem to fit with who they are (Schneider, 1987). Applying this to ideologically-driven or value-laden organizations suggests that individuals who have strong or central value-based identities that are consistent with organizational ideology will be especially likely to have their self-views reinforced (Gecas, 2000). Such identities provide a value-expressive function for the individual (Clary & Snyder, 1991) and often lead to helping and citizenship behaviors (Lavelle & Konovsky, 2003; Van Dyne & Farmer, 2004). From the organization's perspective, this suggests that strategic self-selection and socialization will increase role behaviors that are tightly linked to employee personal values.

Internalization of organizational goals, however, does not necessarily produce benefits for the organization. For example, employees might emphasize some aspects of their role and some role behaviors because they reinforce their personal sense of identity while at the same time neglecting other aspects of the role and other role behaviors. Some employees may over-emphasize “the cause” based on their ideological values and neglect other more routine aspects of efficiency and effectiveness (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). We believe this occurs because while individuals hold multiple identities (Markus & Wurf, 1987) and only a single identity may be activated and brought into the working self-concept at a given moment in time (Forehand, Desphande, & Reed, 2002; Lord & Brown, 2004). The greater the psychological centrality of a given identity, the more likely it will be activated in a specific situation (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

Thus, since individuals are strongly motivated to create opportunity structures that allow them to enact strongly held identities, it seems likely that employees will define their work roles in terms of their own personal identity and de-emphasize other parts of the role that are inconsistent with or that may detract from personal identity driven aspects of the role. This position is consistent with recent theorizing by Ashforth and colleagues (Ashforth, 2000; Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2001) who noted that strongly held roles make transitions into new roles more difficult. It is also a potential explanation for the volunteer “reliability” problem we referred to earlier, where individuals with strong value-based identities are driven to express that identity to the exclusion of counter-identity or identity-neutral behaviors that may be equally important to the organization.

Integrating these ideas and recognizing that role identities do not stand in isolation but can be understood only in relation to other identities (Callero, 1992)—especially counter-roles

(Burke & Tully, 1977)—we examine two role identities in this research. The first is a value-based role identity. Since the mission of the organization we studied focused on client social services delivered to children under age 15, we focused on client helping identity or the extent to which employees viewed helping clients (children and their families) as a core part of their personal sense of self. The second role identity in our study does not focus on the particular values of the organization. Instead, it reflects the extent to which employees viewed adequately performing the routine aspects of their work as a core part of their personal sense of self. This includes being dependable and efficient, maintaining accurate records and reports, and meeting performance standards. Since these behaviors apply to most jobs, we refer to this as routine work identity.

Just as there are multiple role identities, there also are multiple aspects of role-based performance or behavior salient to organizations (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). In this study, we focus on and contrast two specific role behaviors. The first is value-based behavior directed specifically at helping the children who are clients of the organization (client helping behaviors). While a certain level of client service was specified in many job descriptions, we concentrated on discretionary, extra-role helping behaviors that clearly go above and beyond work role requirements. In contrast, the second role behavior is neither value-based nor unique to this organization, and instead focuses on routine role behaviors exemplifying in-role performance—“actions specified and required by an employee’s job description and thus mandated, appraised, and rewarded” (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004: 369-370). Drawing on Ajzen’s (1988) idea of consonance (matched predictors and outcomes), we expected that client helping identity would predict discretionary or extra-role helping behaviors focused on helping children and that routine work identity would predict in-role or routine work behavior, including

dependability, accuracy, paperwork, and complying with rules and regulations. Further extending this idea, we emphasize that “all possible selves are not simultaneously active because humans have relatively limited attentional capacity [so]...one self concept...tends to predominate at any point in time” (Lord and Brown, 2004: 17-18).

Since only one identity is salient at a time, this should produce a more restricted set of cognitions, affective reactions, and role-appropriate behaviors (Lord & Brown, 2004). Accordingly, we expected the two identities would be negatively related to identity-inconsistent behavior (Piliavin, Grube, & Callero, 2002). In other words, a strong client helping identity will enhance client helping (identity consistent behavior) and simultaneously detract from routine work performance (identity inconsistent behavior). Similarly, a strong routine work identity will enhance routine work performance (identity consistent behavior) and detract from client helping (identity inconsistent behavior). This leads to our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Employee role identities will positively predict identity-consistent role behavior and will negatively predict identity-inconsistent role behavior. In particular, the stronger the client helping identity, the higher the client helping (H1a) and the lower the routine work performance (H1b). Similarly, the stronger the routine work identity, the higher the routine work performance (H1c) and the lower the client helping (H1d).

Roles should also be considered from the perspective of the organization in terms of what is expected of employees. The sent role (Katz & Kahn, 1978) reflects direct and indirect verbal and nonverbal communication about desired role behaviors. Interestingly, identity theory predicts role-consistent performance only when the demands of the situation are consistent with the enactment of the identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Thus, when sent role expectations are consistent with perceived self-views, employees have a sense of self-role fit (i.e., their sense of

self fits with the work role). In the current study, the sent role emphasized two key aspects of performance for all employees: client service and routine performance. The first is consistent with organizational values such that having a child service orientation was a normative expectation for all employees—regardless of specific job duties. The second is consistent with the organization’s role as a state-sponsored provider of social services, such that efficiency, accuracy, and reports were also key to overall organizational effectiveness. Both of these role expectations were reinforced proactively to all employees by the organization as a part of their ongoing socialization and communication programs. However, although both aspects of the sent role were communicated as critical to the mission, only routine work performance was included in job descriptions and the formal performance appraisal.. In sum, the most important aspects of the sent role for employees in this organization were client helping and routine work performance.

Although fit may be conceptualized as based on a specific characteristic (e.g., gender, ethnicity, education), most of the fit literature has focused on overall fit of the person to the job (Caldwell & O’Reilly, 1990), organization (Chatman, 1991), or situation (Diener, Larsen, & Emmons, 1984). Combining these points, we now suggest that employee perceptions of role fit will predict both role behaviors because the sent role places equal emphasis on client helping and on routine work performance. Thus, when an employee’s sense of self is consistent with their overall work role, they should engage in high levels of client helping and routine work performance. Thus, we predict

Hypothesis 2: Perceived fit of self with the overall work role will be positively related to client helping (H2a) and in-role behaviors (H2b).

This raises an interesting issue. Perceived fit of self with the work role is a global

assessment summing across multiple identities and multiple aspects of work role. At the same time, identity theory has emphasized specific (not global) identities. A given role identity results in role-consistent performance only when the demands of the situation are consistent with the enactment of that identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978). When consistency (role fit) exists, the enacted role confirms the relevant identity and should increase relevant role performance. For instance, Farmer et al. (2003) demonstrated that the positive relationship between creative role identity and creative performance was enhanced when employees perceived that the organization valued creativity. Applied to our study, the combination of a strong role identity and a strong sense of role fit should enhance role performance, such that role fit strengthens the positive relationship between role identity and role performance. Continuing to follow recommendations of Ajzen (1988) on matched predictors and outcomes, we expect role fit to interact with client helping identity in predicting client helping. Similarly, we expect role fit to interact with routine work identity in predicting routine work performance. Thus, we predict

Hypothesis 3: Perceived fit of self with the overall work role will moderate the positive relationship between role identity and role behavior. In particular, the positive relationship of client helping identity and client helping will be stronger when role fit is high (H3a). Similarly, the positive relationship of routine work identity and routine work performance will be stronger when role fit is high (H3b).

Self-Verification and Role Behaviors at Work

Identity creation, verification, and expression is a self-regulatory process (Burke, 1991; Stryker, 1987) because role behavior that is validated creates and reinforces a role identity that is more closely tied to sense of self (McCall & Simmons, 1978). For this reason, we propose that self-verification processes will have incremental effects on role behavior - above and beyond

those attributable to role identities. For example, feedback from others that one is a certain type of person can satisfy core motives for self-consistency, self-efficacy, and self-enhancement (Erez & Earley, 1993), whether or not one already holds such an identity. Research also demonstrates that individuals proactively engage in feedback-seeking to satisfy core motives related to self-concept (Ashford, Blatt, & Vandewalle, 2003). Finally, employees can elicit role support through strategic and intentional role taking where they anticipate and/or try to influence the expectations of others concerning self-in-role (Swann, 1987). In sum, we propose that these processes build on and are complementary to the effects of role identity.

Unlike role identities, however, where only one identity is activated at a time (Lord & Brown, 2004), individuals may receive concurrent verification for role performance tied to multiple identities. This could be based on verification feedback from different sources (multiple role senders and verifiers). It also could be based on a combination of direct verification feedback (e.g., a verbal statement like “You are really focused on helping the kids”) and indirect or even unintentional verbal or nonverbal forms of verification (e.g., a supervisor’s spontaneous, authentic pleasure when employees complete required paperwork on time). Thus, while we expect that verification of client helping identity will predict client helping and verification of routine work identity will predict routine work performance, we do not expect negative relationships between client helping identity verification and routine work performance or routine work identity verification and client helping. We do, however, expect incremental effects of verification on role behavior beyond the effects of role identities. Thus we predict

Hypothesis 4: Self-verification of role identities will positively predict identity consistent role behavior, over and above role identities. More specifically, perceived verification of client helping identity will be positively related to client helping (H4a), and perceived verification of

routine work performance identity will be positively related to routine work performance (H4b).

Self-verification is an interpretive process individuals use to assess how they are viewed by others. Verification processes, however, do not function in a vacuum because social context influences availability and interpretation of the perceptions of others. From an identity perspective, this occurs because identity centrality or strength is partly determined by social and personal costs of no longer fulfilling a role based on a given identity (Stryker, 1987) and, in turn, these costs are based on the density and importance of network relationships (Farmer & Fedor, 2001; Stryker, 1987).

In organizational settings, this implies that task interdependence ought to impact the way that verification processes affect role behaviors. Task interdependence requires employees to rely on each other to complete their work (Wageman, 1995) and results in more frequent communication and interaction. In addition, the shared goals that are characteristic of task interdependence make employees more dependent on each other. We previously predicted verification of identity would enhance relevant role behaviors. Research on task interdependence shows that the relationship between task interdependence and performance often depends on other factors such as type of task interdependence, group goals (Saavedra, Earley, & Van Dyne, 1993), and may be nonlinear (Wageman, 1995). Given these results, we do not propose a main effect of task interdependence on role behaviors.

Emphasizing the importance of social context, we instead propose that task interdependence moderates these relationships. When employees are interdependent, frequent communication and shared goals create group norms (Hackman, 1992; Jackson, 1966), and as a result, individual employee verification processes can be replaced by task interdependence. In contrast to the interaction we developed for H3 where we proposed that role fit strengthens

(further enhances) the positive relationship between verification and role behavior, here we propose that task interdependence can serve as a substitute for verification processes. In other words, either high task interdependence or verification of identity should lead to consistently high levels of role behavior (no relationship) and low task interdependence should result in a positive relationship (stronger relationship, but a lower overall effect) between verification of identity and role behavior. In sum, high task interdependence or high verification of identity leads to high role behavior and role behavior is low only under the combined (joint) conditions of low task interdependence and low verification of identity. Thus, we predict

Hypothesis 5: Task interdependence will moderate the positive relationship between verification of role identity and role behavior and will function as a substitute for verification of role identity, such that role behavior will be high if either verification of role identity or task interdependence is high and role behavior will be low only if both verification and task interdependence are low. In particular, client helping will be high when client helping identity verification or task interdependence is high (H5a) and routine work performance will be high when routine work identity verification or task interdependence is high (H5b). Client helping will only be low when both client helping identity verification and task interdependence are low. Routine work performance will only be low when both routine work identity verification and task interdependence are low.

Methods

Setting and Sample

While role identity plays out in all employment settings, we anticipated that the effects of role identity would be particularly salient in work settings where ideology is an important element of the employment relationship. Accordingly, we conducted this research in a nonprofit

organization where the core mission was helping vulnerable children (up to age 14) and their families, and workplace ideology emphasized client helping values. The organization provided residential treatment for very emotionally disturbed or disruptive youth, emergency shelter for runaway children or children in immediately danger of harm from others, and similar programs.

We conducted extensive exploratory work to familiarize ourselves with the organization, its operation, its values, and its employees to make sure our research questions, constructs, and operationalizations were relevant to the context. This included semi-structured interviews with organization leaders and with employees in all major job categories at all three locations. During the interviews, employees regularly described their jobs with identity and value-laden phrases (e.g., it must be in your heart; people who stay here have a heart for this work and believe in the mission statement), suggesting that client helping identity was salient for many. In addition, employees often described specific examples of client helping not explicitly specified by their jobs such as sitting up all night with a troubled child, shrugging off an injury inflicted by an emotionally-disturbed child, or even memorializing a child that died as a result of parental abuse.

As a state-sponsored provider of social services, the organization was contractually obligated to complete a significant amount of paperwork and meet a large number of state standards on a regular basis to retain its contract. In addition, two years before our data collection, the organization emerged from bankruptcy proceedings. As a result, conscientiousness and efficiency were continually emphasized by the chief executive, supervisors, human resources, and newsletters. Thus, routine work behaviors such as quantity of work, paperwork, and recordkeeping were key to organizational survival and effectiveness.

Data were collected from employees either in meetings ($n = 221$) conducted by the first author or returned to the researchers by mail ($n = 57$). Supervisors completed questionnaires on

employee role behaviors (client helping and routine work performance). Overall, 278 of 435 employees completed surveys (64%) and 51 of 60 supervisors responded (85%). Employee jobs included foster care, residential youth care, family social work, placement, case management, case assistance, department management and support, and clerical work. Average age was 39.30 (sd = 12.34) and organizational tenure was 4.00 years (sd = 3.93). The sample was 71.2% female, 59% held a college degree or higher, 31.7% had one or more years of college, and 8.6% had a high school education.

Measures

Role Behaviors. Supervisors assessed employee *client helping* with five helping behavior items adapted from Van Dyne and LePine (1998). The original items focused on helping behaviors directed toward the work group, and we modified these to focus on discretionary help provided to the organization's clients (children). A sample item is "This employee... Helps clients even if it means extra work personally" 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree; $\alpha = .93$). Supervisors also assessed *routine work performance* with quantity of work completed, dependability and reliability, and effort (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), reflecting in-role content matching portions of the organization's performance appraisal standards. We added an additional item specifically on paperwork because documentation and records were critical to these jobs in this organization. These items used 1=very much does not meet performance expectations; 7=very much does exceed performance expectations, $\alpha = .89$).

Role Identities. For *client helping identity*, we followed Farmer et al. (2003) and adapted Callero's (1985) role identity scale to measure employee evaluations of the extent to which they viewed the role of client helping as an important aspect of self-identity. This well-validated scale (Callero et al., 1987; Piliavin & Callero, 1991) uses 5-point Likert scaling. Guided by

exploratory research, we modified the wording to reflect role centrality of client helping (e.g., Helping vulnerable children and their families is an important part of who I am; 3 items, $\alpha = .80$). We used a similar approach to assess *routine work identity* (e.g., Doing a job in a consistent manner is really important to me; 2 items, $\alpha = .84$).

Perceived Role Identity Verification. We adapted verification items from Farmer et al. (2003), following Swann et al.'s (2004) recent conceptualization of self-verification. For *client helping identity verification*, our interviews suggested that client helping behavior was most apparent to coworkers. Thus, we created three items reflecting the extent to which employees thought coworkers viewed them as having a strong client helping identity (e.g., My coworkers think that helping vulnerable children and their families is an important part of who I am 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree; $\alpha = .85$). For *routine work identity verification* we used three items reflecting the extent to which employees thought their supervisors viewed them as having a strong routine work performance identity (e.g., My supervisor would be surprised if I did not act in a consistent manner at work $\alpha = .84$).

Role Fit. We used Sheldon and Elliot's (1999) self-concordance approach for assessing fit based on recommendations of Judge and Kristof-Brown (2004). In our case, we focused on *fit of self with work role (role fit)* and adapted five items from Chan (1996) using 5-point Likert scaling (e.g., There is a good fit between my role at work and who I really am; $\alpha = .92$). We used self-perceived (direct) assessment of fit because our focus was employee perceptions of fit and "it is difficult to see how we can have any valid substitution of direct self-report measures" (Chan, 1996: 197).

Task Interdependence. We assessed employee perceptions of *task interdependence* with the five reciprocal interdependence items from Pearce and Gregersen's (1991) scale (e.g., The

way I perform my job has a significant impact on other employees here; 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree; $\alpha = .73$).

Data Analysis Issues

To check construct validity, we analyzed items from the six self-report scales (client helping identity, routine work performance identity, client helping identity verification, routine work identity verification, role fit, and task interdependence) with principal components factor analysis, using varimax rotation. All items loaded on the appropriate factor, with primary loadings greater than .50, no cross loadings greater than .30, and 70.94% total item variance explained. A separate factor analysis on the supervisor-report client helping and routine work performance behaviors explained 77.49% of item variance. All items loaded on the appropriate factor, with all primary loadings greater than .75 and cross loadings at least .35 below the primary loading. These analyses suggest adequate discriminant and convergent validity for Likert scales in the study.

We tested hypotheses with hierarchical multiple regression. Because task interdependence (we did not hypothesize a main effect but predicted interactions) and organizational tenure (time spent in the organization) may influence identity processes (Van Dyne & Farmer, 2004), we entered these in step one. In step two, we entered client helping identity and routine work performance identity. In step three, we added role fit, client helping identity verification, and routine work identity verification. To reduce multicollinearity and improve power to detect interaction effects, we entered hypothesized interactions (centered components) in the final step.

Results

Descriptives and zero-order correlations are presented in Table 1. As expected, client helping identity was positively related and routine work identity was negatively related to client helping (H1a and H1b). Neither type of identity, however, was related to routine work

performance (H1c and H1d). Role fit was positively associated with both role behaviors (H2a and H2b). Client helping identity verification was positively related to client helping (H4a), and routine work identity verification was positively related to routine work performance (H4b). Interestingly, the two identities were not significantly correlated ($r = .06$). This provides additional support for their construct validity and suggests they are not counter-roles based on competing identities and instead could be complementary. Client helping identity was positively related to client helping identity verification ($r = .48$), and routine work identity was positively related to routine work identity verification ($r = .18$). Finally, as expected, both identity verification constructs were positively related to role fit (.38 and .20). Finally, the two forms of identity verification were positively associated ($r = .27$), suggesting that employees perceived identity verifying feedback for multiple, unrelated identities.

 Insert Table 1 about here

Hypothesis Tests

Table 2 reports hierarchical regression results for client helping and routine work performance. We first address main effects. Step two indicates partial support for Hypothesis 1. Client helping identity is positively related to client helping ($\beta = .14$) and routine work identity is negatively related to client helping ($\beta = -.17$) (H1a and H1b). In subsequent steps, client helping identity loses significance, but routine work identity remains significant. Neither identity, however, predicts routine work performance (H1c and H1d). Hypotheses 2a and 2b predicted that role fit would be positively related to both role behaviors. Results in step 3 support these predictions ($\beta = .15$, $\beta = .18$). In step 4, the significance level becomes marginal for client

helping but remains significant for routine performance. Hypothesis 4 proposed that client helping identity verification would predict client helping, and that routine work identity verification would predict routine work performance, above and beyond role identities. Step three provides general support: client helping identity verification (H4a: $\beta = .14$) and routine work identity verification (H4b: $\beta = .15$). In step four, with the addition of the interactions, routine identity verification loses significance.

 Insert Table 2 about here

Hypotheses 3 and 5 predicted moderated effects. Results in step four demonstrate a significant interaction between client helping identity and role fit (H3a: $\beta = -.15$), but no significant interaction between routine identity and role fit (H3b: $\beta = -.06$). For task interdependence, results demonstrate a moderately significant interaction with client helping identity verification (H5a: $\beta = -.11$, $p < .08$) and a significant interaction with routine work identity verification (H5b: $\beta = -.15$).

To interpret the conditional effects, we used procedures suggested by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003) for plotting significant interactions. H3a predicted role fit would strengthen the positive relationship between client helping identity and client helping. Figure 1, however, shows a substitution effect where client helping is high when either client helping identity or role fit is high. Client helping is low only when client helping identity and role fit are both low. In other words, the relationship between client helping identity and client helping is stronger (but at a lower overall effect) when role fit is low and not when role fit is high. In sum, this overall pattern suggests role fit substitutes for the absence of client helping identity.

Insert Figure 1 here

In Hypothesis 5a, we predicted that high task interdependence would function as a substitute for client helping identity verification, such that client helping would be high when either client helping identity or task interdependence was high and that client helping would be low only under the joint conditions of low client helping identity verification and low task interdependence. Figure 2 illustrates the interaction in our sample and demonstrates the predicted relationships, supporting Hypothesis 5a. High client helping identity verification or high task interdependence results in client helping and only low levels of both predictors produce low client helping. Task interdependence, thus, acts as a substitute for identity verification by neutralizing the negative effects of its absence.

Similarly, results support Hypothesis 5b. As illustrated in Figure 3, high task interdependence again neutralized the negative effect of low routine work identity verification and routine work performance was low only when routine work identity verification and task interdependence were both low. In other words, both interactions involving task interdependence show substitution effects, such that high role behavior occurs when either task interdependence or identity verification is high. Additionally, these results suggest there is no benefit when both interdependence and identity verification are high.

Insert Figures 2 and 3 here

Discussion

In this paper, we used identity theory to propose that role identity and identity verification processes have special relevance to role behaviors in organizations that use values and ideology to attract and retain employees. We also drew on the volunteer literature which demonstrates that volunteer “reliability” can be a problem (because volunteers often “do what they like to do” at the expense of other aspects of their roles) and examined whether similar reliability problems might apply to employees in organizations that emphasize values. Results provide an interesting combination of expected and unexpected relationships. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications based on the three goals of the paper below.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our paper had several goals, and we discuss the theoretical implications of each in turn. Our first goal was to examine role identity as a key motivating force that influences employee role behaviors. Results demonstrate that role identity had strong effects on discretionary or extra-role behavior (client helping) and that role identity was not related to routine work performance. Based on Ajzen’s (1988) recommendation to match predictor and outcome (consonant analysis), we predicted that client helping identity would be positively related to client helping and that routine work identity would be related to routine work performance. In addition, based on Lord and Brown’s (2004) assertion that multiple identities can not be expressed simultaneously, we predicted that client helping identity would be negatively related to routine work performance and that routine work identity would be negatively related to client helping.

Results partially supported these predictions and demonstrate a more complex pattern of relationships. As predicted, client helping role identity (not explicitly specified in employee job

descriptions or in the organization's performance appraisal standards) positively predicted client helping and negatively predicted routine work performance. In contrast to our expectations, however, neither role identity predicted routine work performance. In retrospect we realize that this finding parallels results of the organizational citizenship behavior literature (e.g., Organ, 1988; Schaubroeck & Ganster, 1991; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). More specifically, individual attitudes and preferences predict discretionary behavior but often have less or little effect on in-role performance. This is because employees have the freedom to vary their discretionary contributions (in this case, based on personal values), but organizational control mechanisms limit variability in routine work performance. For example, if employees fail to produce an adequate quantity or quality of work or if they fail to complete required paperwork, they can be put on probation or dismissed. This finding is also consistent with the economic dependency literature (Brett, Cron, & Slocum, 1995) which demonstrates that work organizations can be strong situations that constrain behavior (Mischel, 1977) by weakening the relationship between commitment and performance when employees feel economically dependent on their employers.

In sum, these results (H1) show that role identities differ in their effects – perhaps due to personal salience as well as to situational constraints (e.g., a strong situation). This suggests the benefits of future theorizing that considers different types of role identities and potentially contrasting motivational implications of these identities. This finding also suggests the benefits of future research that continues to include multiple role behaviors. For instance, based on role and identity theories, Welbourne et al. (1998) suggested employee performance could be assessed by five general roles: job, career, innovator, team member, and organizational citizen. While we assessed client helping and routine work performance, future work ought to expand the set of roles examined to account for both organization-specific and generalizable work roles.

Our second goal was to assess whether the volunteer “reliability” problem (where volunteers “do what they like to do” and avoid other aspects of their role: Pearce, 1993) has relevance to employee work behaviors in ideologically-driven organizations. Results are interesting in that they show clear evidence of reliability problems for employees who lack a client helping identity and for those with low role identity verification (both client helping and routine work performance). In other words, in this organization, employees who did not see themselves as closely tied to the cause (client helping) contributed low levels of client helping. In addition, those who lacked identity verification (those who thought others viewed them as low in a particular role identity) also exhibited low levels of these role behaviors (H4). At the same time, we want to recognize that role fit predicted both types of role behavior (H2). This is also consistent with the volunteer literature, indicating the importance of matching individual interests and strengths to the role – whether it is a paid employee position or an unpaid volunteer position.

Also with reference to this second objective, we note that results demonstrate that employee perceptions of role fit (H3) and employee perceptions of task interdependence (H5) are key factors that can substitute for role identity and for role identity verification. In other words, results highlight two techniques managers can use to reduce the “reliability” problem. This includes careful selection of employees and matching individual skills, preferences, and interests with job requirements whenever possible. Based on our results, this should enhance motivation and role behavior based on role identity and on role fit. Another technique would be to design jobs so that they are high in task interdependence and so that employees experience a sense of group and/or organizational identification (Ashforth, 2001). This should enhance motivation and role behavior based on group norms, social control, and other forms of social influence.

Finally, results also demonstrate the importance of sincere communications that reinforce employee values—especially when they are consistent with organizational values. These sorts of communications (both direct and indirect) should enhance employee feelings of identity verification, which in turn will increase role behaviors. We recommend additional research that examines other potential substitutes for role identity and role identity verification because there will be situations where managers do not have the freedom to match employee interests and values to job demands. We also recommend future research on characteristics of communications that effectively reinforce role identities and enhance employee identity verification.

Our third goal was to recognize that all employees have multiple identities and to contrast the effects of two specific role identities (client helping identity and routine work performance identity) on two different role behaviors (client helping and routine work performance). Results demonstrate the importance of differentiating specific role identities because our results, as noted in point #1 above, differed for client helping identity (discretionary and not specified explicitly by the job) from routine role identity (where employee behavior constrained by the threat of organizational sanctions for non-performance).

To our knowledge this is one of the first field studies to examine multiple role identities, multiple verification processes, and multiple role behaviors in an organizational setting. In this, we begin to address Stryker and Burke's (2000) complaint that research has not adequately dealt with the interplay of multiple role identities and self-verification feedback processes, which may reinforce, conflict, or even be independent of one another. We have interpreted the contrasting pattern of findings in terms of the organizational citizenship behavior literature. At the same time, this is a post hoc explanation. Accordingly, we recommend additional theoretical work

that considers the basis of these differences in the causal links for discretionary role identities and routine work identities. We also recommend additional research on other role identities and other role behaviors in other types of organizations.

Limitations and Conclusion

As with all research, there are limitations to this study. First, although we were careful to ensure that the identities we examined were relevant to the organization we studied, this specificity suggests that while the identity processes we modeled ought to be generalizable to other organizations, the specific content of the identities may not be. Second, we have modeled verification from both coworkers and supervisors, but we have not fully captured the full richness of the feedback environment (Herold & Parsons, 1985) concerning sources of identity verification in the workplace, nor have we examined what may happen when verification from different sources for a given identity is conflicting. Third, we collected data at a single point in time, which implies caution in any causal conclusions. This is especially true insofar as role performances that are verified will tend to enhance identity, suggesting that future research ought to account for this potential causal ordering.

Finally, it is possible that the unique nature of the organization we studied may have influenced our findings. For example, it is possible that role identity and role identity verification have less relevance in more traditional organizations that emphasize financial motivation. Yet, an increasing number of organizations now emphasize high performance work teams (Mohrman, Cohen, & Mohrman (1995) and self-managed work teams (Barker, 1999) where peer pressure and social control influence employee behavior. Additionally, organizations are also emphasizing employee empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and initiative (Frese & Fay, 2001) which make discretionary behavior increasingly important for competitive success. As a

result, even though our research was conducted in an organization whose mission involved a social cause, the findings may have relevance to other types of organizations that emphasize teams and employee initiative.

This issue concerns our final goal, which was to highlight the evolving nature of work relationships in the 21st century, stressing the idea that traditional role distinctions (such as employee versus volunteer) are no longer adequate for understanding workplace performance. The reason, as alluded to above, is tied to the rapidly increasing emphasis placed on individual employee discretion and initiative as a lever for lasting competitive advantage (Applebaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000; Pfeffer, 1998). As organizations seek payoffs from human resource investments through increasing employee involvement, commitment, and competencies (Institute of Work Psychology, 2001), it seems likely that they will also increasingly seek to align employee values (and implicitly, value-based identities) with the core mission. Organizations may increasingly want employees to act like volunteers—answering a mission-driven call that is truly extra-role—while still needing the control and predictability of employee responses to more instrumental motivations. Our results suggest possibilities and pitfalls that managers will face in this daunting task, and we encourage future research that continues to explore this critical paradox.

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Table 1^a
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Client helping ^b	4.42	1.03	.93							
2. Routine work performance ^b	5.11	1.05	.59**	.89						
3. Client helping identity	4.32	0.57	.16*	.06	.80					
4. Routine work identity	4.14	0.69	-.17*	-.05	.06	.84				
5. Role fit	3.68	0.78	.25**	.22**	.21**	-.03	.92			
6. Client helping identity verification	3.69	0.61	.27**	.11	.48**	-.04	.38**	.85		
7. Routine work identity verification	3.94	0.63	.09	.18**	.17*	.18**	.20**	.27**	.84	
8. Task interdependence	4.09	0.53	.21**	.11	.12	-.05	.29**	.32**	.09	.73
9. Organizational tenure	4.08	3.95	.08	.13*	.11	.01	.08	.13	.19**	.00

^a $n = 236$ after listwise deletion; coefficient alpha reliabilities reported on the diagonal

^b employee role behaviors rated by supervisors

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2^a
Results of Regression Analyses for Client Helping and Routine Work Performance

	Client Helping			Routine Work Performance		
	β	R^2	ΔR^2	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1: Control Variables		.05**			.03*	
Organizational Tenure	.08			.13		
Task Interdependence	.21**			.10		
Step 2: Role Identities		.10**	.05**		.03*	.00
Organizational Tenure	.07			.13		
Task Interdependence	.18**			.09		
H1a, d: Client helping Identity	.14**			.05		
H1b, c: Routine Work Identity	-.17**			-.06		
Step 3: Role Fit and Role Verification		.14**	.04*		.09**	.06**
Organizational Tenure	.04			.09		
Task Interdependence	.11			.04		
H1a, d: Client Helping Identity	.05			.00		
H1b, c: Routine Work Identity	-.16*			-.08		
H2a, b: Role Fit	.15*			.18*		
H4a: Client Helping Verification	.14 ⁺⁺			-.02		
H4b: Routine Work Verification	.03			.15*		
Step 4: Interaction Effects		.17**	.03**		.12**	.03**
Organizational Tenure	.06			.09		
Task Interdependence	.11			.07		
H1a, d: Client Helping Identity	.08			.00		
H1b, c: Routine Work Identity	-.16*			-.08		
H2a, b: Role Fit	.13 ⁺⁺			.19**		
H4a: Client Helping Verification	.15 ⁺⁺⁺			.15**		
H4b: Routine Work Verification	.04			.08		
H3a: Client Helping Identity * Role Fit	-.15*					
H3b: Routine Work Identity * Role Fit				-.06		
H5a: Client Helping Verification * Task Interdependence	-.11 ⁺					
H5b: Routine Work Verification * Task Interdependence				-.15*		
F Value and Adjusted R ²		F=5.08 (9, 226), p<.001		F=3.27 (9, 226), p<.001		
		adj. R ² = .14		adj. R ² = .08		

^a n = 236 after listwise deletion, Beta weights at each step * p < .05, ** p < .01, + p < .08, ++ p < .07, +++ p < .06

