

**Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Identity-Image Interactions for the Sales Force in High Threat Situations**

**Caren Rodrigues\***

St. Joseph's Institute of Management Bangalore

[carenrodrigues@yahoo.com](mailto:carenrodrigues@yahoo.com)

**Anup Krishnamurthy**

St. Joseph's Institute of Management Bangalore

[anup@sjim.edu.in](mailto:anup@sjim.edu.in)

\* This is the corresponding author.

**Acknowledgements:** We thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions that helped us improve this paper. We also thank Mukta Kulkarni, as well as the reviewers and participants of the 2011 Eastern Academy of Management - International (EAMI) Meeting, for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

***This is the pre-peer reviewed version of the following article: Rodrigues, C., and Krishnamurthy, A. (2016) Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Identity-Image Interactions for the Sales Force in High Threat Situations. European Management Review, 13: 307–323, which has been published in final form at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emre.12077/full> . This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving***

## **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Identity-Image Interactions and the Sales Force in High Threat Situations**

### **Abstract**

During times of threat to organizational identity and legitimacy, managers often formulate strategies to regain the organization's original standing. Yet, they frequently ignore the identity-image interactions that occur for boundary-spanning members, despite such interactions having the potential to play a pivotal role in the organization's recovery. We propose that, in high-threat situations, customer-directed boundary-spanners become aware of the discrepancy between the organizational image projected by the organization (Projected Image) and the organizational image perceived by customers (Perceived Image). Consequently, boundary-spanners restructure their identity of the organization. This restructuring is moderated by several factors. The restructured organizational identity results in the boundary-spanner manifesting a new projected image, with its attendant assertions and behaviors. We thus synthesize and extend the literature on identity-image interactions and provide avenues for further research. We also discuss the beneficial managerial implications of closely monitoring the image-identity interactions of boundary-spanners in high threat situations.

**Keywords:** Organizational identity, organizational image, identity threat, boundary spanning

In 2007, Mattel, maker of the famous Barbie Dolls and Hot Wheel cars, recalled around one million toys in the US because they contained lead paint. The firm distanced itself from the problem by blaming its Chinese vendor, and it even took a reporter on tour of its plants and safety laboratories (Story, 2007) to win back the trust of its consumers. In 2012, pharmaceutical giant, GlaxoSmithKline, paid a settlement of \$3 billion after pleading guilty to actively promoting antidepressant drugs for unapproved uses, which included the treatment of children and adolescents (BBC News, 2012). More recently, the family-friendly fast-food retailer, Burger King found itself apologizing to the public after it was discovered that its burgers in UK and Ireland contained traces of horsemeat (King and Buckley, 2013). In all these examples, some of the core or distinctive elements of the organization's identity were under attack – whether it was a children's toy maker selling harmful toys or a drug company promoting medicines that could ruin a patient's wellbeing. These examples bring to the forefront the urgent requirement for managers to have appropriate organizational responses to defuse such situations. At the same time, managers also have to try to keep customers' perception of the organization intact (i.e., protect the organizational image) as well as preserve what organization members themselves feel that the organization stands for (i.e., preserve the organization's identity). On the surface, these issues seem to be limited to the managerial level. However, in reality they run deeper, across levels of analysis.

When Dutton and Dukerich (1991) attempted to conceptualize the process by which environments and organizations are related over time, they found that organizational members' perceptions of the organizational identity and organizational image determined the evolutionary process by which organizations adapted to and changed their environments. Indeed, in high threat situations, the real issues may take a backseat to the *battle of identities* of the key actors in the organization and in the environment (Cheney and Christensen, 2004). This paper studies an important subset of these environment-organization relationships – we examine the changes to

organizational identity and image caused by customer-directed boundary spanning in high threat situations.

In this article, we define *high threat situations* as those that occur at the organization-level when core, valued, key or distinctive elements of the organization – the organizational identity – and its legitimacy are attacked. High threat, as defined here, is therefore not a direct threat to an individual organization member's self-identity (Petriglieri, 2011), but is instead a threat to the identity and legitimacy of the organization. This was the case for the organizations in the opening examples. High threats arise due to unforeseen or unnoticed developments either within the organization or in its environment. At the level of the individual, high threat situations can call into question individual organizational members' and external audience's perceptions of the organization's central identity and legitimacy dimensions.

Boundary spanners, like the sales force, are important organizational members, irrespective of the presence or absence of high threat situations. Their unique straddling of the organization and the local environment has certain advantages. First, being at this interface, they have the opportunity to learn from customers served by the organization and to pass on this learning inwards, to the rest of the organization. In this way, the learning of boundary spanners at the individual-level, when aggregated, can be used by managers to make improvements to the organization's image. Second, it is important for an organization's image to be accepted by its audience (Alvesson, 1990; Pfeffer, 1981). To achieve this, the organizational image is communicated through advertising, corporate communications and public relations at the organization-level, and through the boundary spanner at the individual-level.

The role of the boundary spanners becomes crucial during high threat situations. This is partly because they are often the first organizational members to become aware of the exact nature of the inconsistencies in the organizational image perceived by customers. More

importantly, in times of high threat, the organizational response is most likely to ultimately either establish favorable associations with key environmental elements or influence the environment domain (Daft, 2004). Therefore, in high threat situations, organizational members interfacing the organization with the environment, namely, boundary spanners, have a critical role – they need to establish favorable associations with customers.

We contribute to literature by bringing together organizational identity and image literature from the fields of organizational behavior and marketing in order to clarify and extend the ideas on organizational identity-image interactions between the management, boundary spanners and customers. We conceptualize a cross-level process through which the identity of the organization held by boundary spanners, undergoes a restructuring due to the presence of a discrepancy between the organizational image projected by boundary spanners and the organizational image perceived by customers. Implications for managers and directions for future research are also discussed.

We organize the article as follows: First, we review and synthesize identity and image literature, and delineate the identity-image linkages in the role of a typical boundary spanner, namely, a salesperson. Next, we put forth the propositions related to identity and image restructuring during high threat situations, and present a conceptual model of the same. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and avenues for future research.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Research on identity and image is extensive and cuts across disciplines (see Brown et al., 2006). However, studies examining various identity-image interactions (see Table 1) have so far been largely in the area of organization behavior. Dutton and Dukerich (1991) examined management responses to discrepancies between organizational images held by organizational members and

external audiences. Elsbach and Kramer (1996) studied responses to high identity threats (but low legitimacy threats) by those in image management roles. Gioia and Thomas (1996) investigated the influence of top management team members' perceptions of identity and image on the sensemaking process during organizational change. Scott and Lane (2000) studied organizational identity and image construction by managers. One study examined the effect of non-customer directed boundary spanning on identity in low threat situations, but this was concerned with members' *identification with* the organization, not their *identity of* their organization (Bartel, 2001). There are also several studies in the field of marketing that consider these concepts from the perspective of those outside the organization, like customers (Table 1). To date, however, we are not aware of any study that examines the interaction between identity and image during customer-directed boundary spanning in high threat situations.

**Insert Table 1 about Here**

During high threat situations, management often formulates strategies by trying to reconcile the concerns of and power held by different stakeholders – employees as well as customers, shareholders, creditors, suppliers, local communities and the government. The path down which these strategies lead an organization can result in an organization projecting a certain organizational image to external audiences (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998). At the individual-level of strategy implementation, boundary spanners, who are the organizational members that interact with customers, are expected to share this same image with customers.

There are two ways by which management-formulated images may fall short of delivering to customers. First, managers often consider the varying interests of multiple stakeholders simultaneously. The resultant image that the boundary spanner is expected to project to customers may not be acceptable to the customers. Second, the role of communication is often overlooked in the formulation and implementation of strategy (Argenti and Formans,

2002), and so the boundary spanner may not be communicating the message that management intended. In a high threat situation, it is crucial that boundary spanners and the rest of the organization work in congruence and further, that the organizational image is appealing and acceptable to customers. Boundary spanners' perceptions of identity and image are thus key to their interpretations of issues (Gioia and Thomas, 1996).

### **Projected and Perceived Image**

In their review of brand image literature in the area of marketing, Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) concluded that a brand's *image* is how consumers perceive a brand. In organizational behavior literature too, the concept of image concerns itself primarily with how those external to the organization view the firm (Alvesson, 1990; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach and Kramer, 1996). In contrast, *identity* scholarship has as its focus organizational members (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994; Whetten, 2006). We clarify the difference between these viewpoints by paraphrasing Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000b): The focus in the image view is on the ways in which identity is communicated by the organization (mainly) to external audiences. In contrast, identity scholars tend to focus on the internal communication of that identity.

The organizational image can be examined through two different lenses. First, the image may be partly determined by the success (or failure) of deliberate communications made by the organization. To that end, "the image bears the imprints of a *sender* trying to project a certain impression to an audience" (Alvesson, 1990, p. 375, emphasis in original). This image comprises of the mental associations about the organization that the management want others to hold, and has been referred to as an intended image (Brown et al., 2006). In this paper, we call this the *Projected Image*, that is, the holistic and vivid impression that the organization intends its external stakeholders to have about the organization. The image so projected is the product of the

aggregated communication of the organization about its own nature and its interpretation of reality. Such projected images reflect not only the organization strategies, but also the organizational identity (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998). If such an image is accepted by the organization's audience, it ensures the organization's legitimacy and makes resources accessible (Alvesson, 1990; Pfeffer, 1981). This projected image is thus most often deliberately crafted, or mediated, by the management (Hatch and Schultz, 2002b). At the organization-level, the projected image is largely communicated through advertising and other marketing messages, corporate communications, and public relations. At the individual-level, the projected image is communicated through boundary spanners like salespeople or customer-contact employees in service firms.

Second, the organization's customers have their own sensemaking processes and therefore, the image held by customers may be somewhere between the organization's projected image and reality (Alvesson, 1990). Organizational efforts to impress customers are tempered by the impressions customers form from other sources (Hatch and Schultz, 2002b). Indeed, one of these sources, namely, mass media, has been found to be a strong influencer (Grandy and Mavin, 2012). Customers process the projected image alongside mass media, word-of-mouth, competitors' advertising, and so forth, to develop their judgments and opinion of the organization, which in aggregate, becomes their *Perceived Image* of the organization. Thus, the perceived image comprises of the mental associations about the organization held by others outside the organization (Brown et al., 2006).

During normal circumstances, customers may or may not communicate their perceived image during their interactions with boundary spanners. However, times of high threat – when the organizational identity and legitimacy are being questioned – may act as a trigger for sensemaking, because of 'gaps' between the way things are and the way one expects them to be (Smith, 1988), or because of the likelihood of failure of extant schema (Louis and Sutton, 1991).

This need for sensemaking can drive customers to discuss their perceived images of the organization not only with other customers, but also with the organization's boundary spanners. Thus, during high threat situations, boundary spanners often become aware of a discrepancy between the projected image and the perceived image. We refer to this discrepancy as the *Projected–Perceived Image Discrepancy*.

### **Identity of an Organization**

Identity, as an organization-level construct, has received considerable attention not only in marketing and organizational studies, but also in strategy, impression management and reputation management. Organizational identity has been primarily concerned with the unique set of associations that represent what the organization stands for (Aaker, 1996). In this paper we use identity concepts that are rooted in Social Identity Theory (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). They are concerned with how organizational members perceive and interpret information regarding 'who we are' and 'what we stand for' as an organization – or more specifically, how boundary spanners perceive and interpret information regarding 'what our organization stands for'.

Two schools of thought have since developed, one concerning 'identification with' and the other concerning 'identity of' the organization (Hatch and Schultz, 2002a). The 'identification with' literature is concerned with the social identity that an individual organizational member constructs for herself, given her relationship with the organization (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton, Roberts, and Bednar, 2010; Hatch and Schultz, 2002a; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004; Mael and Ashforth, 1992). The 'identity of' literature, while still being internal to the organization and rooted in members' understandings, examines what organizational members perceive their organization as (Hatch and Schultz, 2002a). This paper is

grounded in ‘identity of’ literature, which brings us to the construct of organizational identity as used in this article.

Organizational identity is organizational members’ collective understanding of the question ‘What kind of organization is this?’. Thus, organizational identity refers to members’ perceptions of what the features of their organization are (Brown et al., 2006). This should not be confused with an organization’s reputation, which is an outcome of both employees’ and customers’ mental associations with the organization (Fombrun and Van Riel, 1997). Early identity definitions were limited to those features that were central, distinctive and enduring (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Dutton et al., 1994). Later work contended that identity is not enduring but dynamic (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000a) and adaptive (Brown and Starkey, 2000). This malleability of identity often arises because of its interactions with organization image, which is subject to change from time to time (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). The instability of organizational identity may be beneficial in that it allows organizations to change when faced with different and changing environments (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000a).

### **The Sales Force: Customer-Directed Boundary Spanning**

Customer-directed boundary spanning roles serve to connect, synchronize and manage an organization’s linkages with its customers. Boundary spanners’ identity as members of a given organization is the chief and legitimating criterion for their interaction with customers (Bartel, 2001). Customer-directed boundary spanning roles include any roles that require direct, one-on-one interaction with customers of the organization. Apart from salespersons in the marketing division, such roles might include, for example, customer-contact employees in service firms, trainers in an educational institution or even, after an acquisition, employees whose role is to coordinate tasks between their organization and the employees of the organization that has acquired them. In this paper, we focus on one of the most common types of customer-directed

boundary spanners, namely, the sales force of an organization. Nonetheless, the concepts and propositions applied to the sales force in this paper are equally applicable to other boundary spanners after appropriate adaptations that account for their specific role.

Salespersons have control only over the image they project. They have no control over other sources – such as competitors and the media – that customers use to construct their perceived image. Thus, salespersons offer a (projected) organizational image to a customer, but have to work with a pre-existing (perceived) image in the customer's mind that has not been created by them.

### **The Image–Identity Link in the Role of a Salesperson**

In high threat situations, when the organization's identity and legitimacy are under attack, the projected image of the organization is not accepted by customers. In such situations, organizational leaders and those in image management roles often attempt to repair or improve the customers' perceived image (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Sutton and Kramer, 1990). This is an organization-level process, which Ginzler, Kramer, and Sutton (2004) describe as a three phase process involving top management and those in image management roles. In the first phase, the management generates a narrative that is aimed at undoing damage to the organizational image. At the end of this phase, a new projected image is created and communicated. The second phase involves customers processing this information (as well as information from other sources) and developing their own perceived image. Lastly, those in image management roles attempt to repair the discrepancy between the organization's projected image and the customers' perceived image. Yet, there are several ways in which this process can go awry with regard to the organization's customers.

When managers plan projected images, they usually consider the needs, values and beliefs of those stakeholder groups that they perceive are powerful, legitimate and having an

urgent claim (Scott and Lane, 2000). The strategy of impression management employed depends on the relative power of the various audiences, their relationship with the management, and their history of previous interaction. This means that management may give inordinate attention to shareholders and governments over customers. Further, the attitudes and values of the management may affect the salience and access to information. Therefore, they may tend to be either unduly optimistic or hold erroneous stereotypes of some of the organization's audience. Managers must also simultaneously deal with a large number of issues and audiences and may thus fall back into preset, but inappropriate, routines for responding to threats. The customer base may also be diverse, and further, some customers may be antagonistic and others sympathetic; this makes it very difficult to formulate a coherent, yet universally satisfying response to all stakeholders (Ginzel, Kramer, and Sutton, 2004). Finally, impression management typically fails due to overestimating the congruence between projected and perceived images (Ross, Greene, and House, 1977). The organization's customers may reject the interpretations made by the organization's salespersons and thus, the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy arises.

The sales force are organizational members who hold an organizational identity. Simultaneously, they carry out an external role and communicate the projected image to customers. Since communicating the projected image involves the creation, negotiation and management of meaning, salespersons' identity of the organization comes to the forefront (Cheney and Christensen, 2004). Thus, salespersons experience interactions between the organizational identity and the projected organizational image while fulfilling their roles. Due to these identity-image interactions, when salespersons transmit the projected image of their organization, they can unintentionally also project the organizational identity (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998). Boundary spanning roles of the salespersons thus makes customers aware of the identity that organization members express (Hatch and Schultz, 2002a, 2002b). Furthermore, salespersons are also likely to carry customers' impressions of the organization back to the

workplace and process them alongside their own understanding of the organizational identity. Thus, traces of the customers' perceived image leak into the organizational identity. In summary, it is not possible to insulate communication which the organization intends its salespersons to deliver from the effects of identity-image interactions.

The boundary spanning work of salespersons takes place in organization-sponsored contexts and therefore accentuates for the salespersons the organizational identity, by pointing out to them the salience of in-groups and out-groups (Bartel, 2001; Scott and Lane, 2000). Further, social identities are relational in nature and are maintained by intergroup comparison (Tajfel, 1982). Such intergroup comparison may result due to information gained by the organization member from the environment, such as a customer. Thus, for salespersons, outwardly directed communication may tend to simultaneously be directed towards oneself (Cheney and Christensen, 2004). When they transmit the projected image to a customer, they are also providing themselves identity-related information to process. Then, their understanding of the organizational identity is constructed via interaction between internal and external parties (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000b), which in the case of salespersons are themselves and customers respectively.

By communicating the projected image, salespersons try to impress their idea of the organization on the customer. As long as customers at least do not dispute the projected image, no tension is created (Scott and Lane, 2000). If not, salespersons may process this information to recalibrate their understanding of the organizational identity (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Thus, in high threat situations, organizational identity is not completely internally determined, but is especially dependent on the salespersons' perceptions of what the organizational image is. Organizational identity at the organization-level often gets contested and restructured through the aggregation of iterative interactions at the individual-level that salespersons have inside the organization and with customers (Scott and Lane, 2000).

Of course, salespersons might receive negative information about the organization even during non-high threat times (e.g., Ramarajan et al., 2011). Still, not all negative information serves as a cue to revisit and reconstruct the organizational identity. Salespersons are “much more likely to respond to perceived attacks on the...(organizational) identity or character than other types of negative cues” (Dukerich and Carter, 2002, p. 101). Thus, the interactions between image and identity can be expected to be more intensified in situations characterized by our definition of high threat.

Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000a) presented a process model of identity-image interdependence. According to their model, when organization members perceive a discrepancy between (organizational) identity and perceived image of outsiders, they can either change (organizational) identity *or* project a new image to change outsiders’ impressions of the organization. However, we argue that unlike in their model, salespersons in high threat situations have both an identity and a legitimacy threat (e.g., Elsbach and Kramer, 1996), as the triggering external event. Changing only the identity or only the image might therefore not be enough to combat both types of threats. Thus, salespersons might need to revisit and restructure their pre-existing perceptions of organizational identity *and* they might also need to transmit a new projected image to justify the organization to customers (Figure 1).

**Insert Figure 1 about Here**

## **PROPOSITIONS**

### **What Happens in High Threat Situations**

When salespersons operate in a high threat situation, what chain of events might we expect?

Does the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy first cause a change in the projected image or

does it first cause a restructuring of the organizational identity? Or does the salesperson merely defend the organization instead? Or does the salesperson develop new, additional identities of the organization, thereby having multiple identities of the organization (Sillince and Brown, 2009), and thus project different images to different customers?

Projected images reflect the organizational identity (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998), and therefore their restructuring cannot precede that of the organizational identity. Thus, the organizational identity must necessarily be restructured before any changes are made to the projected images. In times of high threat, salespersons are likely to receive more questions, accusations and attacks on the organization's identity and legitimacy than at other times. In fact, in a high threat situation, an immediate need for protection makes people manage their social comparisons more actively (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000). In line with attribution theory (Jones et al., 1972; Kelley and Michela, 1980), repeated questions, accusations and attacks can cause salespersons to make internal attributions for the organization's failings. This, in turn, can cause salespersons to restructure their identity of the organization. Thus, instead of defending the organization by merely making external attributions for the attacks on the organization's identity and legitimacy, salespersons might begin to restructure the organizational identity. Furthermore, in high threat situations, organizations face threats to both the organizational identity and legitimacy. Since multiple identities may support only legitimacy claims (Sillince and Brown, 2009), they are an inadequate process by which salespersons can hope to reduce the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy. For all these reasons, we argue that awareness of the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy first causes a restructuring of organizational identity. This restructured organizational identity leads to salespersons formulating new projected images. They then communicate their new projected image, which is manifested via different actions and assertions (Figure 2).

Consider, for example, the server-cum-cashiers at an outlet of a fast-food chain accused of serving horsemeat in beef burgers – an attack on the organization’s identity and legitimacy. Server-cum-cashiers are boundary spanners who interface with customers on a regular basis. The high threat situation generates attacks on the organization’s identity (say, as a good quality fast-food provider) and legitimacy (say, as an organization in the restaurant industry). In such situations, even if server-cum-cashiers try to project an image of the organization based on their identity of the organization, the image perceived by customers is likely to be different due to the customers’ awareness (from other sources) that horsemeat was present in the burgers. In order to reduce this projected-perceived image discrepancy, the server-cum-cashiers might restructure the identity of the organization as an organization that is family-friendly, instead of an organization that is a good quality fast-food provider.

Thus, the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy destabilizes organizational identity, causing salespersons to examine and reformulate the organizational identity (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 2000a). In summary, salespersons must determine which elements of the organization’s identity should change and how much they should change to affect and ultimately reflect a desired future image of the organization (Gioia and Thomas, 1996).

*Proposition 1. In high threat situations, salespersons restructure the organizational identity because of their awareness of the discrepancy between Projected Image and Perceived Image.*

**Insert Figure 2 about Here**

### **Moderators of Identity Restructuring**

The restructuring of organizational identity by salespersons is not influenced solely by the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy. A review of extant literature provided several

moderators that can influence the nature of the new organizational identity, that is, the direction and extent to which salespersons restructure the organizational identity. The moderators include (i) strength of the shared organizational identity (ii) degree of identity regulation by the organization, (iii) degree of overlap between the member's self-identity and the organizational identity, and (iv) direction of internal word-of-mouth communications. Each of these moderators is described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Keller (2002) describes how, by properly designing organization strategies, an organization can attain a strong identity. Strong identities, shared among the members of the organization, have been found to be most useful during times of turmoil (Hatun and Pettigrew, 2004). Unlike weak identities, strong identities cause members to be either attracted or repelled (Ashforth, 1998; Elsbach, 1998). Accordingly, salespersons might find it difficult to ignore shared strong identities, and might therefore find themselves choosing one side or the other. If the shared strong identity attracts (repels) salespersons, then it is likely that salespersons will perceive the organizational identity in a positive (negative) light. Consequently, during times of high threat, when salespersons become aware of Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancies, they might restructure the organizational identity by further skewing the already positive (negative) identity in the same direction.

*Proposition 2a. When salespersons perceive the shared organizational identity positively, then, the stronger the shared organizational identity, the more salespersons will restructure the organizational identity in the positive direction.*

*Proposition 2b. When salespersons perceive the shared organizational identity negatively, then, the stronger the shared organizational identity, the more salespersons will restructure the organizational identity in the negative direction.*

In order to exert control over their members, organizations indulge in identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Identity regulation becomes all the more important in the presence of increased organization exposure in communication media like newspapers, television and the internet during times of high threat. Increased exposure means more outside sources are competing with the information projected by the organization (Hatch and Schultz, 2002a). The type of identity regulation used can determine the lens through which the sales force perceives the organizational identity. For example, education and training are said to be significant in the determination of identity – by constantly educating the sales force in business ethics, an organization hopes that salespersons will perceive the organizational identity as being ethical, honest and having integrity. Cheney and Christensen (2001) found that organizations are increasingly using internal media-based advertising to influence their members. 3M used narratives for this very purpose (Shaw, 2002). Hughes (2013) recommends the regulation of salespersons' perceptions of customer-directed advertising as these perceptions have a significant effect on the salesperson's effort and performance. Each method of regulation differs from the others in the degree of identity regulation it provides. Further, attentive managers can proactively provide salespersons with information that can counter the outside information derived from the awareness of the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy during times of high threat. Therefore, when salespersons desire to restructure the organizational identity, they are framed or pre-primed by the identity regulation policies of the organization.

*Proposition 3. The greater the degree of identity regulation undertaken by the organization, the lesser the extent to which salespersons restructure the organizational identity.*

Schwartz (1987) argued that higher the overlap between an organization member's self-identity and the organizational identity, higher will be the chances that threats to the organization are experienced as threats to the member. For salespersons with a high degree of overlap

between self-identity and organizational identity, the awareness of the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy can become a personal threat (to their own identity). During a period of high threat to the organization, this personal threat is compounded. The salesperson can respond to such a threat through identity-protection responses or through identity-restructuring responses (Petriglieri, 2011). However, the limitations of a salesperson's work (such as the inability to discredit the source of the threat, the impossibility of concealing the identity from customers, and the inability to change the perceived image) prevent the use of identity-protection responses. Thus, the only way for salespersons to reduce the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy is to use identity-restructuring. This response changes associated meanings (Petriglieri, 2011) and hence alters their perception of the organizational identity.

*Proposition 4. The higher the overlap between salespersons' self-identity and the organizational identity, the greater the extent to which salespersons restructure the organizational identity.*

In an organization, there are two ways in which information regarding the organizational identity can spread. The first is internal corporate communications. These communications are disseminated among the sales force through formal communication channels. These communications increase the accessibility and salience of the shared organizational identity (Scott and Lane, 2000). Cheney and Christensen (2001) maintain that even communication meant for those external to the organization can be included as a part of internal communication. Elaborating further on corporate communications, Van Riel (2002) discusses how all stakeholders, including organization members, will be more receptive to corporate messages if the content is coherent and appealing, that is, if there is a sustainable organization story that is unique to the organization. If this is true, salespersons faced with a Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy would necessarily restructure the organizational identity in a positive direction (on the assumption that all corporate communications are positive towards the organization).

However, this is only one type of internal communication. The second, and more influential, type is (internal) word-of-mouth. There has been extensive research on word-of-mouth in the field of marketing (e.g. Arndt, 1967; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Herr, Kardes, and Kim, 1991; De Matos and Rossi, 2008; Reingen and Kernan, 1986; Richins, 1983; Westbrook, 1987). Most word-of-mouth research is focused on informal communications between consumers. Nonetheless, the core ideas still hold when we apply them to informal communications among organizational members, like the sales force. Individuals have an innate desire to seek out opinions of other people when faced with uncertainty (Bickart and Schindler, 2002; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). Not only do they seek out other people's opinions, but they also find information from people to be more credible than information from any other source (Dichter, 1966; Feick and Price, 1987), including corporate communications. Word-of-mouth is not limited to verbal communications; company intranets, email and instant messaging, mobile messages and so forth may also be used as means of person-to-person communication. For organizations, all this implies that salespersons might discuss their perceptions of corporate communications with other employees, especially during times of high threat. Furthermore, information received via word-of-mouth is often perceived as more credible (Dichter, 1966; Feick and Price, 1987) and will thus be more persuasive than information received via formal internal communications.

*Proposition 5. Positive (negative) word-of-mouth communications between organizational members makes salespersons restructure the organizational identity in a positive (negative) direction.*

### **The New Projected Image**

Deliberate reflection on the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy, or between “self” and “other”, results in salespersons restructuring the organizational identity (Gioia and Thomas,

1996). If the salesperson does not accept the message he is projecting, that is, if the projected image is different from the restructured organizational identity, it can cause him considerable discomfort to communicate the message (Cheney and Christensen, 2004). The salesperson can display behavior consistent with the projected image only if it is grounded in the restructured organizational identity, that is, the member believes in the message he is communicating (Schultz, Hatch, and Larsen, 2002). Therefore, during times of high threat, we can expect the salesperson to communicate a new projected image based on the restructured identity. Consider an automobile manufacturer plagued by safety recalls, because the metal components of their cars degenerate rapidly after a year or so of use. The management may continue to reiterate that safety remains core to their organization. Yet, a salesperson may, due to the restructured organizational identity, project an image of an organization that offers cars far cheaper than the competition, even if not of the highest long term safety. Thus, articulation of the projected image frequently reflects the needs and feelings of organizational members more than it does the customers (Cheney and Christensen, 2004). Accordingly, along with or despite the projected image that managers ask the sales force to communicate, the salespersons can be expected to develop new projected images. The new projected image will be framed by the dialogue between the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy and the restructured organizational identity.

*Proposition 6a. The restructured organizational identity causes a change in the projected image being transmitted by the salesperson.*

*Proposition 6b. The new projected image conveyed by the salesperson will be more congruent with the restructured organizational identity than his new projected image with the **old** organizational identity.*

*Proposition 6c. The new projected image conveyed by the salesperson will be more congruent with the restructured organizational identity than his old projected image with the **restructured** organizational identity.*

Next, we examine how much in alignment the new projected image will be with the organizationally prescribed projected image. Will it be more or less accurate? Will it be what the managers would like their sales force to transmit, or will it be reflective of what the salespersons feel will help them meet customer related targets? Scott and Lane (2000) made certain propositions about the nature of organizational images constructed by managers. They proposed that managers construct projected images (i) to enhance their self-perceptions based on their organizational affiliation; (ii) to contribute to what they believe will lead to organizational goal attainment, and (iii) to ensure that the projected image is based in truth or is at least credible for audience consumption. Further, they specify the situations in which motive (ii) takes precedence over motive (iii) and vice versa. Managers often pay more attention to the *accuracy* of the projected image if elements in the projection are measurable or when the audience has alternate sources of information. Managers usually focus more on the *extent to which the projected image leads to organizational goal attainment* when the projected image has claims that are difficult to assess or when alternate sources of information are limited (Scott and Lane, 2000).

In the case of salespersons, we have proposed that the salesperson's new projected image will be congruent with the restructured organizational identity. Additionally, the new projected image will also have taken into account customers' perceived images. The new projected image will be aimed at enhancing the favorable aspects of the perceived image and mitigating the negative aspects through explanations of behavior or corrective action (Dukerich and Carter, 2002; Elsbach and Sutton, 1992; Fombrun, 1996; Ginzler, Kramer, and Sutton, 2004). Whereas organizations often focus only on information within their identity domain (Livengood and

Reger, 2010), customers have a much broader range of information sources, both within or outside the organization's identity domain.

In line with Scott and Lane (2000), we may expect the following. When elements in the projected image – such as behavior, assertions, claims or efficacy – are measurable or when the customer has alternate sources from where he can get information on the product, salespersons can be expected to focus more on the accuracy of the new projected image. When elements of the image are less measurable or when customers have fewer alternate information sources, the new projected image will mostly be more geared towards enabling salespersons fulfill their customer-related goals or targets. The new projected image can then be expected to emphasize what salespersons believe customers would like to see or hear.

*Proposition 7a. Greater the measurability of the elements in the new projected image, more accurate is the new projected image conveyed by the salesperson.*

*Proposition 7b. Lesser the measurability of the elements in the projected image, greater is the alignment of the new projected image with elements necessary to meet the salesperson's customer-related targets.*

*Proposition 8a. Greater the customers' access to alternative information and service, more accurate is the new projected image conveyed by the salesperson.*

*Proposition 8b. Lesser the customers' access to alternative information and service, greater is the alignment of the new projected image with elements necessary to meet the salesperson's customer-related targets.*

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Almost all organizations face threats to their identity and legitimacy (i.e., high threat situations) at some point during their lifetime. These situations are critical junctures for the organization (Greyser, 2009). Some organizations like Mattel survive these times (Yang, 2008), while others like Topps Meat do not (Associated Press, 2007). Understanding the vital role of boundary spanners during these times may help organizations overcome the high threat situations.

In this paper, we have synthesized literature from organizational behavior and marketing in order to extend the current understanding of organizational identity-image interactions. We have proposed that high threat situations cause a discrepancy between the projected and perceived organizational images for salespersons. As a result, the sales force restructures the organizational identity and then individually project a new organizational image that is consistent with this restructured identity. We have also identified the moderators at both the individual- and organization-level for these processes. The propositions in this paper are thus cross-level in nature. While separate individual- and organization-level analyses might also be beneficial in their own right, it is only by looking at both levels that a more complete understanding of the phenomena of organizational identity restructuring and its attendant issues can be uncovered (see Klein, Tosi, and Cannella, 1999).

### **Organizational Identity Restructuring and Similar Phenomena**

The organizational identity restructuring, as described in this paper, might be considered similar to other types of identity constructs or phenomena. Therefore, we distinguish the restructuring of organizational identity from other similar phenomena. We hope that this will aid future researchers to have a conceptually clear foundation to go on.

The restructuring of the organizational identity is not the same as the creation of a transitional identity. Clark et al. (2010) define a transitional identity as a temporary understanding of what the organization is becoming at a time when the organization is undergoing change. Thus, a transitional identity is one that gives way to a new identity of the organization, is shared by all organization members and only emerges when the organization is undergoing change. This is unlike the restructured identity which remains after the threat to the organization has passed, exists only for boundary spanners and only emerges when the organization faces a high threat.

The restructuring of organizational identity might also seem similar to the ideas associated with dual identities (e.g., Badea et al., 2011; Hopkins, 2011; Simon and Ruhs, 2008; Stelzl, Janes, and Seligman, 2008). However, this is a misconception. Psychology research on dual identities deals with an individual's dual *identification with* two objects (usually two national cultures or a national and minority culture or even two organizations) and not with an individual's dual *identity of* a single object (like the organization). Thus, phenomenon of the development of dual identities falls beyond the scope of this paper.

Restructuring of the organizational identity is also different in process from that of the forging of an identity, as described by Gioia et al. (2010). While the process model put forth by Gioia et al. (2010) is for the formation of a completely new identity for the first time, our proposed model is only for the changes made to the existing organizational identity. Accordingly, the restructured identity arises not out of the interaction of multiple processes over a long period (see Gioia et al., 2010), but out of the discrepancy between the Projected and Perceived Images during times of high threat.

## **Future Research**

This article addresses an ‘overlooked gap’ (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011) in existing literature. Thus, the propositions we outlined in this paper will hopefully provide scholars several avenues for further research. We elaborate on some possibilities. First, it would be useful to understand which parts of the organizational identity are changed by boundary spanners. For example, research may examine whether boundary spanners focus on the non-threatened parts of the identity while down-playing the threatened parts. Alternately, boundary spanners may develop some new dimension to the identity so that they have a clean slate to start from. Otherwise, boundary spanners might simply change the meanings associated with the threatened parts of the identity. Such research can help managers prevent or facilitate changes to the organization's identity, depending on the demands of the situation.

Second, empirical support for the moderators we identified in this paper would prove invaluable to those in charge of managing the organization during times of high threat. We have specified moderators at both the individual- and organization-level. However, managers are limited by the extent to which they can affect individual-level moderators. Therefore, future work on individual-level moderators might be more useful in advancing academic knowledge, while those at the organization-level would have greater implications for practice.

Third, future research could also consider how the understanding of organizational identity restructuring can be used in internal marketing (e.g., King and Grace, 2008; Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007) during times of high threat. For an organization, these high threat situations are turning points, and hence ideal for internal marketing (Mitchell, 2002). Thus, developing links between internal and external marketing, a crucial part of internal branding (Mitchell, 2002), can be explored through the process of identity-image interactions that we have outlined in this paper.

Organizational identity is also a vital component in global marketing strategies and is often used by managers when organizations need to adapt to foreign markets (Cayla and Penalzoza, 2012). Accordingly, this paper also has important implications for research concerning organizations with global organizations. Multinational organizations, in comparison to others, have greater exposure to situations that attack the very identity and legitimacy of their organizations. Such organizations operate in their home country and in several foreign (or host) countries simultaneously. Organizations make the decision to go multinational with much deliberation, yet several fail to successfully sustain themselves in new host markets (Sapienza et al., 2006). Often, this is because premeditated strategies and practices work only for so long in the new environment. A sudden high threat situation may arise which renders them useless. Researchers will need to take cross-country issues into account when they apply the propositions in this paper to global organizations. For example, management in a multinational organization may give inordinate attention to, say, home country customers over the host country's customers. This would widen the projected-perceived image discrepancy in the host country, while reducing it in the home country. Even research concerning the moderators in this paper will face the same issues. For example, identity regulation becomes more important when an organization functions in a country different from its country of origin, as the sales force (in the host country) are removed from the sense of history and the cultural context in which the organizational identity was formed.

### **Implications for Practice**

We propose that in high threat situations, the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy makes salespersons restructure the organizational identity. We delineate the possible moderators that may influence the direction and extent to which this identity is restructured. We also propose that the restructuring of organizational identity results in salespersons transmitting a new projected organizational image. Dukerich and Carter (2002) assert that organizational members may err by

overestimating or underestimating the Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy and correspondingly, spend either too much or too little time and money on the repair process. Similarly, salespersons are also subject to perception biases and thus their identity restructuring and new projected image construction may indeed be faulty and detrimental to the aims of the organization. The moderators we propose indicate that management can have considerable effect on the restructured organizational identity – if they only notice.

Indeed, managers must listen to their sales force because salespersons are learning from the people served by the business. A low Projected-Perceived Image Discrepancy can not only improve salespersons' satisfaction and commitment (Anisimova and Mavondo, 2010), but can also lead to financial benefits and buffer firms in high threat situations (Rindova and Fombrun, 1998; Van Riel, 2002). We have proposed that in high threat situations, salespersons perceive when this discrepancy exists. The management will then do well to garner feedback from the sales force, because they may well protect both managers and other organization members from cycles of fruitless effort, unnecessary expenditure, or even exit. At the same time, however, we recommend caution in interpreting these practical implications until there is sufficient empirical support.

Due to their unique straddling of the organization and the local environment, external images of the organization leak into salespersons' organizational identity, which could result in their identity of the organization being significantly different from more insulated organizational members. Yet, for organizational identity to be a source of competitive advantage, it should align the goals of salespersons with those of the rest of the organization; it should be in-line with the organization and the salesperson's core competencies and it must affect operational and strategic decisions in such a way that the organization (and salespersons) can exploit environmental opportunities and/or neutralize environmental threats (Barney and Stewart, 2002).

Also, impression management is crucial when organizations face high threats because it determines how the organization is positioning itself to respond to such threats. At these times, there are several managerial-level responses that are part of impression management, like undertaking technical actions to attenuate the negative effect of the wrongdoing (Zavyalova et al., 2012), or making adjustments to advertising and price (Cleeren, van Heerde, and Dekimpe, 2013), or even managing the CEO's relationship with journalists (Westphal and Deephouse, 2011). Equally important is that, in times of high threat, considerable time, energy, and money are spent by the management to create a good reputation for the organization through a carefully crafted projected image. Yet, we propose that in precisely these high threat situations, identity-image interactions mean that salespersons transmit their self-negotiated new projected image, which can differ from the assiduously formulated projected image that management means for its sales force to transmit.

Of course, managers are responsible to multiple stakeholders – not just to its sales force and customers – and the projected image they formulate reflects the strategy that attempts to reconcile multiple stakeholders. Still, the challenge for managers is to regulate a projected image and an organizational identity that is broad enough to be embraced by stakeholders and organizational members in different roles, while providing enough clarity for each of those roles to carry out organizationally desirable behaviors (Barney and Stewart, 2002).

In sum, management must recognize that organizational image management is inextricably linked with organizational identity. They must therefore manage the identity-image interactions of boundary spanners effectively, to be able to successfully overcome the high threat situation.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, David A. (1996), *Building strong brands*. New York: Free Press.
- Albert, Stuart, and David A. Whetten (1985), "Organizational identity," in *Research in organizational behavior*, Edited by L. L. Cummings, and M. M. Staw. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 263-95.
- Aldrich, Howard, and Diane Herker (1977), "Boundary spanning roles and organization structure," *Academy of Management Review*, 2 (2), 217-30.
- Alvesson, Mats (1990), "Organization: From substance to image?" *Organization Studies*, 11 (3), 373-94.
- Alvesson, Mats, and Hugh Willmott (2002), "Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual," *Journal of Management Studies*, 39 (5), 619-44.
- Anisimova, Tatiana, and Felix T. Mavondo (2010), "The performance implications of company-salesperson corporate brand misalignment," *European Journal of Marketing*, 44 (6), 771-95.
- Argenti, Paul A., and Janis Formans (2002), "The communication advantage: A constituency-focused approach to formulating and implementing strategy," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 231-45.
- Arndt, Johan (1967), "Role of product-related conversations in the diffusion of a new product," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 4 (3), 291-5.
- Ashforth, Blake E. (1998), "Becoming: How does the process of identification unfold?" in *Identity in organizations: Developing theory through conversations*, Edited by D. Whetten, and P. Godfrey. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 213-22.
- Ashforth, Blake E., and Barrie W. Gibbs (1990), "The double-edge of organizational legitimation," *Organization Science*, 1 (2), 177-94.
- Ashforth, Blake E., and Fred Mael (1989), "Social identity theory and the organization," *Academy of Management Review*, 14 (1), 20-39.

- Associated Press (2013) "Topps meat to close down after meat recall," <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/21149977/#.URXczvJ5d8E>.
- Badea, Constantina, Jolanda Jetten, Aarti Iyer, and Abdelatif Er-rafiy (2011), "Negotiating dual identities: The impact of group-based rejection on identification and acculturation," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41 (5), 586-95.
- Barney, Jay B., and Alice C. Stewart (2002), "Organizational identity as moral philosophy: Competitive implications for diversified corporations," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 26-50.
- Bartel, Caroline A. (2001), "Social comparisons in boundary-spanning work: Effects of community outreach on members' organizational identity and identification," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46 (3), 379-414.
- BBC News (2013) "GlaxoSmithKline to pay \$3bn in US drug fraud scandal," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-18673220>.
- Bhattacharya, Chitrabhan B., and Sankar Sen (2003), "Consumer-company identification: A framework for understanding consumers' relationships with companies," *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (2), 76-88.
- Bickart, Barbara, and Robert M. Schindler (2002), "Special session summary expanding the scope of WOM: Consumer-to-consumer information on the internet," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29, 428-30.
- Brown, Andrew D., and Ken Starkey (2000), "Organizational identity and learning: A psychodynamic perspective," *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 102-20.
- Brown, Tom J., Peter A. Dacin, Michael G. Pratt, and David A. Whetten (2006), "Identity, intended image, construed image, and reputation: An interdisciplinary framework and suggested terminology," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 34 (2), 99-106.
- Cayla, Julien, and Lisa Penaloza (2012), "Mapping the play of organizational identity in foreign market adaptation," *Journal of Marketing*, 76 (6), 38-54.
- Cheney, George, and Lars T. Christensen (2004), "Organizational identity: Linkages between internal and external organizational communication," in *Organizational identity: A reader*, Edited by M. J. Hatch, and M. Schultz. New York: Oxford University Press, 510-57.

- Cheney, George, and Lars T. Christensen (2001), "Organizational identity: Linkages between internal and external organizational communication," in *New handbook of organizational communication*, Edited by F. M. Jablin, and L. L. Pumam. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 231-69.
- Clark, Shawn M., Dennis A. Gioia, David J. Ketchen, and James B. Thomas (2010), "Transitional identity as a facilitator of organizational identity change during a merger," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55 (3), 397-438.
- Cleeren, Kathleen, Harald J. van Heerde, and Marnik G. Dekimpe (2013), "Rising from the ashes: How brands and categories can overcome product-harm crises," *Journal of Marketing*, 77 (2), 58-77.
- Daft, Richard L. (2004), *Organizational theory, change, and design* New Delhi, India: South-Western (Cengage Learning).
- De Matos, Celso A., and Carlos A. V. Rossi (2008), "Word-of-mouth communications in marketing: A meta-analytic review of the antecedents and moderators," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (4), 578-96.
- Dichter, Ernest (1966), "How word-of-mouth advertising works," *Harvard Business Review*, 44 (6), 147-60.
- Dobni, Dawn, and George M. Zinkhan (1990), "In search of brand image: A foundation analysis," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 17 (1), 110-9.
- Dukerich, Janet M., and Suzanne M. Carter (2002), "Distorted images and reputation repair," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 97-112.
- Dutton, Jane E., and Janet M. Dukerich (1991), "Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation," *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (3), 517-54.
- Dutton, Jane E., Janet M. Dukerich, and Celia V. Harquail (1994), "Organizational images and member identification," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39 (2), 239-63.
- Dutton, Jane E., Laura M. Roberts, and Jeffrey Bednar (2010), "Pathways for positive identity construction at work: Four types of positive identity and the building of social resources," *Academy of Management Review*, 35 (2), 265-93.

- Elsbach, Kimberly D. (1998), "The process of social identification: With what do we identify?" in *Identity in organizations: Developing theory through conversations*, Edited by D. Whetten, and P. Godfrey. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage,
- Elsbach, Kimberly D., and Roderick M. Kramer (1996), "Members' responses to organizational identity threats: Encountering and countering the business week rankings," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41 (3), 442-76.
- Elsbach, Kimberly D., and Robert I. Sutton (1992), "Acquiring organizational legitimacy through illegitimate actions: A marriage of institutional and impression management theories," *Academy of Management Journal*, 35 (4), 699-738.
- Feick, Lawrence F., and Linda L. Price (1987), "The market maven: A diffuser of marketplace information," *Journal of Marketing*, 51 (1), 83-97.
- Fombrun, Charles J. (1996), *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Fombrun, Charles J., and Cees M. Van Riel (1997), "The reputational landscape," *Corporate Reputation Review*, 1 (1), 1-16.
- Ginzel, Linda E., Roderick M. Kramer, and Robert I. Sutton (2004), "Organizational impression management as a reciprocal influence process: The neglected role of the organizational audience," in *Organizational identity: A reader*, Edited by M. J. Hatch, and M. Schultz. New York: Oxford University Press, 223-61.
- Gioia, Dennis A., Kristin N. Price, Aimee L. Hamilton, and James B. Thomas (2010), "Forging an identity: An insider-outsider study of processes involved in the formation of organizational identity," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55 (1), 1-46.
- Gioia, Dennis A., Majken Schultz, and Kevin G. Corley (2000b), "Identity dialogues: Where do we go from here?" *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 145-7.
- Gioia, Dennis A., Majken Schultz, and Kevin G. Corley (2000a), "Organizational identity, image, and adaptive instability," *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 63-81.
- Gioia, Dennis A., and James B. Thomas (1996), "Identity, image, and issue interpretation: Sensemaking during strategic change in academia," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41 (3), 370-403.
- Godes, David, and Dina Mayzlin (2004), "Using online conversations to study word-of-mouth communication," *Marketing Science*, 23 (4), 545-60.

- Grandy, Gina, and Sharon Mavin (2012), "Occupational image, organizational image and identity in dirty work: Intersections of organizational efforts and media accounts," *Organization*, 19 (6), 765-86.
- Greyser, Stephen A. (2009), "Corporate brand reputation and brand crisis management," *Management Decision*, 47 (4), 590-602.
- Hatch, Mary J., and Majken Schultz (2002a), "Scaling the tower of babel: Relational differences between identity, image and culture in organizations," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 11-35.
- Hatch, Mary J., and Majken Schultz (2002b), "The dynamics of organizational identity," *Human Relations*, 55 (8), 989-1018.
- Hatum, Andrés, and Andrew Pettigrew (2004), "Adaptation under environmental turmoil: Organizational flexibility in family-owned firms," *Family Business Review*, 17 (3), 237-58.
- Herr, Paul M., Frank R. Kardes, and John Kim (1991), "Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information of persuasion: An accessibility-diagnostics perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (4), 454-62.
- Hogg, Michael A., and Deborah J. Terry (2000), "Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts," *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 121-40.
- Hopkins, Nick (2011), "Dual identities and their recognition: Minority group members' perspectives," *Political Psychology*, 32 (2), 251-70.
- Hornsey, Matthew J., and Michael A. Hogg (2000), "Assimilation and diversity: An integrative model of subgroup relations," *Personality & Social Psychology Review*, 4 (2), 143-56.
- Hughes, Douglas E. (2013), "This ad's for you: The indirect effect of advertising perceptions on salesperson effort and performance," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41, 1-18.
- Jones, Edward E., David E. Kanouse, Harold H. Kelley, Richard E. Nisbett, Stuart Valins, and Bernard Weiner (1972), *Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behavior* Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.
- Katz, Elihu, and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1955), *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications* New York: The Free Press.

- Keller, Kevin L. (2002), "Building and managing corporate brand equity," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 113-37.
- Kelley, Harold H., and John L. Michela (1980), "Attribution theory and research," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 31 (1), 457-501.
- King, Mark and Jemma Buckley (2013) "Horsemeat scandal leaves burger king facing a whopping backlash," <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2013/feb/01/horsemeat-scandal-burger-king>.
- King, Ceridwyn, and Debra Grace (2008), "Internal branding: Exploring the employee's perspective," *Journal of Brand Management*, 15 (5), 358-72.
- Klein, Katherine J., Henry Tosi, and Albert A. J. Cannella (1999), "Multilevel theory building: Benefits, barriers, and new developments." *Academy of Management Review*, 24 (2), 248-53.
- Kreiner, Glen E., and Blake E. Ashforth (2004), "Evidence toward an expanded model of organizational identification," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25 (1), 1-27.
- Lam, Son K., Michael Ahern, Ye Hu, and Niels Schillewaert (2010), "Resistance to brand switching when a radically new brand is introduced: A social identity theory perspective," *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (6), 128-46.
- Livengood, Scott R., and Rhonda K. Reger (2010), "That's our turf! identity domains and competitive dynamics," *Academy of Management Review*, 35 (1), 48-66.
- Louis, Meryl R., and Robert I. Sutton (1991), "Switching cognitive gears: From habits of mind to active thinking," *Human Relations*, 44 (1), 55-76.
- Mael, Fred, and Blake E. Ashforth (1992), "Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13 (2), 103-23.
- Mitchell, Colin (2002), "Selling the brand inside," *Harvard Business Review*, 80 (1), 99-105.
- Nandan, Shiva (2005), "An exploration of the brand identitybrand image linkage: A communications perspective," *Journal of Brand Management*, 12 (4), 264-78.
- Petriglieri, Jennifer L. (2011), "Under threat: Responses to the consequences of threats to individuals' identities," *Academy of Management Review*, 36 (4), 641-62.

- Pfeffer, Jeffrey (1981), *Power in organizations* Marshfield, MA: Pitman.
- Punjaisri, Khanyapuss, and Alan Wilson (2007), "The role of internal branding in the delivery of employee brand promise," *Journal of Brand Management*, 15 (1), 57-70.
- Ramarajan, Lakshmi, Katerina Bezrukova, Karen A. Jehn, and Martin Euwema (2011), "From the outside in: The negative spillover effects of boundary spanners' relations with members of other organizations," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32 (6), 886-905.
- Reingen, Peter H., and Jerome B. Kernan (1986), "Analysis of referral networks in marketing: Methods and illustration," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23 (4), 370-8.
- Richins, Marsha L. (1983), "Negative word-of-mouth by dissatisfied consumers: A pilot study," *Journal of Marketing*, 47 (1), 68-78.
- Rindova, Violina P., and Charles J. Fombrun (1998), "The eye of the beholder: The role of corporate reputation in defining organizational identity," in *Identity in organizations: Developing theory through conversations*, Edited by D. Whetten, and P. Godfrey. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 62-76.
- Ross, Lee, David Greene, and Pamela House (1977), "The "false consensus effect": An egocentric bias in social perception and attribution processes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 13 (3), 279-301.
- Sandberg, Jörgen, and Mats Alvesson (2011), "Ways of constructing research questions: Gap-spotting or problematization?" *Organization*, 18 (1), 23-44.
- Sapienza, Harry J., Erkkö Autio, Gerard George, and Shaker A. Zahra (2006), "A capabilities perspective on the effects of early internationalization on firm survival and growth," *Academy of Management Review*, 31 (4), 914-33.
- Saputra, Andy, Sohn Jie-Ae and Roya Shadravan (2013) "EU bans baby food with chinese milk," <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/09/25/china.milk/>.
- Schultz, Majken, Mary J. Hatch, and Mogens H. Larsen (2002), "Managing the corporate story," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 196-207.
- Schwartz, Howard S. (1987), "Anti-social actions of committed organizational participants: An existential psychoanalytic perspective," *Organization Studies*, 8 (4), 327-40.

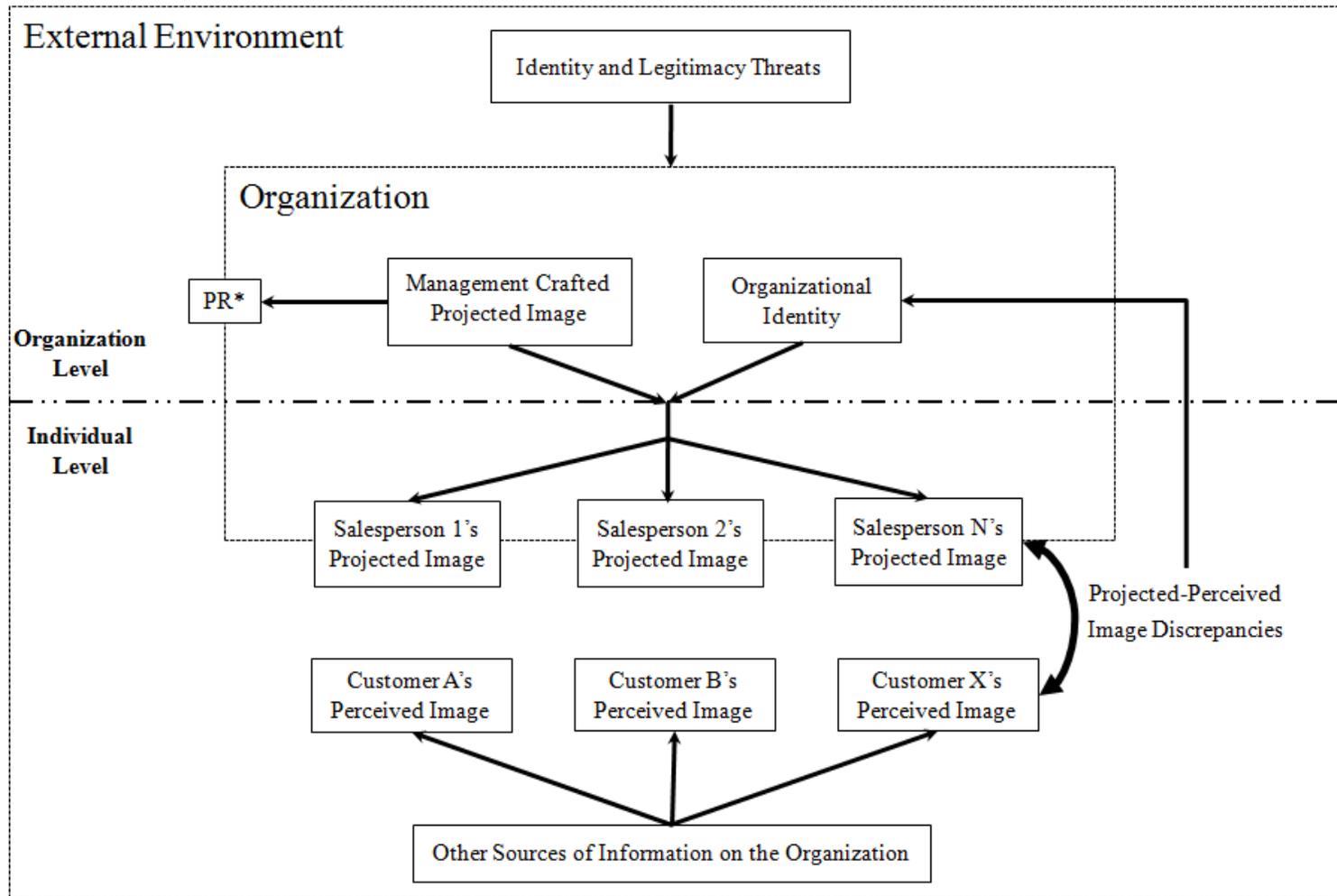
- Scott, Susanne G., and Vicki R. Lane (2000), "A stakeholder approach to organizational identity," *Academy of Management Review*, 25 (1), 43-62.
- Shaw, Gordon G. (2002), "Planning and communicating using stories," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 182-95.
- Sillince, John A., and Andrew D. Brown (2009), "Multiple organizational identities and legitimacy: The rhetoric of police websites," *Human Relations*, 62 (12), 1829-56.
- Simon, Bernd, and Daniela Ruhs (2008), "Identity and politicization among turkish migrants in germany: The role of dual identification," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95 (6), 1354-66.
- Smith, Gerald F. (1988), "Towards a heuristic theory of problem structuring," *Management Science*, 34 (12), 1489-506.
- Stelzl, Monika, Leslie Janes, and Clive Seligman (2008), "Champ or chump: Strategic utilization of dual social identities of others," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38 (1), 128-38.
- Story, Louise (2013) "Lead paint prompts mattel to recall 967,000 toys," <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/02/business/02toy.html>.
- Suchman, Mark C. (1995), "Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches," *Academy of Management Review*, 20 (3), 571-610.
- Sutton, Robert I., and Roderick M. Kramer (1990), "Transforming failure into success: Impression management, the reagan administration, and the iceland arms control talks," in *Organizations and nation-states: New perspectives*, Edited by R. L. Kahn, and M. Zald. San Francisco: Jossey-Bas,
- Tajfel, Henri (1982), "Social psychology of intergroup relations," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33 (1), 1-39.
- Van Riel, Cees M. (2002), "Corporate communication orchestrated by a sustainable corporate story," in *The expressive organization: Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand*, Edited by M. Schultz, M. J. Hatch and M. H. Larsen. New York: Oxford University Press, 157-81.

- Wagner, Tillmann, Richard J. Lutz, and Barton A. Weitz (2009), "Corporate hypocrisy: Overcoming the threat of inconsistent corporate social responsibility perceptions," *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (6), 77-91.
- Westbrook, Robert A. (1987), "Product/ consumption-based affective responses and postpurchase processes," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24 (3), 258-70.
- Westphal, James D., and David L. Deephouse (2011), "Avoiding bad press: Interpersonal influence in relations between CEOs and journalists and the consequences for press reporting about firms and their leadership," *Organization Science*, 22 (4), 1061-86.
- Whetten, David A. (2006), "Albert and whetten revisited," *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15 (3), 219-34.
- Yang, Jia L. (2013) "Mattel's CEO recalls a rough summer," <http://money.cnn.com/2008/01/21/news/companies/mattel.fortune/index.htm>.
- Zavyalova, Anastasiya, Mike Pfarrer, Rhonda Reger, and Debra Shapiro (2012), "Managing the message: The effects of firm actions and industry spillovers on media coverage following wrongdoing," *Academy of Management Journal*, 55 (5), 1079-101.

**Table 1. Gaps in Organizational Identity-Image Literature**

		<i>Organizational Identity</i>	<i>Organizational Identity-Image Interactions</i>	<i>Organizational Image</i>
<i>Inside the Organization</i>	<i>Threat</i>	Elsbach and Kramer (1996)	Dutton and Dukerich (1991)	Ginzel, Kramer, and Sutton (2004); Sutton and Kramer (1990)
	<i>No Threat</i>	e.g., Albert and Whetten (1985); Brown et al. (2006); Whetten (2006)	Gioia and Thomas (1996); Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000a); Hatch and Schultz, 2002a, 2002b; Rindova and Fombrun (1998); Scott and Lane (2000)	e.g., Alvesson (1990); Brown et al. (2006)
<i>Boundary Spanners</i>	<i>Threat</i>	--	<b><i>Our article</i></b>	--
	<i>No Threat</i>	Bartel (2001)	--	Aldrich and Herker (1977)
<i>Outside the Organization</i>	<i>Threat</i>	Lam et al. (2010)	--	Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz (2009)
	<i>No Threat</i>	e.g., Aaker (1996); Bhattacharya and Sen (2003)	Nandan (2005)	e.g., Anisimova and Mavondo (2010); Brown et al. (2006)

Figure 1. Image-Identity Interaction during Customer-Directed Boundary Spanning



\* PR includes advertising, corporate communications and public relations

Figure 2. Restructuring of Organizational Identity in High-Threat Contexts

