WHY COMMUNICATION NETWORKS MIGHT IMPACT EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION WITH ONE OR MORE ORGANIZATIONAL TARGETS

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Why Communication Networks Might Influence Employee Identification With One Or More Organizational Targets

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The purpose of this dissertation is to determine whether or not there exists a relationship between communication networks and organizational identification. Using social identity and network theories as the frameworks, the main argument is that communication networks (both social and task) are associated with one’s strength of identification with one or more organizational targets, including one’s profession, one’s organization, one’s department, and one’s work team. The site for investigation was an organization, referred to as FootWorld, whose main responsibility is to sell foot care products to medical facilities, trained professionals, and retailers. A total of 99 employees from the organization participated in this study and results indicate that neither one’s social network, nor task network, is associated with any of the organizational targets. Furthermore, being central in a social or task network was not associated with strong identification with one or more organizational targets, despite previous research (Bullis & Bach, 1991; Corman, 1990; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002). Future research must examine not only why it is that neither of these types of networks influenced organizational identification, but also which types of networks do come to influence identification with one’s profession, organization, department, and/or team.
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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The formal study of communication within an organizational setting has received noticeable attention over the past several decades (see, for example, Deetz, 1997; Taylor, Flanagan, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001; Wert-Gray, Center, Brashers, & Meyers, 1991). This attention can be attributed to the important and necessary link between organizations and communication. Communication is the very backbone for any organizational entity. In fact, some scholars argue that an organization can most aptly be viewed as a social construction: something that is created through, and sustained by, communication between and among members (Mumby, 1993; Taylor, 2005). Given this link between communication and organizing, it is no wonder that scholars have attempted to determine how each mutually informs the other. In other words, how is it that communication influences organizations and, in turn, how is it that organizations influence communication? Two salient phenomena that are addressed when scholars attempt to study these two bodies of literature are organizational communication networks and organizational identification. These two areas are well-represented within the organizational communication literature because scholars are interested in the social makeup of organizations (who communicates with whom and for what reasons), as well as how employees come to define themselves as a part of the organization or another, more micro target (e.g. department, work team). Each independent stream of research attempts to increase our knowledge concerning how, why, and when communication affects organizations and, in turn, how the creation of certain organizational structures
affects our communication. This exemplifies the reciprocal relationship between
communication and organizations.

This dissertation attempts to determine whether, how, and to what extent
communication networks relate to organizational identification. In other words, might
one’s communication networks (both social and task) come to influence not only whether
or not employees identify with one or more organizational targets, but also the strength of
these identifications? As years of scholarly research indicate, employee behavior results,
at least in part, from modeling the behaviors of others who are part of one’s social and
task networks (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998; Feeley, 2000; Podolny & Baron,
1997). Employees look to fellow coworkers with whom they communicate for
information regarding behavioral norms and expectations. Employees considered part of
a particular communication network might come to influence individual members’
behaviors and attitudes. Decades of organizational identification research indicates that
having a strong psychological tie to an organization (having strong identification) has
been correlated with such things as increased commitment, increased satisfaction, a
willingness to succeed, and a desire to remain in the organization. Among the main
reasons for studying issues of identification within an organizational setting is to
determine which targets employees consider most important in shaping their identity.

Studying the link between networks and identification involves understanding how
networks might come to influence identification. It is interesting, therefore, that scholars
have not paid more attention to the relationship between organizational identification and
social network theory: how is identification with different organizational targets (e.g.
profession, organization, department, and work team) influenced by network members?
Based on existing research, it seems plausible to predict that one’s communication network is going to influence the extent to which he/she identifies with his/her organization (or other organizational targets) (Bullis & Bach, 1991; Corman, 1990; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002). Since these two areas of research inform one another about the relationship between networks (who communicates with whom) and identification (one’s attachment to one or more organizational targets), and considering the lack of research that exists to determine whether the aforementioned relationship exists, studying these two areas together is ripe for investigation.

Another salient impetus for studying the link between organizational identification and communication networks is the question posed by Redding (1966), and echoed in a later piece regarding the evolution of organizational communication theory (Wiio, Goldhaber, & Yates, 1980). These scholars ask where is the “communication” in organizational communication research? For example, when Wiio, Goldhaber, and Yates (1980) analyzed such organizational phenomena as audits, tenure, supervisory status, training, satisfaction, and structure, and when Tompkins (1984) studied such issues as action, power, process, channels, and information flow, and when Redding (1966) determined the most feasible way of studying issues concerning crises, feedback, information overload, and information transmission, all were faced with the same fundamental obstacle of finding the “communication” in organizational communication research. That is, why study organizational phenomena from a communication perspective instead of the perspectives traditionally providing useful frameworks, such as organizational behavior, management, or industrial studies? What can a communication framework provide that these other frameworks cannot? Redding and Tompkins (1987)
conclude that many scholars have succeeded in providing an answer to this seemingly fundamental question. The field and its constituents have gone from the “era of preparation” to the “era of identification and consolidation,” to where we are now in the “era of maturity and innovation” (p. 7). That is, over the years scholars have concluded that communication is a variable that can help explain, for example, power, feedback, training, supervision, and message transfer. Communication is both an antecedent to, as well as an effect of, these variables. For example, in order to have power one must communicate “powerfully” and by communicating powerfully, one is socially constructing this “power” dimension. As Redding (1985) contends, organizational communication scholars have found “communication” in organizational communication research as both a process and a product. Communication is the process by which things like power, structure, satisfaction, and crisis come into being, but at the same time communication is a product of these processes as well (see also Tompkins, 1984). Through communication employees become powerful (or powerless), satisfied (or unsatisfied), committed (or uncommitted), and identified (or unidentified). This approach views communication from the process perspective. However, communication is also a product of these processes. Employees are going to communicate differently to the extent that they are powerful (or powerless), satisfied (or unsatisfied), committed (or uncommitted), and identified (or unidentified). This approach views communication as a product.

Even though scholars reading the claims of Redding (1985) might question the true extent to which the field of organizational communication has “crystallized,” there have been great strides and many have spent their academic careers attempting to espouse
the “communication” in organizational communication theory. Studying the link between organizational identification and communication networks is yet another way of showing the necessary and interdependent relationship between communication and organizational phenomena. From this perspective, those with whom one communicates come to influence (or shape) one’s identification with one or more organizational targets. This dissertation will provide an additional answer to that salient question posed earlier: where is the “communication” in organizational communication research? Specifically, I argue that communication between and among employees creates certain networks and these networks come to influence one’s strength of identification with one or more organizational targets. Using Tompkins’ (1984) process-product link to study organizational communication, one’s networks are viewed as social structures created through the process of communication, which ultimately come to impact and influence the product of this communication (identification).

The first of these areas, the study of organizational identification, attempts to discover whether, how, and why employees come to identify with their respective organizations or other salient targets (profession, department, and work team). According to Larson and Pepper (2003), organizational identification can be defined as “…the communicative process through which individuals either align themselves with or distance themselves from…targets/sources of identity” (p. 530). In other words, to the extent that an employee is identified with his/her organization, he/she comes to see an overlap between one’s own goals, aspirations, and visions and those of the organization. This area of research directly addresses issues of identity which, from both process and outcome perspectives, have long been addressed by social scientists, especially within the
sociological (Goffman, 1956) and rhetorical (Burke, 1955) realms. From a communication perspective, the dominant paradigm is that one’s identity is created through the complex process of social interaction (Burke, 1955; Giddens, 1984; Mead, 1934). Based on existing literature, identity construction is embedded in interaction and is located in and constructed through communication. When an employee identifies with an organization or other targets (such as profession, department, or work team) there exists an emotional attachment or need for (and sense of) belonging, real or perceived, to a particular group of individuals. In fact, this need for belonging or emotional attachment is viewed as a primary reason for identification with one’s organization (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Rousseau, 1998; Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000). Employees identify and come to see themselves as part of an established group or entity to fulfill needs for attachment, belonging, and sense of self. To add to this argument, Cheney (1983) claims that employees identify with certain targets as “…an individual response to the divisions of society” (p. 145). Using Burkein theory, Cheney (1983) discusses what has been termed the “rhetorical situation,” which is the constant battle (on behalf of employees) between segregation and congregation. To the extent that one is identified with a particular organizational target, he/she is engaged in congregation. To the extent that one is not identified, he/she is engaged in segregation. In short, Cheney (1983) argues that certain identification targets are “congregational” (e.g. the organization), meaning that all employees come to share similar characteristics and membership. However, other identification targets (e.g. department, work team) are “segregational,” meaning that they create membership for some, though are exclusionary for others. In this sense, therefore, one can share collective membership in a profession or organization, but also have
individual membership in a specific department or team. This is a prime example of Burke’s (1955) contention that “…the so-called ‘I’ is merely a unique combination of partially conflicting ‘corporate we’s” (p. 140). In other words, employees are likely to congregate “with” certain targets and segregate themselves “from” others which, according to Cheney (1983), provides the impetus to studying multiple targets of identification. Of interest, then, is how more than one target can influence one’s attitudes, behaviors, and overall sense of identity.

Although literature on organizational identification traditionally existed in journals of management and organizational behavior, scholars since have not neglected the notion that this process is communicative in nature. For example, Burke (1950) discussed the importance of studying identification from a communication perspective when he argued that in order for interpersonal persuasion to occur, the target of a message must somehow identify with the source of the message. One of his major conclusions was that, in order to be persuasive, the receiver must come to see certain similarities or overlap (behavioral, psychological, motivational, attitudinal, or otherwise) in the source. This, in essence, is identification. Translating this back to the organizational realm, it is through interaction that social beings begin to create (or notice) these similarities or this overlap. In other words, it is through human communication and social interaction that one creates an identity and subsequently begins to identify with one’s organization or another salient target. To support this notion, Kuhn and Nelson (2002) argue that identification “refers to communicative acts illustrative of one’s attachment to one or more identity structures” (p. 7). Since organizational identification is viewed as a social process, it is not surprising that this topic of inquiry is now well
represented within the communication literature. Scholars emanating from a communication perspective argue that both identity construction and organizational identification are discursive, rhetorical, and social in nature. In support of this view, Cheney and Tompkins (1987) contend that “on the organizational level, we may speak of identity not as something an organization has, but something that is produced and reproduced through conversation of shared interests” (p. 6).

Thus, rather than viewing organizational identification as a passive endeavor whereby employees begin identifying upon arrival (e.g. Hall & Schneider, 1972), communication scholars argue that organizational identification is a process by which employees purposefully and actively create, adopt, and perhaps even recreate an organizational identity. The most salient aspect of the distinction between a management and organizational behavior paradigm (identity and identification as given) and a communication paradigm (identity and identification as constructed) is the social, interactive, rhetorical component inherent in the latter view, but underemphasized in the former. For example, Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) argue that “…the most important indicators and expressions of identification are found in language” (p. 305). That is, and based on Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration, the way in which employees talk about organizational activities, practices, and processes produces identification to one or more organizational targets and this “employee talk” is shaped by these targets as well. In other words, employees’ actions and language are representative of identification, and through language these employees come to produce and reproduce these identification targets. This relates Giddens’ (1984) “duality of structure” to the study of organizational identification. Identification targets shape action and action
shapes (or reshapes) these identification targets. By arguing for a structurational view of identification creation and manifestation, Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) espouse the “communication” in organizational communication research. Again from a communication perspective, Scott et al. (1999) studied the link between identification with multiple organizational targets and one’s intent to leave. By viewing intent to leave from a “communication-based voluntary turnover model,” these scholars found that not only is one’s intent to leave one’s organization a function of the communication and relationships that exist between and among coworkers, but also that being identified with certain micro and macro level targets might decrease one’s intent to leave (pp. 423-428). Similar to Scott et al.’s (1998) structurational view of identification, Scott et al. (1999) argue that organization-wide communication influences intent to leave and also influences the extent to which one identifies with one or more organizational targets.

Several other scholars have studied organizational identification from a communication perspective. Scott (1997) found that employees tend to identify most strongly with the most local (as opposed to geographically dispersed) targets of identification, perhaps based on ease of communication in a collocated environment. Three studies attempt to link communication networks and identification empirically. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) found that an increase in the number of one’s communication contacts was positively correlated with the number of identification targets that one strongly identifies with. Corman (1990) found that through communication one comes to identify with certain targets and, in turn, these targets of identification are likely to influence one’s interests and behaviors. Bullis and Bach (1991) found that there exists a strong, positive relationship between multiplex relationships and identification, insofar as
employees who cultivated relationships with others with whom they could communicate about several topics (both social and task) were more likely to have stronger identification with their organization as compared to those with network ties characterized as uniplex.

Further, Larson and Pepper (2003) found support for the claim that through discursive processes, employees come to share common identification based on Burke’s (1955) and Cheney’s (1983) idea of the corporate “we,” using and extending theories of social identity. Lastly, Barker and Tompkins (1994) found that employees were more likely to have strong levels of identification with a more micro target (team) than a more macro target (organization), and that this strength of identification was manifested through language and organizational dialogue. As these examples illustrate, the study of organizational identification from a communication perspective has not been lacking, but there is a call to study, more specifically, the link between identification and communication networks (Bullis & Bach, 1991; Corman, 1990; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002).

Much research exists to support the notion that those employees with stronger organizational identification have, for example, a clearer understanding of the organization’s goals (Scott & Lane, 2000), a sense of self that is at least partially shaped by the organization (Pratt & Foreman, 2000), increased feelings of organizational membership and belonging (Roussseau, 1998), increased levels of loyalty and commitment to the organization (Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), increased notions of being part of an established in-group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), a socially constructed organizational personality (Cheney, 1982), an enhanced organizational self-esteem (Pratt, 1998), increased levels of motivation (Cheney, 1983), and increased levels of job
satisfaction (Mael & Ashforth, 2001). Based on these results, and despite the fact that recent research has questioned the extent to which strong identification with one’s organization is beneficial (Gossett, 2002; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), the dominant assumption is that identification is advantageous not only for the organization as a whole, but for individual employees as well.

The second area, the study of communication networks, involves a better understanding of how the social makeup of an organization provides certain people with necessary and oftentimes limited resources (enabling factors), while denying these same resources to others (constraining factors). In other words, social network scholars are interested in studying how network position becomes advantageous for some, though disadvantageous for others. Within the organizational environment, the people with whom one creates both social and task relationships is important. Some social actors become part of emergent networks rife with individuals who can provide salient and useful resources. Much research currently exists to support the notion that those employees with ties to resourceful individuals have, for example, increased access to important information (Hansen, 2002), increased organizational satisfaction (Pollock, Whitbred, & Contractor, 2000), increased influence over other employees (Rice, 1993), an increased likelihood of upward mobility (Podolny & Baron, 1997), an increased knowledge base (Cross, Parker, Prusak, & Borgatti, 2001), increased knowledge of organizational norms and expectations (Heimer, 1992), a decreased likelihood of organizational departure (Feeley, 2000), an increase in perceived power (Brass & Burkhardt, 1992), increased levels of social capital (Burt, 2000) and increased responsibilities during decision-making (Kadushin, 2002). Based on the results of these
studies, the main assumption is that the individuals with whom one creates a relationship can ultimately lead to the attainment of certain valuable resources. It is ultimately through the process of communication that these emergent and advantageous links are constructed.

Both social networks and identification are embedded within the process of communication. Neither could be created or function without social interaction with other employees. Although each area has received much scholarly attention over the years only some research examines these issues together. Again, social interaction is at the very heart of both processes. Whom one communicatively creates network ties with will likely determine the target(s) with which one identifies, using a homophily or “birds of a feather flock together” mentality. Therefore, these two areas share an interdependent relationship and mutually inform one another.

This dissertation examines issues of identification in conjunction with communication networks. Two questions frame this study. First, what can be gained, conceptually, theoretically, and pragmatically, from studying identification and communication networks together? Second, how can such a study contribute to understanding issues of organizational communication and organizing? The goal of this dissertation is to determine how one’s identification with an organization and/or other micro targets is related to one’s communication networks. As mentioned previously, it is likely that communication networks influence organizational identification. Examining these phenomena together will help elucidate the relationship between communication networks and identification and will enrich organizational communication research by
answering Ibarra and Smith-Lovin’s (1997) call to examine identification as a variable associated with one’s communication network(s).

The next chapter will review the literature on identification and networks, as well as draw on social identity theory to develop hypotheses about the relationship between both. Following this will be a discussion regarding the methodology, outlining the organization studied, the methods used to obtain data, and the ways in which the data were analyzed. This will be followed by a chapter reporting the results of the dissertation. The discussion chapter explains the significance of the findings, how the findings can be supported by theory, limitations of the study, practical and theoretical implications, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational Identification

In its most general sense organizational identification refers to “communicative acts illustrative of one’s attachment to one or more identity structures” (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002, p. 7). A communicative act, as Kuhn and Nelson (2002) use the term, is a particular instance of social interaction between and among employees that results in, and is representative of, one’s belonging to a particular identification target. For example, and according to Cheney’s (1983) study of identification from a rhetorical perspective, to the extent that an employee refers to his/her organization using the term “we,” rather than “they,” he/she is communicatively creating identification with, or attachment to, the organization. Communication, therefore, is an integral component of organizational identification. It is ultimately through communication that one socially constructs an organizational identity. The study of organizational identification can further be considered an attempt to understand whether, how, and why employees come to view themselves as part of an institution, creating an established sense of what Burke (1955) calls a “corporate we.” That is, what are the benefits of establishing strong identification with one’s organization? According to Burke (1955), identification is a human need: something that, based on need for association or need for affiliation, employees “need” in order to feel satisfied and content with their organizational lives. In other words, identification is a term that refers to a certain agreed-upon, shared, collective identity that connects otherwise disconnected individuals together through common group membership.
As the literature illustrates, the construction (or co-construction) of identities is a basic need common to all social beings. This issue of identity has been an important area of study within the field of communication since Goffman’s (1956) seminal work dealing with the creation and manifestation of multiple selves within the social arena. Goffman’s (1956) three main arguments are that (a) identities are created through social interaction with other actors, (b) social beings create unique selves that become salient depending on the context in which one is embedded, and (c) identities create an established sense of self and meaning for individuals in the social world. Extending these ideas even further, Goffman (1956) argues that all social beings strive to create a positive identity through what he calls impression management. Individuals construct images of themselves that they want to convey to others. For example, if a social being wishes to convey authority, he/she must socially construct an authoritative identity. Goffman’s (1956) overarching thesis is that human beings have both the desire and need to construct and reconstruct their social identities in an attempt to create a certain sense of membership with a particular sector of society, such as an organization.

Several decades after these pivotal claims scholars began to apply Goffman’s (1956) ideas, which were originally used to examine issues of communication within the realms of interpersonal and group relationships, to the organizational setting, which overlapped well with the scholarship of Burke (1955) (e.g. Cheney, 1983; Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). These scholars concluded that Goffman’s (1956) view of identity as a social construction could be applicable to individuals within organizations. As such, organizational scholars have been interested in understanding why employees come to identify with their organizations (an antecedent-
oriented approach), how employees come to identify with their organizations (a process- oriented approach), and what benefits result from identification with one’s organization (an effects-oriented approach). Increasingly, however, scholars have been using communication theory to help uncover the link between social interaction and organizational identification. In other words, each of the aforementioned areas has received noticeable attention and recent literature continues to stress the importance of understanding the antecedents, process, and effects of organizational identification. Furthermore, scholars are interested in understanding how communication affects, and is affected by, belongingness. This dissertation examines the antecedents of organizational identification and of main interest is understanding if networks come to influence employee identification with both micro (e.g. department, team) and macro (e.g. organization, profession) organizational targets.

A question that emanates from a discussion about organizational identification is whether or not employees come to identify, and to what degree, with certain organizational targets. If there are, in fact, different patterns of identification for employees, why is there variation and how does this variation impact communication processes? Based on recent research, there is a strong possibility of dis-identification, anti-identification, neutral identification, ambiguous identification, and even perhaps non-identification on behalf of employees (e.g. Elsbach & Bhattachyarya, 2001). In other words, whereas research once indicated that strong identification with one or more targets was positive and desirable, recent research indicates that employee identification is not a necessary aspect of organizational life. Research has also begun to examine why employees might be hesitant to socially construct an organizational identity and the
repercussions that are likely to transpire. For example, research conducted by Gossett (2002) indicates that one plausible reason for the recent lack of identification deals with the very nature of organizational life in what she calls the “postmodern world.” With the mass utilization of a part-time workforce, rife with what Gossett (2002) calls a temporary (or contingent) staff, strong identification can be problematic for both the employee base and for upper management. Strong identification in the “postmodern” workplace will likely make it more difficult for employees to depart once their short-lived organizational tenure expires and, likewise, more difficult for managers to deal with the departing staff. Furthermore, especially in today’s corporate environment, the notions of layoffs and downsizing make identification problematic for both employees and management. Why should employees want, and management foster, strong identification if tenure in organizations is more the exception than the rule, especially according to Beck (2000). Thus, identification might be disadvantageous for employees and management, alike. From both employee and managerial perspectives, identification is not necessarily considered as beneficial and advantageous as scholars once claimed.

Yet another area ripe for investigation is whether or not organizational identification is viewed as a way of creating a sense of group membership on behalf of the employee or as a form of control on behalf of the organization. On the one hand, identification has been viewed as a way of fitting in with, or becoming assimilated to, the organization (e.g. Russo, 1998; Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004). In other words, identification is the process by which employees begin to see an overlap between their personal identity and the identity of the organization. On the other hand, organizational identification can be viewed as a form of unobtrusive control (mainly
psychological or cognitive) over the behaviors and attitudes of employees (e.g. Barker, 1993; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985; Gossett, 2002). This perspective views identification as a way of increasing the likelihood that employees will act in ways most beneficial for the organization at large. The heart of the debate is whether or not one views identification as a sense-making tool (e.g. Weick, 1995) or a manifestation of organizational control (e.g. Barker and Tompkins, 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995).

Although recent research has begun to examine the aforementioned issues, especially Gossett’s (2002) work on the ill-desirability of identification by a contingent, part-time workforce, much of the scholarly research examines the beneficial (or potentially beneficial) effects associated with strong identification with one’s organization. For example, research indicates that those who exhibit strong (as opposed to weak) identification with the organization are more affiliated with the organization (e.g. Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), see more similarity between their own values and norms and those of the organization (e.g. Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004), are more participative during times of decision making (e.g. Sass & Canary, 1991), and are more affectively and emotionally attached to the organization (e.g. Russo, 1998). Those who are more strongly identified also understand the mission and goals of the organization better (e.g. Scott & Lane, 2000), are more motivated to perform their job duties (e.g. Pratt & Foreman, 2000), have higher levels of self esteem and self worth (e.g. Mael & Ashforth, 2001), are more committed to the organization (e.g. Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), and consider themselves to be part of the organizational in-group (e.g. Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Finally, strong employee identifications also correlated with stronger relationships to the internal network (e.g. Hogg & Terry, 2000), loyalty to the organization and its
workforce (e.g. Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), an increase in positive feedback from upper management (e.g. Bullis & Bach, 1989b), and the desire to increase organizational belongingness (e.g. Mael & Ashforth, 2001). Collectively, these results point out the benefits of strong identification.

A comparatively smaller body of literature devoted to analyzing the various, and possibly conflicting, targets of employee identification has also surfaced over the past several years (e.g. Grice, Paulsen, & Jones, 2002; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Larson & Pepper, 2003). This line of research is interested in determining other targets, aside from the organization, that an employee can identify with, including one’s profession, one’s department, and one’s work team. This lack of attention is likely due to the underlying bias of approaching the systematic investigation of identification at the more macro, organizational level of analysis. What is largely lacking, therefore, is attention afforded to the study of more micro targets of identification. This less emphasized line of research attempts to discover the impact of employee identification not only with a macro target (the profession and the organization), but also with more micro targets (the department and the work team). Friedkin and Simpson’s (1985) study of school principals was among the early attempts that analyzed multiple targets of identification. Results from their study indicate that employees do identify with more micro subunits (e.g. their own schools), though this was mediated by the amount of resources provided by each micro and macro target. Barker and Tompkins (1994) found that employees are more likely to identify with a more local target (e.g. team) as compared to a more macro target (e.g. organization). Scott et al. (1999), in another study analyzing multiple targets of identification, propose four targets available for employee identification, including the
individual, the team/department, the organization, and the occupation. Data from their study indicate that identification with more micro-level targets (e.g. work group and agency) was more predictive of employees’ intention to leave their organization than were more macro-level targets, such as the organization or occupation. Foreman and Whetten (2002) found that when employees have several targets available with which to identify, they are likely to identify most strongly with the target that most characterizes their own identity through what they call “cognitive comparison” (p. 619). For example, to the extent that one sees himself/herself as a marketing expert, he/she will claim strongest identification with the department. Results of their study, similar to the studies previously mentioned, found that employees are more likely to identify with a more local target.

Based on the previous review of the identification literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Employees will have higher strengths of identification with their department and team as compared to the profession and organization.

Among the goals of the dissertation, aside from uncovering more about organizational identification or non-identification, is to determine how employees’ communication networks differ based on the strength of identification with one or more targets. Thus, it is important to determine if there is a relationship between the number (and strength) of identification targets for an employee and the nature of communication ties that employees have to other organizational members. The idea that there exists a link between strong identification with one or more organizational targets and one’s established communication network is warranted. However, this relationship has only
once been addressed using social network theory and methods and is a fruitful area for investigation. The only empirical study to date that has analyzed the relationship between communication networks and multiple targets of identification is the study by Kuhn and Nelson (2002), who found that the more central employees are within the communication network, the more likely it is that they will identify with all four prevalent targets (profession, organization, department, and work group) and identify strongly. Therefore, the driving force behind this dissertation is to determine whether there exists a link between organizational identification and employees’ communication networks. This dissertation extends the work conducted by Kuhn and Nelson (2002) in three important ways: one from a theoretical perspective, one from an empirical perspective, and one from a methodological perspective. First, this dissertation argues that there are two communication networks (social and task) that employees can socially create and that these two communication networks are likely to predict identification with one or more targets. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) only predicted that one’s task network would impact organizational phenomena. Second, this dissertation uses two measures of centrality (degree and eigenvector) as key measures when studying organizational communication networks. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) used degree centrality as the sole network measure. Finally, rather than using the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ), which has recently been questioned regarding its validity (see Miller, Allen, Casey, & Johnson, 2000), Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) scale for studying organizational identification is used. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) used Cheney’s (1982) OIQ instead of the scale constructed by Mael and Ashforth (1992).
From a pragmatic perspective, the benefits accruing from strong identification with one or more targets are advantageous for both the employee (increased self esteem, group membership, strong relationships) and the organization (increased commitment, increased organizational loyalty, and increased participation in decision making). Thus, despite the fact that identification can be viewed as a form of control, it can also be seen as something beneficial. It is important to note that organizational identification is a psychological construct that is created and manifested through communication. This idea is precisely what Burke (1955), and later Cheney and Tompkins (1987), define as the rhetoric of organizational identification. The study of organizational identification is as much about understanding how one’s identification is rhetorically and socially produced and reproduced as the impact of this identity. It is equally important to reiterate that although the study of organizational identification can focus on the antecedents, processes, and/or outcomes of this phenomenon, this dissertation addresses issues of antecedents (communication networks).

Since the study of identification is informed by the literature on identity, social identity theory provides a relevant theoretical framework for studying the link between organizational identification and communication networks. The basic tenets of social identity theory and its use in social science research are discussed next.

**Social Identity Theory**

In its most basic form, social identity theory proposes that individuals act in accordance with what other individuals within their social group(s) consider acceptable. As Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue, all social behavior is predicated on what similar others would do in similar situations under similar circumstances. According to these
scholars, “…the essential criteria for group membership, as they apply to large-scale social categories, are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 15). That is, not only do social beings have to see themselves as being part of a particular in-group, but that those part of the in-group must substantiate and legitimate one’s membership. The major contribution of this theory to the social science literature is that individuals begin to act in accordance with the expectations set forth by associated group members. As Tajfel and Turner (1986) explain, social behavior is a function of in-group norms. For example, individuals are likely to engage in behaviors and hold attitudes that similar others would deem appropriate, even if they, themselves, do not.

Although Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) original theory extended to all facets of social life, scholars subsequently began to limit the scope of analysis by studying more specific, micro contexts. Among these contexts is social identity within an organizational setting. As much research indicates, organizational members strive to create both personal and organizational identities (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000). In fact, among the major driving forces behind one’s desire to identify with an organization is the necessity to connect one’s individual identity with one’s socially shared identity (e.g. Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). It is important for employees to construct these two separate identities, though have them work in a mutually beneficial and rewarding way (e.g. Pratt & Foreman, 2000). This raises issues of multiple identities and how to manage them. According to social identity theory (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989), human beings come to define themselves in terms of the groups in which they are members. Based on the groups in which individuals
become a part, distinct social identities are constructed. Within the realm of organizations, social beings create a plethora of different identities, both individual and professional. These identities define an organizational member as being part of the in-group (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and also help to distinguish this individual from an out-group. Organizational members come to see themselves as part of a distinct “group” based on the social identities they create. These social identities allow for self reference (e.g. Scott & Lane, 2000) and social comparison (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989), whereby organizational members judge their goals, behaviors, and outcomes, against a comparative out-group. Organizational employees categorize themselves into in-groups, or what many scholars call self categorization theory (e.g. Hogg, 1992; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Hogg & Terry, 2000), in an effort to identify with an organization or a more local target. These categories become necessary during the process of organizational identification, insofar as they allow employees to produce, reproduce, construct, and reconstruct their identities (e.g. Hogg, 1992). Using this underlying logic, it is important to understand the targets of identification that employees identify with, why employees identify with these targets, and also how employees come to manage these (perhaps conflicting) identities.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), and salient for social identity theory and self categorization theory, (a) individuals strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity, (b) positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-group, and (c) when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct one or make their existing group somehow more
positively distinct (p. 16). Thus, individuals within organizations strive to identify with a salient, relevant, and rewarding in-group, ultimately creating a positive self-concept (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

As Ashforth and Mael (1989) point out, social identity theory also informs the study of multiple targets of identification. The organizational identification literature once focused solely on one’s identification with his/her organization. However, over the past several years scholars have become more interested in studying multiple targets of identification, such as organizational members’ identifications with work groups, lunch groups, project teams, external customers, departments, and extra-organizational groups (e.g. Russo, 1998). There now exists some scholarly literature devoted to analyzing the various, and possibly confounding, targets of identification that organizational members can adopt (e.g. Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Scott, 1997; Scott et al., 1999). For example, and similar to several of the underlying assumptions of social identity theory, individuals can identify with their organization, with their specific profession or job, with their department, and/or with a particular subgroup of the organization. Thus, individuals have various targets of identification available, ranging from the micro (a work group or subgroup of the organization) to the macro (the organization) level.

Social identity theory and its underlying propositions allow one to better understand the identities that employees can create within the organizational context and also how employees manage these various identities and identification targets. As Van Knippenberg (2000) argues, “identification leads individuals to perceive themselves in terms of the characteristics they share with other members of their in-groups – their shared social identity – rather than in terms of the idiosyncratic characteristics that
differentiate them from other individuals” (p. 358). According to social identity theory, individuals begin to identify with a certain in-group to construct a fulfilling and rewarding self-concept (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). To continue the previous discussion, when individuals identify with multiple targets, possibly even targets that are in direct conflict with one another, a state of cognitive dissonance is likely to occur. Ashforth and Mael (1989) refer to this phenomenon as role conflict. Pratt and Foreman (2000) address this issue, though they use the term identity plurality, and argue that there are four ways that organizational members can manage and negotiate between and among different and conflicting targets of identification: compartmentalization (retain all identifications, though create categories and rank them in terms of saliency), deletion (actually rid oneself of several confounding identifications), integration (combine several distinct identifications in an effort to create a newly formulated one), and aggregation (retain all identifications, though attempt to find links between and among them) (pp. 26-32). As Pratt and Foreman (2000) contend, most research on multiple targets of identification within organizations focuses on compartmentalization. It is important to note, however, that although organizational members might, and often do, have several targets of identification, steps can be taken to alleviate the risk that conflicting identities lead to cognitive dissonance (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Weick, 1995). This cognitive dissonance might occur, for example, when an employee claims strong identification with one’s department, but must engage in work practices that benefit the organization. At first glance, this seems paradoxical. This, in essence, is what Pratt and Foreman (2000) were interested in describing: how can employees claim strong identification with one target, while not allowing this
identification to negatively impact one’s dedication to, or association with, a more macro target?

Although identification with an organization might lead to uncertainty reduction (e.g. Grice, Paulsen, & Jones, 2002), sensemaking (e.g. Scott & Lane, 2000; Weick, 1995), and the development of role and behavioral expectations (e.g. Russo, 1998), the availability of multiple targets with which organizational members can identify makes the process of identification problematic and complex. In his overview of organizations in the “postmodern world,” Beck (2000) speaks about all of the possible identities that employees can construct in contemporary organizations. This dissertation is interested in four of these, including professional identity, organizational identity, departmental identity, and work team identity. Of importance is whether or not identifying strongly with one target negatively influences one’s identification with another target. For example, if one strongly identifies with one’s department (e.g. “I am part of the sales department”), does this necessarily mean that this will lessen one’s identification with one’s team (e.g. “I am part of the team working on a new marketing campaign for our organization’s newest product”)? Therefore, it is important to analyze the multiple targets of identification available for employees, to assess which targets individuals most strongly identify with (from the micro to macro levels of analysis), and to determine whether strongly identifying with one target leads to a decrease in identification with other targets. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) found that employees can strongly identify with all possible targets and this dissertation attempts to determine if those results again surface.
In sum, and to reiterate, social identity theory proposes that social action is predicated on the behaviors and attitudes of other employees considered part of one’s in-group. The overarching claim is that one’s decisions within the organizational realm will shadow others within one’s in-group, based primarily on the knowledge of group membership. Comparison with a comparable out-group provides a rationale for appropriate, acceptable behavior.

Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) social identity theory theoretically frames this dissertation because it can help explain the relationship between identification and communication networks. To the extent that an employee knows who is part of his/her in-group, social network theory is informed (e.g. how social others part of one’s network influence behavior and attitude formation) and organizational identification research is informed (e.g. how one’s strength of identification will be influenced by others in his/her in-group). The next section overviews the literature devoted to social networks to show the link between communication networks and organizational identification, and also to explore how social identity theory can help explain issues of organizational identification from a communication perspective.

*Communication Networks*

According to several network scholars (e.g. Burt, 2000; Kadushin, 2002; Kogut, 2000), and echoed in the research conducted by Gilchrist (2004), examining the nature and quality of communication, and the emergence and creation of social networks, is an insightful way of studying organizations. This is especially the case when one adopts the notion that networking is the necessary ingredient and prerequisite for organizing and the creation of organizations. Given the relationship between social interaction and
organization, it is interesting that network theory continues to be a ripe area of study within the sociology literature, but still somewhat marginal within the field of communication, despite recent attention (e.g. Doerfel & Barnett, 1999).

The study of social networks provides a way of representing and understanding the interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences. Jacob Moreno’s work in the 1930’s indicates that the individuals within one’s social network can influence one’s behavior through what later would be termed normative influence. One of the major conclusions from Moreno’s research is that networks can be analyzed through psychological, sociological, and anthropological lenses. Each field would no doubt have a different emphasis, but each could independently and fruitfully add to our understanding of how, why, where, and when networks emerge. From a sociological perspective, scholars interested in social network theory attempt to better understand how relationships among individuals create a sense of societal structure (e.g. Burt, 2000; Gulati, 1995a; Kogut, 2000). This structure evolves when communication occurs, and relationships form, between two or more social actors. Without the creation of such ties to other social beings, individuals within a given society would be totally disconnected from one another. And, as decades of research indicates, this is not the case. Society is not just a disconnected social space, but rather a socially constructed structural entity (e.g. Burt, 2000). This social structure emanates, at least in part, from one’s basic needs for belongingness, community, comfort, and support (e.g. Kadushin, 2002). Using this underlying logic, one can see the relationship between communication networks and identification. Employees have a need for belonging so they become embedded in
networks and employees have the need for support and community so they claim similar identifications as compared to their fellow network members.

However, it is not merely enough to say that a social structure exists, or even to pictorially represent how and why social actors are connected to others. It is more important to assess the impact that relationships with others might have on such things as behavior, attitudes, decision-making, and support. Research in the areas of sociology, organizational behavior, and management indicates, for example, that the more social cohesion that exists within a small network, the more likely it is that this small group of individuals will be committed to a particular task (e.g. Hartman & Johnson, 1989). Results from Wellman, Wong, Tindall, and Nazer’s (1997) research provides evidence that having ties to others within society results in mutual aid and support between and among network members. Research also indicates that having socially constructed relations with others in one’s organization increases both the extent and ease of knowledge acquisition (e.g. Cross, Parker, Prusak, & Borgatti, 2001). Having ties within and across an organization has also been found to help increase the likelihood of upward mobility (e.g. Podolny & Baron, 1997). Research indicates that those part of one’s social network influence whether or not employees are willing to leave their jobs (e.g. Montgomery, 1992) and that those part of one’s social network or one’s in-group are more likely to influence the adoption of technology and innovation within the organizational setting as compared to those in an out-group (e.g. Valente, 1996). Research also indicates that information and knowledge exchange between and among members of an in-group is much more effective and efficient as compared to information and knowledge exchange between an in-group and an out-group (e.g. Rindfleisch &
Moorman, 2001), that network ties to others provide both valuable resources and a sense
of social cohesion (e.g. Ashman, Brown, & Zwick, 1998), and that there is considerably
less conflict between and among employees part of the same social network as compared
to those not part of the same in-group (e.g. Nelson, 1989).

Research conducted in the area of organizational communication regarding
networks has emerged over the past several decades and results point to similar
conclusions when compared to sociological, organizational behavior, and management
data. For example Sagie, Krausz, and Weinstain (2001) conclude that those part of an
employees’ social network influence the extent to which one is willing to occupationally
relocate. Doerfel and Taylor (2004) found that organizations considered to be more
central among interorganizational networks are better able to influence civil society
movements. Reed, Heppard, and Corbett (2004) conclude that those part of one’s social
network provide resources that help entrepreneurs succeed during times of organizational
innovation and turmoil. Doerfel and Fitzgerald (2004) found that those part of the same
organizational networks are likely to have shared perceptions about their job roles and
job tasks. Kuhn and Corman (2003) conclude that actors in the same organizational
networks not only communicate about organizational change in similar ways, but also
create feelings of homogeneity among network members. Finally, Burkhardt and Brass
(1990) found that networks influence whether and to what extent employees come to
adopt and utilize technological implementations. The accumulation of findings might
ease Wellman’s (1983) fear that “the current state of network analysis probably is just a
waystation to more comprehensive structural formulations” (p. 179). Although this claim
was but 24 years ago, social network research helps explain how social structures
emerge, change, and develop, and also how those who comprise social structures influence organizational behaviors, decisions, actions, thoughts, attitudes, and feelings.

For purposes of the dissertation, social network theory will provide the necessary logic to better understand the impact of relationships between and among individuals within the organizational setting. Scholars have devoted several decades to analyzing both the process and effects of organizational social networks (see Monge & Contractor, 2000). The importance and utility of social networks as they relate to organizations can be traced to the influential thesis of Katz and Kahn (1966), who argue for a systems approach to the study of organizing. Among their main contentions is that organizations are entities comprised of employee relationships. According to Katz and Kahn (1966), organizations would not exist if not for the socially constructed ties among individuals. Organizations are nothing more than a web of social ties that connect organizational members to one another.

Much research has been sparked by this systems approach about both the process and impact of social networks on organizational practices (see Krackhardt, 1992; Monge & Contractor, 2000; Seibert, Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). Research indicates, for example, that members who are part of the same social network will engage in similar organizational behaviors and performance (e.g. Rulke & Galaskiewicz, 2000), mutually influence one another during decision-making (e.g. Tushman & Romanelli, 1983), socially influence one another during times of organizational ambiguity (e.g. Rice, 1993), and mutually influence one another during times of organizational change and turnover (e.g. Feeley & Barnett, 1997). Research also indicates that members part of the same network have similar attitudes concerning the introduction of new technology or
forms of communication (e.g. Rice & Aydin, 1991), share more information considered important for organizational processes (e.g. Hansen, 2002), are more likely to engage in mutually unethical behavior (e.g. Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998), and are more likely to advocate organizational change during post-downsizing reconfiguration (e.g. Susskind, Miller, & Johnson, 1998).

Taken together, these results provide evidence that individuals considered part of one’s communication network have the potential to influence which, in essence, takes Turner’s (1991) and Cialdini’s (1995) theories of social influence (both normative and informational) out of the psychology literature and places them into the field of organizational communication. According to Turner (1991), social influence can best be seen as “the process whereby people directly or indirectly influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others” (Turner, 1991, p. 1). Based on this idea and the previously mentioned results, those part of one’s social network come to influence such things as behavior and attitudes. In fact, this idea can be likened to a concept more formally known as homophily, which has received much attention within the sociology literature. According to this “birds of a feather” phenomenon, members of the same social network will likely hold similar attitudes and engage in similar behaviors merely because they are considered part of the same socially constructed web of relationships. According to Brass (1995), “similarity is thought to ease communication, increase predictability of behavior, and foster trust and reciprocity” (p. 51). Social influence and homophily are given a third cover term when Brass, Butterfield, and Skaggs (1998) talk about social contagion, which is the idea that social actors will hold attitudes and engage in behaviors that others part of one’s social network or in-group would approve of. Of importance, however, is not
merely that these links exist based on notions of homophily, but rather that there is a relationship between the nature of the link and the nature of the communication. In essence, what employees come to communicate about creates a certain sense of homophily and this communication comes to reify the similarities that employees within the same social network share with one another. Thus, it is not merely enough to study the existence of homophilous ties, but also how the nature of the communication between and among network members impacts, and is impacted by, feelings of similarity.

Wellman (1983) perhaps puts it best when he argues that “…people acquire norms, as they do other pieces of information, through their ties structured in social networks” (p. 165), which is analogous to the argument that those part of one’s in-group influence behaviors, thoughts, attitudes, actions, and feelings.

This research on social contagion shows that (a) one’s communication network is a result of emergent processes and (b) homophily is both an antecedent and consequence of one’s social network. One’s social network is also considered “emergent” because oftentimes within the organizational setting it is not necessarily what you know, but who you know, that is of utmost importance. The idea of embedding oneself in an organizational social network rests on the assumption that others possess certain resources (oftentimes considered limited), such as knowledge or mere access to others. These resources are important for one reason or another and obtaining them might be the difference between success and failure, communicatively and organizationally speaking. Research indicates, for example, that one’s social network can provide such advantages as trust (e.g. Krackhardt, 1992), joint problem-solving techniques (e.g. Uzzi, 1996), social information (e.g. Rice & Aydin, 1991), support (e.g. Feeley, 2000), and
organizational knowledge (e.g. Hansen, 2002). Although all of these advantages are important, most scholars argue that information and knowledge sharing is the major resource that results from emergent network positioning (see Monge & Eisenberg, 1987).

The idea that homophily is both an antecedent to, and a consequence of, one’s social network is equally important to understanding organizational communication. This notion argues that employees seek out similar others prior to becoming embedded within a network. According to McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001), and which is considered an outgrowth of research conducted by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954), employees might choose network membership based on either status homophily (e.g. job title, education, social status, race, age, gender, ethnicity), value homophily (e.g. attitudes, values, beliefs), or a combination of both. In either case, from an organizational communication perspective, employees become a member of a particular social network when there exists either status homophily, value homophily, or both. Homophily, however, is also a consequence of one’s social network. That is, not only do employees purposefully expose themselves to similar others in their social network, but, once socially connected to others, these employees begin to collectively adopt similar values, attitudes, and beliefs. This is where the pivotal claims of social network theory come into play for the dissertation. The thesis embedded throughout is that one’s communication network influences, based on the ideas of homophily, whether and to what extent an employee identifies with one or more targets of identification. In the end, research indicates that the members considered part of one’s social network are very influential role models and are likely to influence one’s behavioral, attitudinal, and thought processes (e.g. Dutta & Jackson, 2003). This is supported by the previously mentioned
studies, as well as McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook’s (2001) conclusion that once formed, individuals within a given social network will likely engage in behavioral, attitudinal, and aspirational convergence. Employees create social networks with those considered similar to them and, subsequently, behaviors and attitudes are reflective of membership in a particular social network.

In sum, the underlying principles of homophily are important for scholars studying communication within organizations from a social network perspective. Research related to this phenomenon provides plausible explanations for social networks and offers an explanation of how these combine to create a more observable, objective, reified entity. Attempting to link this phenomenon back to the initial impetus for this dissertation, the study of communication networks, using ideas of social influence and homophily, and the study of identification, share some commonalities. For example, identification and homophily can be viewed as both beneficial and disadvantageous (enabling and constraining). Identification provides employees with a certain sense of identity (enabling factors), but this very identity might pigeonhole employees and make it more difficult to accept the realities of what Burns and Stalker (1968) would call an organic system/environment (constraining factors). Burns and Stalker (1968) argue that organizations placing much emphasis on things such as change, the creation of interdepartmental relationships, lateral forms of communication, and the salience of social networks adhere to the idea of organizations as organic (pp. 119-125). The creation of a particular identity might become constraining for individuals as they attempt to deal with the changes and uncertainties that accompany life in this type of “organic” institution. Similarly, the principle elements of the homophily phenomenon explain why
certain social networks are close-knit and how members of a tight-knit social network mutually influence one another (enabling factors), and how dissimilar others are barred from inclusion and distinct in-group/out-group networks are constructed (constraining factors). Thus, it is apparent that commonalities exist between identification and social networks (considered via the principle of homophily). Put in another way, there exists an interdependent relationship between identification and social networks as a result of homophilous ties. Based on this, the following hypotheses are posed:

H2: Employees from the same department will have similar levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team.

H3: Gender, organizational tenure, language, and departmental membership are homophilous variables that come to influence strength of identification with one or more organizational targets.

In addition to homophily, it is also important to study organizational communication networks from what Raider and Krackhardt (2001) call a structural approach: analyzing “…the position or location of an actor in its social network” (p. 59). Studying communication networks from this structural approach allows one to determine the possible effect(s) of not only being connected to the most social actors in a given network, but also being connected to the “right” social actors. This structural approach emanates from Freeman’s (1979) and Tichy, Tushman, and Fombrum’s (1979) ideas of centrality in social networks. According to the idea of network centrality, certain social actors, because of their position in a given network (relative to all other actors), have certain benefits, including increased power (Ibarra, 1993), increased ability to influence other network members (Everett & Borgatti, 2005), increased participation during
knowledge management (Borgatti & Foster, 2003), an increased likelihood of filling structural holes (Kadushin, 2002), and increased social capital (Burt, 2000). According to Freeman (1979), to the extent that an actor in a social network has high degree centrality (a social actors’ access to the greatest number of social actors in a network relative to all others), high betweenness centrality (a social actors’ ability to connect otherwise disconnected actors together), and high closeness centrality (a social actors’ ability to reach all other social actors in a network with the fewest number of steps relative to all others), it is likely that this individual will be in a structurally advantageous position.

Several network scholars over the years have discussed the different types of centrality measures available for studying social networks, and also how the nature of the phenomenon under examination determines which centrality measure is most appropriate (Faust, 1997; Rothenberg et al., 1995; Stephenson & Zelen, 1989). The majority of network studies, as Rothenberg et al (1995) and Faust (1997) point out, will find a relatively high, positive correlation among all centrality measures. However, certain measures are better suited depending on such things as the accumulated data, the hypotheses and/or research questions, and the variables themselves (see, for example, Borgatti, 2005). As Costenbader and Valente (2003) explain, the four most common centrality measures in social network research are degree, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector. *Degree centrality*, according to Knoke and Burt (1983), is the extent to which social actors in a network are well-connected to all others. The more degree centrality one has within a network, the more ties to all other network members one has. This type of centrality measure is best for studying issues such as social influence, persuasion, and information acquisition (see Feeley, 2000; Rice, 1993). *Betweenness
centrality, according to Freeman (1979), is a measure of the extent to which a social actor has the ability, because of his/her position within a network, to connect otherwise disconnected individuals together. The more social actors that one can connect together, the higher his/her betweenness centrality score is. This type of centrality measure is best for studying issues such as structural holes and social capital (see Ahuja, 2000; Burt, 2004). Closeness centrality, based on Friedkin’s (1991) discussion, is a measure of how short one’s paths are to all other social actors in the network. Those social actors who can reach all others in the network in the shortest possible paths have high closeness centrality. This type of centrality measure is best for studying issues such as information efficiency and affiliation networks (see Faust, 1997; Louch, 2000). Eigenvector centrality, according to Bonacich (2007), is a measure of whether or not social actors themselves are connected to other social actors with high degree, betweenness, and closeness centralities. Those with high eigenvector centrality are connected to those who are central within a given network. This type of centrality measure, similar to degree centrality, is best for studying issues of social influence and persuasion (see Bonacich, 2007; Borgatti, 2005).

Since this dissertation examines the relationship between communication networks and employee identification with one or more organizational targets, which evokes the idea of social influence, both degree centrality and eigenvector centralities were used, as they are the measures most suited for this study.

Based on these centrality measures, it is important to investigate how one’s position within the larger organizational networks (both social and task) might influence one’s strength of identification with one or more organizational targets. The only study
that has empirically investigated identification using centrality measures was Kuhn and Nelson (2002) who found that those employees who had more degree centrality identified relatively strongly with all four targets: one’s profession, one’s organization, one’s division, and one’s workgroup. Given the focus on social influence, this dissertation predicts that degree and eigenvector centrality might influence strengths of identification with one or more organizational targets. Therefore, based on the discussion of homophily, as well as centrality, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: Employees will have similar levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those part of their social network.

H4b: Employees will have similar levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those part of their task network.

H5: Those part of one’s social network will influence levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team more than one’s task network.

H6: Employees with high degree centrality in both social and task networks will be more strongly identified with the profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those with low degree centrality.

H7: Employees with high eigenvector centrality in both social and task networks will be more strongly identified with the profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those with low degree centrality.

This dissertation involves understanding the link between identifying with one’s organization and/or a more micro sector of an institution (department, team) and communication networks. Social network theory can increase our understanding of the study of organizational identification, just as previous studies indicate (Bullis & Bach,
As argued earlier, it is likely that one’s network affiliation influences identity and identification. However, since minimal research to date has empirically examined this issue, there exists scarce scholarly literature available to support this notion. The purpose of this dissertation is to bridge this gap by examining existing social network theory in conjunction with existing organizational identification theory to determine whether, how, and to what extent these two areas mutually inform one another. By examining issues of identification as related to communication networks, the relationship, or lack thereof, between these two streams of research can be realized.

 Organizational Identification and Communication Networks

This dissertation attempts to advance organizational communication research by examining the potential relationship between communication networks and multiple targets of organizational identification. The goal is to help elucidate whether and how one’s communication networks affect both the strength and targets of organizational identification. Adding additional credence to Borgatti and Foster’s (2003) claim that much of social network research attempts to analyze the consequences of relationships and network structures, this study is geared primarily toward identifying the impact (or consequence) of one’s socially constructed networks on strength of identification with one or more organizational targets. Communication is the overarching tie that binds these two literatures together. Without communication, neither network formation, nor organizational identification, would be possible. Although three attempts to date have examined this link and have found empirical support for the relationship between identification and communication networks (Bullis & Bach, 1991; Corman, 1990; Kuhn
& Nelson, 2002), only one study to date has examined how multiple targets of identification of employees might be impacted by those considered part of one’s social network (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002). This exception, however, as mentioned previously, has theoretical, empirical, and methodological differences as compared to this dissertation.

Another impetus for the current dissertation relates to Borgatti and Foster’s (2003) claim that social network scholars must “…show that network variables have consequences for important outcome variables that traditional fields already care about” (p. 1000). As Borgatti and Foster (2003) point out, the majority of social network research is about the consequences of networks: not why or how we join networks, but rather the implications of network membership. Based on these two arguments, among the purposes of this dissertation is to see how identification is impacted by one’s communication network(s) and how social influence is at the heart of organizational identification. The main purpose is to illustrate the consequences of socially constructed relationships and how these relationships come to influence employees’ identification with one or more organizational targets.

Social science research has long proposed that social actors look to others for acceptance and confirmation when engaging in behaviors or holding attitudes. Even a cursory review of the documented psychology and communication literatures will support the notion that models of social influence are well established and well supported. These models attempt to explain how, why, when, and to what extent social beings turn to others for substantiation when adopting attitudes and/or engaging in behaviors. Social influence theories such as Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning theory, Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, and Ajzen’s (1988) Theory of Planned Behavior all
claim that those individuals with whom one shares an interpersonal relationship with are the most salient predictors of attitude formation and behavior: one will engage in behaviors or hold attitudes that salient others would concur with. From this perspective, it is seemingly fundamental to apply network theory to social influence theory, as the two are mutually informing of one another. In essence, Bandura (1977), Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), and Ajzen (1988) were theorizing about the influence of social networks on attitude formation and behavioral decisions, but were using psychology, not network, terminology.

The fundamental question underling the empirical investigation within any area of inquiry is “why.” A great number of social network scholars working in the area of organizational communication have attempted to shed light on this “why should we study organizational social networks” question and have provided some interesting answers. For example, Kuhn (2002) points out that studying social networks can increase our understanding of how and why social others come to socially construct and utilize communities of practice when engaging in such things as organizational decision-making, organizational argumentation, information-sharing, and information gathering. Furthermore, Kuhn and Corman (2003) contend that studying social networks can help explain how and why social others are so instrumental before, during, and after organizational change and development. Rice and Aydin (1991) provide convincing data to support the claim that studying organizational social networks can help explain why certain employees are more willing to support, help implement, and utilize new organizational communication technologies. Contractor and Monge (2002) support the notion that studying social networks can help explain how, why, and when organizational
employees engage in the process of knowledge management. Monge and Contractor (2001) argue that studying social networks can better explain how employees earn and gain trust, how and why employees seek and provide social support, and how and why employees receive and disseminate organizational information. Flanagin, Stohl, and Bimber (2006) claim that social networks emerge based on both the need for, and as a result of, collective action on behalf of an organization’s employee base. Finally, Feeley and Barnett (1997) provide evidence that studying social networks increases our understanding of why certain employees are more likely and willing to leave their organizations in search of new occupational opportunities. All of these aforementioned scholars conduct research from a communication perspective. They not only view communication as the vehicle that produces social networks, but also view communication as an effect of one’s social network as well: communication is the process of network building, but also the product of network membership.

Communication scholars studying social networks attempt to better understand how those part of one’s network come to influence the actions, attitudes, behaviors, thought patterns, and decisions of social actors, mainly from a social influence paradigm.

This dissertation attempts to study, from one angle, social influence. Since it does examine social influence, social network theory is the underlying framework that guides this analysis. Social network theory is about discovering the patterns of social interaction between and among individuals, and is also about determining how those individuals with whom one communicates influence such things as attitudes, feelings, personalities, likes, dislikes, behaviors, and habits, to name a few. Keeping in line with the foregoing argument, this dissertation attempts to bridge social network research with social
influence research to determine whether and how social others within one’s organization come to influence both targets and levels of identification: yet another example of how the individuals part of one’s social web can become a source of influence. A great number of studies have attempted to link social network theory and social influence theory together. For example, McDonald and Westphal (2003) found that chief executive officers take advice from, and are socially influenced by, those considered part of their friendship network when making organization-wide decisions. Lincoln and Miller (1979) found that those part of one’s social network influence not only the process of decision-making, but also on-the-job behaviors. Gulati (1995b) found that organizations are not only more likely to have contacts based on similarities and interdependence, but also that once connected, organizations begin to mutually influence one another. Monge, Rothman, Eisenberg, Miller, and Kirste (1985) found that those part of one’s social network influence patterns of communication within the confines of an organization. Krackhardt and Porter (1985) found that those considered part of one’s social network influence one’s satisfaction with the organization. Hartman and Johnson (1989) found that one’s social network comes to influence one’s commitment to his/her organization. Cross, Parker, Prusak, and Borgatti (2001) found that employees oftentimes look to those part of their social network to determine whether or not to share accumulated knowledge with other organizational constituents.

Ahuja (2000) found that although indirect ties to social others within a network provide the opportunity for information acquisition, employees are most influenced when it comes to decision-making and behaviors by those employees one is directly connected to. Burkhardt and Brass (1990) found that those considered part of one’s social network
have the power to influence employees to adopt new, organization-wide technologies that change both the structure and functioning of the organization. Danowski (1980) found an increase in homogeneity of behaviors among employees from the same network in times when task uncertainty is great. Podolny and Baron (1997) found that those part of one’s social network influence upward advancement within the organizational hierarchy. Rice and Aydin (1991) found that others within one’s social network influence attitudes concerning the introduction, diffusion, and utilization of a new technology within the organizational setting. Finally, Krackhardt and Stern (1988) found that those considered part of one’s social network influence whether and how employees come to deal with organizational crises. Each of these studies attempted to determine how those considered part of one’s organizational social network come to influence the attitudes and behaviors of network members.

This dissertation attempts to determine whether and to what extent employees’ communication network(s) come to influence identification with targets other than just the organization (e.g. occupation, department, and team). This central argument rests on the assumptions of contagion theory and homophily theory. Contagion theory, according to Monge and Contractor (2003), rests on the idea that:

Opportunities for contact provided by communication networks serve as a mechanism that exposes people, groups, and organizations to information, attitudinal messages, and the behavior of others…[and] this exposure increases the likelihood that network members will develop beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes that are similar to those of others in their network. (pp. 173-174)
Above all, this theory argues that one’s attitudes and behaviors are most affected by those social actors with whom one has a direct communication link. As Monge and Contractor (2003) point out, much research has been directed at studying the impact of one’s social network on such factors as employees’ workplace attitudes (e.g. satisfaction, commitment), attitudes toward new technologies (e.g. whether or not to adopt a new organization-wide intranet system), and organizational behaviors (e.g. absenteeism, conflict engagement, ethics). This study attempts to determine whether one’s communication networks influence one’s workplace attitudes, manifested in the form of organizational identification.

The second, homophily theory, rests on the assumption that not only do people oftentimes flock to those similar to them but, as a result of communication, those part of the same network(s) actually become similar to one another. Homophily is not only a cause for, but an effect of, social network membership. According to this line of thinking, people feel at ease when communicating with others who are similar to them in terms of such characteristics as age, gender, interests, personality, education, social class, occupation, and family. As Monge and Contractor (2003) explain, the likelihood that employees’ communication habits, behaviors, and attitudes will be similar is exponentially increased to the extent that social actors share certain attributes in common. Applying this back to the current dissertation, not only is it likely that communication networks will be comprised of individuals who share certain attributes in common (e.g. department), but also that workplace attitudes (e.g. organizational identification) will be reflective of these social others. In other words, it is likely that those in the same
communication networks will have similar identification targets and levels of
identification to the extent that they share certain attributes in common.

Both of these theories, contagion and homophily, are grounded in the idea of
embeddedness, which is a key term that helps describe how one’s behaviors and actions
are, at least in part, shaped by other social actors within one’s social network. Perhaps
one of the best explanations of embeddedness comes from Granovetter (1985) when he
argues that “…[embeddedness is] the argument that the behavior and institutions to be
analyzed are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to construe them as
independent is a grievous misunderstanding” (p. 482). According to Granovetter (1985),
so much of our lives is built around our social relationships and so much of our behavior
is dictated by those with whom we share social relationships, that it is disadvantageous to
study relationships as separate from behavior. One must study how behaviors are
impacted by relationships and take Burt’s (1976) advice to consider all social actors to be
“…nested in a cacophony of relations with other actors in society” (p. 93). That is, all
social beings are embedded in a series of (perhaps conflicting) social networks, all of
which are attempting to influence the attitudes and behaviors of members. According to
Granovetter (1985), the network(s) that one becomes a part of are both enabling and
constraining. They are enabling insofar as they give social actors access to things like
information, support, and advice, though are constraining because attitudes and behaviors
need to reflect the networks in which one is embedded.

Relating this back to the study of organizational identification and its link to
communication networks, one’s networks provide information about targets of
identification and perhaps even behavioral norms given the strength of identification
(enabling factors), though, at the same time, might prohibit any anti-normative behavior that might go against these norms (a constraining factor). Grabher (1993) explains these enabling and constraining factors in more detail by explaining that embeddedness may lead to such things as social support and acceptable social behavior, but can also limit (or even eliminate) unique behaviors and attitudes on behalf of social actors. According to this argument, networks help to shape employees by providing information regarding normative behavior, but may also limit things like creativity and individual volition. Embeddedness can be both enabling and constraining or, as Granovetter (1985) puts it, “undersocializ[ing]” and “oversocializ[ing]” (p. 483).

Among the overarching goals of any empirical investigation is to add to an already accumulated body of knowledge in a particular area or domain of interest. It is important to find holes in current research and to fill these voids with new data, new theories, and/or new perspectives. One of the main goals of Monge and Contractor’s (2003) analysis of social network research and theory, other than showing how the study of social networks has evolved over the past several decades, is to acknowledge several of the weaknesses inherent in this body of literature. Two of these weaknesses seem relevant for this dissertation. First, Monge and Contractor (2003) argue that very few empirical network studies have had solid theoretical frameworks providing the impetus for investigation, which ultimately “…contributes to our knowledge of communication networks, but not nearly to the extent that most would like” (p. xii). As such, social network scholars need to use more theories that provide the framework(s) necessary for empirical investigation. Second, and equally informing, is Monge and Contractor’s (2003) claim that oftentimes network studies focus at a “single level of analysis,” as
opposed to “multiple levels of analysis,” suggesting that social actors not only influence, and are influenced by, formal structures or networks, but also those that would be considered more emergent (e.g. social groups, cliques). Based on this idea, social network scholars not only need to understand that social beings act in a social world that is rife with networks and those part of each of these networks influence (to a greater or lesser degree) the attitudes, actions, thoughts, and behaviors of ego, but also must better understand how each of these types of networks might provide these influences. This dissertation attempts to resolve these two issues by using a well-established theory (social identity theory) to examine network phenomena and by studying not only formal, but also informal and emergent, structures.

When studying communication from a network perspective, it is important to keep in mind Monge and Contractor’s (2000) notion that “communication networks are the patterns of contact between communication partners that are created by transmitting and exchanging messages through time and space” (p. 440). That is, communication within an organizational setting results in links or ties, manifested in relationships, that employees seek for informational, associational, attitudinal, and behavioral reasons. For purposes of this dissertation, networks are viewed as a collection of individuals, for both social and task reasons, which come to influence employees’ attitudes, behaviors, and communication practices, what Monge and Contractor (2000) refer to as “behavior through contagion” (p. 468). To rehash the “where is the communication in organizational communication research” query posed by several of the early organizational communication scholars, relationships with others create certain social structures and, in turn, these social structures come to influence the social lives of those
considered part of them. Using the network ideas of homophily and embeddedness, this dissertation argues that organizational identification is influenced, at least in part, by employees considered to be in the same social and/or task structures.

How do the key assumptions from a communication network paradigm inform the study of organizational communication and organizational identification? Emotional feelings of belongingness, manifested in one’s identification with one or more organizational targets, allow one to see communication networks as a way of understanding relationships. That is, the social and behavioral decisions that employees make are influenced, at least in part, by those social actors within their communication networks and, in turn, these communication networks come to influence, at least in part, which targets one identifies with most strongly.

This dissertation is an attempt to (a) use social identity theory to better understand how one’s strength of identification with one or more organizational targets might be impacted by one’s communication networks and (b) study formal (e.g. team, department, organization) and also emergent (e.g. lunch group, social clique) networks.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The Organizational Site

The organizational site for the purpose of the current dissertation is a company involved in making footwear and foot care products that are sold to medical facilities, trained professionals, and retailers. The organization’s major goals are to (1) create, brand, and distribute performance products that are technologically advanced, (2) create, brand, and distribute footwear that is therapeutically sound, and (3) educate and train professional orthotists and pedorthists about the organization’s product line.

The organization, “FootWorld,” employs approximately 125 individuals and consists of 10 major departments, including production, technology, shipping, sales, marketing, operations, purchasing, accounting, customer service, and administration. Each of these different departments is responsible for a different aspect of the organization’s processing and is almost a textbook example of an organization characterized by the major principles of general systems theory. That is, each distinct department relies on all other departments for the successful manufacturing and distribution of a high quality line of foot care products.

The organizational hierarchy consists of four structural levels: upper management, middle-management, the general employee base, and the production staff. Upper management consists of four individuals who are collectively responsible for much of the decision-making and they each oversee the middle managers in charge of product creation, product marketing, product manufacturing, product sales, and product training. Middle management is responsible for the motivation, performance, and success of the
employee base and to make certain that employees are working adequately based on their roles within the organization.

Next is the general employee base comprised of employees from the technology, sales, marketing, operations, purchasing, accounting, customer service, and administration departments, and who are primarily responsible for such things as product creation, product development, product marketing, and product sales. Finally there are the production and shipping staffs who, while still an integral part of FootWorld’s success, are at the lowest rung of the organizational hierarchy. All of the employees in the production and shipping departments are from the Spanish-speaking population and, therefore, received a version of the survey that was translated from English into Spanish. This type of organization is extremely conducive for a study of multiple targets of organizational identification because, as Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) point out, there will likely be differences in both the existence and degree of identification in an organization that is multi-faceted, multi-layered, and multi-structured.

Since FootWorld sells its foot care products to professional dealers, medical facilities, and trained pedorthists and orthotists, much of the inter-organizational communication occurs with these stakeholders. For example, the sales department and the marketing department constantly communicate with these professionals in an effort to push their foot products. However, despite the importance of studying external, inter-organizational communication, this study focuses on the communication that occurs between and among internal employees and how this communication, in turn, affects identification and communication networks.
Based on informal conversations with upper management, FootWorld employees are most likely to communicate (for task-related reasons) with others based on their formal department and their involvement in intraorganizational teams. Although there are both intradepartmental and interdepartmental teams at FootWorld, the majority of teams are comprised of employees from different departments throughout the organization and, therefore, are considered interdepartmental. These teams are created based on certain organizational needs, such as product development, the creation of new marketing campaigns, and new technological advancements and, these teams are oftentimes dictated or formally constructed, rather than voluntary or self-selecting. Based on preliminary interviews with upper-level managers, teamwork is a necessary (and routine) part of work practices at FootWorld, and these teams are both cross-sectional (employees from different departments) and disbanding (once the team completes its task, the team dissipates). To follow is a prime example of a work team created at FootWorld. Several years ago the organization developed a technological device that aided medical professionals in determining the proper footwear that patients should have. This technology is a way of gauging such things as foot size, pressure points, foot arches, foot types, and foot abnormalities so that medical patients are given a shoe, sneaker, or orthotic that is custom-made for their foot structure. However, the creation, marketing, and sale of this product required that a large, cross-sectional work team be created. As such, this work team, comprised of nearly 20 employees from three departments (technology, marketing, and sales) worked together for months determining not only how to create this technological device, but also how to market and sell this product to the
end-user (medical professionals). Once this project was finished, this team disbanded and, according to informal interviews, has not worked together since.

Other informal, preliminary interviews with upper managers informed me about (a) the formal hierarchy of the organization, (b) how work seems to get done within the organizational setting, and (c) the social groups that seemed to emerge over the past several years. Based on preliminary interviews it seemed as though the organization pays close attention to the formal hierarchy, employee communication is based on both one’s position within the organizational hierarchy and one’s emergent relationships, and social groups emerge based on factors such as department, age, and gender. From a communication perspective, it also seemed as though communication networks are created at FootWorld based on both formal roles and emergent relationships. Finally, and which provided the impetus to pose the fifth hypothesis (those part of one’s social network will influence levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team more than one’s task network), informal interviews revealed that employees are more likely to be socially influenced by their social (as opposed to task) network because interaction in these networks is more common, more frequent, more stable, and more enduring. Thus, although Monge and Contractor (2001) explain the differences between formal and informal networks, data from informal interviews also revealed that there is likely to be a difference between task and social networks: members in the latter likely being more influential than members in the former. All of the information gathered during preliminary interviews helped with the creation of questionnaire items and also allowed certain key organizational issues and concepts to emerge as significant for employees of FootWorld. In short, although there are structural
aspects like an organizational chart and hierarchical roles within the formal structure of
the organization, the daily, ongoing activities and communication do not happen solely
along formal lines (e.g. department, work team), but also along informal lines (task and
social networks), at least based on preliminary interviews.

It is extremely important, however, to consider the informal conversations with
upper management regarding communication practices with caution. The reason for this
cautions, especially according to Krackhardt and Hanson (1993), is because oftentimes
managers are not cognizant of who communicates with whom. According to these
scholars:

Managers often pride themselves on understanding how [networks] operate. They
will readily tell you who confers on technical matters and who discusses politics
over lunch. What’s startling is how often they are wrong. Although they may be
able to diagram accurately the social links of the five or six people closest to
them, their assumptions about employees outside their immediate circles are
usually off the mark. Even the most psychologically shrewd managers lack
critical information about how employees spend their days and how they feel
about their peers. Managers simply can’t be everywhere at once, nor can they read
people’s minds. So they’re left to draw conclusions based on superficial
observations, without the tools to test their perceptions. (p. 104)

Although individuals in upper management positions at FootWorld argued that, for the
most part, employees communicate within departments for task reasons, within and
between departments for social reasons, and are likely to be more influenced by those
part of their social (as opposed to task) network, it is important to take Krackhardt and
Hanson’s (1993) advice and question the true extent to which management knows the network configuration(s) within their own organization.

Survey Instrument

In an effort to examine organizational identification and organizational communication networks, a survey instrument was administered to the employees of FootWorld. Previous research indicates that although qualitative interviews and focus groups are a useful way of uncovering issues related to organizational identification (e.g. Cheney, 1983; Larson & Pepper, 2003; Russo, 1998), the dominant methodology for studying this phenomenon remains survey design (e.g. Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004). Through the use of survey-based research, information relating to whether and to what extent one identifies with the organization (or a more micro target) emerged. Furthermore, the use of surveys has been, and continues to be, the dominant method for obtaining social network data, whether those data are self-report, behavioral, or a combination of both (e.g. Doerfel & Taylor, 2004; Feeley & Barnett, 1997; Podolny & Baron, 1997). Social network analysis, via survey, allows the researcher to determine the nature of perceived relationships between and among employees and also how these relationships impact, and are impacted by, patterns of human communication.

Regarding the use of survey design to study organizational identification, there currently exists the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ), which was originally created by Cheney (1983) as an adaptation of Patchen’s (1970) initial attempt to study this phenomenon. Over the past two decades, the OIQ has been revised and revamped by scholars (e.g. Mael & Ashforth, 1991, and Potvin, 1992), mainly regarding
the verbiage used within the survey, though all versions are similar in both form and scope to Cheney’s (1983) original questionnaire. The OIQ has received high reliability alphas in the past, including coefficients of 0.96 (Potvin, 1992), 0.95 (Bullis & Bach, 1989a), 0.94 (Cheney, 1983), 0.94 (Sass & Canary, 1991), 0.92 (Russo, 1998), 0.89 (Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004), and 0.84 (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001), and therefore is a scale that has a high level of consistency. However, as Miller, Allen, Casey, and Johnson (2000) assert, although the reliability of the OIQ has yielded relatively high percentages, issues of validity are questioned. The results of their analysis indicate that (a) only 12 of the 25 items that tap into organizational identification significantly measure issues of identification and (b) of the 12 total items that do seem to measure identification, all seem to be studying issues of affective organizational commitment. Miller et al. (2000) conclude that rather than tapping into issues of organizational identification, the OIQ actually measures such variables as organizational commitment and job involvement. Due to the validity issues presented by Cheney’s (1982) Organizational Identification Questionnaire, identification is measured using Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) scale, which has not been similarly problematic in terms of instrument validity (Miller et al., 2000) (see Appendix B). The scale created by Mael and Ashforth (1992) has also received high reliability alphas, including coefficients of 0.91 (Bartels, Douwes, De Jong, & Pruyn, 2006), 0.90 (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002), 0.90 (Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong, & Joustra, 2007), 0.86 (Wisenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999). The reliability alpha of the scale for this dissertation was 0.89.

Regarding the use of a questionnaire to analyze social networks, a debate within the scholarly literature is whether or not there exists a correlation between self-report data
and actual, observed behavior (e.g. Bernard, Killworth, & Sailer, 1982; Corman & Bradford, 1993; Diesner & Carley, 2005). In other words, is obtaining information based on self-report concerning who one communicates with a valid method for obtaining social network data? There seem to be certain contradictions and inconsistencies within the scholarly literature. Although much scholarship explains the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical differences between these two phenomena, Bernard and Killworth (1977) equate “perceived” links with cognition and “actual” links with behavior. Perceived links assess with whom (and the extent to which) a social actor claims to communicate, whereas actual/behavior links assess with whom (and the extent to which) a social actor actually communicates. The major difference between these two approaches is that the former relies on self-report data, whereas the latter utilizes a two-stage snowball method by having others substantiate the social network patterns (e.g. Corman & Bradford, 1993). According to Bernard and Killworth (1977), therefore, one cannot necessarily equate perceptual data with behavioral data: although there might be a high correlation between the two, who one claims to communicate with and who one actually communicates with are not necessarily the same (and rarely are).

Nearly 30 years ago Killworth and Bernard (1976) posed an interesting question: although self-report data is both theoretically and methodologically sound, can the link between actual behavior and social networks be ascertained from perceived data? Although several scholars have since shed some additional light on this issue (e.g. Corman & Bradford, 1993; Corman & Scott, 1994; Marsden, 1990), a concrete answer to this inquiry has yet to surface. One interesting finding from Marsden (1990) is that despite the empirical skepticism about the link between actual and observed
communication links, the correlation between self-report or recall data and scientific observation(s) on behalf of the researcher is strikingly high (in most cases an average positive correlation of 0.8). Despite the obvious pessimism related to this issue, and based on the continued popularity of obtaining social network data via the use of self-report questionnaires based on perceived communication, it seems as though perhaps assumptions can be made about actual behavior within communication networks by examining self-report, perceived data.

An additional element that has received little attention over the years is whether or not there exists an important difference between perceived and actual communication links. There is an empirical difference between these two data collection techniques (Krackhardt, 1990; Marsden, 1990). Further, some suggest it might be as important (if not more important) to study who one thinks he/she communicates with or has connections to, rather than who one actually communicates with. Marsden’s (1990) analysis pertaining to issues involving network data and network measurement points to the fact that self-report data, which assess perceived or cognitive links, might be as salient, if not more salient, than studying actual communication links. Similarly, Corman (1990) and Corman and Scott (1994) argued that relational perceptions (who employees think they have relationships with) are most important in order to understand patterns of communication within organizations. Furthermore, the final results from Killworth and Bernard’s (1976) analysis indicate a possible disconnect between social actors’ cognitive and behavioral links, insofar as “people simply do not know…with whom they communicate” (p. 283). Killworth and Bernard’s (1976) main conclusion, therefore, is that cognitive or perceived links offer much information about the structure of one’s
social network. The choice of method for this dissertation is influenced by the advice offered by Marsden (1990), which is essentially to use self-report data to better understand communication habits among organizational employees, but to be wary when discussing the implications of the social network analysis, as the data reflect assumed or perceived, rather than actual or observed, linkages.

Another claim that adds credence to the use of self-report data comes mainly from the social psychology literature and poses a seemingly fundamental question: does it really matter whether or not there exists a disconnect between one’s perceived social network and one’s actual social network? In other words, is it not likely that one’s established organizational identity and/or organizational communication behavior will be based on the social network that one thinks he/she is a member of? One of Marsden’s (1990) underlying arguments is that it might be even more important to assess and analyze who social actors perceive are part and parcel of their social networks, for these “cognitive” networks are ultimately the driving forces behind organizational communication practices, organizational identification, and organizational attachment. For organizational researchers, then, this entire line of arguments might be moot: perceptions of communication partners are what truly matter from an organizational communication perspective. Therefore, by reframing the importance of understanding perceived social network affiliation and how perceptions might be as salient (if not more salient) than actual social ties, the use of self-report data will be used for purposes of this dissertation.

Yet another piece of evidence that supports the use of self-report data for obtaining social network ties is that, as Marsden (1990) argues, “…people are incapable
of reporting accurately on transactions that take place within highly specific time frames, but are able to recall and report their typical social relations” (p. 447). In other words, whereas social actors might not be able to offer specific, micro-examples of communication episodes with other social actors, they can, with a great degree of certainty and accuracy, name those social actors considered part of their overall communication network(s). Furthermore, according to several scholars (e.g. Hammer, 1984; Marsden, 1990; Sudman, 1988), self-report or recall data become problematic when assessing network data for social actors who are geographically dispersed and whose communication patterns are both infrequent and not recent. Since this study is more interested in general notions of social network affiliation than specific, micro-moments of organizational talk with others, and since the social actors from the organization under examination are geographically co-located, communicate frequently, and have communicated recently, self-report data is an adequate methodology for obtaining social network information.

A final piece of evidence that exists to substantiate the use of self-report data comes from Marsden’s (1990) explanation concerning when data should represent perceived or actual communication links. He contends that “accurate knowledge of actually existing ties is arguably important to the study…of certain diffusion processes while perceived ties might be more appropriate for studying social influences on attitudes or opinions” (Marsden, 1990, p. 437). Since this dissertation attempts to explain the relationship between social networks and identification, studying “social influences on attitudes or opinions,” use of a method that results in the accumulation of self-report data is appropriate.
In the end, while self-report, recall data have certain inconsistencies with data gleaned from observations, Marsden’s (1990) main conclusion is that there exists a much higher correlation between self-report data and actual communication behavior than scholars might prematurely assume. In fact, Marsden (1990) argues that “…self reports reflect more than mere respondent perceptions” (p. 449), which assuages the reliability and validity problems traditionally associated with the use of self reports in social network analysis.

The survey instrument includes a series of questions for employees to answer regarding their relationships and/or communication behavior with other organizational employees. In order to assess communication networks, Burt’s (1992) Name Generator Technique was used. This technique asks individuals to name individuals with whom they communicate for certain reasons (e.g. “who are the three people with whom you communicate within your organization when you need personal advice?”). The main advantage of this technique is that employees are forced to think of only several (instead of all) employees with whom they interact. This technique, therefore, allows one to tap into the strong ties that employees create within their organization. The other popular technique, known as the Roster Method, provides the employee with a list of all those employed in his/her organization and asks (a) whether or not he/she communicates with these others and, if so, (b) how often they communicate with these people (see Rogers, 2003). The greatest advantage of this method is that it taps into both strong and weak ties.

Since the purpose of this dissertation is to analyze strong communication ties between and among employees, the Name Generator Technique provided the most appropriate method. This technique provided a way to examine employees’ informal (see
Appendix C) and formal (see Appendix D) communication networks. Much organizational social network research examines the creation and effects of informal and formal networks (e.g. Feeley, 2000; McPherson, Popielarz, & Drobnic, 1992; Podolny & Baron, 1997), and the creation and effects of employees’ social support networks (e.g. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Since the overarching goal of this dissertation is to determine the relationship between communication networks and identification, obtaining data related to formal and emergent networks will ultimately provide the data necessary to test the proposed hypotheses.

**Procedure**

Data were gathered from all full time FootWorld employees as of July 1, 2007. Both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking employees were part of this study. At FootWorld, employees are truly divided by native language: all employees part of the production and shipping departments are native Spanish-speakers, whereas all employees part of all other departments are native English-speakers. A message was sent to all English-speaking employees through electronic mail explaining the nature of the study, the types of questions that participants would be asked, when the survey would be distributed, and by when the survey needed to be completed. Survey completion was optional; however, the Chief Executive Officer of the organization sent a message through electronic mail to encourage his employees to participate in the project. Although there is no formal way of determining whether or not employees read the circulated e-mail, there was a printed copy in the employee lunchroom: a large room in the organization where employees congregate to eat meals, socialize during their breaks, get
coffee or soft drinks, or get a mid-day snack. Important organizational messages are posted on a large corkboard so that employees who visit the lunchroom are informed about important organizational events and/or information. All FootWorld employees can use this lunchroom and have access to these messages, although it is predominantly used by the English-speaking employees. Research began at FootWorld on a Friday afternoon (July 6) during a monthly event that the organization calls “Footloose Friday.” This is an event where all those employed attend a luncheon, located at FootWorld, where the President, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and top-level managers recognize such things as individual achievements, birthdays, special occasions, and the employee of the month. All employees from all departments attend this monthly luncheon. The Chief Executive Officer allowed me to introduce myself, explain the nature of the study (which was already explained to them, via email, by the CEO), explain the importance of the study, and to answer any questions that the employees had regarding things such as purpose, confidentiality, and anonymity. Surveys were then distributed to all of the English-speaking employees and all were informed that the survey should take approximately one hour to complete. I informed them that I would be back in two weeks (July 20) to pick up the completed surveys and that, if any employee had any questions about the survey, I would be available via electronic mail.

The original survey was translated from English to Spanish by a paid, undergraduate translator in the Department of Spanish at Seton Hall University. The Spanish version of the survey was also back translated to confirm accuracy of the translation by a graduate student translator in the Department of Spanish at Rutgers University. A third check from a member of the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers
University confirmed that an accurate translation of the survey was accomplished. One week after the receipt of the completed surveys from the English-speaking employees (July 20), I returned to FootWorld, at which time I met with the Spanish-speaking employees to explain the survey more to them. Prior to this, one of the top-level managers (a fluent Spanish-speaking employee) sent all Spanish-speaking employees the same electronic message that was sent to the English-speaking employees explaining the nature of the study, the types of questions that participants would be asked, when the survey would be distributed, and by when the survey needed to be completed. Whereas all English-speaking employees have their own computers to check email, the Spanish-speaking employees all have access to a single workstation, in the production lunchroom, which was used to access this circulated message. Although there is no formal way of determining whether or not employees read the circulated e-mail, there was a printed copy in the Spanish-speaking employees’ lunchroom. Again, participation was optional; however, the Chief Executive Officer of the organization once again sent a message through electronic mail to encourage the Spanish-speaking employees to participate in the project. One of the top-level managers, who is fluent in the Spanish language, met with me to discuss the project and was present to translate all of my verbal instructions, and was also there to help me answer any questions that the employees had when completing the surveys. Surveys were then distributed to all of the Spanish-speaking employees and all were informed that they had approximately one hour to complete the survey and I informed them, as well, that I would be around the premises should any questions arise. Since this portion of the data collection process was during normal
working hours, the company provided an hour (on company time) for employees to complete the survey.

**Individual-level Variables**

**Organizational Identification.** One of the individual-level variables in this study is organizational identification, which is most aptly defined as “the communicative process through which individuals either align themselves with or distance themselves from…targets/sources of identity” (Larson & Pepper, 2003, p. 530). In an effort to empirically examine the targets with which an employee identifies, a series of close-ended questions, derived by Mael and Ashforth (1992), which is a scale that taps into similar aspects of organizational life as Cheney’s (1983) Organizational Identification Questionnaire, were included in the survey instrument. Respondents were asked to indicate whether and to what extent they were in agreement with each statement, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7) on a 7-point Likert scale, each of which assessed identification with one or multiple targets. The targets used in this study range from the micro to the macro and include the work team, the department, the organization, and the profession, as per the advice of previous scholarship (e.g. Grice, Paulson, & Jones, 2002; Hennessy & West, 1999; Van Knippenberg, & Van Schie, 2000). That is, one can claim strong identification with the profession (“When someone criticizes my profession it feels like a personal insult”), the organization (“When I talk about my organization I usually say we rather than they”), the department (“I am interested in what others think about my department”), or the team (“My work team’s successes are my successes”).
Homophily. The other individual-level variable under examination is homophily, which refers to the idea that “…a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people” (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p. 416). It has been documented that individuals within organizations are more prone to communicate with social actors similar to them because “…similarity is thought to ease communication, increase predictability of behavior, and foster trust and reciprocity” (Brass, 1995, p. 51). As Monge and Contractor (2001) argue, feelings of homophily come about due to similarities between and among individuals based on age, education, social class, gender, prestige, ethnicity, tenure, occupation, race, religion, extra-organizational activities, and personality (pp. 476-479). Research indicates that the most popular homophily variables analyzed within the organizational setting are age (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), gender (Rotolo & Wharton, 2003), education (Ibarra, 1995), department (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987), tenure (Ibarra, 1995), and race (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Vashdi, 2005). Based on this, several survey items assessed issues of homophily. Participants were asked about their age (please indicate how old you are in years), gender (please circle male or female), about education (please circle either “some high school,” “high school diploma/GED,” “some college,” “college degree,” or “graduate/professional degree”), departmental membership (please indicate which department you work for), and tenure in the organization (please indicate how long you have been an employee of FootWorld, in both years and months).

Network Variables

Centrality. Centrality is one of the three network variables analyzed throughout this dissertation. Based on a previous discussion about the four most cited types of
centralities (degree, betweenness, closeness, eigenvector), both degree and eigenvector centralities were determined for employees in both the social and task networks. To reiterate, an employee with high degree centrality is a social actor in a communication network who, relative to all others in the network, has the most ties. An employee with high eigenvector centrality is a social actor in a communication network who has ties to other employees who are also centrally located. In other words, eigenvector centrality takes into account the indirect connections ego has vis-à-vis ego’s direct ties. The main reason that these two centrality measures are most appropriate for this dissertation is because having high degree and eigenvector centralities has been linked to social influence. Since this dissertation attempts to study how employees come to influence others’ strengths of identification with one or more organizational targets, using these two centrality measures is suitable. These centrality scores were created using UCINET.

*Network Faction.* The second network variable analyzed was a faction, which provides a way of placing similar social actors in a network, based on the similarity in communication ties to others, in the same sub-group structure or clique. Based on the underlying logic of a faction, to the extent that individual $i$ both communicates with individual $j$ and also has ties to the same social actors as individual $j$, both $i$ and $j$ will be part of the same faction. Factions, therefore, provide the possibility of creating communication-based sub-groups: those social actors in a given network who communicate with the same individuals come to share common faction membership. After determining employees’ communication practices in both the larger social and task networks, factions were created to separate these larger networks into smaller sub-group structures. Based on the advice offered by Hanneman and Riddle (2005), determining the
number of factions to divide each larger network into is a difficult endeavor because there
is no straightforward answer or rule of thumb. The decision, however, is not arbitrary
either. It is important to create factions based on two numerical calculations: the number
of faction errors and the density within each faction. The number of faction errors
represents the number of errors within a given faction: the number of social actors that
should be in a given faction but are not and the number of social actors that should not be
in a given faction but are.

Ideally, if all social actors are in the correct faction, meaning that all members
communicate with all (and only) members of their own group, there will be zero resulting
errors. The density of each faction is the number of ties between and among all faction
members compared to the number of possible ties between and among all faction
members. If all individuals within a given faction communicate with all others, the
density within the faction will be 1.00. When determining the optimal number of factions
to create, according to Hanneman and Riddle (2005), the key is exploration: exploring
different numbers of factions until (a) the number of errors significantly decreases and (b)
the faction densities significantly increase. For purposes of this dissertation, a total of 15
factions were explored, allowing for the conclusion that moving from nine factions to 10
factions significantly decreased the total number of faction errors and increased the
faction densities, yet moving from 10 factions to 11 factions did not yield significant
changes. Therefore, a total of 10 social factions and 10 task factions were created.

*External-Internal Index.* The final network variable analyzed was an employees’
E-I (External-Internal) Index, which is a measure of whether or not social actors have the
majority of their network ties to homophilous or heterophilous others. Krackhardt and
Stern (1988), who developed the E-I index measure, determined that this measure was a useful way of representing the number of communication ties one has within one’s own group (based on such things as gender, ethnicity, race, and age) as compared to the number of communication ties one has external to one’s own group. This index is a statistical procedure in UCINET that compares the number of ties that social actors have within their own group with the number of ties that social actors have across other groups. The E-I Index, therefore, is used to determine the relationship between group membership and the amount of communication ties that one has to both members internal and external to one’s group (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988). For purposes of this dissertation, factions were used to obtain an E-I index score: how similar are those within one’s social and/or task faction regarding identification with one or more organizational targets? An E-I index score of -1.0 indicates that a social actor has all communication ties to others part of one’s own group and an E-I index score of +1.0 indicates that a social actor has all communication ties to others external to one’s own group. An index score of -1.0 translates into homophilous ties to others part of one’s group and an index score of +1.0 translates into heterophilous ties to others external to one’s group. Thus, an index score of -1.0 indicates that those within a particular faction similarly identify with one or more organizational targets and an index score of +1.0 indicates that those part of the same faction do not similarly identify with these targets.

Along with calculating the E-I index score, UCINET also provides a density score (ranging from 0.00 to 1.00), which is a mathematical computation of how much group closure there is within a particular group. A density score of 0.00 means that individuals part of a particular communication network have no internal connections to one another,
whereas a density score approaching 1.00 means that individuals part of a communication network have many ties between and among group members. A low density score translates into a sparse communication network and a high density score translates into network closure. As Burt (2001) indicates, the more closure there is within a network, the stronger the communication links between and among all social actors, the fewer communication isolates there are in the network, and the more overall connectedness and embeddedness (see Granovetter, 1985). The E-I Index was used to test H4a (employees will have similar strengths of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those part of their social network) and H4b (employees will have similar strengths of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those part of their task network). For purposes of this dissertation, then, factions are the independent variable and the extent to which pairs of employees are similar in terms of identification with each other is the dependent variable.

Participants

Although there are approximately 125 employees at FootWorld, a total of 99 participated in this study (a response rate of 79.2%). Table 1 summarizes the number of participants per department and the overall percentage of the sample that those particular departmental members represent. From informal interviews with upper management there are three primary reasons that the remainder of the employee base did not participate: they may have been away on business at the time of data collection, they may have been too busy with organizational work, or they did not want to offer feedback about their organizational experiences. Perhaps, however, these non-participants never received (or read) the email about the study or did not notice the printout of the email in their
lunchroom. Of the 99 employees that participated in this survey, 52 (52.5%) were male and 47 (47.5%) were female; 31 (31.3%) were from the production department, 14 (14.1%) were from the sales department, 11 (11.1%) were from the customer service department, 10 (10.1%) were from the shipping department, 9 (9.1%) were from the technology department, 8 (8.1%) were from the accounting department, 5 (5.1%) were from the marketing department, 5 (5.1%) were from the purchasing department, 4 (4.0%) were from the operations department, and 2 (2.0%) were from the administration department; 58 (58.6%) were English-speaking and 41 (41.4%) were Spanish-speaking; 30 (30.3%) employees have a college degree, 29 (29.3%) employees have some college education, 21 (21.2%) employees have a high school diploma, 13 (13.1%) employees have some high school education, and 6 (6.1%) employees have a graduate degree; the average tenure (in years) is 4.58, ranging from a low of 0.10 years to a high of 25.00 years.

Matrix Manipulation

In order to test the network hypotheses and how networks might come to influence identification, similarities matrices were created for each participant to determine how similar employees were in their identification with all four organizational targets as compared to their fellow coworkers. Similarities matrices were constructed using dichotomous matrices, in which two employees were similar because they had similar strengths of identification with the target under consideration. In other words, a 1 in cell \( ij \) represents a similarity in identification with a particular target between individuals \( i \) and \( j \), whereas a 0 in cell \( ij \) represents dissimilarity in identification with a particular target between individuals \( i \) and \( j \). Initial matrices included each employees’
identification values for each target (for a total of four separate rectangular matrices of employees by identification scores). These matrices were first transformed to one’s and zero’s based on whether the employees’ identification score was above the average identification score for that target for all participant’s responses (value changed to 1) or below the average identification score for that target (value changed to 0). The rectangular, dichotomous networks were then transformed into square matrices of employees by employees.

In order to create these eight similarity matrices (each of the four targets of identification for both the social and task networks), matrix algebra was used in UCINET. The procedure requires first to create a transpose of each matrix. By creating the transpose of the rectangular matrix and then post-multiplying the original vector by its transpose, the employees-by-employees similarities matrices were created. The eight resulting similarities matrices indicated how similar employees were to others regarding how they identified with each of the four targets. Again, the resulting similarities matrices produce dichotomous numerical values: a 1 indicates that \(i\) and \(j\) similarly identify with an organizational target and a 0 indicates that \(i\) and \(j\) identify differently with an organizational target. The resulting similarities matrices allowed for the E-I analysis to determine whether those part of the same social and task factions similarly cluster in terms of the various targets of identification.

**Analyses**

To analyze the data for hypothesis testing, several procedures were conducted. First, descriptive statistics for all variables associated with identification, social networks, and task networks were computed. Then, in order to test the proposed hypotheses, the
following statistical analyses were conducted: Correlations, T-Tests, ANOVAs, E-I Index, and the Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) in UCINET. The first three statistical analyses were conducted in SPSS. Correlations were used to test H5 (those part of one’s social network will influence levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team more than one’s task network), H6 (employees with high degree centrality will be more strongly identified with the profession, organization, department, and team), and H7 (employees with high eigenvector centrality will be more strongly identified with the profession, organization, department, and team). A t-test was used to test H1 (employees will more strongly identify with their department and team as compared to the profession and organization). An ANOVA test was used to test H2 (employees from the same department will have similar levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team) and H3 (gender, organizational tenure, language, and departmental membership will all be homophilous variables that come to influence strength of identification with one or more organizational targets).

E-I Index analyses, which allow the researcher to determine whether and to what extent those in the same factions similarly identify with the four organizational targets, were used to test H4a (employees part of the same social network will have similar levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team) and H4b (employees part of the same task network will have similar levels of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team). Finally, Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) correlations were conducted in UCINET in order to determine whether or not one of the two networks (social or task) were more predictive of identification with one or more of the organizational targets. According to Taylor and Doerfel (2003),
“...QAP is a correlation procedure in the UCINET network analysis software program that is used to test the similarity of two networks by computing Pearson’s correlation coefficient between corresponding cells of the two data matrices” (p. 167). As such, QAP correlations were used to test H5 (those part of one’s social network will influence strengths of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team more than one’s task network).
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Based on the scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992), mean identification scores for each of the four targets under examination range from 1 (strongly disidentified) to 7 (strongly identified) (see Table 2). Results indicate that employees most strongly identify with the department (6.28) and least strongly with the profession (5.30) (see Table 2). Furthermore, the administration department was most strongly identified with the profession, the administration department was most strongly identified with the organization, the sales department was most strongly identified with the department, and the purchasing department was most strongly identified with the work team (see Table 3).

Centrality scores (degree and eigenvector) were calculated for both social and task communication networks (see Table 5). Results indicate that the mean degree centrality score for the social network was 8.04 (minimum of 2.04, maximum of 41.84, SD = 6.55) and the mean degree centrality score for the task network was 7.56 (minimum of 1.02, maximum of 41.84, SD = 5.99). The mean eigenvector centrality score for the social network was 8.74 (minimum of 0.07, maximum of 54.93, SD = 11.21) and the mean eigenvector centrality score for the task network was 8.99 (minimum of 0.09, maximum of 55.28, SD = 11.00). In order to determine whether or not the two centrality measures were correlated with one another, correlations were computed. Results indicate that, for the social network, the correlation between degree centrality and eigenvector centrality was 0.64 (p < .01) (see Table 6). Results indicate that, for the task network, the
correlation between degree centrality and eigenvector centrality was 0.64 ($p < .01$) (see Table 7).

*Communication Networks*

A total of four pictorial representations of communication networks were created in NetDraw, an application in UCINET that allows one to visually depict one or more emergent networks. These four networks were the organizational social network (see figure 1), the organizational task network (see figure 2), the organizational social networks partitioned by faction (see figure 3), and the organizational task networks partitioned by faction (see figure 4). After statistical analysis, it became evident that the social and task networks were correlated and, as such, indicated similar patterns of communication between and among employees: $r = 0.62, p < .001$. However, although the network of people with whom employees communicate for social reasons was significantly correlated with the network of people with whom employees communicate for task reasons, these networks are not the same. The pictorial representation of the organizational social network (figure 1) shows that two primary groups of employees (or structures) emerged. It is interesting to note that the majority of employees in the left network are English-speaking employees and the majority of employees in the right network are Spanish-speaking employees. As such, there exists a “language divide” between these two networks. Those employees part of the network to the left were less connected, overall, to each other and those employees part of the network to the right were much more connected to each other. Furthermore, in terms of centrality measures, the network to the right was comprised of employees who were more central (based on all four centrality measures) as compared to those employees part of the network to the
left. Using the “language divide” between the two networks, then, the Spanish-speaking employees are more centrally located within the communication network as compared to English-speaking employees. In other words, Spanish-speaking employees have more ties to all other social actors, as well as ties to those with high degree centrality, as compared to their English-speaking counterparts.

The pictorial representation of the organizational task network (figure 2) is very similar to the organizational social network in that two primary groups of employees emerged. It is important to again recognize the obvious “language divide” between the two networks. Employees part of the left network are primarily English-speaking employees, whereas those part of the right network are primarily Spanish-speaking employees. Again, those employees part of the network to the left were less connected to one another and those employees part of the network to the right of the figure were much better connected to each other. Again, in terms of centrality measures, those individuals part of the network to the right of the Figure are considered to be more central (based on all four centrality measures) to the overall network as compared to those employees part of the network to the left. Therefore, and similar to the social network, Spanish-speaking employees, as compared to English-speaking employees, not only have more communication ties to more employees, but also have ties to those with high degree centralities.

The pictorial representation of the social communication network by faction (figure 3) shows that a total of 10 groups or structures emerged. Some of the factions were more dense than the others, some factions had more members than others (minimum faction membership was two and maximum faction membership was 19), and the amount
of communication ties that members of a particular faction had to others varied as well, indicating that certain factions were better connected to the entire social network than others. Each emergent faction had identifying commonalities regarding both gender and departmental membership. The emergent factions are as follows: Faction 1 (males from production), Faction 2 (males from sales), Faction 3 (females from customer service), Faction 4 (females from accounting), Faction 5 (males from operations and shipping), Faction 6 (males from technology and sales), Faction 7 (males and females from sales, marketing, and operations), Faction 8 (males and females from production), Faction 9 (males and females from production and shipping), and Faction 10 (males from operations and purchasing).

The pictorial representation of the task communication network by faction (figure 4) also shows that a total of 10 groups emerged and that, based on communication practices, certain factions were more dense than others, some factions had more members than others (minimum faction membership was 3 and maximum faction membership was 15). The amount of communication ties that members of a faction had to others also varied, similar to the social communication network, again indicating that certain factions were better connected to the entire task network than others. Each emergent faction had identifying commonalities regarding both gender and departmental membership. The emergent factions are as follows: Faction 1 (females from production and shipping), Faction 2 (males and females from accounting and sales), Faction 3 (males from technology and marketing), Faction 4 (males from production and shipping), Faction 5 (males and females from production), Faction 6 (males and females from production and shipping), and Faction 7 (males and females from production and operations).
shipping), Faction 7 (females from customer service), Faction 8 (males from purchasing and operations), Faction 9 (males from sales), and Faction 10 (males from sales).

In order to determine whether or not certain homophily variables (gender, tenure, departmental membership, education, and language) could explain faction membership, statistical tests were conducted (see Table 8). Results indicate that gender influenced membership in both the social faction, \( X^2 = 26.25, df = 98, p < .001 \) and the task faction, \( X^2 = 20.70, df = 98, p < .001 \). Results indicate that tenure did not influence membership in either the social faction, \( X^2 = -1.40, df = 98, p = 0.16 \) or the task faction, \( X^2 = -1.24, df = 98, p = 0.22 \). Results indicate that departmental membership did influence membership in both the social faction, \( X^2 = 432.45, df = 98, p < .001 \) and the task faction, \( X^2 = 390.07, df = 98, p < .001 \). Results indicate that education influenced membership in the social faction, \( X^2 = 73.06, df = 98, p < .001 \) and the task faction, \( X^2 = 54.30, df = 98, p < .001 \). Finally, results indicate that language influenced membership in both the social faction, \( X^2 = 45.22, df = 98, p < .001 \) and the task faction, \( X^2 = 49.78, df = 98, p < .001 \). What is most important, from a communication standpoint, is that there are certain variables that help explain why certain employees are part of the factions that they are in. There are, therefore, certain demographic or organizational factors that tend to be represented in one faction and not the other factions. Since gender, departmental membership, education, and language tended to explain membership, it is apparent that these factions exist not only because of the communication practices between and among employees, but also because of certain homophilous influences.

Tests of Hypotheses
Table 9 reports each of the seven hypotheses, the theoretical frameworks guiding each hypothesis, the variables analyzed for each hypothesis, and the statistical analysis used to test each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that employees would have higher strengths of identification with their department and team, as compared to the organization and profession. The mean scores were computed for strength of identification with one’s profession ($M = 5.30$), strength of identification with one’s organization ($M = 5.50$), strength of identification with one’s department ($M = 6.28$), and strength of identification with one’s team ($M = 5.68$). Table 10 reports the results of the paired-samples t-tests conducted. A paired samples t-test indicated that strength of identification with one’s department was significantly higher than identification with one’s profession, $t(98) = -12.66$, $p < .001$. A paired samples t-test indicated that strength of identification with one’s department was significantly higher than identification with one’s organization, $t(98) = -11.93$, $p < .001$. A paired samples t-test indicated that strength of identification with one’s department was significantly higher than identification with one’s team, $t(98) = 8.07$, $p < .001$. A paired samples t-test indicated that strength of identification with one’s team was significantly higher than identification with one’s profession, $t(98) = -5.76$, $p < .001$. Finally, a paired samples t-test indicated that strength of identification with one’s team was significantly higher than identification with one’s organization, $t(98) = -2.40$, $p < .001$. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that those part of the same department would similarly identify with all four organizational targets. Table 11 reports the results of the ANOVA analyses conducted. Results indicated no statistically significant difference in
identification with one’s profession based on department, $F(98) = 0.83, p = 0.59$; with one’s organization based on department, $F(98) = 1.14, p = 0.35$; with one’s department based on department, $F(98) = 1.82, p = 0.08$; or with one’s team based on department, $F(98) = 0.76, p = 0.65$ (see table 11). Thus, hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that gender, organizational tenure, language, and departmental membership will all be homophilous variables that come to influence strength of identification with one or more organizational targets. Table 12 reports the results of ANOVA analyses conducted. Results indicated that gender did not influence identification with one’s profession, $F(98) = 0.93, p = 0.56$; with one’s organization, $F(98) = 1.15, p = 0.32$; with one’s department, $F(98) = 1.22, p = 0.27$; or with one’s team, $F(98) = 1.58, p = 0.09$. Gender, thus, does not predict identification with any of the four organizational targets. Results indicated that language did not influence identification with one’s profession, $F(98) = 0.66, p = 0.86$; with one’s organization, $F(98) = 1.15, p = 0.32$; or with one’s team, $F(98) = 1.59, p = 0.08$. However, language did influence identification with one’s department, $F(98) = 1.75, p = 0.05$. Therefore, language only explains a significant difference in one’s identification with his/her department. Results indicated that education did not influence identification with one’s organization, $F(98) = 1.28, p = 0.21$; with one’s department, $F(98) = 0.93, p = 0.54$; or with one’s team, $F(98) = 0.82, p = 0.68$. However, education did influence identification with one’s profession, $F(98) = 1.98, p = 0.02$. Therefore, education only explains a significant difference in one’s identification with his/her profession. Results indicated that tenure did not influence identification with one’s profession, $r(98) = -0.03, p = 0.80$; with one’s organization, $r(98) = 0.03, p = 0.78$; with one’s department, $r(98) = 0.00, p = 0.80$.
0.98; or with one’s team, \( r(98) = 0.03, p = 0.78 \). Therefore, tenure does not predict identification with any of the four organizational targets. Thus, hypothesis 3 is only partially supported.

Hypothesis 4a predicted that employees would have similar strengths of identification with their profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those part of their social network. Table 13 reports the results of the E-I indexes for both social and task networks. The mean scores were computed for strength of identification with one’s profession \( (M = 5.30) \), strength of identification with one’s organization \( (M = 5.50) \), strength of identification with one’s department \( (M = 6.28) \), and strength of identification with one’s team \( (M = 5.68) \). The results indicated that one’s social faction did not influence strength of identification with one’s organization, E-I Index = 0.24, n.s.; with one’s department, E-I Index = 0.26, n.s.; or with one’s team, E-I Index = 0.57, n.s. The results indicated that one’s social faction did influence strength of identification with one’s profession, E-I Index = 0.68, \( p < .05 \). Thus, hypothesis 4a is only partially supported.

Hypothesis 4b predicted that employees would have similar strengths of identification with their profession, organization, department, and team as compared to those part of their task network. Table 13 reports the results of the E-I indexes for both social and task networks. The mean scores were computed for strength of identification with one’s profession \( (M = 5.30) \), strength of identification with one’s organization \( (M = 5.50) \), strength of identification with one’s department \( (M = 6.28) \), and strength of identification with one’s team \( (M = 5.68) \). The results indicated that one’s task faction did not influence strength of identification with one’s profession, E-I Index = 0.63, n.s.; with
Hypothesis 4b predicted that those part of one’s social network would influence strengths of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team more than one’s task network. Table 14 reports the results of the correlations conducted. The mean scores were computed for strength of identification with one’s profession \((M = 5.30)\), strength of identification with one’s organization \((M = 5.50)\), strength of identification with one’s department \((M = 6.28)\), and strength of identification with one’s team \((M = 5.68)\). Using UCINET’s Quadratic Analysis Procedure (QAP), correlations were run between social network and strength of identification with profession, \(r = -0.04, p < .01\); strength of identification with organization, \(r = -0.04, p < .01\); strength of identification with department \(r = -0.08, p < .01\); and strength of identification with team, \(r = -0.01, p < .01\). Correlations were also run between task network and strength of identification with profession, \(r = -0.01, p < .01\); strength of identification with organization, \(r = -0.01, p < .01\); strength of identification with department \(r = -0.08, p < .01\); and strength of identification with team, \(r = 0.00, p < .01\). The results indicate that those part of one’s social network do not influence strengths of identification with the four targets more so than one’s task network. Thus, hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that employees with high degree centrality in both social and task networks would be more likely than employees with low degree centrality to strongly identify with all organizational targets. Table 15 reports the results of correlations conducted. Correlations were run between degree centrality in the social network and strength of identification with profession, \(r = -0.11, p = 0.28\); strength of
identification with organization, $r = -0.11, p = 0.28$; strength of identification with department, $r = -0.25, p < .05$; and strength of identification with team, $r = -0.03, p = 0.74$. Correlations were also run between degree centrality in the task network and identification with profession, $r = -0.02, p = 0.81$; identification with organization, $r = -0.03, p = 0.78$; identification with department, $r = -0.25, p < .05$; and identification with team, $r = -0.01, p = .90$. Results indicated that not only does degree centrality not predict strong identification with all four organizational targets, but also that having high degree centrality in both the social and task network suggests a decrease in identification with one’s department. Thus, hypothesis 6 is not supported.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that employees with high eigenvector centrality in both social and task networks would be more likely than employees with low eigenvector centrality to strongly identify with all organizational targets. Table 16 reports the results of correlations conducted. Correlations were run between eigenvector centrality in the social network and strength of identification with profession, $r = -0.02, p = 0.81$; identification with organization, $r = -0.07, p = 0.50$; identification with department, $r = -0.28, p = 0.01$; and identification with team, $r = -0.15, p = 0.15$. Correlations were also run between eigenvector centrality in the task network and strength of identification with profession, $r = -0.01, p = 0.89$; identification with organization, $r = -0.04, p = 0.67$; identification with department, $r = -0.28, p < 0.01$; and identification with team, $r = -0.10, p = 0.35$. Results indicated that not only does eigenvector centrality not predict strong identification with all four organizational targets, but also that having high eigenvector centrality in both the social and task networks suggests a decrease in identification with one’s department. Thus, hypothesis 7 is not supported.
One post-hoc analysis was conducted to determine whether or not there existed a statistically significant difference in identification with any of the four organizational targets based on departmental membership (see Table 17). Results indicated that department did not significantly predict identification with one’s profession, $F(98) = 0.83, p = 0.56$; one’s organization, $F(98) = 1.14, p = 0.35$; one’s department, $F(98) = 1.82, p = 0.08$; or one’s team, $F(98) = 0.76, p = 0.65$. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in identification based on department.

Overall, the results indicate that the areas of organizational identification and organizational communication networks are mutually informing of one another theoretically, but less so empirically. Not only do others part of one’s social and task network not come to influence strengths of identification with one or more organizational targets, but being central within a social and/or task network does not influence strengths of identification either. The remainder of this dissertation will elucidate these major findings by using the literature and theories previously discussed to determine why communication networks might not be associated with identification with one’s profession, organization, department, or team.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

General Discussion

This dissertation began with the argument that organizational networks will influence strengths of identification with one’s profession, organization, department, and team. This argument was developed out of the underlying assumptions of social identity theory, which bridges the fields of communication, psychology, and sociology. Social identity theory would lead one to assume that one’s social and task networks, what social identity theory calls “in-groups,” would be related to employee identification. The results of this dissertation, however, do not support this contention.

Much research exists to support the notion that communication networks influence things such as the adoption of technology within organizations (Rice & Aydin, 1991), organizational turnover (Feeley & Barnett, 1997), organizational satisfaction (Pollock, Whitbred, & Contractor, 2000), knowledge sharing practices (Contractor & Monge, 2002), shared perceptions of one’s role within the organizational setting (Doerfel & Fitzgerald, 2004), homogeneity in feelings about organizational change and development (Kuhn & Corman, 2003), decision-making practices (Rulke & Galaskiewicz, 2000), and engagement in unethical organizational behaviors (Brass, Butterfield, & Skaggs, 1998). Yet the communication networks assessed for this dissertation did not relate to employee identification with one or more organizational targets. This finding will be explored during the remainder of this dissertation in an effort to determine why these bodies of literature (networks and identification) seem to inform one another theoretically, but in this case did not inform one another empirically. First, a
discussion regarding the results from an organizational identification perspective will be presented, which will be followed by a discussion framing the results from a network perspective. Following this will be an explanation of how the results might still be used to inform social identity theory. This chapter will conclude with some limitations, implications, and further directions, as well as a conclusion about how this dissertation extends the study and field of organizational communication.

Discussion of the Organizational Identification Results

Based on the extant literature in the fields of management, organizational behavior, and organizational communication, employee identification is important not only for the success of an organization at the macro level, but also for the satisfaction of the employee at the micro level (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Russo, 1998; Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001). Whenever the topic of organizational identification is brought to the forefront, a practical implication that scholars (and practitioners) are faced with is why employees would want to be identified with one or more organizational targets. In other words, what can be gained from having strong identification with one’s profession, organization, department, and/or team? For example, Burke’s (1955) idea of the “corporate we” emanated from the argument that identification is a human need. According to Burke (1955), employees identify with their organization in an effort to claim emotional and/or attitudinal attachment to a collective. Since this claim, however, other scholars have argued that employees identify for reasons other than mere human necessity. Literature supports the notion that employees will identify with their organization in an effort to increase organizational opportunities, whether they are in the form of promotions, increased responsibilities, increased power, or increased inclusion in organizational
decision-making (Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001). There is also support for the claim that employees will identify with their organization to engage in uniform thinking with other organizational members, whereby mental models and cognitive schemas are constructed, creating, at least in part, the “corporate we” fostered by Burkeian theory (Rousseau, 1998). Research also shows that employees will identify with their organization merely to claim membership and reduce identity ambivalence or ambiguity (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000). Collectively, the results of the majority of organizational identification research over the years show that employees identify because of the positive effect(s) of identification.

Strong identification with one’s profession, organization, department, and/or team has been found to significantly predict such things as strong relationships with other organizational employees (Hogg & Terry, 2000), higher levels and feelings of self-esteem (Mael & Ashforth, 2001), an increased level of emotional attachment to the organization (Russo, 1998), increased participation during organizational decision-making (Sass & Canary, 1991), an increased level of motivation to succeed (Pratt & Foreman, 2000), an increased level of organizational commitment (Zdaniuk & Levine, 2001), and an increased understanding and knowledge of the organization’s missions and goals (Scott & Lane, 2000). As evidenced, strong identification with these organizational targets not only has benefits at the more macro, organizational level, but also at the more micro, individual level. In other words, strong identification leads to increased motivation and commitment (a benefit for the organization), as well as increased self-esteem and sense of self (a benefit for the employee).
A major finding from this dissertation that is consistent with organizational identification research is that employees at FootWorld identified more strongly with the department, as compared to the profession and the organization. This is consistent with previous research, which argues that employees are likely to be more identified with a more local (or salient) target (Larson & Pepper, 2003; Scott, 1997; Scott et al., 1999). The major logic behind this finding is that employees will identify strongest with the target that is most salient or immediate to them. That is, within FootWorld, employees can answer the question “who are you” with at least four answers: “I am an employee who creates footwear products,” “I am an employee who works for FootWorld,” “I am a member of a particular department within FootWorld,” or “I am a member of a particular team within FootWorld.” This, in essence, captures the idea of multiple targets of identification available to employees. Results of this dissertation reveal that the most important target of identification is the department, meaning that departmental membership is more salient than membership in the profession, organization, or team. It is likely that this finding can be substantiated by the fact that much of the internal communication practices within FootWorld are not inter-organizational, nor inter-departmental, but rather intra-departmental. That is, employees communicate most closely and most frequently with others who share the same departmental identity and, as such, this target is relatively more salient than the other organizational targets.

However, it is equally important to question why team, what is also considered to be a micro target (e.g. Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Scott, 1997; Scott et al., 1999), was not as strong (or even stronger) than department, seeing as this is the most local target of all. It seems as though Gossett’s (2002) research about the ill-desirability of identification has
empirical support. As mentioned previously, teams at FootWorld are disbanding, meaning that they emerge based on necessity, and dissipate upon task completion. As Gossett (2002) argues, there are negative ramifications associated with strongly identifying with certain targets when (a) one’s tenure in an organization is likely to be short-lived, (b) one is considered to be a part-time worker, and (c) one’s role or identity within an organization is transient. Employees at FootWorld who are part of teams know that their tenure in that team is going to be temporary and so it makes sense that it was not the strongest target of identification, despite previous research (e.g. Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Scott, 1997). One’s departmental membership, however, is much more stable and, based on preliminary interviews with upper-level managers, is much more likely (as compared to the other targets) to shape one’s identity. This finding supports previous research because the strongest target of identification was a more micro target, rather than a more macro (profession, organization) one. However, this finding is in conflict with existing research that has found the most micro target within an organization to be the one with which employees most strongly identify (e.g. Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Larson & Pepper, 2003). It is plausible in this case that department was the strongest target of identification because it is more stable and more salient in defining who one is, as compared to one’s work team.

Another interesting finding was that identifying strongly with one’s department did not decrease one’s strength of identification with other, possibly competing targets. In fact, average identification scores with all targets tended to be relatively high (averages were about five on a 7-point scale). Scholars interested in multiple targets of identification suggest that although an employee can identify similarly with all possible
organizational targets, it is likely that certain targets are going to be in competition with others (Friedkin & Simpson, 1985; Russo, 1998). For example, to the extent that one might strongly identify with a department, this might, therefore, decrease one’s identification with the organization. Again, this logic is supported by the basic tenets of social identity theory, whereby employees will come to identify themselves as part of a profession, organization, department, or team based on the salience of the target. At FootWorld, employees came to see themselves most in terms of departmental membership, but also viewed the other targets as relevant, too. From an organizational perspective, then, FootWorld employees see several identity structures as important in defining who they are, though membership in a particular department is most salient in creating one’s identity. This conclusion was ascertained through both the study’s survey and informal interviews with upper-level managers prior to data collection. The interviews, in particular, revealed that since so much of employees’ organizational lives are based on communication between and among those within the same department, it is natural that individuals at FootWorld are most strongly identified with this target. What is interesting (and enlightening) from a management perspective is that although employees come to see themselves first and foremost based on departmental membership, these employees are also strongly identified with the organization. This finding, according to social identity theory, means that while employees are likely most interested in acting in ways that will benefit their individual department, they are also interested in acting in ways that will benefit the organization at large. FootWorld employees, thus, do not sacrifice identification with the organization for identification with their individual department.
Finally, from an organizational identification perspective, results indicate that those part of the same department at FootWorld did not similarly identify with any of the four organizational targets. This finding is surprising, especially in light of existing social influence literature that suggests that those part of one’s network(s) will come to influence such things as employee attitudes and behaviors. Perhaps those part of one’s department do come to influence other attitudes, such as satisfaction and commitment. However, results of this dissertation indicate that those who share departmental membership do not necessarily share strengths of identification with any of the four organizational targets considered. Future research is necessary to determine not only how those within one’s own department come to have influence and in what areas they become influential, but also why those in the same department do not come to share similarities in identification.

The question still yet to be answered is why, in this study, identification was not related to one’s social or task network within the organizational setting. Riketta (2005), in a meta-analysis of organizational identification research over the past five decades, argued that, if the fields of organizational communication, organizational behavior, and social psychology know anything about organizational identification, it deals with the effects of identification, not the process of identification. That is, correlation studies related to organizational identification abound; however, process-related studies are sparse. Previous studies have attempted to analyze how employees come to identify with their organization (Cheney, 1983) and even why employees come to identify (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000), but few studies have taken a social network
perspective to help discover the process through which people become identified, with

Kuhn and Nelson (2002) posit, “…we may conclude that members’
organizational identifications are shaped by both their frequent communication partners
and the content of those interactions” (p. 9). What Kuhn and Nelson (2002) concluded is
that centrality was a key determinant of identification with multiple identification targets.
Those more central within the organizational network identified more strongly with their
profession, organization, department, and division, and those less central within the
organizational network identified less strongly with all four targets. As such, two key
findings from this dissertation are (a) that networks are not related to identification with
multiple targets and (b) that being central in a given network is not related to
identification. It is, therefore, important to understand why the results of this dissertation
do not support those of Kuhn and Nelson (2002).

Discussion of the Communication Networks Results

This dissertation predicted that organizational networks would influence
organizational identification. Based on decades of sociological and communication
research, much of our daily routine is, at least in part, influenced by those with whom we
share relationships and communicate. These webs of interaction occur in one’s social
world and also in one’s organizational world (Monge & Contractor, 2003; Rice, 1993). In
fact, since social beings spend such a large portion of their lives within the organizational
realm, some have argued that organizational networks might be even more important than
one’s more personal networks (Borgatti & Foster, 2003).
One of the more interesting findings from this dissertation is the fact that FootWorld has two correlated, yet different, networks working at once: a social network and a task network. Results indicate that the people with whom employees communicate for social reasons are somewhat different from those people with whom employees communicate for task reasons. Although Krackhardt and Hanson (1993) claim that managers often do not know the communication patterns of employees, nor what communication networks within one’s organization look like, management at FootWorld knew, at least to a certain extent, that employees communicate with different employees based on whether the communication is considered to be social or task in nature. Although this might seem intuitive (that the people with whom employees communicate for social reasons are significantly different from those people with whom employees communicate for task reasons), prior research has concluded that these two networks can be the same: employees will communicate with the same individuals for both social and task reasons (Monge & Contractor, 2000; Monge & Eisenberg, 1987). Using the underlying logic of Katz and Kahn’s (1966) general systems theory, which evokes the ideas of effectiveness and efficiency, the question of efficiency suggests that it would be more efficient to communicate with the same people for both social and task reasons. Since these two networks were not identical regarding patterns of interaction between and among employees, it seemed plausible that one’s social network might influence certain organizational variables that one’s task network did not, and vice versa. Again, based on preliminary interviews with upper-level managers, it became evident that employees likely are psychologically (or socially) influenced more by those part of their social network because these are the individuals with whom people interact more frequently.
However, results did not support this assumption. In fact, there is no support that either network influences identification with any of the four organizational targets. An important question, based on the results of this dissertation, is why neither social, nor task, networks come to influence organizational identification on behalf of employees?

According to Monge and Contractor (2001), there are nine theoretical frameworks that help guide the study of organizational social networks, each of which attempts to explain why people are part of the networks that they are. These include theories of self interest (being part of a particular network for individual gain and the accruement of social capital), theories of mutual self interest and collective action (being a part of a particular network for collective gain and collective social capital), exchange and dependency theories (being a part of a particular network because ego has resources that others need and others have resources that ego needs), contagion theories (being a part of a particular network because the behaviors and attitudes of all members is similar), cognitive theories (being a part of a particular network because all members share collective meanings), homophily theories (being a part of a particular network because of the similarity in member characteristics), theories of proximity (being a part of a particular network because of shared space), theories of uncertainty reduction (being a part of a particular network because affiliated members help reduce organizational ambiguities), and social support theories (being a part of a particular network because they offer advice and emotional comfort). Based on three of these theories (contagion, cognitive, homophily), it makes sense that those part of one’s task and/or social network would influence identification. Based on Monge and Contractor’s (2001) theoretical frameworks, it makes sense that network membership within the organization is based, at
least to a certain degree, on homophily. Employees that are similar in terms of gender, department, education, and language will be in the same communication networks. Results of this dissertation support this. However, and based on the contagion theory of social influence (Monge & Contractor, 2001), it is also likely that those part of the same network will similarly identify with certain organizational targets. Results indicate, however, that even though homophilous variables do predict network membership, membership in a particular task or social network does not influence identification with any of the organizational targets.

One explanation for this finding (that networks do not influence identification with one or more organizational targets) is that there was very little variation in identification scores. The strengths of identification for all targets was quite high and the standard deviation among employees for each target was strikingly low (see Table 2). In short, this means that all employees were, on average, strongly identified with all targets, meaning that employees in faction two had similar strengths of identification as compared to employees in faction five, and employees in faction five had similar strengths of identification as compared to employees in faction nine. The finding that network membership did not influence identification does not necessarily mean that those part of the same network were not similarly identified. This finding means that those in one network were no more (or less) identified than those in another network, which provides support for the null hypothesis.

Another explanation, however, evokes the idea of homophily. According to McPherson et al. (2001), homophily is oftentimes based on things such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and social class. However, within the organizational setting, it is
likely that department is also related to homophily, or the “birds of a feather flock together” mentality. Based on the results of this dissertation, faction membership was based on two homophilous variables: departmental membership and language (see figures 3 and 4). This finding is supported by the basic tenets of homophily theory (McPherson et al., 2001; Monge & Contractor, 2001), whereby certain characteristics create commonalities between and among social actors which, in turn, increase the likelihood of social interaction and relationship development. Homophily theory, thus, helps explain faction membership: faction membership is based, at least to a certain extent, on one’s formal department and one’s language.

However, the results that membership in a social network, membership in a task network, age, gender, and race did not significantly predict identification cannot be explained by homophily theory. Therefore, a post-hoc test was conducted to determine if membership in one’s department influenced strength of identification with any of the organizational targets. Results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in identification based on department. This finding means that neither emergent networks (social and task), nor formal networks (department) were predictive of identification. This is not to say that networks are not important at FootWorld, nor that networks do not influence the attitudes of other members. This result means that formal networks are no more influential within this organization than are emergent networks, which is interesting, especially in light of previous research that has found one’s formal network to be predictive of information acquisition, uncertainty reduction, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, overall connectedness, and social influence (Eisenberg,
Monge, & Miller, 1983; Monge & Contractor, 2003; Monge & Eisenberg, 1987). This result is different from that of Corman (1990) who found that:

Formally prescribed relationships have a very important effect on perceived communication relationships, and moreover that this is true even in a high uncertainty organization where formally prescribed relationships tend to be viewed as less important than those that are informally established. (p. 595)

One might make the a priori assumption that formal networks are not as important or informing as emergent networks, but the results of Corman’s (1990) study relating to organizational identification questions this underlying logic. As such, while networks do, in fact, influence identification (Corman, 1990), it might be formal networks (departments), as opposed to emergent networks (social or task), that are most predictive of this variable. The results of this dissertation found that neither formal, nor emergent, networks come to influence identification. Other research that has analyzed identification from a social network perspective, however, has found the opposite. For example, Bullis and Bach (1991) found a strong, positive correlation between multiplexity in one’s informal network and organizational identification, Kuhn and Nelson (2002) found that one’s position within an organization’s formal structure (based on measures of centrality) predicts strong identification with one’s profession, organization, department, and workgroup, and Corman (1990) found that identification is influenced not by one’s individual position within the formal structure, but rather by the extent to which one perceives an overlap between one’s own interests and the collective interests of one’s network. This dissertation separates itself, both theoretically and empirically, from these three studies because although formal networks were assessed (in terms of one’s role
within the organization based on departmental membership), several of the main hypotheses were also based on the predictive nature of more emergent networks. None of the previous three studies analyzed both formal and informal networks, but rather one or the other. As such, an important research question for future consideration is why neither type of network (formal or emergent) is related to identification with one or more targets?

Of importance is understanding why those part of one’s social and/or task network do not influence strengths of identification with one’s profession, one’s organization, one’s department, and/or one’s team. Based on previous literature, those part of one’s communication network will likely come to influence one’s own thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. This line of thinking is similar to the contagion and cognitive theories proposed by Monge and Contractor (2001). However, this dissertation provided evidence that this is not always the case.

One explanation may be that the nature of the survey items tapped into only strong ties as opposed to both strong and weak ties. According to Granovetter (1973), ties are strong to the extent that they are emotionally-driven, intimate, reciprocal, and enduring, whereas weak ties are less emotional, less frequent in terms of communication and interaction, and more instrumental and purposive. By asking the questions in the survey (e.g. list the five people with whom you communicate most, who are your most important contacts for continued organizational success, who are your most important contacts for professional growth, who are your most valued contacts), strong ties were “forced” and weak ties did not emerge. Krackhardt’s (1992) idea that those with whom one shares strong ties are influential is questioned, and Granovetter’s (1973) idea that those with whom one shares weak ties are influential becomes intriguing. Consistent with
Granovetter’s (1973) thesis, it is possible that if emergent networks within FootWorld do influence identification with certain targets, it is important to not only capture who has strong ties to others within the organization, but also with whom people cultivate weak ties: what some refer to as the strong vs. weak ties argument (Granovetter, 1973; Krackhardt, 1992) and what others refer to as the core vs. periphery argument (Borgatti & Everett, 1999; Morgan, Neal, & Carder, 1996). It is possible, therefore, that if emergent networks are influential at FootWorld, the strength of weak ties, as opposed to strong ties, may influence identification.

Second, not only were strong ties the only types of links explored, but also there were no survey items that assessed one’s communication practices with individuals outside of FootWorld. In other words, although the survey items did tap into who communicated with whom and for what reasons within the organization, there are many social groups to which employees belong that extend beyond the workplace, such as friend networks, family networks, professional colleague networks, client networks, and other socially constructed networks. Based on the results of this dissertation, if, again, networks are to influence identification, it is likely that others part of non-organizational social webs become influential. Again using homophily theory, it does not necessarily have to be only those with whom one shares departmental membership who influence employees, but can also be social beings in other walks of life. One might naturally assume that one’s organizational life and one’s personal life are mutually exclusive and, as such, not mutually influential. That is, even the most cursory review of organizational literature might lead one to assume that social beings have the cognitive ability to separate their “work” and “private” lives. However, it can also be argued that there is
great overlap between these two types of networks. “Work” networks can influence “private” networks and “private” networks can influence “work” networks (Hochschild, 2003).

Ibarra (1997) found support for this idea when she found that it was a managers’ “range” of contacts external to the organization that are important for access to information. One of Ibarra’s (1997) main reasons for studying the impact of external social agents on managerial networks was to question the longstanding notion that one’s most important contacts come from within one’s organization, as opposed to externally. Again, the nature of the survey questions in this dissertation did not assess the “private” or “personal” networks that employees have membership in that extend beyond the organizational environment. In retrospect, it would be important to consider networks and identification targets that extend beyond the confines of the organization.

Third, and perhaps most important, is a problem that frequently surfaces in the social network literature and which was discussed in great detail in chapter three. Can scholars make great claims about the link between networks and other variables by studying perceptions as opposed to behaviors? The main conclusion from an earlier chapter was that, although there does exist some controversy in the scholarly literature, insofar as some scholars claim that perceptions cannot explain behaviors and some scholars claim that perceptions can be linked to behaviors, is that the entire perception versus behavior argument is moot. From an organizational communication perspective, our perceptions of communication partners are what truly matters (Corman, 1990; Marsden, 1990). Based on this logic, the survey items for this dissertation only tapped into perceptions (studying who employees think they communicate with), rather than
including observations that would tap into behaviors. Thus, the two different networks that emerged throughout this dissertation (a social network and a task network) are cognitive networks as opposed to behavioral networks. Future research should consider Killworth and Bernard’s (1976) argument that, within the organizational setting, people do not necessarily know with whom they communicate and for what reasons. Perhaps in order to determine whether and to what extent one’s network influences identification with one or more organizational targets, it is important to study networks comprised of people sharing weak ties and also equally necessary to study behavioral networks. That is, perhaps it is important to study not only perceived (Diesner & Carley, 2005), but also actual (Corman & Bradford, 1993) behaviors. Perhaps Killworth and Bernard’s (1976) claim that “people simply do not know…with whom they communicate” has credibility in light of the findings of this dissertation (p. 253).

It has long been thought that the “birds of a feather flock together” mentality informs communication theory. Wilbur Schramm, who Rogers (1997) considers to be the father of modern day communication, was perhaps the first to explicate this idea when he spoke of the importance of a common field of experience for ensuring communication effectiveness. According to Schramm (1963), communicators will be effective to the extent that they share certain things in common, whether it be a common language, a common culture, or even common interests. Based on this fundamental communication paradigm, having certain attributes in common helps communicators facilitate the interaction process. Research indicates, for example, that creating homophilous communication networks in organizations helps newcomers in the area of social support (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Vashdi, 2005), helps organizational newcomers assimilate
into a diverse work environment (Mollica, Gray, & Trevino, 2003), and helps employees make sense of their role within the organizational environment (Rotolo & Wharton, 2003).

However, and which has been pointed out in the literature at least as far back as Rogers and Bhowmik (1970), although homophily does breed more effective communication, heterophily, or the “degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are different with respect to certain attributes,” does not necessarily make communication impossible or ineffective (p. 526). For example, to the extent that there is empathy, upward or downward negotiation, and/or feedback, communication between source and receiver can still be effective. It is important to note that whereas homophily might ease communication, it does, at the same time, inhibit innovation (e.g. new ideas, novel ways of thinking, creativity) in a given communication system.

Scholars who have studied the homophily/heterophily debate have come to accept, and appreciate, the heterophilous gap, first coined by Alpert and Anderson (1973). The heterophilous gap is the idea that commonness (homophily) between a source and a receiver has an invisible gap which, if too wide, creates no commonness between the two, yet if too narrow, provides too much similarity. According to Anderson and Alpert (1974), “…it follows, therefore, that somewhere along the similarity-dissimilarity continuum is a point of optimal heterophily, which offers the potential for maximally effective communication” (p. 284). Based on this idea, both similarity and dissimilarity have a ceiling effect: they are only effective up to a point. Rogers and Bhowmik (1970) create a similar argument when they claim that “…for maximum communication effectiveness, a source and receiver should be homophilous on certain
variables and heterophilous on some variables relevant to the situation” (p. 532). The question, then, is which variables should be similar and which variables should be dissimilar between a source and receiver? Although Rogers and Bhowmik (1970) pose this question by asking “…homophily with respect to what?,” they do not shed much light on this inquiry. In one of the first empirical studies of this heterophilous gap, Lowry (1973) found that persuasion and attitude change was not a result of receivers sharing certain similarities with the source, but rather was a result of sharing certain dissimilarities (persuasion occurred because receivers perceived the source as more credible and intelligent than themselves). This is one of the first studies to provide evidence that homophily is not necessarily a prerequisite for persuasion or effective communication.

These ideas inform the results of this dissertation in several ways. The idea of optimal heterophily can certainly be applicable for communication within the organizational setting. Within the organizational setting, there is often the constant battle between creating relationships based on induced homophily (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987) or focused choice (Feld, 1982). Induced homophily, according to McPherson and Smith-Lovin (1987), is when“…the composition of the group dictates that all pairs will be homophilous” (p. 371). According to this idea, individuals interact with similar others because of such things as organizational membership, departmental membership, team membership, shared tasks, etc. In other words, it is the idea that because of one’s formal role within the organization, s/he will share homophilous ties with similar others.

Focused choice, on the other hand, is the idea that although social beings might choose a particular profession, and even choose a specific organization within that
profession to work, they decide with whom to communicate and with whom to create relationships. This phenomenon is not, however, random. According to Feld (1982), employees choose relational partners based on expected rates of return. In other words, according to focused choice, individuals are covertly asking themselves ‘how can I benefit from this relationship?’ The answer to this question is oftentimes ‘I want to create a relationship with this employee because they have something that I need or want.’ This, in short, is the basic premise of resource dependency theory: others have resources that we need, want, or desire, and creating a relationship with them will increase the likelihood of obtaining that valued, limited resource. This is almost a textbook example of heterophily in that we create relationships with dissimilar individuals because they have certain things that we need.

Based on the results of this dissertation, strong ties occur based on such variables as gender, language, education, and departmental membership. One way to interpret these results is using the idea that, within the organizational setting, employees come to create “weak” relationships with others who are dissimilar to them. And perhaps it is those with whom employees have “weak” relationships at FootWorld that come to influence identification. Using the idea of heterophily, it makes sense that employees cultivate weak relationships with others dissimilar to them. What, in other words, would one gain from creating relationships with those similar to them? Creating relationships with similar others might increase communication effectiveness, decrease communication uncertainty, and increase the likelihood of creating social support networks. However, creating relationships with similar others likely cannot provide employees with valuable resources that they do not have. Again, echoing resource dependency theory, if everyone
had access to the same resources at the same time, why would certain employees be more valued, less expendable, and more powerful?

From a social network perspective, the idea of heterophily can help explain social capital, a phenomenon that has recently intrigued scholars. One of the most useful definitions of social capital is that offered by Pearce and Randel (2004), who claim that:

Social capital is a resource that can facilitate certain actions and is located in a network for more or less durable relations. For example, social capital can be having the contacts to gain the support of another department, having a well-placed friend who is willing to do a favor, knowing who to call to ensure that customers’ bills are paid promptly, or gaining information from a regular golf partners or lunch buddies. (p. 83)

The basic idea of social capital is that employees within an organization are inclined to create network ties with others based on expected outcomes. This is very similar to Ibarra’s (1995) idea of the deficit hypothesis: “…[that] despite the presence of significant structural constraints, people play an active role in structuring their social networks to achieve their goals” (p. 677). Communication, therefore, becomes strategic, deliberate, and tactical. As Lin (2001) explains, individuals communicate with and create social ties to others in an effort to receive a constant and punctual flow of information, in an effort to have some level of assumed or perceived influence over another, for accessibility to scarce resources, and/or to increase one’s own sense of identity, recognition, and worthiness as an individual within the organization (pp. 6-8). At the very heart of social capital is communicating not necessarily with the most people, but the “right” people, in
terms of the accruement of valuable and limited resources. Social capital, then, is something beneficial at the more micro/employee level.

Pearce and Randel (2004) concur with this idea when they claim that social capital “is a resource that can facilitate certain actions and is located in a network for more or less durable social relations” (p. 83). Some studies showed that increased social capital is correlated with increased career success within the organization (Gabbay & Zuckerman, 1998), increased possession of scarce resources (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998), improved communication within group and team settings (Rosenthal, 1996), increased organizational benefits (Portes, 1998), greater feelings of social control (Smart, 1993), the creation of intellectual capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), a reduction in turnover rates among employees (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993), an increase in inter-group and inter-team collaboration (Rosenthal, 1996), an increase in inter-organizational communication (Uzzi, 1997), and an increase in intra-organizational learning (Kraatz, 1998). According to Burt (1997), “certain people are connected to certain others, trusting certain others, obligated to support certain others, dependent on exchange with certain others” (p 340). What is missing from this definition, however, is the term “dissimilar.” In order to have access to limited resources, it is important to create relationships with those who have these resources. According to the principle of heterophily, similar people would have the same contacts, would share the same common resources, and would have access to the same benefits. Employees create relationships with dissimilar others because such contacts, resources, and benefits are scarce: accumulated by few, yet wanted by most.
The original idea that informed this dissertation is that those part of the same communication network(s) come to influence the behaviors and attitudes of each other. And, based on a large body of existing research, there is empirical evidence to suggest that social beings are influenced by others with whom they communicate and who are considered similar to them. However, and perhaps too often overlooked when it comes to the process of communication, there are great benefits of creating relationships with those who are dissimilar, creating heterophilous ties. Within the organizational setting especially, creating relationships with dissimilar others provides the possibility of (a) novel solutions to existing problems, (b) new ways of completing tasks, (c) obtaining new and valued resources, (d) obtaining access to new and profitable individuals, and (e) obtaining new and important information. The results of this dissertation provide additional support for the notion that although homophily might provide increased feelings of similarity, heterophily might provide increased access to novel resources.

Although the results of this dissertation were unexpected they are, in theory, not unexplained. It is perhaps most useful to frame the results of this dissertation using the “strength of weak ties” and the “strength of strong ties” arguments. According to Ibarra (1995), and using the basic tenets of social capital theory, employees seek relationships with others because they possess a certain valuable resource; however, at the same time, these employees will create weak ties with these individuals, making certain to foster trust and gain the sought-after resource, but not expending the energy or intimacy necessary to create a strong tie.

Based on the idea of heterophily, it is likely that those with whom one creates weak relationships with will be dissimilar, whereas those with whom one creates strong
relationships will be similar. This idea is not novel and has received support in the literature (Ibarra, 1995; Louch, 2000). This finding questions Krackhardt’s (1992) idea that those with whom one shares strong ties are extremely influential, and adds credibility to Granovetter’s (1983) idea that those with whom one shares weak ties are extremely influential. Consistent with Granovetter’s (1973) main thesis those part of one’s communication networks might influence both strengths and breadth of identification with one or more targets. This dissertation, however, only captured strong ties: ties that were influential in terms of network membership, but not influential regarding similarities in identification. The main conclusion from a network perspective, therefore, is that if those part of one’s networks at FootWorld do influence strengths of identification, it is perhaps the strength of weak ties, rather than the strength of strong ties, that might explain this.

A question that still remains un answered is why those more central in the social and task networks do not exhibit significantly stronger strengths of identification as compared to those less central. Two explanations can help shed some light on this finding. First, and to reiterate, although those more strongly identified did not significantly identify more strongly with any of the organizational targets, there was very little variation in identification scores throughout the organization. On one hand, this has positive implications for FootWorld. Employees, for the most part, are strongly identified with all four organizational targets, albeit some more than others. From an empirical and theoretical perspective, however, little variation in scores means that there is likely going to be no significant difference in identification based on membership in certain subgroups. Therefore, one rationale for the lack of evidence supporting the notion that
those more central would be more identified is that all employees were strongly identified. This offers evidence that certain employees at FootWorld are not unidentified or even disidentified as some scholarship would indicate (Gossett, 2002; Rousseau, 1998), but rather strongly identified with all four targets. Lack of variation in identification scores throughout the organization, therefore, is one way of explaining this unexpected finding.

Second, although much research exists to support the notion that members central in a given network are more influential than those who are peripheral, it is important to yet again acknowledge the fact that only two networks were analyzed for the purposes of this dissertation: a social network and a task network. Although results indicate that being central in either of these networks, based on degree and eigenvector measures, did not influence identification, perhaps being central in other networks within the organization (e.g. one’s department or work team) would have predicted strong identification. For example, other networks that are likely to emerge within an organizational environment are support networks, advice networks, trust networks, knowledge networks, peer networks, lunch networks, and/or networks based on common interests. Because of the nature of the survey items, although these are examples of formal and informal networks, these other networks were not considered. As such, although centrality in the larger social and task networks did not predict strong identification, perhaps being central in these other networks would be a better predictor of identification.

Discussion of the Results From a Social Identity Theory Perspective

Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) social identity theory stems from the idea that social beings have the psychological need to claim membership in certain groups, ultimately
creating social identities. The social categories in which individuals classify themselves, similar to the theories of homophily forwarded by Monge and Contractor (2001), provide useful information regarding human behaviors, decisions, and attitudes. As Mael and Ashforth (1989) point out, social identities not only allow one to define himself/herself, but also allow one to define others. That is, identifying oneself as part of a particular “in-group,” whether that be based on such variables as age, education, gender, occupation, or religion, not only allows one to compare himself/herself with others part of the same group, but also allows one to compare himself/herself against a comparable “out-group.” Taking this out of the psychological and social-psychological fields and using it as a framework for the study of organizational communication, those part of the same “in-group” should, according to previous scholarship, hold similar attitudes and engage in similar behaviors (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Brown & Starkey, 2000; Hogg & Terry, 2000). This should occur because of one’s communication practices with others, ultimately constructing certain communication networks. Although, as Mael and Ashforth (1992) contend, social identities attempt to espouse the question “who am I?” within the organizational realm, much research to date argues that this question can be answered in several ways. For example, employees from FootWorld can claim identity membership based on gender (e.g. “I am a female employee within the organization”), the organization itself (e.g. “I am an employee at FootWorld”), tenure (e.g. “I am an employee who has been at the organization for the past 25 years”), department (e.g. “I am an employee from the marketing department”), team (e.g. “I am an employee who has been working on the development of a new product”), or language (e.g. “I am a Spanish-speaking employee”).
Social identity theory claims that even though one might claim membership based on any or all of these identities, some identities are more salient than others. As the results of this dissertation reveal, since employees identify most strongly with the department, next strongly with team, next strongly with the organization, and least strongly with the profession, it is likely that these are also the identities that employees see as most important in helping define themselves. That is, it is likely that employees identify themselves first and foremost based on membership in one of 10 departments and define themselves least based on their professional or occupational title. According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), “the individual’s social identity may be derived not only from the organization, but also from his or her work group, department, union, lunch group, age cohort, fast-track group, and so on” (p. 22). Perhaps most employees at FootWorld identify themselves based on departmental membership because of distinctiveness, meaning that the values, beliefs, motives, goals, and attitudes of “in-group” members are strikingly similar to oneself, yet different from comparable others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 24). Identification with one’s department might also be strongest based on prestige, meaning that one is part of an “in-group” because there is a positive stigma associated with such membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 25). Identification with one’s department might also be strongest because of one’s formal role: communication is most frequent with those who have similar jobs within FootWorld. Although the results of this dissertation cannot lead to any conclusions regarding why identification with one’s department is stronger than identification with one’s profession, organization, or team, it is likely that each of the aforementioned variables (distinctiveness, prestige, and formal role) plays a role in this psychological process.
Social identity theory can help explain why levels of identification were not predicted by membership in either task or social networks. Based on Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) overview of social identity theory, “…in the relevant intergroup situations, individuals will not interact as individuals, on the basis of individual characteristics or interpersonal relationships, but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to members of other groups” (p. 10). However, since Tajfel and Turner (1986), and other, more recent reviews (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Scott & Lane, 2000), claim that employees have several individual and social identities, why are the identification targets examined throughout this dissertation (profession, organization, department, and team) not related to network membership? Based on Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) assumption that employees part of the same “in-group” act in ways reminiscent of group membership (a homophily perspective), it is unclear why those part of the same social and/or task networks did not have similar strengths of identification. Furthermore, the logic underlying social identity theory is that those in the same social and task networks will identify similarly with all four identification targets and that their strengths of identification will be significantly different from members outside of their networks. Neither of these assumptions was supported by the results of this dissertation, as membership in a task or social network did not predict strengths of identification, nor was there significant variance in identification based on network membership. Analyses also revealed that language, gender, education, and tenure did not significantly influence identification either.

Similar to the previous discussion of social influence, it is likely that employees are influenced by social others, but that perhaps targets in addition to one’s profession,
one’s organization, one’s department, and one’s team are salient. According to social identity theory, social beings claim, at once, membership in many different (and possibly confounding) networks, each of which might influence how one acts, the attitudes that one holds, and the relationships that one socially constructs. For example, some of the networks that were not assessed for the purposes of this dissertation were groups of people who go to the same organizational meetings, people who frequently eat lunch together, people who are working in groups or teams on a particular project, groups of professional colleagues, possible clients, groups of friends, family members, and other social groups that extend beyond the confines of the organization. As such, when using social identity theory as a guiding framework for the study of such variables as those analyzed here, it is important to remember that, even when studying networks within an organizational setting, it is likely that non-organizational networks also impact the attitudes and behaviors of employees. The a priori assumption at the outset was that the four targets under examination would be related to the networks most salient for employees (task and social) and, as such, employees would look to these networks for attitudinal and behavioral indicators. Based on this dissertation, however, this was not the case, which underscores the importance of considering other salient networks that can guide the attitudes and behaviors of organizational employees. Again, perhaps the networks more influential and informing of identification are either those within the organizational setting that were not analyzed here, or those that extend beyond the organizational context. A key finding, therefore, is that not all networks come to influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees.

Limitations
Like any research, this study is not without limitations. One possible limitation of this dissertation is the response rate. Although the number of respondents who participated (99) compared to the possible number of employees (123) is a response rate of over 80%, it would have been more beneficial to get data from all employees. However, and similar to Doerfel and Fitzgerald (2004), there were no incentives driving one’s participation. Although a census was not achieved, most network scholars would agree that a response rate of 80% enables one to capture enough information about social behaviors and social processes (Burt, 2000; Feeley, 2000; Friedkin, 1982).

Another possible limitation of this dissertation is that the only two networks that were measured to predict identification with each of the four targets were task and social in nature. However, there are many other types of networks of which employees part of FootWorld could be members, including informal lunch networks, advice networks, knowledge networks, social support networks, and the list goes on. Future research should consider whether other networks influence the variables under examination.

A third possible limitation of this dissertation is that the only type of network ties that were analyzed were strong, as opposed to weak. According to Granovetter (1973), “the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutually confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie (p. 1361). Based on Granovetter’s (1973) overview, as well as the research conducted by Friedkin (1982) and Marsden (1990), it may well be that those with whom people communicate infrequently and where there exists little emotional attachment or emotional intimacy come to have as much (if not more) influence than those with whom employees cultivate strong ties. In order to partition employees into the
different task and social factions, it was important to study strong ties only, even though this may have impacted the results. The nature of the survey items tapping into one’s communication networks put certain constraints on the employees of FootWorld because the only ties that were measured were those that employees have within the physical workplace, neglecting the influence of professional colleagues, friends, clients, and social groups outside of the workplace: memberships that Mael and Ashforth (1992) claim are important in predicting behavior. Thus, another area ripe for investigation is studying the relationship between weak ties and organizational identification, determining how each mutually influences the other. Perhaps weak ties are influential in different ways--or more so--than strong ties when it comes to predicting organizational identification.

A fourth possible limitation of this dissertation is the fact that when obtaining the data, employees’ perceptions of their relationships with others were gathered based on self-report surveys rather than conducting observations of actual behavior. Although Bernard and Killworth (1977) provide data to support the notion that there is a high correlation between one’s self-reported relationships and one’s actual relationships, others argue that perhaps it is more beneficial (and valid) to study communication networks using a two-stage snowball method, whereby the social actors that one claims to have social ties to substantiate egos’ claim (e.g. Corman & Bradford, 1993). Perhaps the way that the network items were measured impinged on the results of this dissertation. Future research should measure behaviors, not only perceptions, such as who goes to the same organizational meetings, who is working in the same group toward the same project, and/or who is routinely going to lunch with the same people.
A fifth possible limitation of this dissertation is the fact that this study was cross-sectional, instead of longitudinal. A cross-sectional design involves analysis at one--oftentimes timed for the convenience of the researcher, the organization, or both--point in time, whereas a longitudinal design has several stages of data collection. Longitudinal designs are beneficial, according to Assche (2005), because they allow the researcher to study such things as network stability, network turnover, network intimacy, and network importance over time. Longitudinal data, therefore, allow one to study not only the effect(s) of certain networks, but also the process involved in network construction or even network destruction. Moreover, longitudinal data enables the researcher to do reliability checks on the data as well as compare points in time to identify stable networks, identify possible cycles of variation, and/or reveal instabilities in the social and task relations. As such, had this dissertation been more longitudinal in nature, perhaps the data would have been more informing of the connection (or lack thereof) between communication networks and identification.

A sixth possible limitation of this dissertation is the fact that only four targets of identification were analyzed: profession, organization, department, and team. Based on the results, it becomes evident that perhaps employees might also strongly identify with other targets, such as identification with one’s nationality, identification with one’s culture, and identification with one’s language. Although results are informing of identification, perhaps other targets are equally (and perhaps more) important for FootWorld employees.

A seventh possible limitation has to do with the survey items that tapped into identification with the four organizational targets. First, since a pretest was impossible,
insofar as it would prime employees, it is possible that employees did not know the
difference between “profession” and “organization.” It would have been more beneficial
to explain each of the four targets and give an example of each, increasing the likelihood
that employees correctly operationalized the difference between these two targets.
Second, there may have been a halo effect due to how similar the survey items were. This
might explain why the strengths of identification were both so similar and so strong:
employees might have fallen prey to a halo effect and/or a response rate. It would have
been beneficial to have reverse coded some of the items to help reduce the likelihood of a
response rate or halo effect.

A final possible limitation of this dissertation is the fact that this organizational
analysis must be framed as a case study. Although case study approaches are certainly
informing of organizational practices and processes, the use of such a methodological
approach impinges on issues of generalizability. The results of this dissertation find that
social and task networks do not significantly impact strength of identification with one or
more organizational targets; however, this is not to say that results in all organizations
will be uniformly the same. It is extremely important to examine several organizations,
using the same method, to determine whether and to what extent results are similar, and
whether and to what extent results can be generalized to organizations at large.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this dissertation support previous research in the area of
organizational identification, insofar as a more local organizational target (department)
was stronger than the more distant organizational targets (profession, organization). This,
again, can be explained using the underlying logic of social identity theory, where
employees will come to identify with the target considered most instrumental in defining who one is. Results also support the previous claim that, using social identity theory as a theoretical framework, employees will not only come to define themselves in many different ways within the organizational setting, but that all identities become a strong predictor of who one is within that organization (Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Grice, Paulsen, & Jones, 2002; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

The results of this dissertation propose the need to better understand the link between organizational communication networks and identification with organizational targets. Although results indicate that there exists no link between these two phenomena at FootWorld, this does not necessarily mean that the same results will surface in other organizations as well. That is why it is important to frame this dissertation as a case study in that it is one example of an organization’s communication practices.

Results also propose the need to better understand how social identity theory helps to frame the study of organizational communication from an identification perspective. The results of this dissertation indicate that neither one’s task network, nor one’s social network come to influence strength of identification with one or more organizational targets. As such, it is important to understand, from a theoretical perspective, which variables might influence identification and, perhaps more importantly, which in-groups or systems may influence organizational employees.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, two key assumptions can be made from the results of this dissertation. First, employees at FootWorld, although most strongly identified with their department, are strongly identified with all organizational targets. As such, and
based on much of the extant literature on organizational identification, it is likely that FootWorld employees (a) behave in ways that reflect the values of the organization, (b) behave in ways that will benefit not only themselves or their department, but the organization at large, (c) are proud to be employed by the organization, and (d) are strongly committed to the organization. Certain scholarship over the years has found support for the idea that strongly identifying with one organizational target will lead to weaker identification with other targets (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Based on this idea, to the extent that one is strongly identified with one’s department, not only is it likely that this employee will be less identified (or disidentified) with the organization, but this employee will also act in ways that will benefit the department and perhaps not the organization. However, since employees claimed strong identification with all targets, both of these worries can be assuaged.

Second, from a network perspective, employees have cultivated strong relationships, for both social and task reasons, with fellow employees. Although results from this dissertation explain how frequently employees communicate with each other and some reasons for communication (e.g. support, assistance), the data are not informative about whether or not employees create relationships with the “right” people within the organization. Therefore, on one hand, from a practical perspective, both the social and task networks at FootWorld are quite dense, meaning that the majority of employees are well-connected and few isolates emerge (see Figures 1 and 2). From an organizational perspective, this is certainly beneficial. It translates into the idea that FootWorld employees are “in the know” and that few structural holes emerge within the networks. On the other hand, however, the nature of the survey items did not tap into the
major reason(s) that individuals are connected to the employees that they are connected to. The results, therefore, cannot lead one to claim that employees are connected to the “right” people for the “right” reasons. Employees at FootWorld, therefore, are well-connected in both their social and task networks, increasing the likelihood of effective communication.

Future Research

Two avenues for future research can be considered. First, it is important to better understand what it means for one to be strongly identified with one’s profession, organization, department, and/or team. Although there exist several scales that tap into organizational identification, as well as variations of these scales, perhaps the statements presented in these scales do not necessarily measure or “get at” identification. For example, although Miller et al. (2000) questioned the validity of Cheney’s (1982) Organizational Identification Questionnaire, one must ask about the extent to which any version of this survey instrument is truly measuring identification. Therefore, although the methodology of choice for studying identification remains quantitative in nature (see Riketta, 2005), perhaps qualitative methodologies could provide data that better explain why individuals identify (or do not identify) with certain targets and what it means, from communication and behavioral perspectives, to identify with one’s organization or other organizational targets. Future research should examine identification from a qualitative perspective (or at least from a mixed methods approach) in order to better “get at” issues of identification.

Second, it is important to assess communication networks that extend beyond the organizational environment when studying organizational communication networks. The
organizational communication literature increasingly acknowledges the changing nature of work over the past decade or two. For example, being employed in the same organization for one’s entire professional tenure has become the exception, rather than the rule. Along with the changing nature of work comes the changing nature of communication and networking within these organizations. As Arthur and Rousseau (1996) point out, the boundaries of traditional organizations are becoming much less rigid and far more fluid as a result of things such as restructuring, globalization, and new communication technologies. Thus, with the changing nature of work and the changing nature of networks, comes the changing nature of communication. No longer do employees only create communication ties with those internal to the organization. It becomes important to study organizations in what Arthur and Rousseau (1996) call the “boundaryless organization” or what Beck (2000) calls the “second modernity.” These types of organizations reject traditional notions of organizing in that part-time employees, temporary employees, geographically dispersed employees, and work-from-home employees are more common, rather than the exception. Future research should examine not only how identification in these new organizational environments changes (and likely shifts), but also how our communication networks change, become more dynamic, and become more fluid. Future research must examine both the process and effects of these organizational shifts.

Conclusion

When discussing the role of contemporary media in framing both political and social issues, from a communication perspective, Gandy (2003) writes:
Funny thing about the horizon. No matter how far or how fast you walk toward it, it never gets any closer. Indeed, as we are often reminded, if we walk toward the horizon long enough, we eventually arrive back at the point from which we began our journey. Along the way, however, we often have a sense of making progress because the landscape appears to have changed so dramatically. (p. 355)

This proclamation, in essence, can describe the efforts of this dissertation. The major premise of this research endeavor was that organizational communication networks influence the strength of identification with one or more organizational targets. The results indicate that although networks are important at FootWorld, they are not predictive of identification with one’s profession, identification with one’s organization, identification with one’s department, or identification with one’s team. They might, however, be important for employees in their efforts to reduce organizational uncertainty, to gain organizational information, to obtain both formal (organizational) and informal (personal) advice, to gain support, and the list goes on. As such, although the original hypotheses proposed relationships between and among both social and task networks and the aforementioned variables, a question still remains unanswered: which type(s) of communication network might influence identification? Similar to Gandy’s (2003) observation, the hypotheses driving the current dissertation have been tested and answered; however, as a result, many new research questions have surfaced. The next step in this line of research, therefore, is to determine not whether and how networks influence identification with the four organizational targets, but rather which types of networks might come to influence these variables.
This dissertation has shed light on several hypotheses, has forced the creation of new questions, has supported the use of network theory and social identity theory as useful frameworks for studying organizational communication networks, and has provided some interesting avenues for further investigation. Applying Gandy’s (2003) advice to social science research at large, it may very well be that all research should be critiqued on whether or not it increases our “…understanding of where we are and where we have been.” (p. 375). However, it is equally (if not more) important to know where we are going. This dissertation has paved this path for future research.
References


Unpublished master’s thesis, Purdue University.


Table 1

*FootWorld Participants By Department*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Department Size</th>
<th># of Participants From Department</th>
<th>% of Overall Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification w/ Profession</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification w/ Organization</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification w/ Department</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification w/ Team</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Means for Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team by Department*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>6.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>6.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>5.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

*Correlations Between and Among Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
<td>0.88*</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>0.70*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>0.88*</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
<td>0.71*</td>
<td>0.66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>0.71*</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
<td>0.55*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>0.70*</td>
<td>0.66*</td>
<td>0.55*</td>
<td>1.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = $p < .01$
Table 5

*Mean Centrality Scores For Social and Task Communication Networks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Eigenvector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Network</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>8.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Network</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>8.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Correlation Between Centrality Measures (Social Network)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Eigenvector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.639*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvector</td>
<td>.639*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = $p < .01$
Table 7

*Correlation Between Centrality Measures (Task Network)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Eigenvector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.639*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvector</td>
<td>.639*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = p < .01
Table 8

Results of chi square analyses to determine the influence of homophilous variables on social and task faction membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>26.25*</td>
<td>-1.40</td>
<td>432.45*</td>
<td>73.06*</td>
<td>45.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>20.70*</td>
<td>-1.24</td>
<td>390.07*</td>
<td>54.30*</td>
<td>49.78*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = p < .001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Employees will most strongly identify with their department and team</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>T-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Employees part of the same department will similarly identify with all targets</td>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>Identification w/Department</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Gender, tenure, language, and department will influence identification</td>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a: Employees part of the same social network will similarly identify with all targets</td>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>Identification Social Network</td>
<td>E-I Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b: Employees part of the same task network will similarly identify with all targets</td>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>Identification Task Network</td>
<td>E-I Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Those part of one’s social network will influence identification more than one’s task network</td>
<td>Homophily</td>
<td>Social Network Task Network</td>
<td>QAP Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: Those with high degree centrality will be more strongly identified with all organizational targets</td>
<td>Centrality</td>
<td>Identification Degree Centrality</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7: Those with high eigenvector centrality will be more strongly identified with all organizational targets</td>
<td>Centrality</td>
<td>Identification Eigenvector Centrality</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*Results of Paired-Samples T-tests Between and Among Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>t-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession/Department</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-12.66*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization/Department</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>-11.93*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team/Department</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>8.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team/Profession</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>-5.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team/Organization</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>-2.40*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = p < .001
Table 11

Results of ANOVA Analyses Between and Among Department, Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession/Department</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>p = 0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization/Department</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>p = 0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department/Department</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>p = 0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team/Department</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>p = 0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12

Results of ANOVA Analyses Between and Among Homophilous Variables and Strengths of Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$F$ (Gender)</th>
<th>$F$ (Language)</th>
<th>$F$ (Education)</th>
<th>$F$ (Tenure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>1.98*</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.75*</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = $p ≤ .05$
### Table 13

*Results of the Social and Task EI Indexes for Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Index Score (Social)</td>
<td>0.68*</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Index Score (Task)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = $p < .05$
Table 14

Results of QAP Correlations Between and Among Social Network, Task Network, Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Network</th>
<th>Task Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
<td>-0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
<td>-0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>-0.08*</td>
<td>-0.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>-0.01*</td>
<td>0.00*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = p < .01
Table 15

Correlations Between and Among Degree Centrality in Social and Task Networks and Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree Centrality Social Network</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Centrality Task Network</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = $p < .01$
Table 16

*Correlations Between and Among Eigenvector Centrality in Social and Task Networks and Identification with Profession, Organization, Department, and Team*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvector Centrality Social Network</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.28*</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvector Centrality Task Network</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.28*</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = $p < .01$
Table 17

Results of ANOVA analyses between departmental membership and strength of identification with the profession, organization, department, and team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Membership</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: None of the $F$ values are deemed significant at the $p < .05$ level
**Figure 1**

*Pictorial Representation of the Organizational Social Network*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ac</th>
<th>Ad</th>
<th>Cu</th>
<th>Ma</th>
<th>Op</th>
<th>Pu</th>
<th>Sa</th>
<th>Sh</th>
<th>Te</th>
<th>Op</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Purchasing</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Operations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English-speaking = •**

**Spanish-speaking = ▲**
Figure 2

Pictorial Representation of the Organizational Task Network

Ac = Accounting       Pr = Production
Ad = Administration   Pu = Purchasing
Cu = Customer Service Sa = Sales
Ma = Marketing        Sh = Shipping
Op = Operations       Te = Technology

English-speaking = •  
Spanish-speaking = ▲
Figure 3

Pictorial Representation of the Social Communication Network By Faction

- Faction # 1 (Males from production)
- Faction # 2 (Males from sales)
- Faction # 3 (Females from customer service)
- Faction # 4 (Females from accounting)
- Faction # 5 (Males from operations/shipping)
- Faction # 6 (Males from technology/sales)
- Faction # 7 (Males/females from sales/marketing/operations)
- Faction # 8 (Males/females from production)
- Faction # 9 (Males/females from production/shipping)
- Faction # 10 (Males from operations/purchasing)

English-speaking = •
Spanish-speaking = ▲
Figure 4

Pictorial Representation of the Task Communication Network By Faction

- Faction # 1 (Females from production/shipping)
- Faction # 2 (Males/females from accounting/sales)
- Faction # 3 (Males from technology/marketing)
- Faction # 4 (Males from production/shipping)
- Faction # 5 (Males/females from production)
- Faction # 6 (Males/females from production/shipping)
- Faction # 7 (Females from customer service)
- Faction # 8 (Males from purchasing/operations)
- Faction # 9 (Males from sales)
- Faction # 10 (Males from sales)

English-speaking = •
Spanish-speaking = ▲
Appendix A

Informed Consent Form for Studying Organizational Identification and Organizational Networks

Dear Employee,

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Corey Liberman, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at Rutgers University. This consent form contains information about the study that the researcher will go over with you. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. When all of your questions have been answered, you will be asked to sign this consent form if you agree to be in the study. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep for your own records.

The purpose of this study is to assess issues of communication within your organization. The purpose of this research is to determine whether the relationships that you have created within your organization influence your levels of organizational satisfaction and commitment. The research is also designed to determine whether and how these relationships that you have created have helped you “learn the ropes” of your organization. Previous studies have shown that the individuals with whom employees create relationships influence these and this study will try to determine whether these results apply to your organization as well.

You must currently be employed by the organization to participate in this study. Your participation in this study will last for approximately 30 minutes. The investigator will first ask if you have any questions about the study. Once all questions are answered by the investigator, you will be given a survey and asked to compete it. During the
Appendix A (cont…)

survey, all employees are more than welcome to ask the investigator any questions. Once you have completed it, you will give it back to the investigator.

Participation in this study may not benefit you directly, but the results may provide both you and your organization with information about the importance of relationship development within your organization and possible ways of increasing satisfaction, commitment, and understanding. There is no risk associated with your participation in this study. There will be no compensation for your participation in the study. There is no cost to you for participating in this research project. Your alternative to this survey is to not participate.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you, such as your age, the department that you work for, and how long you have been an employee of the organization. I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual’s access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The researcher and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated, unless you have agreed otherwise.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and you may refuse to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Corey Liberman at (973) 768-8153 or by email at liberman@scils.rutgers.edu. If you have any questions about your
Appendix A (cont…)

rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(732) 932-0150 Ext. 2104

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

By signing below, you agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of subject ________________________         Date ___________________

Signature of investigator ______________________       Date ___________________
Appendix B

Survey Items Assessing Organizational Identification

When someone criticizes my profession it feels like a personal insult
When someone criticizes my organization it feels like a personal insult
When someone criticizes my department it feels like a personal insult
When someone criticizes my work team it feels like a personal insult
When someone praises my profession it feels like a personal compliment
When someone praises my organization it feels like a personal compliment
When someone praises my department it feels like a personal compliment
When someone praises my work team it feels like a personal compliment
When I talk about my profession I usually say “we” rather than “they”
When I talk about my organization I usually say “we” rather than “they”
When I talk about my department I usually say “we” rather than “they”
When I talk about my work team I usually say “we” rather than “they”
If a story in the media criticized my profession, I would feel embarrassed
If a story in the media criticized my organization, I would feel embarrassed
If a story in the media criticized my department, I would feel embarrassed
If a story in the media criticized my work team, I would feel embarrassed
I am interested in what others think about my profession
I am interested in what others think about my organization
I am interested in what others think about my department
I am interested in what others think about my work team
My profession’s successes are my successes
Appendix B (cont…)

My organization’s successes are my successes

My department’s successes are my successes

My work team’s successes are my successes
Appendix C

Survey Items Assessing Organizational Social Networks

Please indicate the THREE individuals with whom you communicate most on a weekly basis, including communication via telephone, e-mail, phone conference, memos, meetings, face-to-face, for reasons relating to organizational gossip, personal gossip, weekend plans, social clubs, lunch meetings, dinner meetings, or any other information that is not work-related. Please also indicate how often you communicate with these people on a weekly basis using the following scale:

1 = Very infrequently
2 = Infrequently
3 = Moderately infrequently
4 = Sometimes
5 = Moderately frequently
6 = Frequently
7 = Very frequently

Individual 1 ___________________               How often you communicate __________
Individual 2 ___________________               How often you communicate __________
Individual 3 ___________________               How often you communicate __________
Appendix C (cont…)

For each individual listed above, please answer the following questions by using the following scale and writing in the number that applies:

1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = Moderately
4 = Quite a bit
5 = A great deal

Individual 1

How much can you confide in this person? ____

How much does this person agree with or support your actions or thoughts? ____

If you needed immediate help or assistance, how much could this person usually help? ____

Do you feel as though this person really appreciates you as an individual? ____

Do you feel as though you can count on this person? ____

Is this person someone that you would consider dependable? ____
Appendix D

Survey Items Assessing Organizational Task Networks

Please indicate the THREE individuals with whom you communicate most on a weekly basis, including communication via telephone, e-mail, phone conference, memos, meetings, face-to-face, for reasons relating to organizational goals, organizational information, job tasks, rules, regulations, policies, or any other information that is about work-related things. Please also indicate how often you communicate with these people on a weekly basis using the following scale:

1 = Very infrequently
2 = Infrequently
3 = Moderately infrequently
4 = Sometimes
5 = Moderately frequently
6 = Frequently
7 = Very frequently

Individual 1 ___________________               How often you communicate __________
Individual 2 ___________________               How often you communicate __________
Individual 3 ___________________               How often you communicate __________
Appendix D (cont…)

For each individual listed above, please answer the following questions by using the following scale and writing in the number that applies:

1 = Not at all
2 = A little
3 = Moderately
4 = Quite a bit
5 = A great deal

Individual 1

How much can you confide in this person? ____

How much does this person agree with or support your actions or thoughts? ____

If you needed immediate help or assistance, how much could this person usually help? ____

Do you feel as though this person really appreciates you as an individual? ____

Do you feel as though you can count on this person? ____

Is this person someone that you would consider dependable? ____
Appendix E

Translated Informed Consent Form for Studying Organizational Identification and Organizational Networks

Empleado,

Se le invita a que participe en un estudio investigativo conducido por Corey Liberman, un candidato doctoral en el departamento de la Comunicación en la Universidad de Rutgers. Este formulario de consentimiento contiene información acerca del estudio, que el investigador repasará con usted. Usted tendrá la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y de que se las contesten. Cuando se hayan contestado todas sus preguntas, le pedirán que firme este formulario de consentimiento si usted está de acuerdo en ser parte de la investigación. Se le dará una copia de este formulario para que guarde en sus propios expedientes.

El propósito de este estudio es evaluar los asuntos de la comunicación dentro de su organización. El propósito de esta investigación es determinar si las relaciones que usted ha creado dentro de su organización influyen en sus niveles de la satisfacción y el compromiso con la organización. La investigación también está diseñada para determinar si estas relaciones que usted ha creado le han ayudado a aprender cómo funciona su organización y de así serlo, cómo lo han hecho. Las investigaciones anteriores han demostrado que los individuos con quienes los empleados crean relaciones influyen en ellos y esta investigación intentará determinar si estos resultados podrían aplicar a su organización también.

Usted debe ser empleado actual de la organización para participar en este estudio. Su participación en el estudio durará aproximadamente 30 minutos. El investigador
primero le preguntará si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio. Una vez que el investigador conteste todas sus preguntas, le darán una encuesta para que usted llene. Durante la encuesta todos los empleados son bienvenidos a hacerle cualquier pregunta al investigador. Una vez que usted la haya terminado, se lo devolverá al investigador.

Puede ser que su participación en este estudio no le beneficie directamente, pero los resultados pueden proveer información, tanto suya como de su organización, sobre la importancia del desarrollo de las relaciones dentro de su organización y las maneras posibles de aumentar la satisfacción, el compromiso y la comprensión. No hay ningún riesgo si participa en este estudio. Tampoco habrá remuneración por su participación en este estudio. No tendrá que pagar nada por participar en este proyecto de investigación. Su alternativa a esta encuesta es no participar.

Esta investigación es confidencial. Confidencial quiere decir que se incluirá cierta información acerca de usted, tal como su edad, el departamento para el cual usted trabaja, y cuánto tiempo usted ha sido empleado de la organización. Mantendré esta información confidencial limitando el acceso de los individuos a los datos de la investigación y manteniéndolos en un lugar seguro. Las únicas partes que estarán permitidas ver los datos serán el investigador y el Comité Institucional de Evaluación de la universidad de Rutgers, a menos de que la ley requiera lo contrario. Si se publica un informe de este estudio, o si se presentan los resultados en una conferencia profesional, sólo se divulgarán los resultados de todo el grupo, a menos que usted haya dado permiso de lo contrario.
Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Usted puede retirarse de la investigación en cualquier momento, y usted puede negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta que le incomode. Si usted tiene cualquier pregunta sobre el estudio, se puede poner en contacto con Corey Liberman al (973) 768-8153 o por correo electrónico en liberman@scils.rutgers.edu. Si tiene cualquier pregunta sobre sus derechos como sujeto de investigación, se puede poner en contacto con el Administrador de los Programas Patrocinados de la Universidad de Rutgers a la siguiente dirección:

Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(732) 932-0150 Ext. 2104

Se le ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y de que se las contesten. Con su firma, usted da su consentimiento para participar en este estudio investigativo.

Nombre del sujeto ______________________________________
Firma del sujeto ______________________________________
Fecha ________________________________________________

Nombre del investigador _________________________________
Firma del investigador __________________________________
Fecha _________________________________________________
Appendix F

Translated Survey Items Assessing Organizational Identification

Cuando alguien critica mi profesión siente como un insulto personal
Cuando alguien critica mi organización siente como un insulto personal
Cuando alguien critica mi departamento siente como un insulto personal
Cuando alguien critica mi equipo de trabajo siente como un insulto personal
Cuando alguien alaba mi profesión siente como un elogio personal
Cuando alguien alaba mi organización siente como un elogio personal
Cuando alguien alaba mi departamento siente como un elogio personal
Cuando alguien alaba mi equipo de trabajo siente como un elogio personal
Cuando hablo de mi profesión yo usualmente digo “nosotros” en vez de “ellos”
Cuando hablo de mi organización yo usualmente digo “nosotros” en vez de “ellos”
Cuando hablo de mi departamento yo usualmente digo “nosotros” en vez de “ellos”
Cuando hablo de mi equipo de trabajo yo usualmente digo “nosotros” en vez de “ellos”
Si un cuento en los medios de comunicación criticara mi profesión, me sentiría avergonzado
Si un cuento en los medios de comunicación criticara mi organización, me sentiría avergonzado
Si un cuento en los medios de comunicación criticara mi departamento, me sentiría avergonzado
Si un cuento en los medios de comunicación criticara mi equipo de trabajo, me sentiría avergonzado
Appendix F (cont...)

Estoy interesado en lo que piensan los demás de mi profesión

Estoy interesado en lo que piensan los demás de mi organización

Estoy interesado en lo que piensan los demás de mi departamento

Estoy interesado en lo que piensan los demás de mi equipo de trabajo

Los éxitos de mi profesión son mis éxitos

Los éxitos de mi organización son mis éxitos

Los éxitos de mi departamento son mis éxitos

Los éxitos de mi equipo de trabajo son mis éxitos
Appendix G

Translated Survey Items Assessing Organizational Social Networks

Por favor indica los TRES individuales con quien tu comunicas más semanalmente, incluyendo comunicación vía teléfono, correo electrónico, conferencias por el teléfono, memorándum, reuniones, cara a cara, por razones relacionadas a chismes organicionales, chisme personal, planes del fin de semana, club sociales, reuniones durante el almuerzo, reuniones durante la cena, o cualquier otra información que no está relacionada al trabajo. Por favor indica también cuantas veces al menudo comunicas con esta gente semanalmente usando la siguiente escama:

1 = Muy infrecuentemente

2 = Infrecuentemente

3 = Moderadamente infrecuente

4 = Algunas veces

5 = Moderadamente frecuente

6 = Frecuentemente

7 = Muy frecuentemente

Individual 1 _____________________    Cuanto al menudo tu comunicas __________

Individual 2 _____________________    Cuanto al menudo tu comunicas __________

Individual 3 _____________________    Cuanto al menudo tu comunicas __________
Appendix G (cont...)

Por cada individual indicado arriba, por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas usando la siguiente escama y escribiendo el número que aplica:

1 = Para Nada
2 = Un poco
3 = Moderadamente
4 = Bastante
5 = Una gran cantidad

Individual 1

¿Cuánto confías en esta persona? ____
¿Cómo cuanto esta persona está de acuerdo o apoya tus acciones o pensamientos? ____
¿Si tú necesitabas ayuda inmediata o asistencia, cuanto esta persona usualmente te ayudaría?
¿Sientes como esta persona te aprecia a ti como un individual? ____
¿Sientes como tú puedes contar en esta persona? ____
¿Esta persona es alguien que tú consideras fiable? ____
Appendix H

Translated Survey Items Assessing Organizational Task Networks

Por favor indica los TRES individuales con quien tu comunicas mas semanalmente, incluyendo comunicación vía teléfono, correo electrónico, conferencias por el teléfono, memorándum, reuniones, cara a cara, por razones relacionadas a chismes organiconal, chisme personal, planes del fin de semana, club sociales, reuniones durante el almuerzo, reuniones durante la cena, o cualquier otra información que está relacionado al trabajo. Por favor indica también cuantas veces al menudo comunicas con esta gente semanalmente usando la siguiente escama:

1 = Muy infrecuentemente

2 = Infrecuentemente

3 = Moderadamente infrecuente

4 = Algunas veces

5 = Moderadamente frecuente

6 = Frecuentemente

7 = Muy frecuentemente

Individual 1 ________________    Cuanto al menudo tu comunicas __________

Individual 2 ________________    Cuanto al menudo tu comunicas __________

Individual 3 ________________    Cuanto al menudo tu comunicas __________
Appendix H (cont...)

Por cada individual indicado arriba, por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas usando la siguiente escala y escribiendo el número que aplica:

1 = Para Nada
2 = Un poco
3 = Moderadamente
4 = Bastante
5 = Una gran cantidad

Individual 1

¿Cuánto confías en esta persona? ____
¿Cómo cuánto esta persona está de acuerdo o apoya tus acciones o pensamientos? ____
¿Si tú necesitabas ayuda inmediata o asistencia, cuanto esta persona usualmente te ayudaría?
¿Sientes como esta persona te aprecia a ti como un individual? ____
¿Sientes como tú puedes contar en esta persona? ____
¿Esta persona es alguien que tú consideras fiable? ____
Curriculum Vita
Corey Jay Liberman

Education

Ph.D., School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
May 2008

M.A., School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies
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B.A., Department of Communication
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Positions Held

Non-tenured Assistant Instructor, School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Fall 2006-Present

Part-time Lecturer, School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Fall 2005-Spring 2006

Teaching Assistant, School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Fall 2003-Spring 2006

Research Experience

Research Assistant, School of Communication, Information, and Library Studies, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Fall 2004-Spring 2006

Professional Experience

Graduate Assistant, Department of Special Events, Livingston College, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, July 2002-July 2003


Publications
