



# Introduction to Understanding Identity 1

## 1.1 Introduction

Identity is a topic that is relevant to everyone. Identity relates to the timeless question: ‘who am I?’ and the related questions: ‘who and what do I appear to be: to myself, to my friends, my boss, my bank, my neighbours, my lecturers?’. A person can appear to be many things at once, even where these different ‘identities’ appear inconsistent or even contradictory. Someone could be, for example, a politically conservative, religiously atheist, homosexual female surgeon. All these words act as categories that describe us in different contexts. Such identifiers are vital to our experience of life, both at work and outside of it. In effect, they act as landmarks as we navigate or negotiate our way through social landscapes.

Some aspects of our identity are hard, but not necessarily impossible, to control. Sex, height and colour of skin are all difficult to alter, but they can in some cases be changed – in the case of transsexuals, for example. Other aspects, such as religion, hobbies and occupation, are more open to being changed, managed and controlled (Muir and Wetherell, 2010).

We sometimes hear about identities being ‘strong’ or ‘weak’. Fanatical sport team supporters, such as so-called ‘football hooligans’, who have fights with other people simply because they are supporters of rival teams, could be said to have too ‘strong’ a sense of identification (see Glossary) – a strong sense of belonging and attachment with their team and fellow supporters. In extreme cases, people are murdered simply because they are members of a rival street gang, to protect the ‘honour’ and ‘reputation’ of the gang. In contrast, other identities are thought to be too ‘weak’ nowadays. Attachment to the local community, for example, is often said to be weaker now, and this is associated with a breakdown in social cohesion and community spirit.

We see the importance of identity in work organizations too. Sherron Watkins’ role at Enron illustrates this point. Watkins was a Vice President for Corporate Development. In August 2001, she tried to alert the CEO at the time, Kenneth Lay, to the presence of accounting irregularities within the company, which she felt were dubious and possibly illegal. As the corporation began to collapse, she advised her CEO to come clean and report its massive financial losses to investors, but the result was a sidelining of her role in the organization. When Enron was eventually brought down, with catastrophic effects, Watkins testified before US Congressional Committees that investigated Enron’s business practices.

In subsequent interviews, traces of Watkins' sense of identity, and her multiple identifications, emerge. She describes herself as a professional accountant, a moral person and an Enron employee, citing all three as contributing to her sense of self – who she is (and was). In particular, she points to the importance (or 'strength') of her sense of professional values that were embedded during her training as an accountant which, she says, equipped her with an ethical sensibility and a moral perspective on the world:

*I started my career in the early 1980s at Arthur Andersen & Co. as an auditor. I have to say that it bothered me that we were told it was not a public accountant's job to detect fraud. We were told to maintain a healthy degree of skepticism, but our audits were not specifically designed to find fraud. The trouble is that most shareholders believe the opposite: that an audit does in fact mean auditors looked for signs of fraud. ... Being an ethical person is more than knowing right from wrong. It is having the fortitude to do right even when there is much at stake. (Carozza, 2007)*

Watkins recalls how, early on in her career, she experienced some conflict between two key elements of her identity: an accountant and a Christian (she discusses God and Enron in 'The Enron Blog' by Cara Ellison (2010), 17 November 2010). As time passed during her period at Enron, she became aware of the dubious 'creative accounting' taking place at her firm. Her identification with Christian values and professional ethics came into conflict with her identification as an Enron employee. She grew uncomfortable with wrongdoing that appeared to be at odds with the values that were central to her sense of identity. This conflict led her to 'blow the whistle' (see Figure 1.1) on her close colleagues by drawing her concerns to the attention of her boss, Ken Lay. In an interview that took place after she had publicly spoken out, Watkins said:

*The real lesson for me is that I should have left Enron in 1996 when I first saw behavior that I thought was over the line. If your own personal value system is not validated or if you are uncomfortable when your value system gets violated, leave that organization. Trouble will hit at some point. (Lucas and Koerwer, 2004)*

Watkins' self-identity – how she saw herself – played an important role in her decision to expose one of the largest and most significant corporate scandals of the last century.

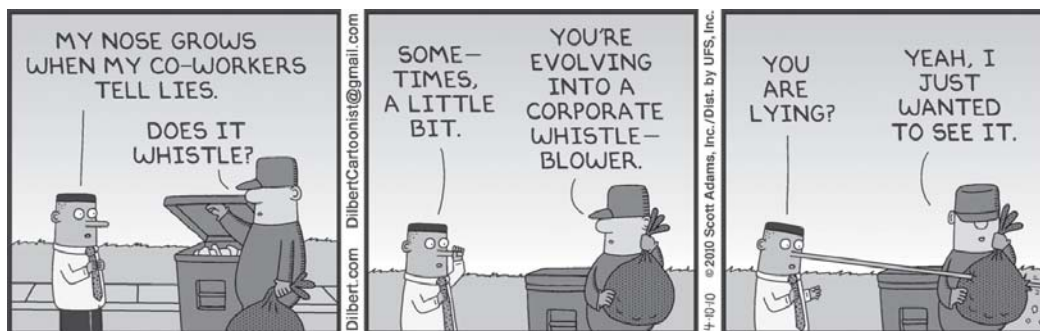


Figure 1.1 Corporate whistleblowers

What the Sherron Watkins example shows us is that workplace identity is a vital part of working life and has significant implications for ourselves and for those around us. This book focuses on the relationship between identity and workplace life. Our particular focus is upon how identities are shaped in and through organizations, such as accounting firms, Enron and religious institutions. By ‘organizations’ we mean anything from a large corporation, to a small family business, a single subcontractor, a public sector organization, a charity or voluntary organization – anywhere where people work that is formally organized and structured, whether paid or unpaid.

## 1.2 Identity vs Personality

Often the terms identity and personality (see Glossary) are used interchangeably, or are assumed to have rather similar meanings. Words can, of course, acquire all kinds of meanings, so we are not suggesting that ‘identity’ has any essential meaning. Here we are simply concerned to communicate how we intend to define and use the term ‘identity’ and, to do this, we distinguish it from ‘personality’.

At first sight, the terms personality and identity seem very similar. They both seem to be about what makes us ‘who we are’. For us, however, the terms signify quite different things. The term personality tends to be associated with a person’s unique and distinctive ‘inner world’ and is widely used in the discipline of psychology. It refers to the idea that we have a distinct set of inner cognitive (i.e. mental) structures and processes (such as attitudes, dispositions, temperaments and stereotypes) that influence how we behave. For example, some people are considered to have a ‘shy and introverted’ personality while others are ‘outgoing and extrovert’. These inner cognitive structures are understood to be either genetically predetermined (i.e. we are born with them), or formed primarily during the early stages of childhood – making them ‘hard-wired’ into the brain and therefore difficult to change. Social scientists study personality differences by using scientific methods such as tests, questionnaires and experiments. They attempt to categorize the different types of personality and study how personality types influence behaviour. They rely on the assumption that human beings are discrete, independent entities with unique characteristics.

The term identity, on the other hand, can be attributed to groups as well as individuals. Indeed, membership of a wider group is key to specifying and understanding identity. So, for example, Sherron Watkins understood herself in terms of being an accountant and a ‘Christian’, both of which indicate membership of a wider group (of accountants and Christians). In contrast to the term personality, reference to the term identity signals an approach to understanding ‘who we are’ that is found in the fields of sociology, politics, cultural studies and discourse studies. Identity, even self-identity, does not refer to a distinct set of inner cognitive (i.e. mental) structures, processes or dispositions. Rather, it refers to how a person makes sense of themselves in relation to others, and how others conceive of that person. Identity can refer to individual characteristics (such as being an ‘outgoing person’), which may of course include ideas about the kind of ‘personality’ we have, as well as to social categories (such as ‘being a gay person’).

So, identity can include identification with elements that we call ‘our personality’. But this approach does not treat such elements as ‘hard-wired’, genetically predetermined features of the brain. In general, identity refers to socially available categories, which

can of course include how we think about our ‘personality’. These categories provide ways of making sense of ‘who I am’ in relation to ‘who you are’. Whereas the psychological use of the term personality assumes and refers to the existence of a comparatively rigid and unchanging set of cognitive structures or mental processes, the sociological term identity is conceived to be contingent upon the particular – local, cultural and historical – conditions of its production. In other words, identity varies according to:

- Local context (e.g. my identity at home vs my identity at work).
- Culture (e.g. what it means to be a man in Chinese society vs American society).
- History (e.g. what it meant to be a man in the twelfth century vs today).

The concept of identity helps us to appreciate how our ways of making sense of ourselves and others are influenced by social processes. Such processes include the local, day-to-day interactions we have with friends, family and colleagues as well as the broader context of the society and period of history in which we live. Consider the type of person who respects tradition and authority figures, who has a strong sense of ‘duty’ to others – which can be regarded as a ‘personality trait’. Those interested in ‘personality’ might attempt to use personality tests to measure the differences between people in respect of their sense of duty and respect for authority. When engaging a sociological focus on ‘identity’, the emphasis shifts from individual differences to the social conditions that produced this type of ‘personality trait’. For example, think about the differences between those born into so-called ‘honour-bound’ cultures, such as parts of India or China, where a strong sense of duty to the family and to (male) elders is upheld, with those born into the more ‘individualistic’ culture of North America. Table 1.1 outlines the main differences between the two concepts.

**Table 1.1** Personality and identity compared

	<b>Personality</b>	<b>Identity</b>
<b>Core tenet</b>	Who we are is based on relatively stable <i>individual</i> traits, attitudes and beliefs	Who we are is based on our experiences of the society and <i>social</i> groups in which we live
<b>Central academic discipline</b>	Psychology	Sociology (and social psychology)
<b>Main source of self-formation</b>	Biology or early socialization – something we are born with, or formed at an early stage of childhood	Society – something we learn to be from our interaction with others and wider society
<b>Approach to stability</b>	Personality remains relatively stable for life	Identity can change as a result of interactions with others
<b>Approach to difference</b>	Personality differentiates us from others	Identity attends to similarities to others
<b>Research methods</b>	Use of quantitative instruments (e.g. personality tests) to measure individual characteristics	Use of qualitative instruments (e.g. interviews) to explore processes of identity (trans)formation
<b>Level of analysis</b>	Individual cognition	Individual-group-society interactions

An attentiveness to ‘identity’, we believe, helps to compensate for some limitations of studies that place ‘personality’ at their centre. Among these limitations are:

- 1 A view of people as atomistic, sovereign agents: that is, as isolated individuals who either have complete control over who they are, or are the prisoners of their ‘personalities’.
- 2 A reliance on the idea that our sense of self resides ‘within us’, as an essential feature of our cognitive make-up.
- 3 A use of a power-free analysis: that is, the focus on personality ignores the role of power in shaping and directing processes of self-formation.

The value of a focus upon identity can be summarized as follows:

- It appreciates how people’s sense of ‘who I am’ is embedded in social relationships.
- It views identity as a social phenomenon, based on (more or less dominant) collective understandings of what it means to be a person, rather than existing only ‘inside our heads’ as mental processes.
- It emphasizes the role of power in shaping our sense of self, including the reproduction of diverse forms of inequality (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class structure, etc.).

We will not be discussing ‘personality’ per se in this book. But we will be exploring many themes and issues that are highly relevant to anyone who is interested in ‘personality’. That is because students interested in ‘personality’ are usually inquisitive about how they, and other human beings, behave: what makes them ‘tick’. Studying identity, we will show, can provide penetrating insights into ‘human behaviour’ that are different to, and so can complement and perhaps surpass, those generated by studies of ‘personality’. So, for example, applying a personality test (e.g. Myers–Briggs) to Sherron Watkins might help us to understand why she, rather than some other Enron employee, sent the ‘whistleblowing’ internal memo to her boss, Ken Lay. But, to understand the way she alerted her superiors in Enron, how and why she eventually decided to ‘go public’, might be better understood by considering her diverse and perhaps conflicting identities and institutional affiliations, as a loyal employee, as a Christian, as an ambitious accountant, and so on.

### 1.3 Identity on the Management Agenda: A Brief History

When did the notion of identity first get onto the management agenda? Early approaches to management, such as F.W. Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), viewed a person’s identity – our affiliations with others and the thoughts, feelings and values which make up our sense of who we are – as an obstacle to effective management (Rose, 1988). Taylor thought that management should be a rational, scientific endeavour that is not ‘messed’ and ‘muddled’ by having to manage such subjective and emotional issues. In effect, Taylor believed that workers should leave their sense of identity at the factory gate, and so be prepared to fit whatever ‘mould’ had been prepared for them by management.

Taylor was influenced by his experience of working as a foreman at the Midvale Steel Corporation, in Philadelphia in the United States. Taylor thought that, when left to their own devices, workers had a highly 'irrational' and 'inefficient' way of organizing work. Workers developed informal status hierarchies in their work 'gangs'. The gang 'boss' decided who did what job, and how fast, based on their own informal 'pecking order', habits and customs. The 'leader' of the work gang was not appointed to that position by management based on their relevant skills or experience. Instead, the 'leader' emerged from an informal hierarchy based on principles that, in Taylor's estimation, had little or nothing to do with the workplace – such as who was the 'toughest', or the most 'senior', or the most 'respected'.

Taylor set out to reform, and perhaps revolutionize, such 'irrational', unproductive arrangements by developing an approach to management that he termed 'scientific'. Using stopwatches and other measurement instruments, he sought to root out needless inefficiencies by eliminating all trace of subjective and social factors – such as loyalties to each other that stood in the way of the scientific division and application of labour. Taylor regarded such factors as morally indefensible (unfair) as well as instrumentally flawed (inefficient). He objected to them morally because he saw them holding back the ability of workers to maximize their productive capacity and thereby increase their earnings which, in 'scientific management', were linked directly to output in a 'piece-rate' system. By abolishing the 'custom and practice' associated with established, traditional identification with the gang, workers would be efficiently organized like the very 'cogs' in Taylor's stopwatch.

Taylor was not so much uninterested in the 'identities' of workers, and whether these were being recognized or ignored at work, as he was morally and managerially hostile to them. He wanted employees to be fairly treated by adopting scientific methods of working devised by time-and-motion experts. Because he regarded established identifications as irrational and harmful to the interests of workers in maximizing their pay, Taylor was confident that employees would enthusiastically embrace this approach. That was because he believed human beings to be 'rational economic' creatures who were motivated to work by the prospect of economic gain (i.e. pay), and would therefore willingly accommodate new 'scientific' forms of job design that would enable them to maximize their earnings.

Taylor was surprised that workers (and foremen) resisted the application of 'scientific' principles of work organization. For him, resistance to the new 'rational' scheme was simply irrational. The remedy was to apply the principles even more stringently, insisting that management tolerated no deviation from the methods prescribed by scientific investigations. This approach proved counterproductive as it simply increased the resistance. Workers began to organize (e.g. in unions) in defence of the informal culture, hierarchies and controls. One way to understand such resistance is in terms of workers' attachments to identities and affiliations with each other that were disrupted by 'scientific' methods. In other words, workers resisted the changes, in spite of the fact that they might earn more money from complying, due to their identification with the norms and values of the work gang. Being 'part of the gang' was perhaps more important than earning more money. Money was perhaps not the only thing that motivated employees – see Figure 1.2. The question for management and their advisors was: if these 'irrational' identities and identifications could not be eliminated by 'scientific' management, could they be co-opted in some way?





Figure 1.2 Motivation at work

The 'human relations movement' (Rose, 1988) provided a way forward by showing the role played by 'social factors' in human motivation. Its advocates sought to incorporate, rather than exclude, the view that human beings have 'needs' that are 'social' (such as group affiliation) as well as 'material' (pay according to output). Such 'needs' were understood to include belonging, companionship, recognition, social status and esteem – and were most famously 'demonstrated' in the classic Hawthorne studies (Sykes, 1965). The irony was that Elton Mayo, the Harvard professor responsible for the experiments at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company (a telephone manufacturing subsidiary of AT&T), originally set out to apply scientific management principles in the factory. Instead, Mayo's experiments brought to his attention a completely unexpected and very puzzling finding. The experimental group produced higher levels of output regardless of whatever changes the experimenters made, such as altering lighting levels or rest breaks.

The Hawthorne researchers eventually came to believe that the positive results were attributable to an unintended effect of the experiments – namely, that employees felt more motivated because they felt 'special' somehow, because they had a sense of camaraderie as a group and because they felt people were taking an interest in them. For employees, the intervention of the researchers was a form of status, affiliation and recognition that led to higher productivity. More generally, the focus of the human relations movement which arose from the experiments at the Hawthorne plant, is, as the name suggests, upon relations between people, including relations between workers themselves and between workers and management. Its claim is that people are motivated by factors related to subjective things like identity – such as feeling recognized and feeling part of a group. This movement did not, however, celebrate or commend a restoration of the informal practices of work gangs abhorred by Taylor. On the contrary, it has sought to extend the control of management by constructing more 'human' kinds of workplaces as a means of overcoming the social obstacles encountered by Taylor. To this end, the human relations movement has favoured the adoption of an ostensibly more 'caring' and 'humanistic' posture in relation to workers. The intent has been to encourage employees to derive a stronger sense of affiliation, identification and esteem from the norms and values prescribed by the organization rather than by their work group, by unions or by affiliations outside of the workplace. The significance of identity was not simply recognized by management, it was identified as something that could be shaped and controlled by management.

In ‘human relations’ thinking, subjective elements such as identity were no longer to be eliminated by management. Instead, these elements were to be utilized (or, some critical thinkers would say, exploited) by management. The theories of motivation that emerged from the so-called ‘human relations movement’ (such as Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’, Alderfer’s ‘Existence, Relatedness, Growth’ (ERG) and Herzberg’s ‘two-factor theory’) all recognized that workers were motivated not only by money or the physical work environment, but also by social and emotional ‘needs’ like the need for a sense of belonging in a group, for example (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004: Ch. 8). In Maslow’s infamous ‘hierarchy of needs’, the top of the pyramid refers to needs for ‘belonging’, ‘esteem’ and ‘self-actualization’. These can be read as addressing ‘identity concerns’ – the desire to feel like part of a group (‘I am a team player’), the desire to be held in high regard by others (‘I am respected by others’) and the desire to reach our potential (‘I am what I always dreamed of being’).

Whereas Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management* is almost exclusively concerned with organizing work in ways that are restricted to lower levels of the hierarchy (needs for survival and security), human relations techniques and more recent variations on this theme (such as ‘corporate culture’, see Chapter 5) can be seen to connect to ideas about ‘esteem’ and ‘self-actualization’. From a management perspective, employees become more pliable and productive when they identify strongly with the organization. Strong identification is thought to lead employees to ‘go the extra mile’ (be more productive or flexible) for their organization – such as working late to complete a project. It is this so-called ‘discretionary effort’ (i.e. effort that is not formally required and that employees have discretion about whether to ‘give’) that makes the idea of exercising control through ‘identity’ so appealing to managers (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). We will discuss the issue of identity and organizational control in more detail in Chapter 5.

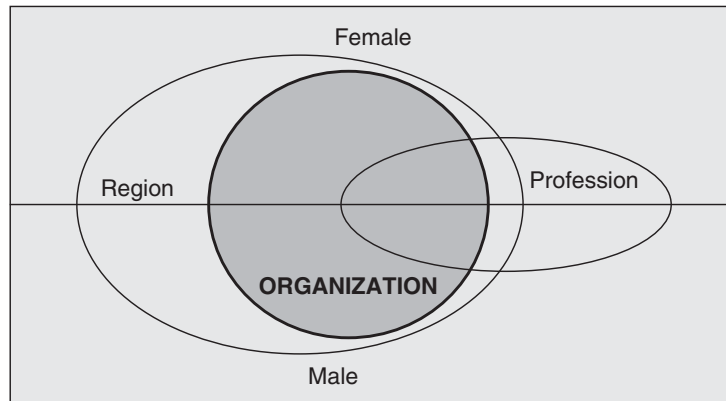
#### 1.4 How Do Individual and Organizational Identities Interact?

In this book, we are interested in any form of organization, any group of people who work in some way towards a common goal. That includes not just paid employment in companies, but also charities, community organizations, public sector or not-for-profit organizations.

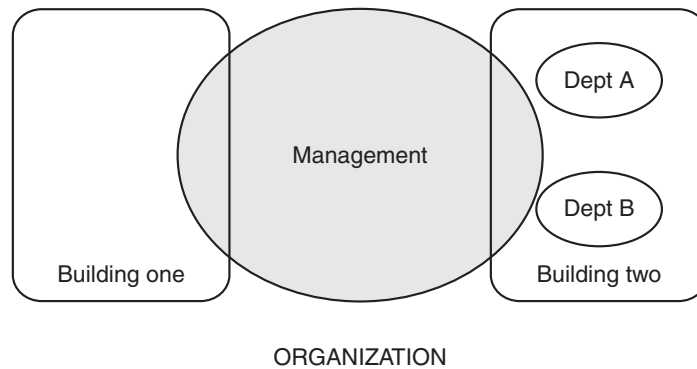
How, then, does our individual identity relate to ‘organizations’? At a basic level, being a member of an organization – an employee or an unpaid volunteer for a charity, for example – may itself provide us with a sense of identity. When people ask us about ourselves, we can say ‘I work for Apple’ or ‘I help to run a local homeless shelter’. Beyond this simple aspect of ‘membership’, the way we relate as individuals to organizations can be much more complex and multi-faceted.

Parker (2007) notes that our sense of identification with (and within) an organization can be complex, multiple and contextual. By this he means that we can identify with different parts of the organization, or the organization as a whole, or indeed groups outside the organization (such as a geographical region, or a trade union, or a profession), at different times depending on the context. Figure 1.3 shows





**Figure 1.3** An organization with some 'externally' derived identity divisions



**Figure 1.4** An organization with some 'internally' derived identity divisions

what sorts of identifications outside an organization could be important to different workers. Figure 1.4 shows what sorts of identifications within an organization could be important to different workers. The box at the end of this chapter sets out some 'thinking tasks' that you can undertake to assess your own identity and identifications, or those within the organization you are currently studying.

Parker (2007) argues that identifications are contextual because the identity that is most important to a person depends on what is relevant to a particular situation. Let's imagine there is a Senior Marketing Manager for a factory called Mary. On Monday, Mary joins a staff protest to save the staff canteen in her building, 'Building One'. She is prepared to stand up and fight for everyone who works in Building One, even if this means going against the views of other members of senior management and other marketing colleagues. On Tuesday, Mary identifies more strongly with being a 'marketing' person when arguing at a board meeting for more resources for a new advertising campaign which is opposed by the Engineering Director, who is actually based in Building One. On Wednesday, the identity of 'manager' becomes more important when she is conducting an annual appraisal with a subordinate and has to enforce a disciplinary warning, in spite

of being close friends with the person in question. On Thursday, the difference between her and her subordinates, and the differences between departments and buildings, is less important when they are discussing their shared concerns about a possible merger with another company. On Friday, she feels a sense of identity as a 'Northern' employee when she participates in a squash tournament against the 'Southern' branches of the company.

This book aims to explore these processes through which people come to see themselves as identified with (or within) the organization as a whole, or other possible identifications, such as hierarchical level (e.g. manager), occupation (e.g. engineer) or region (e.g. the Northern branch).

## 1.5 Introducing the Book

**About Us:** We are three people who have been working in the area of identity and organizations for a number of years.

Kate Kenny, a lecturer in the Sociology of Work at NUI Galway, Ireland, carried out a four-year research project into identity among people working for not-for-profit organizations. Andrea Whittle is a Professor of Organization Studies at Cardiff Business School in the UK, and studied identity among management consultants for her PhD. She is now working on research exploring the role of discourse and narrative in identity construction. Hugh Willmott is a Research Professor in Organization Studies at Cardiff Business School. Hugh became interested in identity in the 1980s. At the time, the study of such 'subjective' concerns were considered to be incompatible with the identity of sociologically minded researchers who were content to leave its examination to psychology. His PhD research was on the identity of single homeless people as seen by themselves and the agencies responsible for their 'management'. Since then his work has revolved around an exploration of the relevance of identity in relation to power, insecurity and inequality for the study of organizational work (see e.g. Knights and Willmott, 1999). For further details, see <https://sites.google.com/site/hughwillmottshomepage>.

The three of us share the idea that identity is a vital part of work and its organization. We noticed that there were few books around that dealt adequately with this important topic and so we decided to write one.

Of course, we cannot cover all the different contributions and perspectives on identity and its significance within workplaces. Our choices no doubt reflect our own interests and assumptions, even and perhaps especially where we remain ignorant of them. We acknowledge that this book, in common with all academic work, is not 'neutral'. It too is a form of 'identity work' rooted in a specific culture and written at a particular time. Our aim, nonetheless, has been to draw together our specific concerns and viewpoints to provide a good introductory coverage of the field.

**About the Book:** We want this book to provide teachers and students with a useful, relevant and engaging overview of the field of identity studies, especially in relation to business and management, and applied social sciences.

**Theory:** The book introduces a variety of different approaches to understanding identity. There is no one ‘correct’ way to study identity. What is the ‘right’ method or theory to use depends on the perspective adopted. Broadly speaking, this book adopts a predominantly social constructionist perspective on identity, which means that identity is viewed as an outcome of social processes through which people construct a sense of ‘who they are’. This differs from a realist or positivist perspective which views identity as an entity or object that is ‘real’ and exists out there in the world, amenable to scientific methods of discovery (such as experiments, questionnaire surveys, etc.). We are particularly interested in, and therefore have included, some of the latest emerging theories – including poststructural perspectives and psychoanalysis. We also anticipate that these are likely to become increasingly influential.

**Real-Life Examples:** Colleagues around the world, who have similar interests in studying identity and organizations, have for years been carrying out fascinating research into real-life working situations. In addition to using cartoons and our own examples from everyday life and the media, we draw extensively upon their scholarship. We present mini-case studies which we call ‘Case Points’. When selecting the studies to include, we endeavoured to choose examples from a range of countries and diverse work settings, although our choices are undoubtedly limited by the number of studies published in English-language books and journals.

### 1.5.1 Using the book

**Students:** We have organized the chapters around key areas of the study of identity and organizations. In Chapter 2, we present an overview of major theoretical approaches to the study of identity. In Chapters 3–7, we detail and explore key areas of study. In the final chapter, we consider what the future might hold for the study of identity.

Each chapter begins with the rationale for why we include certain issues and leave others out. Since the issues we explore remain open to debate, we encourage a questioning approach by including Thinkpoints in each chapter: inviting the reader to think about a certain topic. In addition, we provide Case Points where we draw on previous studies to illustrate the concepts or issues discussed in the text. To signal connections between different chapters and different sections within chapters, we use Links to other sections of the book. The Glossary at the end can be used for reference, along with the Index.

**Course Instructors:** This book can be used either as supplementary reading for a lecture on identity and organizations, or to structure an entire course (in combination with additional material – see Suggested Reading at the end of each chapter). Chapters 3–7 would work well as individual lecture topics, while Chapter 2 would perhaps require more than one lecture, depending on the number of theoretical perspectives you would like to cover in the class. We would recommend using the Case Points as a basis for class discussion or to design tutorial exercises. You might also want to select certain cases for further reading and discussion by giving the students the original book or article to read in private study time. We have provided sample questions at the end of each chapter that could be used to set an assignment or exam.



## Suggested Reading

Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity*. London: Routledge. Ch. 1.

Pullen, A., Beech, N. and Sims, D. (eds) (2007) *Exploring Identity: Concepts and Methods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Introduction ch.

Webb, J. (2006) *Organisations, Identities and the Self*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Ch. 1.

Wetherell, M. and Mohanty, C.T. (eds) (2010) *The Sage Handbook of Identities*. London: Sage. Ch. 1.

Task 1: Think about the kinds of identifications that you think you have, at the moment, on this course you are currently studying. Think about whether your identification is (a) strong and positive, (b) neutral, (c) weak, or (d) negative, regarding the following groups:

- Your fellow students on this module.
- Your fellow students on the same course as you.
- Your fellow students at this institution (i.e. university, college).
- Your fellow students who are part of your friendship group that you socialize with outside of lessons.
- Your fellow students who live in the same student house or university accommodation (if applicable).
- Your fellow students who are from the same social category as you (e.g. gender, age, race/ethnicity, nationality, etc.).

Task 2: To 'test' the extent to which you identify with each of these social groups, think about the following scenario:

A fellow student has asked you for help with their coursework assignment. You are already pushed for time, busy working on your own assignment and your various hobbies and social activities. You would have to give up your time to help them.

Depending on which group listed above the student belongs to, how willing would you be to help them?

For example, would you be more likely to help someone who was the same gender as you? Or someone who was part of your friendship group? Or part of the same 'cohort' of students studying the same course?

Your answer to this question will tell you how much you think you identify with the group, making you see yourself as 'just like them', with associated feelings of solidarity and duty.

Task 3: Use your answers to the questions in Tasks 1 and 2 above to develop your own organizational 'identification diagram', which plots which groups you identify with and which you do not, just like Figure 1.4.