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Social Identity and Social Exchange: Identification, Support, and Withdrawal from the Job

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Social Identity and Social Exchange:
Identification, Support, and Withdrawal from the Job

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Abstract

Integrating insights from the social exchange perspective and the social identity perspective on the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization, we propose that evaluations of the support received from the organization and its representatives, and organizational identification interact in predicting withdrawal from the job. Specifically, the relationship of support with withdrawal is proposed to be weaker the stronger employees identify with the organization. This prediction was confirmed in two samples focusing on different operationalizations of support and withdrawal. Sample 1 concerned the interaction of organizational support and organizational identification in predicting turnover intentions, Sample 2 concerned the prediction of absenteeism from supervisor support and organizational identification. We conclude that the present study yields promising first evidence that may lay the basis for further integration of social exchange and social identity analyses of organizational behavior.

Social Identity and Social Exchange:

Identification, Support, and Withdrawal from the Job

The psychological relationship between the individual and the organization is an important factor in organizational behavior (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rousseau & Parks, 1993). Employees may, to a greater or lesser extent, conceive of themselves in terms of their membership in the organization. Thus, the magnitude of the individuals' attachment to the organization and the evaluation they make of the relationship that the organization develops with them may exert an important influence on job-related attitudes and behavior, such as absenteeism and turnover (intentions) (e.g., Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Riketta & van Dick, in press), in-role behavior (e.g., Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; James & Greenberg, 1989), and extra-role behavior (e.g., Christ, van Dick, Wagner, & Stellmacher, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Understanding the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization therefore is of great theoretical and practical relevance for research in organizational behavior.

Two perspectives on the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization have been receiving increasing attention in recent years: The social exchange perspective (e.g., Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rousseau & Parks, 1993) and the social identity perspective (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). So far, these perspectives have largely developed in isolation from each other. To move towards a more integrated understanding of the psychological relationship between individual and organization, in the present study we integrate insights from both perspectives. Specifically, we propose that evaluations of the exchange relationship with the organization, as evident in evaluations of the support received from the organization and its representatives, and

organizational identification interact in predicting withdrawal from the job.

Withdrawal from the job is a concern to organizations (Cascio, 1982). It is also particularly relevant in an analysis of the psychological relationship between individual and organization, because it involves withdrawing from this relationship either temporary (i.e., absenteeism, lateness) or permanently (i.e., turnover). Accordingly, focusing on withdrawal from the job helps to explicate how the social exchange and social identity approaches to individual's attachment to the organization may be integrated. Studies of job withdrawal have shown withdrawal intentions and behavior to be related to a variety of factors, including job satisfaction, organizational justice, organizational commitment, work group norms, and labor market conditions (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Johns, 2001; Riketta, 2004). Of particular relevance to a conceptual integration of social exchange and social identity perspectives on the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization, withdrawal has also been shown to be contingent on social exchange and social identity processes, and the remainder of this discussion focuses on these processes as predictors of job withdrawal. In the following, we first outline the social exchange perspective and the social identity perspective on the relationship between the individual and the organization, and on withdrawal from the job in particular. We then zoom in on the proposition advanced in this study, that social exchange processes and social identification processes interact in predicting withdrawal from the job.

Social Exchange and Organizational Behavior

Central to the social exchange perspective on the employee – organization relationship is the assumption that the relationship between employees and their employer is built on the trade of effort and loyalty for benefits like pay, support, and recognition (Blau, 1964; Levinson, 1965; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rousseau & Parks, 1993). Accordingly, employees' evaluation of the quality of their exchange relationship with the organization and

its representatives (i.e., leaders, supervisors; Levinson, 1965) is predictive of their attitudes and behavior. The better the perceived quality of the exchange relationship (i.e., benefits received from the other party are high and up to par with own inputs in the relationship), the more motivated individuals are to exert themselves on behalf of the other party and to remain within the relationship. This motivation is proposed to flow from a norm of reciprocity that prescribes that benefits received should be repaid in kind (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001; Gouldner, 1960).

Research has operationalized these social exchange processes largely in terms of evaluations of the exchange relationship. Eisenberger et al. (1986) proposed the concept of perceived organizational support to reflect the individual's evaluation of the organization's role in the exchange relationship. Perceived organizational support refers to global perceptions of the extent to which the organization values the individual's contribution and cares about the individual's well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In similar vein, Rousseau and colleagues (e.g., Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau & Parks, 1993) conceptualize the psychological contract between individual and organization from a social exchange perspective, proposing that the psychological contract between individual and organization is the individual's beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations in this exchange relationship. Research has also focused on evaluations of support received from the supervisor (Kottke & Shafranski, 1988; Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Levinson (1965) argued that the relationship between the individual and the organization is often enacted through the relationship with representatives of the organization, such as leaders and supervisors. Accordingly, employees' evaluations of their relationship with these representatives and of their relationship with the organization as a more abstracted entity may to a certain extent merge. Viewed slightly differently, evaluations of the exchange relationship with organizational representatives may also be seen as a precursor to evaluations of the

relationship with the organization (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

In support of the view that evaluations of the support received from the organization and its representatives reflect social exchange processes, research has shown that the relationship between evaluations of organizational support and outcomes is mediated by the felt obligation to reciprocate the organization's support (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Further validating evaluations of support as indicator of social exchange processes, other studies show that organizational support is more strongly related to outcomes for individuals with a stronger exchange orientation (Eisenberger et al., 1986), and less strongly the more individuals do not trust the organization to reciprocate (Lynch, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 1999). Corroborating this argument, Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch (1997) outline how the social exchange analysis implies that organizational support only is an exchange commodity when it is given voluntarily. Accordingly, support should only engender the motivation to reciprocate to the extent that the support is seen as being discretionary. Eisenberger et al. indeed show that the extent to which organizational support is perceived to be discretionary moderates the relationship between evaluations of support and outcomes.

In support of the basic predictions of the social exchange perspective, evaluations of the social exchange relationship between the individual and the organization and its representatives have been shown to be related to a variety of outcomes relevant to employees and organizations, such as in-role performance, extra-role behavior, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). The social exchange analysis also has clear implications for withdrawal from the job.

To the extent that individuals are satisfied with the "give and take" in the relationship, they will be motivated to continue the relationship, and the organization may expect

individuals' active involvement in the job. However, when individuals are not satisfied with the relationship (i.e., because the benefits received from the other party in the relationship are perceived as too low in comparison to own inputs in the relationship), they may withdraw from the relationship (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959), either by leaving the relationship entirely (i.e., turn over) or by other withdrawal behaviors like absenteeism, lateness, and non-work activities on-the-job (e.g., private emails, social talk). Evidence for these processes is found in research on perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, and psychological contracts (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Griffeth et al., 2000; Guzzo et al., 1994; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997).

Social Identity and Organizational Behavior

Whereas reciprocity between the individual and another party lies at the core of the social exchange perspective, self-definition lies at the heart of the social identity perspective. Core to the social identity perspective on employee – organization relationships is the notion that group memberships are self-definitional to a greater or lesser degree (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Individuals may conceive of the self in terms of “we” rather than “I”, including the group in their sense of self (i.e., the collective self; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; J. C. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The extent to which individuals define the self in terms of the membership in the organization is reflected in the concept of organizational identification, the perceived oneness between self and organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The more people identify with a group or organization, the more the group's or organization's interests are incorporated in the self-concept, and the more likely the individual is to act with the organization's best interest in mind (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003).

In support of the basic prediction that identification engenders a motivation to further the collective's interest, identification has been shown to be related to such behaviors as

contributions to a public good (De Cremer & Van Vugt, 1999), support for the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), in-role performance (James & Greenberg, 1989; van Knippenberg, 2000), and extra-role behavior (Christ et al., 2003; Riketta & van Dick, in press) – for overviews, see for instance Haslam (2001), Haslam, van Knippenberg, Platow, and Ellemers (2003), and Hogg and Terry (2001). This is not to say, however, that identification always leads to positive outcomes. M. E. Turner, Pratkanis, and Samuels (2003) for instance suggest that organizational identification may frustrate necessary organizational change if it leads organizational members to resist changes to a valued identity (cf. Rousseau, 1998; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Monden, & de Lima, 2002). The conclusion should thus be that identification motivates actions that are perceived to be in the collective's interest, even when in reality they may not be (van Knippenberg, 2000).

Like the social exchange perspective, the social identity perspective has clear implications for job withdrawal. Organizational identification may be expected to be negatively related to withdrawal from the job for at least two reasons. First, the more an individual identifies with the organization, the more the individual's self-concept is tied to the organization. Accordingly, withdrawal from the organization, especially permanent withdrawal (i.e., turnover), would affect the self-concept. People desire internal consistency and continuity over time in their self-concepts. They are motivated to behave in ways that are consistent with their sense of self (e.g., pursue goals that are consistent with their values and the way they see themselves), and may resist changes to valued aspects of the self (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Festinger, 1957; Rousseau, 1998; van Knippenberg et al., 2002). Withdrawal from the job is therefore an action that is less likely to be taken the more people's sense of self is tied to the organization. Second, we may assume that withdrawal from the job would typically be perceived as going against the organization's interest, and organizational identification motivates individuals to pursue that very interest. For that reason too, the social

identity perspective suggests a negative relationship between organizational identification and withdrawal from the job. In support of this proposition, research has shown that organizational identification is negatively related to turnover intentions (Abrams et al., 1998; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), turnover (Mael & Ashforth, 1995), and absenteeism (van Dick & Wagner, 2002).¹

Identification, Support, and Withdrawal from the Job: The Present Study

Both the social exchange perspective and the social identity perspective make clear predictions about withdrawal intentions and behavior, but propose different processes to underlie these outcomes. The social exchange perspective identifies dissatisfaction with the exchange relationship as a cause of withdrawal from the job, and felt obligation towards the exchange partner as motivation for active involvement in the organization and a reason to refrain from withdrawal. The social identity perspective, in contrast, identifies incorporation of the collective interest into the self-concept and a desire for self-consistency/continuity as causes of active involvement in the organization, and thus as reasons not to withdraw from the job. These perspectives need not be in contradiction, and an obvious question to raise is how these processes relate to each other in determining organizational behavior.

A first observation in this respect is that social exchange processes and social identity processes have to a substantial extent different antecedents, and may thus in principle operate relatively independently from each other. Positive evaluations of social exchange relationships, such as reflected in evaluations of organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986), supervisor support (Kottke & Shafranski, 1988), and psychological contracts (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994) derive from the perception that benefits received from the other party are high and commensurate with own inputs in the relationship. Perceived fairness, and organizational rewards and benefits have for instance been associated with positive evaluations of the exchange relationship (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Tavares &

Caetano, 2003). Organizational identifications, in contrast, are rooted in context-dependent perceptions of similarity between self and organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2001). Because through identification the organization's image reflects on the self (J. C. Turner et al., 1987), organizational identifications are strengthened by factors that render the organization attractive, such as its status or prestige (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and its distinctiveness (Dutton et al., 1994). It is conceivable that social exchange processes contribute to the attractiveness of the organization (e.g., being supportive of employees may contribute to an organization's attractiveness), but they are clearly not the only factor that renders an organization attractive. Moreover, in contrast to identification processes, social exchange processes do not rely on perceived similarity between self and organization.

Yet, this does not preclude the possibility that social exchange processes and social identity processes interact in affecting organizational behavior. Indeed, both social exchange processes and social identity processes in and of themselves may be enough to prevent withdrawal from the job, and to motivate individuals to be actively involved in the organization. In this sense, high identification as well as positive evaluations of the social exchange relationship may impose a “psychological threshold” to withdraw from the job, buffering the effects of factors that might motivate withdrawal, including low identification or low evaluations of the quality of social exchange. High quality social exchange (i.e., high support) may instill a sense of obligation that renders withdrawal less likely even when identification is low, because the norm of reciprocity will motivate active involvement in the organization (cf. Eisenberger et al., 2001). Conversely, when high identification leads individuals to take the organization's interest to heart and links a sense of self-consistency to active involvement in the organization, withdrawal likewise is less likely even when the exchange relationship is perceived to be of low quality, because withdrawal would both go against high identifiers motivation to further the organization's interest and would negatively

impact their sense of self-consistency. Moreover, social exchange processes imply a relationship in which the individual and the organization are separate entities psychologically (Levinson, 1965; Rousseau & Parks, 1993), and identification implies that the individual and the organization are one (i.e., in the sense that the organization is included in individual's self-conception; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; J. C. Turner et al., 1987). Accordingly, higher identification will lead individuals to evaluate their relationship with the organization less in terms of the quality of exchange, because such evaluations are contingent on a psychological linkage in which the organization is perceived as a separate entity (cf. Tyler & Blader, 2000). Accordingly, we predict that evaluations of the quality of the exchange relationship and organizational identification interact in predicting job withdrawal, such that the relationship between evaluations of the exchange relationship and withdrawal is weaker the stronger an individual identifies with the organization.

We tested this hypothesis in two samples focusing on evaluations of the support received as indicator of the quality of the exchange relationship (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Both samples allowed us to test the interaction of organizational identification and support in predicting withdrawal from the job. They differed somewhat, however, in the specific operationalizations of evaluations of support and of job withdrawal. Sample 1 focused on evaluations of supervisor support and turnover intentions. Sample 2 focused on evaluations of organizational support and absenteeism. To the extent that both samples yield the same pattern of results, these differences in operationalizations may bolster the confidence in our findings and testify to their generalizability.

Sample 1

Sample 1 was a cross-sectional survey of bank accountants (i.e., private sector employees), and focused on the interaction of organizational identification and support from one's supervisor as a representative of the organization in the prediction of turnover

intentions as an important aspect of withdrawal. Our hypothesis was that both evaluations of supervisor support and organizational identification are negatively related to turnover intentions, but that evaluations of supervisor support are less related to turnover intentions the more individuals identify with the organization.

Method

Sample

Data regarding supervisor support, organizational identification, and turnover intentions were assessed in a questionnaire survey of 358 bank accountants stemming from a large regional bank in Germany. Fifty-two percent of respondents were female, age was obtained in categorical classes (younger than 25 years: 14%, 25-34 years: 29%, 35-44 years: 29%, 45-54 years: 23%, older than 54 years: 4%), and 84% of participants were employed by the current company for more than 5 years. Response rate was 68%.

Measures

Evaluations of supervisor support were assessed with three items based on Hackman and Oldham (1980; cf. Kottke & Shafranski, 1988), for example “I’m satisfied with the amount of support I receive from my supervisor”. Organizational identification was obtained with five items which have been shown to be a reliable measure before (Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004), for example “Being a member of my organization is a reflection of who I am”. Finally, turnover intentions were measured with two items inspired by Hackman and Oldham (1980) (“I frequently think of quitting”, “I often think of quitting this job”). All items were in German, and responses were assessed on 6-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores on the composite measures indicate more positive evaluations of supervisor support, higher organizational identification, and higher turnover intentions, respectively.

Results

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1. Scale reliabilities were good for all scales. We conducted hierarchical regression analyses to test our hypothesis. On Step 1 we entered supervisor support and organizational identification, and on Step 2 the interactions between supervisor support and organizational identification. Following Aiken and West (1991), we standardized the predictor variables before computing the interaction terms, and entered the standardized scores. Results are shown in Table 2.

As expected, both supervisor support and identification were negatively related to turnover intentions. Of most importance to the present discussion, the interaction of supervisor support and organizational identification was significant. Following Aiken and West (1991), we tested the simple slopes for respondents with higher identification (one standard deviation above the mean) and respondents with lower identification (one standard deviation below the mean) to determine the nature of the supervisor support x organizational identification interactions. In line with our hypothesis, supervisor support was strongly and negatively related to turnover intentions for respondents with lower identification ($b = -.64$, $\beta = -.45$, $p < .001$), while the relationship between supervisor support and turnover intentions was weaker for highly identified employees ($b = -.31$, $\beta = -.22$, $p < .01$; see Figure 1).

Sample 2

Sample 2 also provided information about the relationship between identification, support, and withdrawal, and thus allowed us to replicate the findings from the first sample. Because Sample 2 also deviated from Sample 1 in several respects, it also allowed us to extend the findings from the first sample. First, it assessed evaluations of organizational support rather than supervisor support. Second, it focused on (self-reported) absenteeism as indicator of withdrawal from the job rather than turnover intentions.² Third, it concerned employees from the public sector (school teachers) rather than private sector employees. Our

hypothesis was that evaluations of organizational support and identification are negatively related to absenteeism, but that the relationship between perceived support and absenteeism is weaker the stronger identification.

Method

Sample

Data regarding perceptions of organizational support, organizational identification, and absenteeism were assessed in a questionnaire survey of German schoolteachers as part of a larger project on school teachers' work life. The original sample consisted of 515 teachers. For economical reasons, however, teachers were provided different versions of the questionnaire containing different subsets of concepts, and the present analyses are based on the subsample where organizational support and identification were assessed. 175 usable questionnaires were returned which contained all concepts relevant here. Overall response rate was 63%. Forty-two percent of the respondents were male, mean age of the respondents was 46.29 years ($SD = 8.40$), and mean tenure was 18.84 years ($SD = 10.08$).

Measures

Perceptions of organizational support were assessed using a 12-item scale following Eisenberger et al. (1986). We formulated the items in a school-specific way, using school administration instead of organization, for instance. Items included "School administration takes teachers' personal needs into account when making decisions" and "School administration recognizes and appreciates teachers' performance". Organizational identification was assessed with an equivalent instrument to Study 1 but adapted to the school context (e.g., "Being a member of my school is an important reflection of who I am"). All items were in German, and responses were assessed on 6-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores on the composite measures indicate higher organizational support and higher organizational identification, respectively. A single item

requested respondents to indicate days of absenteeism from the job during the past six months.²

Results

Descriptive statistics are provided in Table 3. Scale reliabilities were sufficient for organizational support and organizational identification. As in Study 1, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to test our hypotheses. On Step 1 we entered organizational support and organizational identification, and on Step 2 the interactions between organizational support and organizational identification. We standardized the predictor variables before computing the interaction terms, and entered the standardized scores.

Results are shown in Table 4.

Of most importance to the present discussion, the interaction of organizational support and organizational identification was significant. We tested the simple slopes for respondents with higher identification (one standard deviation above the mean) and respondents with lower identification (one standard deviation below the mean) to determine the nature of the organizational support x organizational identification interaction. In line with our hypothesis organizational support was negatively related to absenteeism for respondents with lower identification ($b = -3.73$, $\beta = -.42$, $p < .001$), while the relationship between perceived organizational support and absenteeism was non-significant for highly identified employees ($b = -1.13$, $\beta = -.13$, $p > .21$; see Figure 2).

Discussion

Integrating insights from social exchange and social identity perspectives on job withdrawal, we argued that both the felt obligation to reciprocate induced by organizational support, and the motivation to further the organization's interest and to maintain self-consistency engendered by organizational identification introduce a "psychological threshold" against withdrawal from the job. Moreover, we argued that evaluations of the

organization's role in a social exchange relationship become less of a concern to individuals the less the individual and the organization are separate entities psychologically (i.e., with higher identification). Based on this reasoning, we predicted that evaluations of support and identification interact in predicting job withdrawal. Findings from two different samples confirm this hypothesis. Support and identification were both negatively related to withdrawal, and in both samples identification buffered the impact of support on withdrawal. The fact that this interaction was replicated across samples bolsters the confidence in our findings, especially because samples concern different types of organizations (i.e., public vs. private sector), differ in the source of support (the organization vs. the supervisor as representative of the organization), and differ in the specific indicator of withdrawal studied (turnover intentions vs. absenteeism).

The present study thus seems to be a promising first step in integrating insights from social exchange and social identity perspectives on the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization. From that perspective, it would be valuable to extend the current analysis to other indicators of the quality of social exchange between individual and organization. The specific prediction that support and identification interact in predicting job withdrawal follows from the more general hypothesis that social exchange and social identity processes interact. Accordingly, the support for our prediction obtained in the present study suggests for instance that organizational identification may also moderate the impact of evaluations of psychological contracts and psychological contract violations as indicators of the quality of the exchange relationship between the individual and the organization (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau & Parks, 1993). Testing this prediction in future research would seem to be a valuable further step in integrating social exchange and social identity perspectives on individual-organization relationships.

In similar vein, it would be valuable to extend the current analysis to other attitudes and

behavior than withdrawal from the job. Both evaluations of the social exchange relationship and organizational identification are for instance associated with in-role and extra-role behavior (for overviews, see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; van Knippenberg, 2000). An obvious question would therefore be whether the interaction observed in the present study may also be observed for in-role and extra-role behavior. Exploring the combined effects of social exchange processes and social identity processes on these and other behaviors may advance our understanding of the factors governing these behaviors, and may lead to a more integrative understanding of the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization as a predictor of organizational behavior.

In line with our predictions, it seems that for high identifiers, psychological job withdrawal (either by intending to give up membership in the organization, or by diminishing their presence in the job context) is not a viable action to reciprocate a perceived lower quality of the exchange relationships. This raises the question of what is a viable response to low quality exchange for high identifiers. Our analysis suggests that at least to a certain extent low quality exchange is just less of a concern to high identifiers. Adopting Farrell's (1983; cf. Hirschman, 1970) terminology, loyalty (i.e., sticking with the organization without responding to a dissatisfying situation) rather than exit or neglect (i.e., withdrawal) may be the obvious course of action for high identifiers. To the extent that high identifiers are concerned with low quality exchange, however, voice (i.e., attempts to change a dissatisfying situation) to try to actively change the situation without withdrawing from the job might be a more viable response for high identifiers. This is an interesting possibility, that would be valuable to investigate in future research.

In Study 1, we focused on supervisors as representatives of the organization. Not all supervisors are seen as equally representative of the organization, however (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). An interesting question therefore is

how differences in supervisors' representativeness of the organization affects the processes studied here. A first prediction might be that the less representative of the organization a supervisor is perceived to be, the less the psychological relationship between the individual and the organization will be affected by the exchange relationship with the supervisor (i.e., which is not to say that an individual may not seek to withdraw from a dissatisfying relationship with the supervisor).

On a different note, however, we should be careful not to conclude that supervisor behavior becomes less influential the more individuals identify with the organizations. Rather, as Hogg and van Knippenberg (2003; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003) argue, with higher identification attention is likely to shift to different aspects of leader behavior. Hogg and van Knippenberg show that, as individuals identify more with the organization, leadership effectiveness is more contingent on the extent to which leaders are perceived to be representative ("prototypical") of the collective, and are seen to pursue the collective interest (also see van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Clearly, then, even though evaluations of the social exchange relationship may become less influential as people identify more with organizations, leaders remain a powerful source of influence on organizational behavior, especially when they are seen to represent the collective.

A potential drawback of the present study is that both samples rely on mono-source data derived from a single questionnaire. Common method variance may therefore enhance estimates of main effects. Importantly, however, common method variance cannot account for interactions in regression – indeed, it leads to an underestimation of statistical interactions (Evans, 1985; McClelland & Judd, 1993). Despite the mono-source/mono-method design, we may therefore have some confidence in the interactions obtained.

This is not to say, however, that the study is without limitations. A first thing to note is that the samples do not contain real behavioral measures. Sample 1 focused on behavioral

intentions, whereas Sample 2, although focusing on actual behavior, relied on self-reported behavior rather than on a more objective measure of absenteeism. Moreover, this was only a single-item measure. Single-item measures are not necessarily problematic when they concern clear-cut, factual information, but there would have been added value in a multifaceted measure of absenteeism (cf. footnote 3). An obvious direction for future research would thus be to focus on more objective and fine-grained behavioral measures of withdrawal from the job, such as actual turnover, and company records of absenteeism and lateness. A second limitation is that the cross-sectional design of the study renders it mute in matters of causality. Complementing the present study with (field) experimental data would therefore be valuable. A third limitation is that the study relied on measures of support that were rather specific to these samples rather than applying more widely used measures such as those developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) and Kottke and Shafranski (1988). While the specific operationalizations may be valid in the context where they were used, this lowers comparability with other studies in the field. Follow-up research using different measures would thus be worthwhile.

From the point of view of organizational practice, the implications of the present findings are that attempts to combat withdrawal from the job through investments in the exchange relationship (cf. Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) are especially important when the levels of organizational identification are low or decreasing. Put differently, the present findings may be taken to imply that either investing in building a high quality social exchange relationship or in building employee identification, contingent on what seems to be the more viable option in a given organizational context, may be an effective way to reduce or prevent withdrawal from the job.

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Footnotes

¹ It is possible that high identification may under certain circumstances be conducive to withdrawal. Research on mergers and acquisitions for instance suggests that high identifiers may respond more negatively to a merger than low identifiers when the merger is perceived as a significant change in the organization's identity (van Knippenberg et al., 2002; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003). It should be noted, however, that to our knowledge no published study has documented a positive relationship between identification and job withdrawal (cf. Riketta, 2004).

² Because for schoolteachers in Germany, turnover is hardly an option and extremely rare (van Dick & Wagner, 2002), we did not include a measure of turnover intentions.

³ We acknowledge the added value of compiling different measures of absenteeism (e.g., summary scores, frequency of absent days, frequency of periods of different duration; e.g., Schmidt & Daume, 1996). Because of administrative limitations it was not possible in the present context to get objective data or to measure different aspects of absenteeism with subjective methods.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Variables, Study 1^a

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. supervisor support	3.83	1.30	(.81)		
2. organizational identification	4.60	.96	.36***	(.86)	
3. turnover intention	2.1	1.39	-.45***	-.42***	(.89)

^a Coefficients alpha are displayed on the diagonal. *N* = 339 (listwise). Higher scores indicate higher supervisor support, organizational identification, and turnover intentions.

*** $p < .001$

Table 2. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis, Study 1^a

Variable	Turnover intentions			
	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				
supervisor support	-.49	.07	-.35***	.13
organizational identification	-.41	.07	-.29***	.09
Step 2				
support x identification	.17	.06	.13**	.02

^a $N = 339$ (listwise).** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Variables, Study 2^a

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. perceived organizational support	2.72	.70	(.72)		
2. organizational identification	4.33	1.11	.28***	(.80)	
3. absenteeism	3.71	8.86	-.30***	-.15*	(-)

^a Coefficients alpha are displayed on the diagonal. *N* = 167 (listwise). Higher scores indicate higher perceived organizational support, organizational identification and days of absenteeism.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 4. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis, Study 2^a

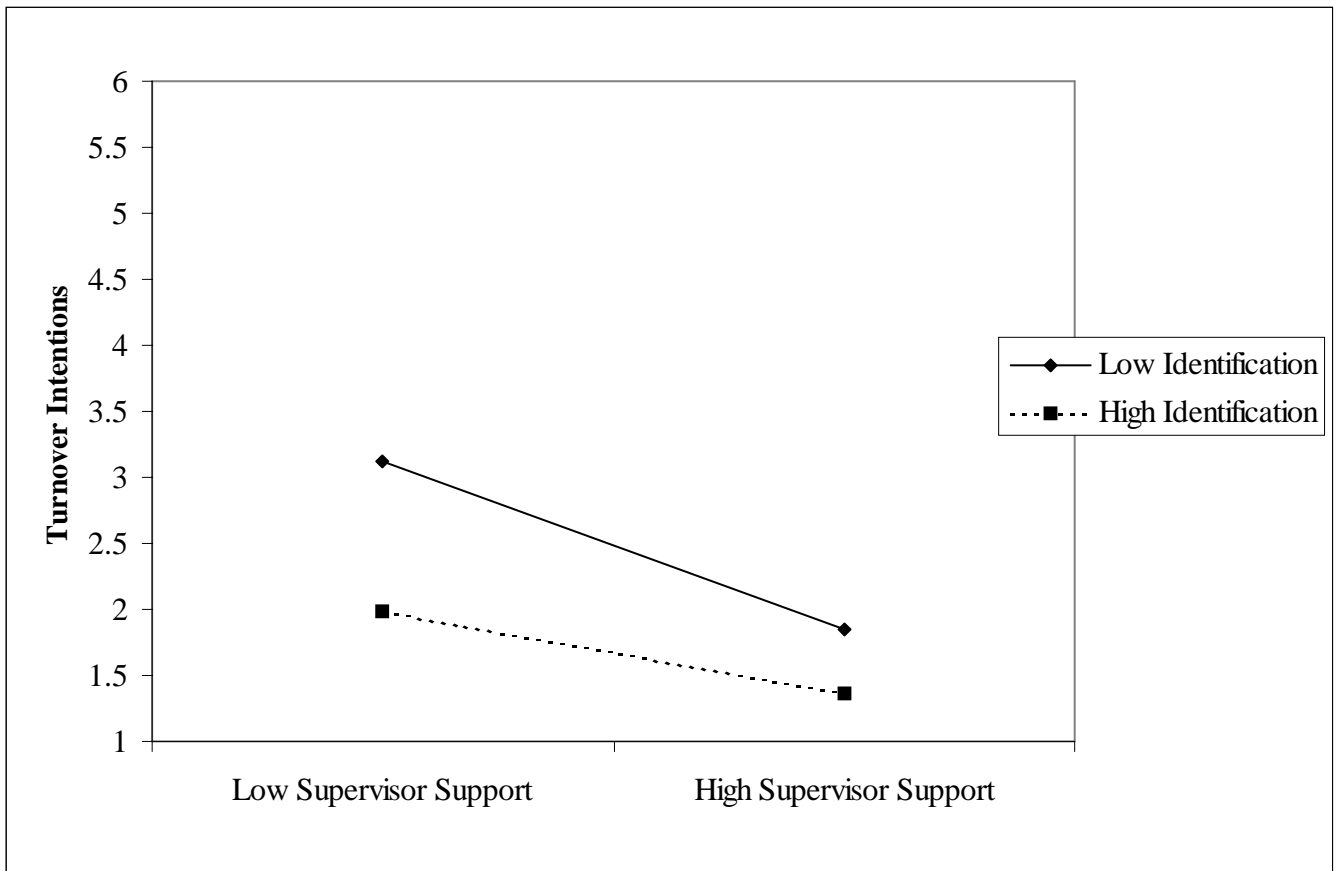
Variable	Absenteeism			
	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				
organizational support	-2.45	.69	-.28***	.07
organizational identification	-.65	.68	-.07	.01
Step 2				
support x identification	1.30	.57	.17*	.03

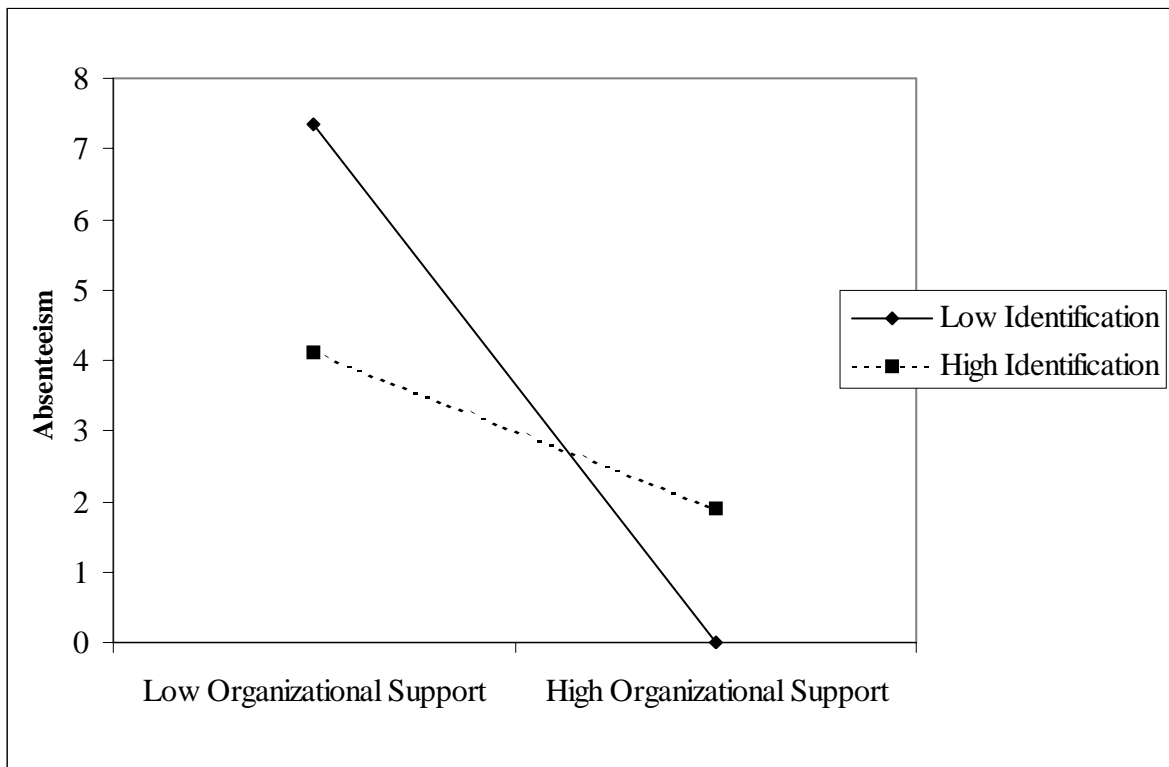
^a *N* = 167 (listwise).* *p* < .05** *p* < .01*** *p* < .001

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Turnover intentions as a function of supervisor support and organizational identification, Sample 1.

Figure 2. Absenteeism as a function of organizational support and organizational identification, Sample 2.





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