

**Leader and Organizational Identification and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors:  
Examining Cross-Lagged Relationships and the Moderating Role of Collective Identity  
Orientation**

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**Abstract**

People may identify with multiple entities at work, but how are different foci of identification related and how do they influence extra-role work behaviors? Drawing from social identity theory, our paper examines: a) the potential bidirectional relationship between leader and organizational identification; b) the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between leader identification and organizational citizenship behavior (organization-targeted, OCBO) and c) the moderating role of collective identity orientation on the indirect relationship between leader identification and OCBO via organizational identification. Cross-lagged analyses of two-time data in two independent studies provided support for identification generalization from leader identification to organizational identification and confirmed the hypothesized mediating role of organizational identification. Our results also confirmed the moderating role of collective identity orientation and showed that the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification was stronger for employees with low collective identity orientation. Support was also provided for moderated mediation. Overall, our findings showcase the importance of examining multiple identifications foci when studying social identification at work and provide support for spillover effects of lower-order to higher-order identifications.

**Keywords:** leader identification; organizational identification; collective identity orientation; organizational citizenship behavior

Organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of multiple social identification processes at work (Ashforth, Schinoff, & Rogers, 2016; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). As Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) have stressed “it is precisely because individuals seek situated moorings in each of their social domains that it is important to understand the dynamics, risks, and potential of identification in today’s organizations” (p. 360). Research on social identification in the workplace suggests that people can identify with multiple entities (e.g., leader, work group and organization) simultaneously and that multiple identifications could interact. Despite the importance of multiple identifications in work contexts we still have little empirical insight into their complex relationship with one another (Ashforth et al., 2016). The majority of research on social identification in the workplace has focused on how employees develop identification with their organization and work groups and their effects on work outcomes with limited research examining employees’ identification with their leader despite prior calls for additional work in that area (Ashforth et al., 2013; Zhang & Chen, 2013).

In this paper we examine two foci of identification, namely organizational and leader identification, which refers to an individual’s perceived ‘oneness’ with their organization and their leader, respectively (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Leader and organizational identification are both important for employees’ cognition, affect, and behavior (Ashforth et al., 2008) and more recently research has suggested that the two types of identification are related. For example, Steffens, Haslam, and Reicher (2014) proposed that employees infer identification with their leader based on the strength of their social identification with the group whereas Horstmeier et al. (2017) argued that employees’ identification with their leader strengthens their identification with the organization. Considering that higher and lower order identifications can reinforce each other and could be reciprocally linked (Ashforth et al., 2016), and the call for more research on

multiple identifications (Ashforth et al., 2013), it is surprising that prior studies have not provided definitive answers to the link between leader and organizational identification.

Multiple identifications in the workplace can potentially complement, compete with and be independent of each other (Chen, Chi, & Friedman, 2013) suggesting that the relationship between leader and organizational identification is complex and warrants further investigation. Prior research has explored independently the outcomes of both leader and organizational identification and shown that they are both important for employee work outcomes (e.g., Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015; Riketta, 2005; Zhu et al., 2015). However, only a limited number of studies have examined both leader and organizational identification and their effects on outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, task performance, self-efficacy, and voice behavior (e.g., Kark et al., 2003; Zhang & Chen, 2013; Zhu et al., 2015). We investigate this further and focus on contextual work performance towards the organization as an outcome of special interest for multiple identifications. When employees define themselves in terms of the leader and the organization, they will be more motivated to work towards the interests of and goals specified by the leader and the organization (Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Wang & Howell, 2012). Organizational citizenship behavior directed toward the organization (OCBO) is defined as discretionary employee actions that are not explicitly rewarded but benefit the organization as a whole (Organ, 1997; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Williams & Anderson, 1991). It involves adhering to organizational rules and complying with the organization's norms and values and is in the interest of the leader and the organization as it promotes effective organizational functioning (LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002). As such OCBOs should be affected by leader and organizational identification. While both leader and organizational identification have shown to be positively related to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Zhang &

Chen, 2013) research has yet to examine how the two types of identification collectively affect OCBO. Based on the concept of *identification generalization* (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), which postulates that lower-order identifications (i.e., leader identification) can spillover to higher-order identifications (i.e., organizational identification) we suggest that leader identification may be seen as a source for employees' identification with the organizations and citizenship behaviors suggesting that leader identification affects organizational identification, which then affects OCBO.

We further expand the framework to examine self-concept orientation as a moderator that can help us obtain a deeper understanding of identification processes in organizational settings (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). We incorporate the levels of the self into models of identification and specifically examine the role of collective identity orientation in this context. Collective identity orientation is a trait-like chronically salient cognitive representation that captures the predisposition for one to value and define oneself in terms of group memberships (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Such identity orientations may play an important role in identification generalization processes (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss et al., 2012) and moderate the spillover effects from one type of identification to another. By examining the moderating role of collective identity orientation we answer the call for research that incorporates levels of the self into models of identification (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010).

Together, results of past research raise a set of interrelated questions; Is the relationship between leader and organizational identification unidirectional or bidirectional? Can organizational identification mediate the relationship between leader identification and important employee work outcomes? How can collective identity orientation act as a boundary condition of the relationship between leader and organizational identification? We address these three

questions and to our understanding we make three essential contributions to social identification in the workplace, while also responding to the call for more research on multiple identifications at work (Ashforth et al., 2016; Horstmeier et al., 2016; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). First, we examine the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification and test the possible bidirectional relationship between the two types of identification. Second, we examine the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between leader identification on OCBO. Organizational citizenship behaviors towards the organization (such as conscientiousness and civic virtue) are underlain by individuals' concern for the organization's fate and are thus important outcomes of identification processes. Third, we examine the moderating role of collective identity orientation on the indirect relationship between leader identification and OCBO via organizational identification. Using a two-time design with data from two samples of organizational employees, we shed light on the linkages between the two identification types, their effects on citizenship behaviors at work and relevant moderating mechanisms.

### **Theory and Hypothesis Development**

Following Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), social identification reflects psychological oneness with a social category (another person or a group) and is a process of depersonalization by which individuals define themselves in terms of the social category (e.g., leader or organization) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Similarly, it has been argued that identification concerns the person's psychological merging of him/herself with another person or group and it involves taking the other person's or group's interests to heart (van Knippenberg, Martin, & Tyler, 2006; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Researchers have further distinguished between personal and social identification, where personal identification refers to identification with

another person (e.g., leader) and social identification refers to identification with a group (e.g., an organization) (Ashforth et al., 2016; Kark et al., 2003). Sluss and Ashforth (2007) extended this and proposed that individuals can develop identification with a role relationship (e.g., the relationship with one's leader) labelled relational identification. Just as people may develop identification with their leader and organization they may also include their relationship with their leader in their self-concept and thus define themselves in terms of their relationship with the leader (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007).

Building on this, Sluss and colleagues proposed that relational identification may generalize to organizational identification as leaders act as representatives of the organization and as such there may be a spillover from the employee's identification with the leader to the identification with the organization (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Sluss et al., 2012).

### ***Leader Identification and Organizational Identification***

Prior research has shown that leaders are important sensegivers who play a critical role in interpreting and framing organizational reality and subsequently shaping the sensemaking processes of organizational members in times of both change and stability (Bartunek et al., 1999; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Leaders are 'managers of meanings' (Staw & Sutton, 1993) who interpret organizational events in ways that reflect organizational priorities. They thus shape the perceptions of key organizational exchange actors such as employees. Leaders further clarify role expectations and exemplify organizational norms and values (Lord & Brown, 2001; van Dick et al., 2007). They are perceived as representative organizational agents who exemplify or personify the organization through their actions and behaviors (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013). As such employees' relationship with their leader becomes a critical lens through which they view and

interpret their work experiences (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Tse et al., 2013). In general, the concept of identification generalization (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss et al., 2012) states that lower level identification (e.g., leader identification) may generalize to higher level identification (e.g., organizational identification) due to the lower-order collective (or relationship) representing the higher-order collective. It thus suggests that there may be a spillover effect from one type of identification to another. In identifying with their leader, individuals may come to identify with the collective (i.e., the organization) that the leader embodies and represents and thus see the organization as an extension of their relationship with the leader. As Sluss and Ashforth (2007) note, in extending the self to include the leader's role and the relationship with the leader, one can develop a broader understanding of the wider organization. Identification with the leader may thus strengthen the person's identification with the organization.

Lower level identification (e.g., leader identification) is generally viewed as more salient to employees than higher level identification (e.g., organizational identification) as employees engage more with their leader than the organization in their day-to-day activities (Ashforth et al., 2008). Lower level identification (e.g., leader identification) should therefore be more important for cognitive, affective and behavioral processes of employees than higher level identification (e.g., organizational identification) (Ashforth et al., 2013). Furthermore, as a person is more likely to be influenced by another individual's values and opinions if they are attracted to them, then they are more likely to identify with what the other individual identifies with (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). As the leader exemplifies and embodies the organization, employees are more likely to experience a stronger sense of belonging to the organization through their relational bond with the leader (Gerstner & Day, 1997; van Dick et al., 2007). Thus, employees' identification with their leader may generalize to identification with their organization pointing



to a potential spillover effect. For leader identification, we specifically focus on employees' identification with the manager they report to.

Building on Sluss and Ashforth's (2007) concept of identification generalization we argue that leader identification will predict organizational identification. Being closer to one's leader will facilitate generalization processes as the employee will be likely to perceive the leader as representing or exemplifying the organization (Henderson et al., 2008). This generalization process will then lead employees' identification with their leader to spillover to their identification with the organization. Given the proximity of the leader to employees' work experiences (Ashforth et al., 2008) thereby playing an important role for employees' sensemaking processes, we argue that when a person defines themselves in terms of their leader, they will then be more likely to define themselves in terms of the collective the leader represents. We thus hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Leader identification is positively related to organizational identification.

While we propose that lower level identification can generalize to higher level identification it is important to note that Sluss et al. (2012) indicated that different pathways may exist and that one cannot disregard the possibility of higher level identifications influencing lower level ones. Steffens et al. (2014) tested this proposition and reversed the identification generalization sequence. They specifically suggested a process whereby in established groups leader identification can also derive from followers' and leaders' shared social category membership. They further argued that the relationship between leader and organizational identification can be bidirectional based on prior research on personal and social identities that showed them not to be exclusive or incompatible but defined through each other (e.g., Postmes & Jetten, 2006). Their results support a spillover effect from social identification to relational

identification but Steffens et al. (2014) explicitly stress that their aim was not to demonstrate the predominance of one type of spillover effect versus the other but rather to demonstrate their co-existence. Like Steffens et al. (2014), we acknowledge that the relationship between leader and organizational identification can be bidirectional. We further follow their suggestion to avoid the limitations of a correlational design when examining these complex relationships and adopt two-time, cross-lagged methodologies to assess causality and cast a more in-depth light on the bidirectional effects between leader and organizational identification.

### ***Leader and Organizational Identification and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors***

Prior scholarly work has suggested that identification with a person, a relationship or a collective is associated with acting on behalf of the needs of others and can contribute to other-focused behaviors, such as helping, understanding, and supporting behaviors (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Therefore, the more one experiences a bond with the leader or the organization the more one will then behave to the benefit of the leader or the organization. Organization-targeted OCBs refer to discretionary employee actions that are not explicitly rewarded but benefit the organization as a whole (Organ, 1997; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Williams & Anderson, 1991). They involve adhering to organizational rules and complying with the organization's norms and values, which promotes effective organizational functioning (LePine et al., 2002). When people identify with the organization, they will be more devoted to working in the interest of the organization. We specifically focus on OCBO and not organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals (OCBI), which refers to employee actions that benefit individual work colleagues (Williams & Anderson, 1991), for two main reasons. First, organizational identification should be more closely related to OCBOs than OCBI due to target similarity, which is also supported by meta-analytic results (Lee et al.,

2015). Second, whereas OCB towards individuals such as co-workers is mainly driven by pro-social motives, OCB towards the organization is primarily driven by organizational concern motives (Bolino, Harvey, & Bachrach, 2012; Grant & Mayer, 2009; Rioux & Penner, 2001). By strengthening identification with the organization, leader identification indirectly makes concern for organization more salient and thus we expect leader and organizational identification to matter more for OCBO.

As leaders exemplify the organization's norms and act as role models showing commitment to the organization's goals (Dust, Resick, & Mawritz, 2014) it can be argued that engaging in behaviors that promote effective organizational functioning is already an integral part of the leader's role. When employees identify with the leader, they will be motivated to work towards goals specified by the leader (Wang & Howell, 2012) and view the interests of the leader as their own (Epitropaki, 2013; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). The more employees identify with their leader the more they should engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, a relationship that has been supported by prior research (e.g., Zhang & Chen, 2013). When employees engage in OCBOs, they behave in alignment with the leader's goals, take on work of the leader and work in the interest of both the leader and the organization. Based on the this, both leader and organizational identification should be positively related to OCBO.

However, we expect organizational identification to be a more proximal antecedent of OCBO than leader identification. According to the principle of compatibility (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), the relationship between attitudes and behaviors is enhanced when the attitudes and the behaviors correspond and focus on the same target. Similarly, the *correspondence of focus* principle (van Dick et al., 2004) suggests that the strength of the relationship between identification and one's behaviors depends on the correspondence of the focus of the two.

Following this principle, and as organizational identification and OCBOs share the same focus (i.e., the organization), we expect leader identification to influence OCBOs indirectly via organizational identification. Identification with the leader will increase people's identification with the organization and subsequently influence employees' discretionary behaviors that promote organizational functioning. We therefore expect organizational identification to mediate the relationship between leader identification and OCBOs. Based on this, we propose that:

*Hypothesis 2:* Organizational identification mediates the relationship between leader identification and OCBO.

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationships examined in Studies 1 and 2.

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### **Study 1: Method**

In Study 1, we tested Hypotheses 1 and 2 using a two-time design with data from 316 employees of a Danish organization to examine the possible bidirectional relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. We further examined the mediating role of organizational identification on the relationship between leader identification and OCBO.

### ***Sample and Procedure***

The sample in this study overlaps with the sample used in Marstand, Martin, and Epitropaki (2017) and Marstand, Epitropaki, and Martin (2018). However, the hypotheses and relationships of interest are distinct from these earlier articles. We collected data at two time points with a six-month interval from individuals employed at a consumer products company in Denmark. To develop the Danish version of the questionnaires we followed the

recommendations by Brislin, Lonner, and Thorndike (1973). At Time 1, 3,054 employees were invited to complete the online questionnaire. We received 468 completed questionnaires (response rate of 15.32%). At Time 2, the 468 respondents were invited to complete the second questionnaire. A total of 316 employees who reported to the same manager at Time 1 and Time 2 completed the questionnaire (Time 2 response rate of 67.52%).

Chi-square analysis and independent t-tests were conducted to compare the 316 employees, who completed the questionnaires at both time points, with the 152 employees who completed the questionnaire at Time 1 only. Chi-square analysis showed no significant difference between the two groups in gender ( $\chi^2(1, N = 468) = .82, p = .37$ ) and independent t-tests showed no significant difference in job tenure ( $p = .12$ ). There was a significant difference in organizational tenure ( $p < .05$ ), manager tenure ( $p < .05$ ), age ( $p < .01$ ), and work experience ( $p < .01$ ) with tenure, age and experience being higher for those who participated at both Time 1 and Time 2 compared to those who only participated at Time 1. Independent t-tests indicated no significant differences in leader identification ( $p = .32$ ) and organizational identification ( $p = .87$ ).

Following Kark et al. (2003) we only included employees who had worked with their manager for a minimum of six months in order to ensure that they had had enough time to get acquainted with their leader, which led to a sample size reduction from 316 to 282 respondents. Of the 282 respondents, 53.9% were male. At Time 1, respondents' average age was 45.37 years ( $SD = 9.17$ ), average work experience was 24.32 years ( $SD = 10.56$ ), average organizational tenure was 14.31 years ( $SD = 10.00$ ), average job tenure was 8.73 years ( $SD = 8.92$ ) and on average respondents had worked with their manager for 4.68 years ( $SD = 4.08$ ).

### ***Measures***

At Time 1, employees evaluated leader identification and organizational identification and at Time 2 they evaluated leader identification, organizational identification and OCBO. For leader-related questions, respondents were asked to focus on their immediate manager.

**Leader identification (Time 1 and Time 2).** The six organizational identification items from Mael and Tetrick (1992) were reworded by replacing ‘organization’ with ‘manager’ to measure leader identification. A sample item is “I am very interested in what others think about my manager”. A five-point scale was used with anchors from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

**Organizational identification (Time 1 and Time 2).** We used the six-item scale by Mael and Tetrick (1992). A sample item is “This company’s successes are my successes”. Items were rated on a five-point scale, which ranged from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

**Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) organization-targeted (Time 2).** We used the seven-item organization-targeted OCB scale by Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item is “My attendance at work is above the norm”. Respondents rated the items on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*).

**Control variables.** As employees with greater work experience should have a better understanding of what is important for them at work and where they belong (Cable & Parsons, 2001), and as previous work experience may affect identification development processes (Horstmeier et al., 2016), we controlled for work experience . Furthermore, as individuals are more likely to stay with organizations with which they identify, we followed recommendations by Ashforth et al. (2013) to control for tenure when examining identification. Thus, we used both employees’ tenure with their manager and the organization as control variables.

## **Study 1: Results**

Means, standard deviations, zero-order correlations, and reliabilities of variables are shown in Table 1.

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### *Cross-Lagged Effects*

We tested our proposed cross-lagged effects with structural equation modeling using a maximum likelihood estimator in EQS 6.2 (Bentler, 2006). Following Becker (2005), we ran our analyses both with and without control variables and reported both sets of analyses if results differed. First, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses to examine whether leader and organizational identification captured different constructs. We tested three models that included leader and organizational identification items from the two waves. In Model 1, for each measurement wave, leader identification items loaded on one factor and organizational identification items loaded on one factor. We allowed the four factors to correlate just as we allowed residuals for commensurate items across the two waves to correlate (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). In model 2, again leader identification items loaded on one factor and organizational identification items loaded on one factor and residuals for commensurate items were correlated, but the factors were not correlated. In model 3, all items for each measurement wave loaded on a single factor. The factor for the first wave and the factor for the second wave were not correlated. Model 1 provided a reasonable and better fit to the data ( $\chi^2(234, N = 282) = 554.17 (p < .001)$ , CFI = .90, NNFI = .88, RMSEA = .07) than Model 2 ( $\chi^2(240, N = 282) = 1034.36 (p < .001)$ , CFI = .76, NNFI = .72, RMSEA = .11) and Model 3 ( $\chi^2(252, N = 282) = 1641.58 (p < .001)$ , CFI = .57, NNFI = .53, RMSEA = .14). Furthermore, chi-square difference tests indicated that Model

1 provided a better fit to the data than Model 2 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 480.19$ ,  $\Delta df = 6$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Model 3 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 1087.41$ ,  $\Delta df = 18$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Overall, this indicates that leader identification and organizational identification are distinct constructs that are related.

After establishing construct distinctiveness, we followed procedures by Finkel (1995) and tested a configural invariance model and a metric invariance model. In both models, measurement errors for leader identification were set to correlate over time just as measurement errors for organizational identification were allowed to correlate over time. For the configural invariance model the factor structure was the same for Time 1 and Time 2. For the metric invariance model, the factor loadings for Time 1 were constrained to be equal to the factor loadings for Time 2. Both models did not provide a good fit to the data (Configural invariance model:  $\chi^2(476, N = 282) = 1725.06$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .81, NNFI = .78, RMSEA = .10; Metric invariance model:  $\chi^2(486, N = 282) = 1730.09$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .81, NNFI = .78, RMSEA = .10). Furthermore, the nonsignificant  $\Delta\chi^2$  between the two models ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.03$ ,  $\Delta df = 10$ , ns) indicates model consistency over time.

Finally, we tested four structural models. Models 1, 2 and 3 include cross-lagged paths and the three models all include autoregressive paths within constructs and correlations between constructs within each measurement occasion. Model 1 includes a cross-lagged path from leader identification to organizational identification and a cross-lagged path from organizational identification to leader identification. The model fit indices indicated a reasonable fit:  $\chi^2(294, N = 282) = 627.80$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .90, NNFI = .88, RMSEA = .06. However, organizational identification Time 1 was not significantly related to leader identification Time 2 ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $SE = .06$ , ns). Model 2 includes a cross-lagged path from leader identification to organizational identification. Fit statistics also indicated a reasonable fit for Model 2:  $\chi^2(295, N = 282) = 628.61$



( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .90, NNFI = .88, RMSEA = .06. Both the effect of leader identification Time 1 on organizational identification Time 2 and autoregression effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ). The nonsignificant  $\Delta\chi^2$  between the two models, shows that the hypothesized Model 2 fits the data better than Model 1 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 0.81$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ , ns) and thus Model 2 is a plausible model. Model 3 includes a cross-lagged path from organizational identification to leader identification. This model also demonstrated a reasonable fit:  $\chi^2(295, N = 282) = 633.06$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .90, NNFI = .88, RMSEA = .06, but provided a worse fit than Model 1 due to the significant  $\Delta\chi^2$  ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.26$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, the effect of organizational identification Time 1 on leader identification Time 2 was not significant. Finally, we tested Model 4, which includes only autoregression effects. The following fit statistics were obtained  $\chi^2(313, N = 282) = 940.01$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .82, NNFI = .79, RMSEA = .08 and the  $\Delta\chi^2$  between model 1 and 4 was significant,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 312.21$  with  $\Delta df = 19$  ( $p < .001$ ). Based on the fit statistics for the tested models, the significant effects in Model 2 and the nonsignificant effect of organizational identification Time 1 on leader identification Time 2 in both Model 1 and Model 3, we conclude that the hypothesized Model 2 is the best fitting model.

Figure 2 shows the standardized parameter estimates for the full cross-lagged Model 1. The results support the hypothesized direction of effects that leader identification Time 1 affects organizational identification Time 2 and not the reverse relationship, which provides support for Hypothesis 1. Thus, the more employees identify with their leader, the more they identify with their organization. Following Becker (2005), we reran the analyses without control variables, which did not change the support for Hypothesis 1.

### ***Mediation Effects***

To statistically test the mediating role of organizational identification, we applied the bootstrapping method with 10,000 resamples and used the PROCESS macro Model 4 (Hayes, 2012). Mediation is supported when the range between the lower and upper bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect does not contain zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Hypothesis 2 predicted that organizational identification would mediate the relationship between leader identification and OCBO. Results from the mediation model indicated that leader identification was positively related to organizational identification ( $b = .48, SE = .05, p < .001$ ) and organizational identification was positively related to OCBO ( $b = .31, SE = .06, p < .001$ ) whereas leader identification was not significantly related to OCBO ( $b = -.02, SE = .06, p = .70$ ). The indirect effect ( $b = .15, Boot SE = .03$ ) of leader identification on OCBO through organizational identification was significant as the 95% CI [.09, .21] for the indirect effect did not contain zero. This provided support for Hypothesis 2 that organizational identification will mediate the relationship between leader identification and OCBO. Thus, the more employees identify with their leader, the more they identify with the organization, which is positively related to OCBO. We reran the analyses without control variables and the result for Hypothesis 1 was identical to the result reported with control variables.

### **Study 2: Moderation Hypotheses**

Study 2 extends the findings of the first study and aims to understand better collective identity orientation as a boundary condition of the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. In addition to testing the same hypotheses as those in Study 1, Study 2 further examines the moderating role of collective identity orientation.

Having found support for the direction of effects between leader and organizational identification and the mediating role of organizational identification in the relationship between

leader identification and OCBO in Study 1, we focus next on collective identity orientation as an important moderator in this context.

Cooper and Thatcher (2010) argued that by incorporating self-concept orientations and levels of the self into models of identification, we can reach a more in-depth understanding of identification processes in organizational settings. The self-concept is a multidimensional construct, which refers to the knowledge an individual has about himself or herself and guides one's behavior (Lord & Brown, 2004; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Brewer and Gardner (1996) distinguished between three levels of self (i.e., personal, relational and collective). The *personal self* is based on self-evaluation of own traits and is driven by self-interest with a focus on maximizing own welfare. The personal level of the self involves seeing oneself as independent of other people. The *relational self* is based on dyadic interactions and interpersonal connections with significant others (e.g., a leader) and is driven by the motivation to benefit and satisfy the significant other person. The *collective self* is based on group memberships with significant meaning for the individual (e.g., an organization) and is driven by the group norms and goals with a focus on increasing the welfare of the group. All three levels of the self compose a person's *self-identity* (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999).

While individuals have all three levels of self, the importance of each level may vary and some levels may be more salient to some individuals versus others (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Johnson & Chang, 2006). We focus on collective identity orientation as this form of identity orientation is linked to external social entities and has implications for identification processes (Johnson & Lord, 2010). The terms identity (self-concept orientation) and identification have often been conflated in research and it is important to underscore that they do not reflect the same construct. Identity is an organized cognitive representation of a person's self-schemas,

traits, goals, and behavioral scripts. Although self-identities are dynamic constructs and it is possible to be activated by situational cues, they can also be chronically salient (Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999). In its chronically salient form, self-identity refers to how one generally thinks of oneself in terms of individual characteristics, interpersonal relationships and group memberships. As Johnson, Selenta, and Lord (2006, p. 177) state “The chronic self-concept refers to the relatively time-invariant (i.e., trait-like) accessibility of the individual, relational, and collective levels for a particular person that occurs because different learning histories produce stable differences among people’s self-schemas”. On the other hand, identification refers to how one defines oneself in terms of *specific* targets (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). As described in earlier sections, identification is the perceived ‘oneness’ with a specific person or group to the point of a psychological merging of oneself with that person or group (van Knippenberg et al., 2006; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

Collective identity orientation concerns the predisposition to value and define oneself in terms of group memberships, whereas organizational identification reflects the degree to which one defines oneself in terms of being a member of a specific organization (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Johnson et al., 2006; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Collective identity orientation has been proposed to be strongly linked to organizational identification (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). People with a strong collective identity orientation are predisposed to anchor on the collectives they are a member in for self-definition. Collective identification tends to be stronger for individuals with stronger collective identity orientation, and this should also hold for organizational identification as a collective identification.

Because people with higher collective identity orientation are more predisposed to take their memberships in a collective as a starting point for self-definition, their organizational

identification will be less contingent on their identification with representatives of the organization such as their leader (i.e., their predisposition to identify with the organization should not be confused with a predisposition for spillover effects; collective identity orientation feeds directly into organizational identification). Individuals lower in collective identity orientation, in contrast, do not have this strong tendency to anchor self-definition on their membership in a collective. For those individuals, the spillover effect from leader identification to organizational identification will be more important in establishing their level of organizational identification. We therefore expect the identification generalization effect to be stronger for those with lower collective identity orientation.

Thus, we propose that collective identity orientation moderates the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification such that the positive relationship between leader identification and organizational identification is stronger for those with lower collective identity orientation. For individuals with high collective identity orientation, group memberships are of high importance for their self-definitions and sense of self-worth. They will thus be more inclined to identify with the organization and this identification is less contingent on their identification with specific individuals such as their leader. Those with a low propensity to define themselves through group memberships, in comparison, will experience a stronger generalization effect from their identification with their leader as a representative of the organization to organizational identification. In identifying with their leader, organizational membership may become more salient for individuals who are not predisposed to place significant value on this membership and this experience of a bond with their leader will have a stronger spillover effect on their organizational identification.

*Hypothesis 3:* Collective identity orientation moderates the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification; the positive relationship between leader identification and organizational identification is stronger for those lower in collective identity orientation.

Since we hypothesized that organizational identification mediates the relationship between leader identification and OCBO and that collective identity orientation will moderate the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification, we test a moderated-mediated model. When the above relationships are considered together, we propose that the mediating effect of organizational identification between leader identification and OCBO will be stronger for those individuals with low collective identity orientation. We further argue that the indirect effect of leader identification on OCBO via organizational identification depends on the person's collective identity orientation. Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4:* Collective identity orientation moderates the indirect effect of leader identification on OCBO through organizational identification such that the indirect effect is stronger for those lower in collective identity orientation.

## **Study 2: Method**

In Study 2, we used a two-time design with data from 461 working professionals to shed light on collective identity orientation as a boundary condition of the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification and the indirect relationship between leader identification and OCBO through organizational identification.

### ***Sample and Procedure***

For Study 2 we collected data at two time points two months apart from Amazon Mechanical Turk working professionals (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011) in the US who

were employed full-time. Furthermore, respondents had to be minimum 18 years old and not be a student. Finally, respondents were asked only to participate if their tenure with their manager was minimum six months. While the time-lag for Study 2 is shorter than the one used for Study 1 we should note that existing research on identification at work has used similar time-lags such as six weeks (Sluss et al., 2012) and three to four months (Horton & Griffin, 2017). Respondents completed the questionnaires online in exchange for payment. We used three attention checks at Time 1. On the page with questions relating to their manager and on the page with questions relating to their organization they were asked to answer the statement “On this page I have evaluated:” with the response options: “my manager” and “my organization”. On the page with demographic questions they were asked “Have you filled in information about your age as part of this survey?” providing the following response options: “yes”, “no”, and “I don’t know”. In total 770 completed the survey at Time 1. Thirty-nine respondents failed the attention checks leaving us with a sample of 731 respondents at Time 1. At Time 2, we invited the 731 respondents from the Time 1 sample to complete the second survey. We received 465 completed questionnaires from employees who reported to the same manager at Time 1 and Time 2 (response rate of 63.61%). Of these 465 respondents, two failed the attention checks reducing the sample to 463 respondents. Again we followed Kark et al. (2003) and only included employees with a minimum tenure with their manager of six months leaving us with a final sample of 461 respondents at Time 2.

The 465 employees, who participated at both time points were compared with the 266 employees who participated at Time 1 only. Chi-square analysis showed no significant difference between the two groups in gender ( $\chi^2(1, N = 731) = .78, p = .38$ ) and independent t-tests showed no significant difference in terms of job tenure ( $p = .20$ ), organizational tenure ( $p = .27$ )

and manager tenure ( $p = .07$ ), but there was a significant difference in age ( $p < .05$ ) and work experience ( $p < .05$ ) with age and work experience being higher for those who participated at both Time 1 and Time 2 compared to those who only participated at Time 1. Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of the main variables; leader identification ( $p = .64$ ), organizational identification ( $p = .65$ ), and collective identity orientation ( $p = .27$ ).

Of the 461 respondents, 44.9% were male. At Time 1, respondents' average age was 38.00 years ( $SD = 9.90$ ), average work experience was 17.61 years ( $SD = 10.14$ ), average organizational tenure was 6.80 years ( $SD = 5.57$ ), average job tenure was 6.10 years ( $SD = 5.16$ ) and on average respondents had worked with their manager for 4.50 years ( $SD = 3.97$ ). 10.8% of the respondents worked in accounting and finance, 10.6% worked in administration, 3.7% worked in arts and design, 10.0% worked in education and training, 3.0% worked in engineering, 12.4% worked in IT, 5.2% worked in management, 13.0% in sales, marketing and business development, 13.2% worked in operations, and 18.0% worked in other functional areas.

### ***Measures***

At Time 1, employees evaluated leader identification, organizational identification, and collective identity orientation and at Time 2 they evaluated leader identification, organizational identification and OCBO. Respondents rated all items on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). We used the same measures of leader identification, organizational identification, and OCBO as those in Study 1. For leader-related questions, respondents were asked to evaluate the manager they reported to.

***Leader identification (Time 1 and Time 2).*** The six organizational identification items from Mael and Tetrick (1992) were reworded by replacing 'organization' with 'manager' to measure



leader identification. A sample item is “I am very interested in what others think about my manager”.

***Organizational identification (Time 1 and Time 2).*** For the measurement of organizational identification we used the six-item scale by Mael and Tetrick (1992). A sample item is “This organization’s successes are my successes”.

***Collective identity orientation (Time 1).*** We used the five-item scale by Selenta and Lord (2005). A sample item is “It is important to me to make a lasting contribution to my work organization”.

***Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) organization-targeted (Time 2).*** We used the seven-item organization-targeted OCB scale by Williams and Anderson (1991). A sample item is “My attendance at work is above the norm”.

***Control variables.*** As in study 1, we included work experience, tenure with the manager and tenure with the organization as control variables.

## **Study 2: Results**

Means, standard deviations, zero-order correlations, and reliabilities of variables are shown in Table 2. The correlations between variables within each wave were positive and moderate to high in magnitude and Cronbach’s alphas ranged from .79 to .94.

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Insert Table 2 about here  
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### ***Cross-Lagged Effects***

As in Study 1, we first tested three measurement models, then tested configural and metric invariance and finally examined the cross-lagged effects.

In the first step, we tested extended versions of the measurement models of Study 1 by also including collective identity orientation. In Model 1, collective identity orientation, which was only measured at Time 1, loaded on one factor, and in each measurement wave, leader identification and organizational identification items loaded on two separate factors. The five factors were set to correlate just as residuals for commensurate items across the two waves were set to correlate. In model 2, we used the same factor structure, but the factors were not correlated. In model 3, all items for each measurement wave loaded on a single factor. The factor for the first wave and the factor for the second wave were not correlated. Model 1 provided a reasonable and better fit to the data ( $\chi^2(354, N = 461) = 1545.11$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .90, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .09) than Model 2 ( $\chi^2(364, N = 461) = 2893.79$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .79, NNFI = .77, RMSEA = .12) and Model 3 ( $\chi^2(377, N = 461) = 5006.94$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .62, NNFI = .59, RMSEA = .16). Furthermore, chi-square difference tests indicated that Model 1 provided a better fit to the data than Model 2 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 1348.68$ ,  $\Delta df = 10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Model 3 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 3461.83$ ,  $\Delta df = 23$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Overall, this indicates that leader identification and organizational identification are distinct constructs that are related.

In the second step, we tested the same configural and metric invariance models as those tested in Study 1. Both models did not provide a good fit to the data (Configural invariance model:  $\chi^2(476, N = 461) = 3826.90$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .84, NNFI = .82, RMSEA = .12; Metric invariance model:  $\chi^2(486, N = 461) = 3834.82$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .84, NNFI = .82, RMSEA = .12). The nonsignificant  $\Delta\chi^2$  between the two models ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 7.92$ ,  $\Delta df = 10$ , ns) offers support for model consistency over time.

In the third step, we then tested the same four structural models that we also tested in Study 1. The full cross-lagged Model 1 demonstrated a reasonable fit to the data:  $\chi^2(294, N =$

461) = 1291.91 ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .91, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .09. However, the effect of organizational identification Time 1 on leader identification Time 2 was not significant ( $\beta = .09$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $ns$ ). Similarly Model 2, which includes a cross-lagged path from leader identification to organizational identification, had a reasonable fit to the data:  $\chi^2(295, N = 461) = 1295.59$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .91, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .09. Both the effect of leader identification Time 1 on organizational identification Time 2 and autoregression effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ). The nonsignificant  $\Delta\chi^2$  between the two models indicates that the hypothesized Model 2 fits the data better than Model 1 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 3.68$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $ns$ ) and therefore Model 1 is rejected. Model 3, which specifies a cross-lagged path from organizational identification to leader identification, also yielded reasonable fit statistics:  $\chi^2(295, N = 461) = 1302.46$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .91, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .09, but provided worse fit statistics than Model 1 due to the significant  $\Delta\chi^2$  between Model 1 and Model 3 ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 10.55$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Both the effect of organizational identification Time 1 on leader identification Time 2 and autoregression effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ). Finally, we tested Model 4, which includes only autoregression effects. The following fit statistics were obtained  $\chi^2(313, N = 461) = 2005.37$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .85, NNFI = .83, RMSEA = .11 and the  $\Delta\chi^2$  between Model 1 and 4 was significant,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 713.46$  with  $\Delta df = 19$  ( $p < .001$ ). Based on the fit statistics for the tested models and the significant paths in Model 2, Model 2 is viewed as the best fitting model. The standardized parameter estimates for the full cross-lagged model are presented in Figure 2. The results support the hypothesized direction of effects that leader identification Time 1 affects organizational identification Time 2 and not the reverse relationship, thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

We also reran our analyses without control variables and as the results differ with and without control variables we follow Becker (2005) and report and discuss both sets of results.

The full cross-lagged Model 1 provided a reasonable fit to the data:  $\chi^2(234, N = 461) = 1217.22$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .91, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .10. Both cross-lagged effects and autoregression effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ). The hypothesized Model 2 also yielded a reasonable fit:  $\chi^2(235, N = 461) = 1221.65$  ( $p < .001$ ), CFI = .91, NNFI = .89, RMSEA = .10. Both the effect of leader identification Time 1 on organizational identification Time 2 and autoregression effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ). The nonsignificant  $\Delta\chi^2$  between Model 1 and Model 2, shows that the cross-lagged Model 1 provides a better fit to the data ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 4.43$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p < .05$ ) when we do not include control variables. For two reasons, however, we have less confidence in this finding than in the findings with controls. First, whenever replication tests are available, we should have greater confidence in findings that replicate. The leader-to-organizational identification path replicates with and without controls in both Study 1 and Study 2; the organizational-to-leader identification path is only found without controls and only in Study 2. Second, our choice of control variables is theoretically driven (Becker, 2005) and by including them we offer a more rigorous test of the phenomena of interest. As employees with greater work experience are expected to have a better understanding of what is important for them at work and where they belong (Cable & Parsons, 2001), work experience is a meaningful control variable in the context of our research. Tenure is also an important control variable as the duration of interactions an individual has with their leader is likely to strengthen their identification with them (Ashforth et al., 2016) and employees tend to stay with organizations that they identify with (Ashforth et al., 2013). Thus, both organizational tenure and tenure with the manager are meaningful control variables. We thus have greater confidence in findings obtained with controls than without controls.

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Insert Figure 2 about here  
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### ***Moderation and Moderated Mediation Effects***

We used the PROCESS macro Model 7 (Hayes, 2012) and applied the bootstrapping method with 10,000 resamples to test moderation and moderated mediation with collective identity orientation as the moderator.

After entering the controls, leader identification and collective identity orientation, the interaction between leader identification and collective identity orientation was significant in predicting organizational identification ( $b = -.090$ ,  $SE = .037$ ,  $p = .016$ ) with significant increases in explained variance,  $\Delta R^2 = .007$ ,  $p = .016$ . This provides support for the proposition that collective identity orientation moderates the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. The significant interaction effect between collective identity orientation and leader identification on organizational identification is plotted in Figure 3, which shows that the positive relationship between leader identification and organizational identification is stronger for those low in collective identity orientation (simple slope =  $.661$ ,  $SE = .059$ ,  $t = 11.208$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than for those high in collective identity orientation (simple slope =  $.488$ ,  $SE = .052$ ,  $t = 9.383$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported. We then examine the conditional indirect effects of leader identification on OCBO at three levels of collective identity orientation (1 *SD* below the mean, the mean, and 1 *SD* above the mean). Moderated mediation exists when the indirect effect is dependent on the level of collective identity orientation (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). The conditional indirect effect for leader identification was significantly stronger when collective identity orientation was low (effect =  $.051$ , Boot  $SE =$

.021, 95% CI [.010, .093]); than when collective identity orientation was moderate (effect = .045, Boot *SE* = .019, 95% CI [.008, .081]); and collective identity orientation was high (effect = .038, Boot *SE* = .016, 95% CI [.007, .072]). The difference between indirect effects under low and mean collective identity orientation condition and the difference between indirect effects under high and mean collective identity orientation condition was significant (effect difference =  $-.007$ , Boot *SE* = .004, 95% CI [ $-.015$ ,  $-.001$ ]). Overall, this provides support for Hypothesis 4 indicating that collective identity orientation moderates the indirect relationship between leader identification and OCBO through organizational identification such that the indirect relationship is stronger for those low in collective identity orientation. Furthermore, support for Hypotheses 3 and 4 remains unchanged when analyses are run without control variables.

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Insert Figure 3 about here  
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Overall, the findings of Study 2 are consistent with the findings in Study 1 and show that leader identification affects organizational identification and not vice versa and that organizational identification is an important mediating mechanism of the relationship between leader identification and OCBO. Furthermore, the results of Study 2 also helped to establish collective identity orientation as a boundary condition governing the relative strength of these relationships indicating that collective identity orientation is an important moderator.

## **Discussion**

The present studies sought to expand our understanding of how two important forms of identification, that is leader and organizational identification, relate to one another and their subsequent influences on employees' OCBOs. Past research has mainly focused on

organizational identification and less emphasis has been placed on leader identification (Ashforth et al., 2013). Furthermore, the question of directionality of effects between leader and organizational identification remained mainly unanswered. Building on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and the concept of identification generalization (Sluss et al., 2012), we first examined the direction of effects between leader and organizational identification, and tested the two competing predictions in more depth. Our aim was to find out whether leader identification indeed affected organizational identification as hypothesized or the reverse relationship could also hold. Tests of cross-lagged effects consistently supported (i.e., across studies and in analyses with and without controls) that leader identification Time 1 affected organizational identification Time 2; there was no consistent support for the reverse relationship.

Our findings support the notion that the direct leader, due to their proximity to the employee and their role as an agent representing or exemplifying the organization, plays a critical role for the individuals' organizational experiences and their sense of belonging. The more employees identify with the leader, the more likely it is that they will also identify with the organization providing support for identification generalization (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007).

Second, we examined the mediating role of organizational identification and found that leader identification Time 1 was positively related to organizational identification Time 2, which in turn was positively related to OCBO Time 2. This indicates that, organizational citizenship behaviors are influenced by the employees' leader identification only indirectly, through organizational identification.

Third, we examined collective identity orientation as a boundary condition of the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. The results showed that the relationship between leader identification (Time 1) and organizational identification

(Time 2) was moderated by collective identity orientation (Time 1) and that the indirect effect of leader identification (Time 1) on OCBO (Time 2) through organizational identification (Time 2) was moderated by collective identity orientation (Time 1) providing support for moderation and moderated mediation. Thus, collective identity orientation moderated the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification.

### ***Theoretical Contributions***

First, we contribute to research on multiple identifications in the workplace by examining the potential bidirectional relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. So far, studies examining the relationship between leader and organizational identification (i.e., Horstmeier et al., 2017; Steffens et al., 2014) have only tested unidirectional effects between the two types of identification. For example, Steffens et al. (2014) argued that social identification with a group leads to identification with the leader suggesting that higher level identification would lead to lower level identification whereas Horstmeier et al. (2017) proposed that lower level identification would lead to higher level identification. Following arguments by Ashforth et al. (2008) and Sluss and Ashforth (2007), we hypothesized that lower level identification (e.g., leader identification) would lead to higher level identification (e.g., organizational identification) through identification generalization processes. This is in line with research on relational identification, which suggests that identification with the leader relationship generalizes to the identification with the organization (Sluss et al., 2012). Across two different studies, our results showed that leader identification Time 1 affected organizational identification Time 2 and did not support the reverse relationship. As such our results support the generalization of identification from lower to higher levels (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Our studies are the first to test the potential bidirectional relationship between leader identification and



organizational identification providing important insights into the relationship between multiple identifications and offering support for identification generalization processes.

Second, the limited existing research on the relationship between multiple identification (e.g., Horstmeier et al., 2017; Steffens et al., 2014) has not examined the mediating mechanisms of organizational identification on outcomes. By examining organizational identification as a mediator of the relationship between leader identification and OCBO the present study is the first to examine how organizational identification mediates the effects of another type of work-related identification related on a work outcome. The finding that organizational identification mediated the relationship between leader identification and OCBO provides support for the central role of the immediate leader (Henderson et al., 2008; Sluss et al., 2012).

Third, we address the call by Sluss et al. (2012) for research examining moderators of the relationship between multiple identifications. Not only did we examine simple moderation, but we also examined moderated mediation and found that collective identity orientation moderated the indirect relationship between leader identification and OCBO through organizational identification. Thus, our results help to shed light on collective identity orientation as a boundary condition of the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. In accordance with our hypotheses, we found that the positive relationship between leader identification and organizational identification was stronger for those low (rather than high) in collective identity orientation. As it can be observed in Figure 3, although those with high collective orientation also experienced a boost in their organizational identification as their leader identification increased, the observed increase was much steeper for those with a low collective identity orientation. Thus, leader identification is found to have a stronger spillover effect on organizational identification for those who are less predisposed to define themselves in

terms of collectives. While we proposed that the positive relationship between leader identification and organizational identification would be stronger for those lower in collective identity orientation, we should note that leader identification also increases the organizational identification of those high in collective identity orientation (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). As such we do not dispute this positive effect, but rather extend it by proposing and finding that the positive relationship between leader identification and organizational identification will be stronger for those lower in collective identity orientation than for those higher in collective identity orientation. Through their experience of a bond with a leader embodying organizational norms and objectives, group memberships may become more salient for low collective orientation employees with important implications for their organizational identification and their citizenship behaviors towards the organization.

### ***Practical Implications***

Overall, our findings indicate that in order to strengthen identification generalization with spillovers from one type of identification at work to another type of identification at work, organizations need to acknowledge the important role that leaders play as key foci of employees' identification. Our results suggest that investing in leadership, such as in practices focused on leadership selection and development, is one avenue for organizations to increase employees' identification. Hiring and developing leaders who can embody key organizational attributes and can build strong bonds with their employees, may have important implications for employees' identifying with the organization and their striving to accomplish organizational goals and outcomes. Notably, the role of leaders was found to be even more profound for those employees who are not predisposed to identify with collectives and may thus easily disengage.

Organizations can thus invest in leadership training that highlights identification processes and the role of specific leadership behaviors for identification. For example, transformational leadership has been found to be a strong predictor of employees' identification with their leader (Horstmeier et al., 2017), thus training leaders to become more transformational (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996) can strengthen employees' identification with them and eventually their organization. Organizations should also be aware of the role of both leader identification and organizational identification in relation to OCBO as the effect of leader identification on OCBO runs through organizational identification. As such leader identification strengthens organizational identification, which then strengthens OCBO. Leaders act as representatives of organizations and their own identification with the organization can stimulate employees' organizational identification (Gerstner & Day, 1997; van Dick et al., 2007). Thus, organizations could aim to first strengthen their leaders' identification with the organization for a trickle-down effect of organizational identification to be possible. The combination of leaders identifying with the organization and employees identifying with the leader can create a strong foundation for ensuring that employees identify with the organization eventually strengthening OCBO. As collective identity orientation moderates the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification, we suggest that organizations engage in activities that emphasize the salience of meaningful group memberships. By strengthening organizational identification via implementing socialization, training and onboarding programs, organizations can also strengthen citizenship behaviors that are vital for performance and long-term viability. For example, during the onboarding process organizations could emphasize the need for employees to think as a group stressing the "we" aspect and the importance of helping each other.

### ***Potential Limitations and Directions for Future Research***

Despite the strength of our cross-lagged design for testing the proposed relations, there are still some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, data in both studies were collected from one source and thus common method variance issues are possible. Using a two-time design should reduce some of the risks of common method variance as responses regarding predictor and criterion variables from both time points are unlikely to be remembered by the respondent, which will reduce systematic covariance among variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Nonetheless, future studies could use multi-source ratings such as leader-rated OCBO to reduce common method variance. Second, although the two-time and cross-lagged design strengthened our claims of direction of effects between leader identification and organizational identification compared with a cross-sectional design, future research can aim at data collection at multiple time points for a stronger test of causality (Kenny & Harackiewicz, 1979). While we used a cross-lagged design which overcomes the limitations of correlational designs with regards to testing causality, we must acknowledge that it would be beneficial to further test the proposed relationships using experimental designs as well. When answering questions about organizational identification we asked respondents to evaluate the organization they worked at and we cannot disregard the possibility that some may have considered their own focal unit when responding whereas others the organization as a whole.

We recommend that future research expands the lens to include additional foci of identification. For example, future research could shed light on the relationship between leader identification, work group identification and organizational identification. This could be extended further by examining how these types of identification are related to other forms of OCB. For example, future research can examine OCB towards individuals (OCBI) and

specifically OCB targeted at the leader. Also, OCBs focused on the work group rather than the whole organization can be examined. Ideally this should be conducted using data from multiple-sources and multi-wave longitudinal designs. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate the role of self-schemas and group prototypes in the relationship between multiple identifications. As leaders are in a better position to influence employees when they are seen as group prototypical (i.e., when they embody the group's identity) (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), leader prototypicality can be an interesting moderating variable in the relationship between leader and organizational identification (Steffens et al., 2014). Furthermore, as employees' interpersonal identification with the leader may be more important in the earlier stages of their relationship with their leader (Lord et al., 1999) it is possible that the spillover effect from leader to organizational identification will change over time such that the spillover effect is stronger for new employees (newcomers) than for long-term employees as leaders orient newcomers and are responsible for integrating them in the organization (Sluss et al., 2012). Future research could use newcomer samples and examine the early stages of leader and organizational identification development using experience sampling methodologies. A closer look at how multiple identifications unfold over time and at different stages of a person's career in an organizational setting would also be of interest. Latent growth modeling methodologies could be utilized in order to capture identification developmental trajectories. Leader departures and transitions to different departments and/or managers (Shapiro et al., 2016) would be events of special interest as they can help cast additional light on the reciprocal effects between identifications with changed foci (e.g., new manager) and identifications with foci that remained unchanged (e.g., the same organization).

## **Conclusion**

Our studies are the first attempt to test the bidirectional relationship between two types of identification and offer support for a spillover effect of lower-order identification (leader identification) to higher-order identification (organizational identification). Our research also highlights the role of multiple identifications for organizational outcomes such as citizenship behaviors and the importance of taking into account key mediating and moderating mechanisms of the proposed relationships. We specifically showcased the role of collective identity orientation as an important boundary condition of the relationship between leader identification and organizational identification. By examining cross-lagged, mediation and moderation effects, our studies on multiple identifications at work provide important insights into the relationship between leader identification, organizational identification and citizenship behaviors.

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Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities of Variables – Study 1*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Work experience in years T1	24.32	10.56	–							
2. Tenure with leader in years T1	4.68	4.08	.22***	–						
3. Tenure with organization in years T1	14.31	10.00	.60***	.36***	–					
4. Leader identification T1	2.85	0.61	.12*	.00	.07	(.77)				
5. Organizational identification T1	3.54	0.63	.14*	.06	.10	.55***	(.82)			
6. Leader identification T2	2.92	0.65	.20***	.06	.11	.71***	.51***	(.83)		
7. Organizational identification T2	3.61	0.59	.19**	.07	.19**	.52***	.71***	.55***	(.83)	
8. OCBO T2	6.03	0.56	.17**	.06	.12*	.15**	.23***	.20***	.33***	(.66)

*Note.*  $N = 282$ . Cronbach's alpha coefficients are reported on the diagonal.

T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities of Variables – Study 2*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Work experience in years T1	17.61	10.14	–								
2. Tenure with leader in years T1	4.50	3.97	.30***	–							
3. Tenure with organization in years T1	6.80	5.57	.43***	.62***	–						
4. Leader identification T1	4.04	1.52	.02	.18***	.07	(.91)					
5. Organizational identification T1	4.76	1.49	.13**	.16***	.08	.65***	(.93)				
6. Collective identity orientation T1	5.83	0.97	.17***	.19***	.14**	.44***	.51***	(.86)			
7. Leader identification T2	3.96	1.49	.05	.17***	.07	.77***	.58***	.40***	(.91)		
8. Organizational identification T2	4.55	1.59	.16***	.15**	.10*	.61***	.80***	.42***	.69***	(.94)	
9. OCBO T2	5.91	0.90	.24***	.12*	.15**	.11*	.20***	.52***	.09*	.18***	(.79)

*Note.*  $N = 461$ . Cronbach's alpha coefficient are reported on the diagonal.

T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

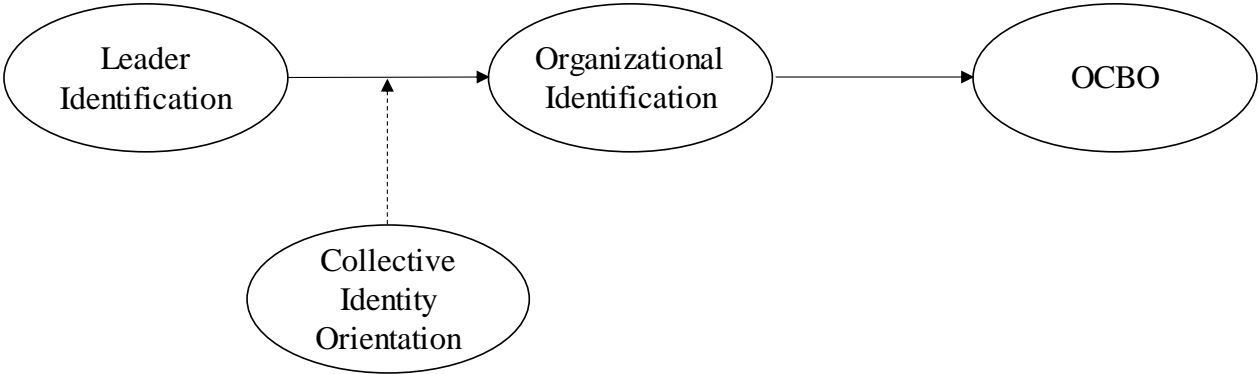


Figure 1. Model showing hypothesized relationships examined in Study 1 and Study 2. The moderating role of collective identity orientation examined in Study 2 only is represented with a dashed line.

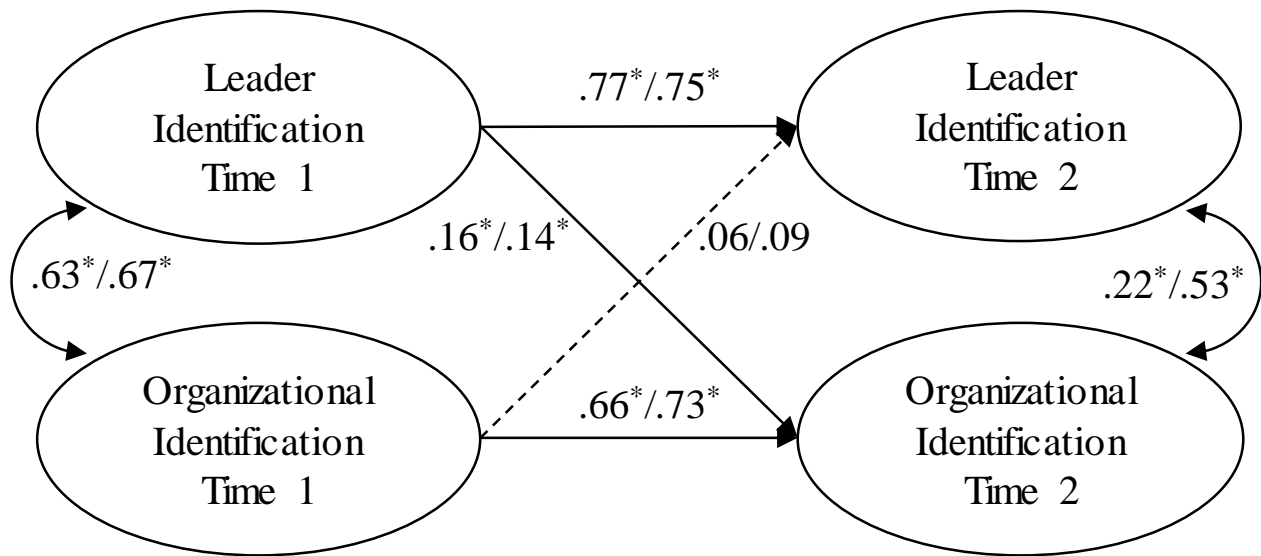


Figure 2. Full Cross-Lagged Model Results – Study 1 and Study 2.

*Note.* Parameter estimates for Study 1 and Study 2 are shown before and after /, respectively.

\*  $p < .05$ .

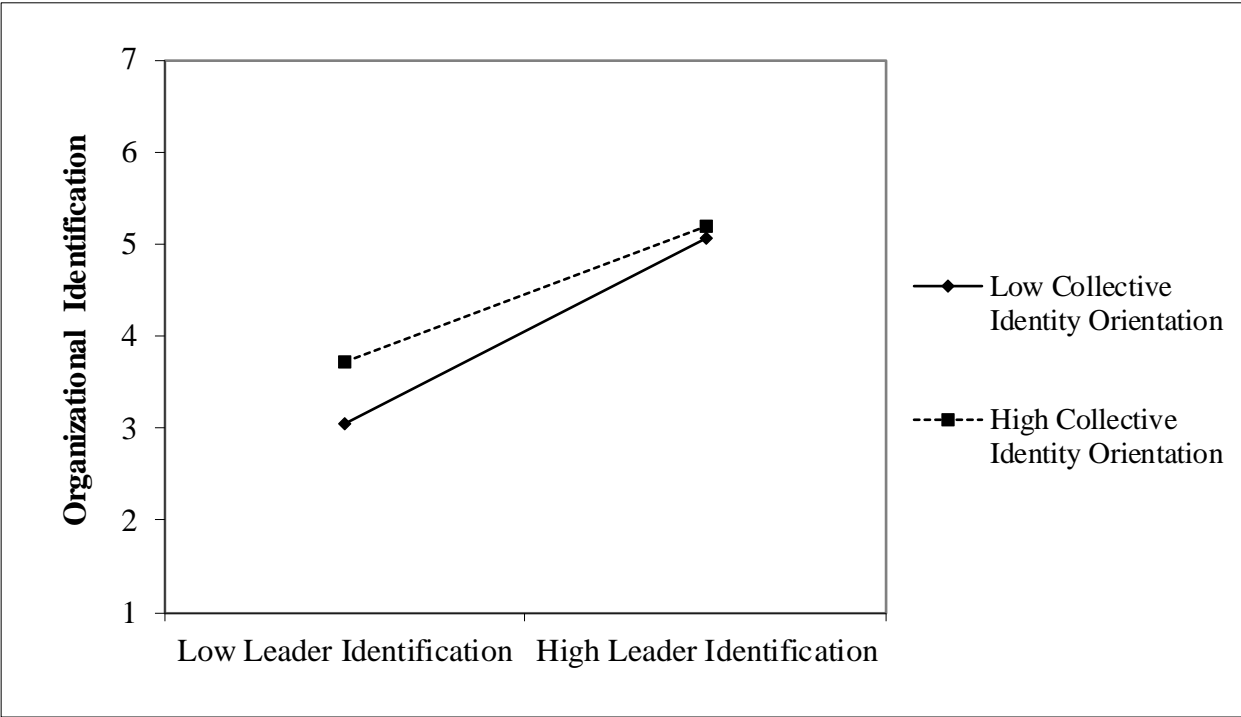


Figure 3. Interaction of Leader Identification and Collective Identity Orientation – Study 2.