EMPLOYEE ATTACHMENT TO WORKPLACE: A REVIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND COMMITMENT
Shahidul Hassan*

ABSTRACT. This article provides a critical review of four constructs—organizational identification, organizational commitment, occupational identification, and occupational commitment—to advance our understanding about how public sector employees from different occupations may become psychologically attached to their organizations. This review is intended to clarify previous inconsistencies as well as spark new interest among public administration researchers to examine sources and consequences of public employees’ organizational identification and commitment. This article also elucidates about how public sector employees’ attachment to their occupations may influence their attachment to their organizations. In that effort, this article reviews interrelationships among the four constructs. Finally, based on the patterns of connections observed, a future research program including seven testable research propositions is proposed.

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing interest among researchers in public administration in understanding how employees in government agencies become psychologically attached to their workplace (Hassan & Rohrbaugh, 2011, 2012; Moon, 2000; Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006; Moynihan, & Pandey, 2007; Park & Rainey, 2007; Reid, Riemenschneider, Allen & Armstrong, 2008a, 2008b; Robertson & Tang, 1995; Robertson, Lo, & Tang, 2007; Yang & Pandey, 2009). This is because the extent to which employees feel psychologically

* Shahidul Hassan, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of public management, John Glenn School of Public Affairs, Ohio State University. His current research interests are in the role of leadership and organizational practices on motivation, commitment and performance of public sector employees.
attached to their workplace has been shown to relate with increased employee satisfaction, performance, and citizenship behaviors and decreased absenteeism and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bacharach, 2000; Riketta, 2005). An improved understanding of such relation, therefore, has both theoretical and practical importance for public administration scholarship.

Traditionally, psychological attachment to the workplace has been examined with regards to commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997; Morrow, 1993; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). However, organizational researchers now are paying a keen interest to assess this relation from social identity perspective (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, 1985) with the concept of organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Organizational identification is viewed as an important psychological state that reflects employee attachment to workplace and is capable of explaining important outcomes including job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Riketta, 2005). But organizational identification has received limited attention in research in public administration (Hassan, 2012).

Both organizational identification and organizational commitment have been studied from a variety of perspectives, and it is widely acknowledged that both concepts are complex and multifaceted (Edwards, 2005; Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006). However, little agreement exists in the literature regarding their conceptual distinctiveness with some studies equating organizational identification as organizational commitment or considering it as a component of organizational commitment (Edwards, 2005; Meyer et al., 2006). A key goal of this article, therefore, is to critically review conceptual similarities and differences between organizational identification and organizational commitment. Such a review may clarify some previous inconsistencies as well as spark interest among public administration researchers to investigate antecedents and consequences of organizational identification and commitment among public employees.

Another goal of this article is to elucidate about how employees’ attachment to their occupation is related to their attachment to their organization. Employees in government agencies belong to numerous occupations, but little is known about how public employees’
attachment to their occupations influences their attachment to their organizations. Given the beneficial outcomes of psychological attachment to workplace, a better understanding of public employees’ organizational identification and organizational commitment is essential. But this article also focuses on occupational identification and commitment because of the importance of the key relationships between individuals’ occupational and organizational identities and their occupational and organizational commitments (Anteby, 2008; Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006a; Meyer et al., 2006; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006).

With the ongoing economic downturn, government agencies are facing acute budget crisis and public sector employees are experiencing increasing job insecurity. Furthermore, government agencies now are relying more on temporary and contracted employees to provide public services. To cope with the uncertainty of the labor market, employees are known to shift focus to aspects of work life where they feel they have more control, that is, to their occupations (Johnson, 1996; Lee et al., 2000; Reilly, Brett, & Stroch, 1993). An assessment of the relationship between employees’ attachment to their occupations and their organizations may provide a better understanding about how to improve their job performance (Lee et al., 2000). Such an assessment may also clarify how employees in government agencies develop, make sense of, and integrate different aspects of their workplace attachment.

The structure of this article is following beyond this introduction. First, an overview of the four constructs—organizational identification, organizational commitment, occupational identification, and occupational commitment—is provided. Second, interrelationships among the four constructs are examined. Finally, based on the patterns of connections found, avenues for future research concerning public sector employees’ attachment to their occupations and their organizations from both identification and commitment perspectives are provided.

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR CONSTRUCTS

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification refers to perception of oneness with or belongingness to the organization, where employees define
themselves in terms of their organizational membership (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Ashforth et al. 2008a). This definition has roots in the social identity perspective (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel & Turner 1979, 1986; Turner 1985) and it differs from earlier work on organizational identification (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Patchen, 1970). The social identity perspective suggests that a society comprises a set of discrete social groups or categories (e.g., based on nationality, race, and occupation) with different power and status relations with one another, and that individuals largely derive their social identity from the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity, according to this perspective, is “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership” (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292). Additionally, identification is a socio-cognitive process through which individuals categorize themselves and others as members of particular groups because they need to simplify and make sense of the complex social world (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). The primary motive for individuals to identify with particular groups is to enhance their self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Because individuals have a strong need for a positive self-image, they often try to enhance their self-image by identifying with groups that serve as a source for positive social identity (Hogg & Turner, 1985; Tajfel, 1978).

An organization can be the primary source of an individual’s social identity (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Organizational identification has important implications for both employees and employers. Identification with an organization helps employees to enhance collective self-esteem (Ashforth et al., 2008a). When identification is strong, employees include the distinctive, central, and enduring attributes that define the organization into their self-concepts and the differences between their personal and their organizational identities become blurred (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail 1994). Consequently, employees feel the successes and failures of their organization as their own, and they engage in behaviors that help the organization to achieve its goals.1

Organizational identification can take several forms. Rousseau (1998) identified two types: situated organizational identification and deep structure organizational identification. Situated organizational identification is a sense of being part of a larger organizational entity.
Such kind of identification can occur fairly quickly when cues encourage a perception of shared interests between an employee and the organization (“we” rather than “I”) and the employee perceives that his or her efforts make some sort of contribution to the organization (Rousseau, 1998). Deep structure organizational identification takes place more slowly as employees’ relationship with the organization changes their mental schema by incorporating their participation in the organization into their self-concepts (Rousseau, 1998). In contemporary organizations, there are many barriers to deep structure organizational identification, including geographic separation, shorter tenure, and temporary work arrangements.

Organizational identification is a multidimensional concept that consists of a cognitive, an evaluative, and an affective component. Tajfel (1982, p. 2) noted:

The two necessary components (of identification) are: a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness of membership; and an evaluative one, in the sense that this awareness is related to some value connotations. The third component consists of an emotional investment in the awareness and evaluations.

The cognitive component captures the extent to which organizational membership is self-defining and how employees see themselves in relation to their organization (Ashforth et al., 2008a). The evaluative component encompasses the value that employees attach to their organizational membership (Ashforth et al., 2008a). The affective component refers to employees’ emotional reactions to their organization that can be both positive and negative (Dutton et al. 1994). Organizational researchers have primarily examined the cognitive component of organizational identification while the evaluative and affective components have received only limited attention in past research.

**Occupational Identification**

Even though occupation, profession, and career are distinct concepts, they are sometimes used interchangeably in the organizational behavior literature (Lee et al., 2000; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), which often lead to confusion. Lee and associates (2000) defined occupation as “an identifiable and specific line of work that an individual engages in to earn a living (e.g. nurse, banker, clerk) at a given point in time” (p. 800). Van Maanen and Barley
(1984) referred to occupation as a “group of people who consider themselves to be engaged in the same sort of work”. A specific occupation requires a set of essential skills, knowledge, and associated activities that differentiate it from other occupations and are transferable across settings (Lee et al., 2000). Occupation is a more inclusive and descriptive term than profession (Aranya, Pollock, & Amernic, 1981) because both professionals and non-professionals can identify with and be committed to the work they do (Blau, 2001a; Meyer et al., 1993). Van Maanen and Barley (1984) noted that professions are a subset of occupations in which individuals have a high level of expertise, a belief in the regulation of the professions by its members, and belief in the importance of the professions’ service to the society. Occupation also is a less ambiguous term than career. Career can be defined as planned pattern of work related experiences from individuals’ entry into the workforce to their retirement (Greenhaus, Callahan, & Godshalk, 2000; Greenhaus, 1987; Hall, 1976). Thus, individuals generally have one career in their work-life, but can have multiple occupations.

Mael and Ashforth (1992) defined occupational identification as “the extent to which an individual defines him or herself in terms of the work he or she does and the prototypical characteristics ascribed to individuals who do that work” (p. 106), that is, the cognitive and affective association that individuals have with their occupation (Ashforth et al., 2008b). When individuals identify themselves in terms of their occupation, they are likely to incorporate their distinctive occupational values into their self-concepts (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). The process of identification with a particular occupation may start in many cases in educational institutions where individuals are socialized with an occupation’s values and norms. Such identification is further enhanced as individuals occupy their occupational roles in organizations (Antebay, 2008; Lui, Ngo, & Tsang, 2003; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006).

Occupation serves as the major source of an individual’s identity in the workplace because an association with a particular occupation is generally more enduring than an association with a particular organization (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006). Occupational identification can positively enhance individuals’ self-esteem and serve as a template for guiding their attitudes and behavior in workplace (Ashforth et al., 1989; Dutton et
An occupation’s perceived reputation, therefore, is likely to affect individuals’ identification with their occupations (Ashforth et al., 2008b). Additionally, individuals who perceive that their occupation matches their knowledge, skills and abilities and addresses their desires and needs well can be expected to positively identify with their occupation more than those who do not perceive the same set of circumstances (Ashforth et al., 2008b).

In spite of an important construct, occupational identification has been largely overlooked in organizational research, although it is now more frequently studied (Ashforth et al., 2008b; Ibarra, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006a; Kreiner et al., 2006b; Loi, Ngo, & Foley, 2004; Lui et al., 2003; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006). Current research on occupational identification can be grouped two areas: (1) the processes of identity construction among various professional groups (Chreim, Williams, & Hinings, 2007; Ibarra, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006a; Kreiner et al., 2006b; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006); and (2) the degree of compatibility between professional values and norms with organizational values and norms (Gouldner, 1958; Hall, 1968; Loi et al., 2004; Lui et al., 2003; Wallace, 1993, 1995).

Studies that have focused on the process of occupational identification have taken an ethnographic approach to demonstrate that construction of occupational identity is a fluid or dynamic process and is contingent on a variety of situational factors (Anteby, 2008; Ashforth et al., 2001; Chreim et al., 2007; Dutton et al., 1994; Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufmann, 2006). Research that has focused on professional-bureaucratic conflict has suggested that values and norms inherent in a particular occupation may be in conflict with an organization’s values and norms (e.g., an account may place adherence to professional standards above his or her employer’s goals) (Lui et al., 2003; Wallace, 1995). Several studies have also focused on the linkage between occupational identification and employee work attitudes (Loi et al., 2004; Van Dick & Wagner, 2002).

Organizational Commitment

Commitment to the workplace can take various forms and is capable of influencing employees’ feelings of well-being as well as organizations’ overall effectiveness (Morrow, 1993). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) noted that “commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets” (p. 301). From this perspective, commitment is a stabilizing force
that gives direction or guidance to employee behavior (Meyer, Becker & Van Dick, 2004; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Commitment can be both attitudinal and behavioral (Mowday et al., 1982). This distinction, however, has more to do with the processes involved in the development of commitment than with the focus of commitment because an individual can be committed to both an entity and to a particular behavior in that organization (e.g., implementing a certain management policy) (Meyer et al., 1991, 1997).

Porter and associates (Mowday et al., 1982; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974) defined organizational commitment as the overall strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in an organization. Although Porter and associates conceptualized organizational commitment as having three components—1) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, 2) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and 3) a desire to maintain organizational membership, they still considered it to be a unidimensional construct that focused primarily on affective connection (Mowday, 1998).

Drawing on Kelman's (1958) work on attitude and behavior change, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) suggested that the organizational commitment can take three different forms: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance reflects instrumental behavior designed to gain rewards. Identification occurs when employees want to maintain membership with an organization due to its attractive goals and values, even though employees may not personally adopt those goals and values. Internalization reflects employees' behaviors that are driven by internal values and goals that are consistent with the values and goals of the organization. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) provided initial empirical evidence for their three-dimensional commitment measure. However, in later work, they encountered some difficulty in distinguishing identification and internalization (Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990; Vandenberg, Self, & Seo, 1994) and, consequently, combined measures of identification and internalization to create normative commitment.²

Meyer and Allen (1984) undertook an integration of attitudinal and behavioral studies of organizational commitment based on distinctions apparent in the existing unidimensional models. They initially identified two components of organizational commitment:
affective and continuance. Affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization. Continuance commitment is the perceived costs or lack of alternatives associated with leaving the organization. In subsequent work, Meyer and associates (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et al., 1991) added a third component—normative commitment—to their model, based on Wiener's (1982) work that suggests that one can be committed to an organization because of moral obligations.

Although Allen and Meyer (1990; 1996) found empirical evidence to support their three-dimensional model, some disagreement remains about whether normative commitment is distinguishable from affective commitment and whether continuance commitment is a unidimensional construct. Confirmatory factor analyses results of previous studies show better statistics of model fit when affective and normative commitment are defined as separate factors (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994; Dutton et al., 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994), although correlation between the two components remains high. Results regarding the dimensionality of continuance commitment are mixed. Several studies (Dunham et al., 1994; Ko, Price and Muller, 1997) found support for a single factor, while others (Hackett et al., 1994; Somers, 1993) found evidence for two factors—one reflects costs associated with leaving the organization and the other defined by the lack alternative employment opportunities.

Of various multidimensional frameworks, Meyer and Allen's (Allen et al., 1990; Meyer et al., 1991) three-component model has established itself as the dominant approach in the organizational literature. Other notable works include Angle and Perry's (1981) value commitment and commitment to stay, Jaros, Jarmier, Koehler, and Sincich's (1993) affective, moral, and continuance commitment, Mayer and Schoorman's (1992, 1998) value and continuance commitment, and Penley and Gould's (1988) moral, calculative, and alienative commitments based on Etzioni's (1961) work on organizational involvement. Common to all of these approaches is the idea that commitment to organization is experienced as a psychological state that binds employees toward a particular course of action, but that which constitutes the psychological state remains a point of debate in the literature (Meyer et al., 2001). Most of these frameworks include a dimension of psychological state that reflects
employees’ affective connection with the organization, although the basis for such attachment (i.e., emotional involvement, value congruence, identification) differs across models. Also, most models appear to recognize that employees may persist in a course of action out of obligation or with a cost-avoidance interest. Whether an employee’s persistence in a course of action based on obligation or cost-avoidance can be considered as commitment remains arguable.

**Occupational Commitment**

Various definitions of occupational commitment have been proposed. Blau, Paul, and John (1993) defined occupational commitment as “one’s affect, belief, and behavioral intention towards his or her own occupation” (p. 311). Lee and associates (2000) defined occupational commitment in affective terms as “the psychological link between an individual and his or her occupation that is based on an affective reaction to that occupation” (p. 800). From this perspective, individuals with strong occupational commitment are expected to experience more positive feelings about their occupations than individuals with weak occupational commitment. The emotional attachment that individuals feel toward their occupation has implications for work-related attitudes, including occupational and organizational turnover intention, job satisfaction and performance (Lee et al., 2000; Snape & Redman, 2003).

In later work, occupational commitment has been conceptualized and operationalized as a multi-dimensional concept. Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) developed a three-dimensional measure of occupational commitment—affective, normative, and continuance—that is based on their work with organizational commitment. They defined affective occupational commitment as individuals’ emotional attachment to an occupation, normative occupational commitment as obligation to remain in an occupation, and continuance occupational commitment as assessment of costs in leaving an occupation. Individuals are likely to develop affective occupational commitment when they have positive experiences in their occupation and develop normative occupational commitment as a result of normative pressures to pursue a certain occupation (e.g., being a member of a family with a tradition of military service). Individuals may develop continuance occupational commitment because of the economic investments they already have made in an occupation or because of lack of alternatives. This three-component model of occupational
commitment has received reasonable empirical support in a variety of work settings (Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997; Snape & Redman, 2003). Recently, Blau and associates (Blau, 2001a, b, 2003a, b; Blau & Holladay, 2006) have attempted to expand this work by introducing a four-dimensional model in which they divided continuance occupational commitment into two sub-dimensions: a) accumulated investments/costs (e.g., time, money, training and emotion) that would be lost if one changes occupation, and b) limited occupational alternatives. But empirical support for this model has been mixed (Blau, 2001a, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b; Blau & Holladay, 2006).

INTERRELATIONS AMONG THE FOUR CONSTRUCTS

Linkage between Occupational and Organizational Identification

Although a great deal of research has focused on organizational identification, the relationship between occupational and organizational identification has been investigated only in limited number of studies (Bamber & Iyer, 2002; Hekman, Bigley, Steensma, & Hereford, 2008; Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, & Lloyd, 2006; Russo, 1998). Russo (1998) examined the linkage between occupational and organizational identification of a group of journalists in a large daily metropolitan newspaper. Russo (1998) suggested that journalists’ occupational identification may enhance their organizational identification because their organization provides them the means necessary to work as journalists and strengthen their occupational identity. This study found that journalists’ occupational identity served as a source of collective inspiration, energy, and strength and that their professional values were particularly important in sustaining them in difficult periods, particularly during restructuring and management changes and during their day-to-day challenges and frustrations working as journalists. Another study by Bamber and Iyer (2002) found a positive linkage between auditors’ occupational and organizational identification in large accounting firms. Similar to Russo (1998), Bamber and Iyer (2002) concluded that employees’ occupational identification fosters their organizational identification when their organizations meet their occupational expectations and strengthen their occupational identity.

Johnson and associates (2006) examined multiple targets of identification (i.e., organization, occupation, and work group) of a group of veterinarians and found that veterinarians working in
government owned non-veterinarian organizations identified more strongly with their occupation than with their organizations. This study suggested that the relationship between organizational and occupational identification is fairly complex and depends partly on the employment situation. Recently, Hekman and associates (2009) examined the combined effect of occupational and organizational identification on the organizational reciprocity experienced by physicians. They argued that organizations generally are concerned with efficiency and profitability whereas professionals like physicians mainly are concerned about providing the highest quality of service. Therefore, physicians would weakly adhere to the norms of organizational reciprocity when they identify strongly with their occupation. Hekman and associates (2009) found complex three-way interactive relationship among physicians’ occupational and organizational identification, and perceived organizational support best predicted their adherence to their organization’s policies. This study also found a positive linkage between physicians’ occupational and organizational identification.

Several other studies found a moderate positive correlation between occupational and organizational identification. Lui and associates’ (2001) investigated the moderating role of occupational identification on the relation between inter-role conflict and accountants’ work attitudes in Hong Kong. In this study, both occupational and organizational identification were antecedents of accountants’ job satisfaction and turnover intention. Lui and associates (2001) did not find any significant difference between accountants’ levels of occupational and organizational identification. Additionally, Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, and Christ (2004) examined different foci and dimensions of social identification among a group of German schoolteachers and reported a moderate positive association between occupational and organizational identification.

**Linkage between Occupational and Organizational Commitment**

The association between occupational and organizational commitment has been investigated in several studies (Aranya & Ferris, 1983, 1984; Aranya et al., 1981; Aryee, Wyatt, & Min, 1991; Lui et al., 2001; Wallace, 1993, 1995). Part of this research focused on the potential conflict between professional employees’ commitment toward their occupations and their organizations. Based on the presumption of professional-bureaucratic conflict (Wallace,
put forward in early sociological studies (Blau & Scott, 1962; Gouldner, 1958; Parson, 1954; Scott, 1966; Somers, 1993; Sorenson & Sorenson, 1974), an inherent disjunction has been asserted between the values and goals of organizations and the values and goals of professions. That is, professional value systems are viewed as emphasizing considerable autonomy, yet conformity nevertheless to professional standards and collegial authority, whereas a bureaucratic value system emphasizes hierarchical authority and conformity to organizational and institutional values (Wallace, 1995).

That individuals’ may experience a conflict between the commitment to their organization and occupation is illustrated well by Gouldner’s (1958) idea of local versus cosmopolitan. Locals are internally oriented, loyal to their employing organizations and not strongly committed to their occupations. In contrast, cosmopolitans are externally oriented and committed to the values and skills of their occupations. The local versus cosmopolitan contrast assumes that commitment to organization and occupation are inversely related; that is, greater commitment to one results in lesser commitment to the other (Wallace, 1993, 1995).

Although proponents of the professional-bureaucratic conflict approach would expect a negative linkage between organizational and occupational commitment, empirical results have not fully supported this proposition. Three meta-analyses on organizational commitment found a moderate positive correlation between measures of organizational and occupational commitment ($r = .48$, Mathew & Zajac, 1990; $r = .51$, Meyer et al., 2002; $r = .51$; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005). In addition, Wallace (1993) conducted a meta-analysis on organizational and occupational commitment and found a correlation of .45 for 25 samples. Wallace (1993) noted that the correlation was higher for employees with managerial or supervisory responsibilities ($r = .47$) than those with no management or supervisor responsibilities ($r = .29$), indicating that organizational hierarchy may moderate the relationship between the two variables. Further, this study found that the correlation between the two variables was higher for occupational groups that are highly professionalized ($r = .50$) than within occupational groups that are less professionalized ($r = .32$).
Another meta-analysis found a corrected correlation of .45 between organizational and occupational commitment (Lee et al., 2000). This study also found that, for professionals working in professional organizations (i.e., lawyers working in law firms), the correlation between organizational and occupational commitment was .48 and, for professionals working in non-professional/bureaucratic organizations (i.e., lawyers working in government), the correlation was .23. This result indicated that, even under conditions in which employees are more likely to experience professional-bureaucratic conflict, a negative association between organizational and occupational commitment does not appear. A possible explanation for this result is that, although bureaucratic organizations may not be able to fulfill the needs of professionals in the same ways as professional organizations, they often provide professionals with profession-specific rewards and career opportunities and, thus, the potential for professional-bureaucratic conflict largely is reduced (Lee et al., 2000).

Lee and associates' (2000) meta-analysis showed that the correlation between organizational and occupational commitment for non-professionals was very similar to that found for professionals working in professional organizations (rs = .45 vs. .48). This similarity between the two occupational groups does not necessarily mean that the mechanisms through which they develop occupational commitment are the same. Lee and associates (2000) suggested that, in occupations that require intensive training (e.g., medicine and law), occupational socialization generally starts before individuals' begin working for an organization. Hence, individuals' commitment to those occupations is likely to precede the development of their organizational commitment. In contrast, since non-professionals generally do not require extensive pre-entry training, they are likely to develop occupational and organizational commitment at the same time (Lee et al., 2000).

Other studies also have contradicted the argument of the local versus cosmopolitan view. Wallace (1995) and Hoff (2001) provided empirical evidence that, given favorable work environments (challenging work, autonomy, and organizational and coworker support), professionals can be committed to both their organizations and their occupations. A meta-analysis by Briedley and Cowton (2000) found negative correlations between professional-
bureaucratic conflict and organizational commitment ($r = -.14$) and between professional-bureaucratic conflict and occupational commitment ($r = -.19$), indicating that higher degrees of organizational and occupational commitment were related to lower degree of professional-bureaucratic conflict.

**Linkage between Organizational Identification and Commitment**

There are some striking similarities between organizational identification and organizational commitment in terms of how the two constructs have been defined and measured (Edwards, 2005; Riketta, 2005). Edwards (2005) noted that these similarities are observed partly because both constructs describe a similar psychological state; feelings of membership, belongingness, and attachment are a common theme in both organizational identification and commitment. Similarities between the two constructs also are observed because definitions of organizational commitment often include organizational identification as a sub-concept (see, for example, definitions by Meyer et al., 1991; Mowday et al., 1979; O'Reilly et al., 1986). The close similarities between organizational identification and commitment can lead one to question whether the two constructs are conceptually and empirically different from each other. The fact that some studies have used identification and commitment as synonymous (e.g., Benkhoff, 1997; Wallace, 1993) or cited studies on organizational identification as studies on organizational commitment (Cohen, 1992; Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), or incorporated measures of organizational identification in measures of organizational commitment (e.g., Mottola, Bachman, Gaertner, & Dovidio, 1997) have increased further the confusion regarding their distinctiveness.

Rousseau (1998) suggested that organizational identification and organizational commitment are related yet distinct concepts, and that each can influence the other. Organizational commitment generally is considered a broader construct than organizational identification. A key difference between these two constructs is that organizational identification is rooted in individuals’ definition of self-concept whereas organizational commitment is not (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth et al., 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Pratt (1998) suggested that organizational identification and commitment can be differentiated theoretically, because of the cognitive basis of
identification (i.e., the idea of self-definition which is at the core of social identity theory) is not an essential element of organizational commitment. Pratt (1998, p. 178) noted: “Organizational commitment is often associated with, ‘How happy or satisfied am I with my organization?’... Organizational identification, by contrast, is concerned with the question, ‘How I perceive myself in relation to my organization?’

Moreover, organizational identification and commitment can be differentiated in terms of their antecedents. Because organizational commitment is considered an attitudinal construct, it is likely to be contingent on factors that make employees' job enjoyable, improve the quality of the exchange relation between employees and organization, and contribute to their positive attitude towards the organization as a whole. Two comprehensive meta-analyses by Meyer and Allen (1997) and Mathieu and Zajac (1990) showed that perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, leader-member exchange relationship, role ambiguity, role conflict, and organizational fairness are the key antecedents of organizational commitment. In contrast, key antecedents of organizational identification are perceived distinctiveness and prestige of the organization, salience of out-groups (organizations), perceived similarity, proximity, liking, shared history and goals, and organizational fairness (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Mael and Ashforth 1992; Van Knippenberg and Sleebos, 2006; Riketta, 2005).

Differences between organizational identification and commitment in their relation with outcome variables are not as clear as the differences between their antecedents. Both organizational commitment and organizational identification are found to be related to job motivation, job satisfaction, job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intention and absenteeism (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Riketta, 2005). A few recent studies, however, have shown some narrow distinctions between the two constructs in their relation with outcomes. Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) examined the differences between organizational commitment and identification in terms of their linkage with perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and turnover intention. Their analysis was based on the key conceptual difference—“self-definition versus social exchange”—between the two constructs suggested by Ashforth and Mael (1989). Specifically, social exchange
theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that employees usually perceive themselves and the organization as psychologically separate entities, whereas identification implies that employees and the organization are one in the sense the organization is incorporated in employees’ self-concept. Further, organizational commitment is more contingent on perceptions of quality of the exchange relations between employees and the organization than organizational identification, and therefore, variables such as perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and turnover intention are expected to be more closely related to organizational commitment than they are to organizational identification. Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) found that, while controlling organizational identification, organizational commitment was positively related to perceived organizational support and job satisfaction whereas organizational identification was not related when controlling for organizational commitment. Further, when controlling for organizational identification, organizational commitment was found to be negatively related to turnover intention, whereas this linkage disappeared when controlling for organizational commitment (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). These findings provided some support for the conceptual distinctiveness of organizational identification and commitment.

Herrbach (2006) investigated the linkage between organizational commitment and identification and self-reported affect. Through a longitudinal survey of engineers, Herrbach (2006) found that organizational identification was related to negative affect when controlling for affective traits and commitment; however, the significant positive correlation between organizational identification and positive affect disappeared when controlling for affective commitment. This result indicates that the affective aspect of organizational identification can lead to both positive and negative emotional experiences whereas the affective aspect of organizational commitment is associated only with positive emotional experiences. Similar assertions also have been made in other studies (Ashforth et al., 2008a; Dutton et al., 1994; Pratt, 1998).

Riketta (2005) conducted a meta-analysis and found a mean correlation of .78 between organizational identification and commitment. Even though this indicates a large overlap between the two constructs, organizational identification indeed may have some unique features that are not measured by organizational...
commitment. Confirmatory factor analysis results of a number of recent past studies have (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004; Herrbach, 2006; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006) shown that organizational identification and commitment are empirically distinct constructs, although the degree to which they are empirically distinct partly depends on the particular measurement scale being employed.5

**Linkage between Occupational Identification and Organizational Commitment**

The relationship between occupational identification and organizational commitment has been examined only in a few field studies. Witt (1993) surveyed 125 employees in two military staff agencies and found that, employees who strongly identified with their occupation showed higher levels of organizational commitment than employees who either moderately or weakly identified with their occupation. This study reported a moderate positive correlation between occupational identification and organizational commitment. Based on Schneider’s (1983) attraction-selection-attrition theory, Witt (1993) offered an interesting explanation for the positive relationship found between these two variables. The attraction-selection-attrition theory suggests that people usually select themselves into organizations that best fit their needs. Witt (1993) suggested that employees who strongly identify with their occupation might carefully select organizations that they perceive would be most appropriate for practicing their occupations and fulfilling their occupational goals. Thus, employees who strongly identify with the occupations can be highly committed to their employing organizations, as well.

In another recent study, Loi and associates (2004) suggested that, when an organization’s value system is accommodating to individuals’ occupational values and goals, their occupational identification would enhance their organizational commitment. Loi and associates (2004) surveyed a sample of 309 lawyers working in various law firms in Hong Kong and found that, occupational identification was an important predictor of lawyers’ organizational commitment. However, they found only a modest positive correlation between lawyers’ occupational identification and their organizational commitment.
Linkage between Occupational Commitment and Organizational Identification

Individuals who are highly committed to their occupation also may identify with their employing organization, given that organization provides them with a supportive work climate and opportunities to meet their occupational goals. However, the relationship between occupational commitment and organizational identification has not received much attention in past research. Lui and associates' (2001) examined the moderating role of occupational commitment on the relationship between inter-role conflict and job attitudes in a sample of accountants in Hong Kong. Measures of organizational identification and occupational commitment in this study were antecedents of accountants’ job satisfaction and turnover intention. Lui and associates (2001) reported a moderate correlation between accountants’ occupational commitment and their organizational identification ($r = .38$).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Many of the key findings concerning the relationships between the four variables reviewed here are summarized in Figure 1. As one might expect, the larger of the six mean correlations were between organizational identification and organizational commitment ($r = .78$) and between occupational identification and occupational commitment ($r = .54$). Clearly, the stronger, vertical connections in Figure 1 reside within the domains of organization (identification and commitment on the left) and of occupation (identification and commitment on the right). Lower mean correlations were found between the identification measures (organizational and occupational, $r = .49$) and between the commitment measures (organizational and occupational, $r = .48$). Such lesser connections in identification and commitment measures also are not surprising, as they occur across the occupational and organizational divide (shown horizontally in Figure 1). The smallest mean correlations occur on the diagonals of Figure 1 between organizational identification and occupational commitment ($r = .38$) and between occupational identification and organizational commitment ($r = .34$).

The literature reviewed here indicates that a substantial amount of research has been conducted over the past three decades on how individuals become psychologically attached to their occupation and
organization. This body of work has substantially enriched our understanding of how employees establish, make sense of, and integrate their workplace attachments, as well as documenting key consequences including greater job performance, citizenship behaviors and lower turnover intention (Meyer et al., 2002; Riketta, 2005). However, much of this research work has been conducted in business rather than in government work settings. The limited research that has examined how public employees become psychologically attached to their organizations has focused primarily on the organizational commitment rather than organizational identification of government employees (Hassan & Rohrbaugh, forthcoming, 2011; Moon, 2000; Moynihan, & Pandey, 2007; Park & Rainey, 2007; Reid, Riemensneider, Allen & Armstrong, 2008, 2008b; Robertson & Tang, 1995; Robertson, Lo, & Tang, 2007; Yang & Pandey, 2009). Moreover, little effort has been made to elucidate about the relationship between occupational and organizational
identification and between occupational and organizational commitment of professional employees working in public agencies.

The service orientation of government agencies has resulted in an increasing reliance on professionals from various fields—engineering, accounting, law, information technology, and education (Emmert & Taher, 1992). Government agencies are one of the largest employers of professionals and they play a vital role in the formulation of public policies and implementation of public programs. However, we have limited understanding about how professionals working in government agencies develop identification with and commitment to their agencies. Further, research in public administration has yet to identify factors that may moderate or mediate the relationship between professional employees’ attachment to their occupations and attachment to their agencies. While a variety of cognitive/perceptual factors may influence this linkage, two factors that appear particularly salient are professional employees’ perception of job autonomy and congruence of values.

Job Autonomy as a Moderator of the Linkage between Occupational and Organizational Identification and between Occupational and Organizational Commitment

Prior research on the compatibility of professional and bureaucratic values has suggested that, the professional-bureaucratic conflict may not be as prevalent as previously was thought in contemporary organizations (Hall 1968, Wallace, 1995). However, potential for such conflict exists when there is an imbalance between organizations’ efforts to monitor and control professional employees’ work through bureaucratic means and their ability to freely make decisions about how to perform their work activities (Raelin, 1985). Striking a balance between bureaucratic control and job autonomy, therefore, appears particularly important for enhancing organizational identification and commitment of professional employees in government agencies.

Job autonomy—the freedom, independence, and discretion over scheduling work, make decisions and select methods to perform tasks (Hackman and Oldham, 1976)—is one of the most valued characteristics of professionals’ work. The lack of job autonomy has been shown to be a notable source of conflict or tension between professionals and their employing organizations (Hall 1968; Wallace,
Professionals consider autonomy as a legitimate aspect of their work and prefer to rely on their own judgment to solve unique problems that they encounter in variety of work situations (Hall, 1968). Further, professionals prefer to determine the content of their work tasks and select relevant methods and tools needed to in performing those tasks (Hall, 1968). They justify such autonomy by their expert knowledge in their professional field; that is, none but professionals themselves have the competence in performing those tasks (Raelin, 1985; Wallace 1994, 1995).

Job autonomy has been found to be inversely related to high levels of bureaucratization in organizations (Hall, 1968). Professional employees may experience less job autonomy while working in government agencies than while working in professional organizations (e.g., clinics, law firms and accounting firms). Government agencies generally are known to be more bureaucratic than professional organizations (see, for example, Hall, 1968; Engel, 1970). When professionals’ job autonomy is curtailed through overly formalized rules and procedures, they are less likely to identify with and show commitment toward their organizations. Similarly, it can be expected that when professionals are provided with substantial autonomy in performing their work activities, they are more likely to identify and show commitment to their agency.

Several studies have found that, in favorable work climate, professionals’ occupational identification and commitment can foster their organizational identification and commitment (see, for example, Bamber and Iyer, 2002; Hoff, 2001; Russo, 1998). Job autonomy is an important indicator of supportive work climate in organizations (James, Choi, Ko, McNeil, & Minton, 2008). Further, past research has found that job autonomy is an important antecedent of professional employees’ organizational identification (Bamber & Iyer, 2002) and organizational commitment (Wallace, 1995). Given these findings, one might expect that, the relationship between professional employees’ occupational and organizational identification and between occupational and organizational commitment will be stronger when professionals are provided with substantial job autonomy by their employing agencies. These linkages have not been thoroughly investigated. Thus, future studies should examine the two following propositions:
Proposition 1: Job autonomy will moderate the relationship between occupational and organizational identification.

Proposition 2: Job autonomy will moderate the relationship between occupational and organizational commitment.

Job Autonomy as a Moderator of the Linkage between Occupational Identification and Organizational Commitment and between Occupational Commitment and Organizational Identification

Job autonomy may also moderate the relationship between occupational identification and organizational commitment and between occupational commitment and organizational identification of professional employees in government agencies. As mentioned earlier, the relationships between occupational identification and organizational commitment and between occupational commitment and organizational identification have received limited attention in prior research. The average correlations shown in Figure 1 between these two pairs of variables are based only on a few studies (Loi et al., 2004; Lui et al., 2001; Witt, 1993). However, it seems plausible to assert that, in a work climate where professionals can freely exercise their expert judgments, make decisions about how to perform their tasks, and select appropriate tools and methods to perform those tasks, their occupational identification will enhance their organizational commitment and their occupational commitment will enhance their organizational commitment. Hence future research should examine the two following propositions:

Proposition 3: Job autonomy will moderate the linkage between occupational identification and organizational commitment.

Proposition 4: Job autonomy will moderate the linkage between occupational commitment and organizational identification.

Value Congruence as a Mediator of the Effect of Organizational Identification on Organizational Commitment

Although prior research has shown that organizational identification can enhance employees’ organizational commitment, little work has examined whether value congruence may facilitate the development of such a relationship. Values shape employees’ work attitudes and behaviors in important ways. When employees’ role expectations are different from their espoused/preferred values, they
are less likely to identify with and be committed to their organizations. Pratt (1998) suggested that employees develop deep structure organizational identification when they gradually internalize the organization's values into their self-concepts. Hence, congruence of professionals' own and their organization's values is likely to be an important antecedent of their organizational identification and organizational commitment.

Social identities fundamentally are meant to satisfy individuals' psychological needs such as autonomy, relatedness, competence, and self-esteem (Pratt, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals generally categorize themselves as members of certain groups to satisfy these psychological needs for their personal well-being (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, individuals generally prefer to work in an organization that has values similar to their own because such an organization can provide them with a work environment in which they can act in ways that are consistent with their self-concepts (George & Chattopadhay, 2005). For instance, professionals who have a high level of public service motivation may be attracted to enter and work for agencies that exemplify those values (Perry & Wise, 1990). This perspective also is consistent with the idea of person-organization fit and parallels Schneider's (1986) attraction selection attrition framework. Further, because individuals generally prefer to maintain stable social identities, the congruence of individuals' own and their group's values can help individuals to maintain self-integrity across situations (Dutton et al., 1994). There also is evidence that value congruence can enhance organizational identification. For example, George and Chattopadhay (2005) found that congruence of information technology contractors' values with their organizations was related to their organizational identification.

Congruence of individual and organization's values reduces uncertainty and increases predictability, trust and bonding in the individual-organization relationship (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Past research consistently has shown that internalization of the organization's values often leads to developing commitment toward that organization (see, for example, Edwards & Cable, 2009; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Because value congruence can enhance both organizational identification and organizational commitment and organizational
identification can increase organizational commitment, one might expect that, organizational identification would at least partially mediate the effect of value congruence on professionals’ organizational commitment. Future studies, therefore, should examine the following proposition:

**Proposition 5:** Organizational identification will mediate the effect of value congruence on organizational commitment.

**Value Congruence as a Mediator of the Effect of Occupational Identification on Occupational Commitment**

Congruence of personal and professional values may be an important factor for professionals to develop identification with and commitment toward their occupations. Individuals may initially identify with an occupation because of its perceived prestige or distinctiveness, but such type of identification is less likely to translate into occupational commitment. However, when individuals develop deep structure identification with an occupation, they are more likely to be committed to that occupation. Such type identification usually develops when individuals internalize the distinct values of their occupation into their self-concepts. Internalizing an occupation’s values into self-concepts is likely to foster both identification and commitment for that occupation. Further, occupational identification may also partially mediate the effect of value congruence on occupational commitment. Past research has not examined these linkages; thus, future studies should examine the two following propositions:

**Proposition 6:** The congruence of individuals’ own and their occupational values will enhance their occupational identification and commitment.

**Proposition 7:** Occupational identification will mediate the effect of value congruence on occupational commitment.

**CONCLUSION**

Psychological attachment to workplace is an important topic for research in public administration because of its close association with outcomes such as work motivation, job performance, citizenship behaviors and turnover intention. Research on this topic has been conducted using either identification or commitment perspective, and
little research has tried to integrate these two theoretical approaches. In an effort to move future research in such a direction, this article has reviewed interrelationships among organizational identification, organizational commitment, occupational identification and occupational commitment. This review is intended to provide a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the constructs as well as their empirical distinctiveness. Further, based on the patterns of linkages found among the constructs, this article has offered a set of testable propositions that may guide future research on employees’ attachment to workplace by integrating identification and commitment perspectives.

The research program proposed here is important in several ways. For example, examining the role of value congruence (for person-organization and person-occupation) will help to better understand how public employees develop identification with and commitment toward their occupation and organization. Further, examining the effect of job autonomy may shed some light on how professionals’ occupational identification and commitment may foster their organizational identification and commitment. Although important, the research program proposed here is not a comprehensive one. A number of other factors such as participation in decision-making, public service motivation, organizational fairness, and organizational support may influence the linkages between occupational and organizational identification and between occupational and organizational commitment of public employees. Hence, future research should explore these relationships, as well. Additionally, limited attention has been paid on the relationships between occupational and organizational identification and between occupational and organizational commitment for public employees belonging to less professionalized occupational groups (e.g., craftsmen, clerical and support workers). Therefore, future studies need to examine how employees who belong to less professionalized occupations develop occupational identification and commitment and how these attachments, in turn, influence their organizational identification and commitment.

NOTES

1. Organizational identification may also have undesirable consequences. For example, over-identification may lead to
increased competition and conflict between different units within an organization. Over-identification may also lead to resistance to organizational change and innovation.

2. O’Reilly and Chatman’s definition of normative commitment is similar to Meyer and Allen’s (1991) affective, but not normative commitment.

3. The samples designated by Wallace (1993) as highly professionalized were nurses, accountants, professional and scientific university employees and the samples designated as low professionalized were personnel managers, insurance agents, supervisory employees.

4. Ashforth and Mael (1989) noted that employees who strongly identify themselves with their organizations are likely to experience some level of “psychic loss” when they leave their organizations, because their identity is psychologically intertwined with the organization’s identity. Van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) acknowledge that organizational identification is negatively related to turnover intention but argued that the desire to remain in an organization is not central to the definition of organizational identification. Thus, turnover intention is expected to be more closely related to affective commitment than it is identification.

5. Riketta (2005) found that correlation between organizational identification and commitment is higher when organizational identification is measured with the Organizational Identification Questionnaire (Cheney, 1983) instead of the Mael Scale (Mael & Tetrick, 1992).

6. The mean correlations between pairs of variables reported here were calculated as following:

   1. The mean correlation between occupational and organizational identification was based on Bamber and Iyer (2002); Hekman, Bigley, Steensma, and Hereford (2008); Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, and Lloyd (2006a); Lui et al. (2001); Van Dick & Wagner (2002); Van Dick et al. (2004);

   2. The correlation between occupational and organizational commitment was based on Mathew and Zajac (1990); Meyer
The correlation between organizational identification and commitment was based on the meta-analysis study by Riketta, 2005.

4. The correlation between occupational identification and commitment was based on Lui et al., 2001.

5. The correlation between occupational identification and organizational commitment was based on Loi et al., 2004; Witt, 1993.

6. The correlation between occupational commitment and organizational identification was based on Lui et al., 2001.

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