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# The Glass Is Half Full: The Positive Effects of Organizational Identification for Employees Higher in Negative Affectivity

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Organizational identification has traditionally been associated with positive organizational outcomes, whereas negative affectivity (NA) has most often been associated with negative individual outcomes. We hypothesize that organizational identification will positively influence self-reported performance for individuals high in NA. Conversely, individuals low in NA will not experience feelings of enhanced performance as organizational identification increases. The findings from 2 samples provided support for the research hypothesis; specifically, the personality factor of NA moderated the organizational-identification/self-reported performance relationship. We discuss our findings in light of important implications for the positive psychology movement and practicing managers.

Since Ashforth and Mael's (1989) seminal work on organizational identification, organizational scientists have investigated the beneficial effects of employees who have a strong identification with their employing institutions. *Organizational identification* refers to how one feels toward one's employing organization, such that individuals who have high organizational identification feel as though they are "one" with the organization. Research on organizational identification has revealed that high identification generally leads to positive outcomes for the organization. For instance, research has found that high organizational identification leads to higher cooperative behaviors (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002) and extra-role behaviors (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005).

The notion that higher organizational identification leads to higher performance is generally accepted. For instance, in a theoretical paper, Walsh and Gordon (2008) proposed that occupational and organizational identity congruence will lead to individual job performance that is consistent with organizational objectives and expectations. However, research investigating the identification–performance relationship has not shown consistent results. For example, Michinovi, Michinovi, and Toczek-Capelle (2004) did not find

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a significant relationship between group-level identity and group-level performance. As such, we address the need to investigate boundary conditions to the identification–performance relationship.

In particular, we explore the dispositional variable of negative affectivity as a potential moderator of the identification–performance relationship. *Negative affectivity* is a dispositional trait in which individuals high in the trait are more likely to experience negative feeling (e.g., anxiety, nervousness) than those low in the trait (Kaplan, Bradley, Luchman, & Haynes, 2009). Negative affectivity correlates with negative emotional states and moods, such as irritability and fear (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

In this paper, we explore the possibility that organizational identification will ignite positive outcomes for persons high in negative affectivity. Given that there is a negative relationship between negative affectivity and self-reported performance (Kaplan et al., 2009) and that those high in negative affectivity are apt to be less optimistic that their efforts will lead to success (Wright & Staw, 1999), at first blush one might presuppose that negative affectivity will mitigate any potential gains achieved through enhanced organizational identification. However, based on social identity theory and the potential for social categories to enhance self-esteem (Hogg & Turner, 1985), we argue that for individuals high in negative affectivity, self-reported performance will increase as organizational identification increases as a self-enhancement mechanism. Alternatively, self-reported performance for individuals low in negative affectivity will remain unaffected by organizational identification. In doing so, we attempt to provide empirical support for the self-esteem hypothesis of identification, as well as self-consistency theory.

This paper reports our empirical investigation of the interactive effect of organizational identity and negative affectivity on self-reported performance. In the following sections, we review relevant organizational identification literature and expand our discussion by grounding our hypothesis in social identity theory and the extant literature on affectivity. Following, the results of two samples are reported, as well as a discussion of research and practitioner implications.

### Social Identification in Organizational Settings

Since the late 1960s, researchers have examined organizational identification as an antecedent to job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). According to Hall, Schneider, and Nygren (1970), *organizational identification* is “the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent” (pp. 176–177), thus leading to positive outcomes. Ashforth and Mael

were among the first to apply the principles of social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner, 1985) to an organizational context, separating antecedents from consequences and articulating a more process-oriented view of the phenomenon of organizational identification.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) highlighted four antecedents to organizational identification: distinctiveness, prestige, salience of out-groups, and a number of antecedents typically associated with group formation (e.g., shared goals or threats, proximity, similarity, liking). Interestingly, Ashforth and Mael contended, "Identification with a collectivity can arise even in the absence of interpersonal cohesion, similarity, or interaction and yet have a powerful impact on affect and behavior" (p. 26). While issues such as liking and similarity are not necessary to enhance organizational identification, by design, organizations facilitate proximity and shared goals.

However, antecedents alone do not explain why individuals find a need to belong to groups. Individuals identify with various groups in an attempt to (a) make sense of their environment (Hogg & Terry, 2001); (b) enhance their self-esteem (Hogg & Terry, 2001); or (c) both. After individuals identify with a group, they develop images of a prototypical member, which represents a blueprint for how a typical member of the group should behave (Turner, 1985). The process of putting order to one's world, minimizing ambiguity, and locating norms for behavior can clearly enhance organizational outcomes, as well as provide individuals with an opportunity to increase their perceptions of their own self-worth. In fact, the positive consequences of organizational identification are well established.

Interestingly, Turner (1984) noted that one could identify with a group and experience positive outcomes without necessarily liking the others within the group. This nuance is noteworthy, given our inclusion of affectivity into the equation, as will be discussed shortly. Ashforth and Mael (1989) asserted that organizational identification would lead to internalization of group values and norms, as well as a general homogeneity of attitudes and behaviors.

While Ashforth and Mael (1989) integrated theory and research—differentiating the antecedents from the consequences of organizational identification—Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail (1994) built on the assumptions posed by Ashforth and Mael and proposed that organizational membership shapes the self-concept and subsequently enhances self-esteem and distinctiveness. While we will not review Dutton et al.'s model in its entirety, a number of propositions are particularly relevant to this research.

First, Dutton et al. (1994) defined *organizational identification* as a cognitive connection that is the "degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization" (p. 239). Members develop identification based on both their own perceived

characteristics of the institution, as well as what they believe others (i.e., those outside the organization) believe about the institution. These internal and external images come together to help shape one's own perception of themselves: inferences they believe others are making about them based on one's affiliation with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). At the core of their propositions is Brown's (1969) idea that identification is a process of self-definition such that positive perceptions of one's organization lead to identification, and identification leads to positive perceptions of self.

Furthermore, organizational identification not only enhances perceptions of oneself, but it affects behaviors as well. The process is a reinforcing cycle whereby individuals aim to achieve consistency between attitudes and behaviors (Festinger, 1957). Van Dick et al. (2005) noted that "when participants are more strongly identified with their group, they should also act and think more in accordance with group norms" (p. 282). Therefore, it is not necessarily the interactions with others or a change in rewards based on interactions with others that alter behaviors; but rather, merely thinking differently about the organization (Dutton et al., 1994) can enhance performance and organizational outcomes.

### Identification and Performance

In addition to the more general positive outcomes associated with organizational identification, research in social identity has specifically investigated the influence of identification on performance (e.g., Van Knippenberg, 2000). For the most part, there is a positive linear relationship between identification and various types of individual and group performance. For example, although not the purpose of their study, Singh and Krishnan (2008) found a significant, positive correlation between group identification and perceptions of group performance in two studies ( $r_s = .67$  and  $.68$ , respectively). Van Dick et al. (2005) empirically illustrated a positive relationship between identification and various extra-role behaviors. Specifically, Van Dick et al. found that category salience, mediated by identification, had a positive effect on extra-role behaviors for German school teachers. However, when examining the research on identification outside of a workplace setting, as we will highlight later, the findings are still somewhat mixed.

For instance, in a study of student athletes, students who were primed on an athlete-based identity had lower self-regard and performed worse on math tasks, compared to students who were primed with a student-focused identity (Yopyk & Prentice, 2005). In a similar study, Chen (2004) found that students who were primed on their Asian American-based identity showed a

boost in their math test performance. Chen (2004) explained that motivation might be a possible explanation for increases in performance, such that students with a high Asian American-based identity performed well in an attempt to live up to positive racial stereotypes. However, Chen did not find a significant relationship between gender-based identities for women's verbal test performance, which is another positive identity stereotype.

Michinovi et al. (2004) found that group identification, task-building communication, and morale-building communication were higher for individuals who were cognizant of group membership, compared to individuals who were not cognizant of group membership. However, these researchers did not find a significant relationship between identity salience and group-level performance, begging the question as to whether positive outcomes are necessarily behavioral (e.g., performance) or if they are perhaps cognitive in nature.

Taken collectively, research on the identification–performance relationship generally supports the notion that identifying with a group increases individual members' effort exertion. However, as evident by the studies reported earlier, the results are not always consistent. Perhaps one reason for this inconsistency is the influence of dispositional moderating variables.

Research has been limited with regard to variables that may moderate the relationship between identification and performance, although it has been noted that individual differences could play a crucial role in understanding the identification process (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006). Kreiner et al. alluded to qualitatively observing dispositional differences, such as need for collectivity. As mentioned earlier, group-behavior researchers have investigated the role of collectivistic orientation and group behavior (Shamir, 1990). However, research has been limited in the area of affectivity and the organizational-identification/outcome relationship. Hence, by exploring negative affectivity as a moderator of the organizational-identification/self-reported performance relationship, the research presented in this paper will contribute to the identity literature.

### Negative Affectivity

Negative affectivity (NA) is viewed as an individual-difference variable, often neglected in research, yet believed to play an important role in outcomes at work (Perrewé & Spector, 2002). Individuals high in NA maintain high levels of negative affect, even in the absence of stress (Watson & Clark, 1984). Some have argued that because high-NA individuals dwell on failures and shortcomings, they alienate their coworkers and report lower job satisfaction, not based on their affectivity alone, but based on their negative

interaction with their environments (Brief, Butcher, & Roberson, 1995; Burke, Brief, & George, 1993) and the stressor-creation mechanism (Perrewé & Spector, 2002).

Individuals high in NA are likely to experience “adverse mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness, with low NA being a state of calmness and serenity” (Watson et al., 1988, p. 1063). Individuals high in NA are less satisfied with their own lives and focus on the negative side of others as well (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989). Spector, Chen, and O’Connell (2000) noted that those high in NA are more likely to perceive stress in the workplace such that high-NA individuals report more organizational constraints, physical complaints, and interpersonal conflict at work (Spector & Jex, 1998). Others have found that NA is positively related to strain (Fortunato, Jex, & Heinisch, 1999), job dissatisfaction (e.g., Cavanaugh, Boswell, Rochling, & Boudreau, 2000), and sleep and gastric problems (Parkes, 1999). However, it is important to note that these studies correlated self-reported NA with self-reported outcome measures. The general conclusion is that those with high NA are cognitively prone to perceive and focus on the negative aspect of their environments, including their own missteps and limitations. We contend that, because of the self-esteem enhancement that is associated with organizational identification, the negative effects of NA may be overcome by increasing identification.

A recent meta-analysis by Kaplan et al. (2009) found that NA was negatively related to performance. However, the results were more pronounced for self-reported performance than for supervisor-reported performance. Kaplan et al. noted that negative performance could be simply exaggerated for individuals high in NA; an extension of their negative outlook on life. Thus, individuals high in NA are more likely to report lower performance, regardless of their actual performance.

### The Current Study

A number of nuances in the literature review are worth reiterating. First, organizational identification leads to internalization of the institution’s values and beliefs, leading to enhanced outcomes. However, a sense of identification need not be interpersonal. Similarity and liking are not necessary precursors to organizational identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Turner, 1984). In fact, identification alone can aid in enhancement of self-esteem through proximity, shared goals, and interactions with others because the external competition and other relevant out-groups (rather than organizational design or explicit incentives) provide momentum and a driving force behind motivation and performance. Membership alone enhances self-

esteem and helps to mold one's self-concept around the institution. This cognitive connection appears stronger than other forces.

According to Hogg and Abrams (1990), individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in in-group bias because they have a motive to self-enhance (i.e., self-esteem hypothesis, Corollary 2). Aberson, Healy, and Romero (2000) described the process as such:

Self-enhancement mechanisms are stronger for low-self-esteem individuals. Deficient self-esteem acts as a stressor that prompts coping responses. High-self-esteem individuals do not possess similar motivations, because their positive self-concepts eliminate the need for coping responses (Wills, 1981, 1991). Low self-esteem individuals need to make up for poor self-concept, and therefore they may pick on others to raise deficient esteem, whereas high-self-esteem individuals do not need to bolster self-esteem (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). (p. 158)

However, in their meta-analysis on self-esteem and in-group bias, Aberson et al. found that the self-consistency theory (e.g., Brown, 1993) prevailed over Corollary 2 provided by Hogg and Abrams. The self-consistency theory contends that individuals will attempt to act in a manner that is consistent with their view of themselves. In other words, those with low self-esteem will be unlikely to engage in in-group bias because this will counter their perspective of themselves (e.g., "If I think I'm not a very worthy person, I cannot rate my group as better than another").

Aberson et al. (2000) did note that those with low self-esteem did engage in in-group bias, and the amount was different for the type of in-group bias. For instance, when direct in-group bias (e.g., favoring a group to which one belongs and actively participates) was examined versus indirect in-group bias (e.g., favoring a group to which one only observes, yet of which one feels a part), there was a pronounced difference. Specifically, those low in self-esteem were more likely to engage in indirect in-group bias than direct in-group bias. This difference was not found for individuals high in self-esteem.

Based on the previous meta-analysis results, Aberson et al. (2000) contended that the self-esteem Corollary 2 proposed by Hogg and Abrams (1990) may still hold, as long as it does not violate self-consistency theory. Although low self-esteem is by no means synonymous with NA, we contend that their properties have enough in common to produce a similar effect on self-reported performance. We contend that individuals with high NA will engage in self-enhancing behaviors (e.g., self-reported performance) as long as there is self-consistency. This is where identity plays an important role.



We contend that individuals high in NA and low in organizational identity will report low performance because this will be consistent with their view of themselves. However, as organizational identification increases, being a prototypical organizational member will become more salient. Thus, self-reported performance will act as a mechanism to increase a sense of worth for those high in NA that is consistent with their self-view (i.e., being a good organizational member). We propose the following:

*Hypothesis.* Negative affectivity will moderate the relationship between organizational identification and self-reported performance such that those with high negative affectivity will increase their reported performance as organizational identification increases. Conversely, individuals low in negative affectivity will not change their reported performance as organizational identification increases.

We conducted a study to test the research hypothesis. We collected and analyzed two samples to examine the question of interest. The aim of the second sample was to replicate or confirm the results from the first sample.

## Sample 1

### *Method*

#### *Data Collection and Procedure*

Using a data-collection method similar to previous studies (e.g., James, Treadway, Conner, & Hochwarter, 2005), we used undergraduate students to help recruit full-time working individuals as respondents. The students were given class credit for recruiting respondents who were at least 25 years of age, who currently were working at least 30 hours per week, and who had at least 5 years of full-time work experience. Students were given the opportunity to earn the same class credit for an alternative research activity if they did not wish to or could not participate in recruiting respondents.

The respondents completed two surveys that were administered approximately 1 month apart. The first survey included the antecedents, and the second survey included the outcome variable. Although 150 surveys were distributed, a total of 123 respondents (66 males, 57 females) completed both surveys (response rate = 82%). Furthermore, the respondents had an average of 19 years of work experience ( $M = 18.91$ ,  $SD = 12.09$ ) and an average tenure of 10 years at their current organizations ( $M = 9.67$ ,  $SD = 8.95$ ). The sample was representative of a cross-section of the working population, with

various positions represented (e.g., clerical to upper management). Specifically, 15% of respondents were clerical workers, 32% were first-level employees, 27% were middle managers, 13% were general management, and 13% were upper management.

### *Measures*

*Organizational identification.* Organizational identification was measured using a six-item scale that was developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). Respondents were asked to rate statements such as “My employing organization is very important and significant in my total life,” and “When someone praises this organization, it feels like a personal compliment.” The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Coefficient alpha was .90.

*Negative affectivity.* Negative affectivity was measured with a 10-item scale that was developed by Watson et al. (1988). Respondents were asked to rate attributes such as *distressed*, *irritable*, and *jittery* on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). Coefficient alpha was .84.

*Self-reported performance.* We used an 11-item scale that was adapted from Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli’s (1997) Task Performance Scale to measure self-reported performance. Respondents were asked about their quantity and quality of work, relative to the average worker. Respondents were asked to rate statements such as “My quality of work is much higher than average,” and “My judgment when performing my main job is higher than average.” The items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Coefficient alpha was .93. As previously noted, this outcome variable was collected approximately 1 month after the antecedents and control variables.

*Control variables.* Although gender may not affect performance (Shore & Thornton, 1986), empirical research has linked gender and identity. Previous researchers (e.g., Aryee & Luk, 1996) have found gender and identity to be correlated. Therefore, we controlled for gender. Furthermore, we controlled for organizational tenure in the analysis, given that previous research (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) has empirically linked tenure and organizational identity.

### *Analysis*

To test the research hypothesis that negative affectivity will interact with organizational identification to predict self-reported performance, we

conducted a four-step moderated hierarchical regression (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). In the first step, the two control variables were entered into the equation. The organizational identification and negative affectivity variables were centered. In the second step, the main effect for organizational identification (centered) was entered into the equation. In the third step, the main effect for negative affectivity (centered) was entered into the equation. In the fourth and final step, the interactive term (i.e., Centered NA  $\times$  Centered Organizational Identification) was entered into the equation. If the final step is statistically significant and provides additional variance (beyond the main effects) in self-reported performance, the interactions will be graphed to see if there is visual support for the research hypothesis.

### Results

Bivariate correlations are presented in Table 1. Table 2 reports the results from the hierarchical moderated regression. First, after controlling for gender and organizational tenure, organizational identification ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) independently explained 4.2% of the variance in self-reported performance. Second, negative affectivity ( $\beta = -.11$ , *ns*) was not a statistically significant predictor of variance in self-reported performance beyond that of organizational identification. In the final step of the analysis, the interactive term of Organizational Identification  $\times$  Negative Affectivity was significantly related to self-reported performance ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and explained an additional 7.0% of the variance in self-reported performance.

In order to depict the interactive relationship visually, we graphed the interaction using Dawson's (2006) graphing program. As can be seen in

Table 1

#### *Means and Correlations: Sample 1*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Organizational tenure	9.42	8.79	—			
2. Gender	0.46	0.50	.21*	—		
3. Organizational identification	3.63	0.94	.13	.02	—	
4. Negative affectivity (NA)	1.70	0.49	-.06	.04	-.12	—
5. Performance	3.98	0.58	.11	.15	.23*	-.12

Note.  $N = 123$ .

\* $p < .05$ .

Table 2

*Results of Regression Analysis for Performance: Sample 1*

	<i>B</i>	$\Delta R$	$\Delta F$ ( <i>dfs</i> )
1. Gender	.13		
Organizational tenure	.07	.023	1.44 (2, 120)
2. Gender	.13		
Organizational tenure	.04		
Organizational identification (OI)	.20*	.042*	5.29 (1, 119)
3. Gender	.13		
Organizational tenure	.04		
Organizational identification	.19*		
Negative affectivity	-.10	.010	1.26 (1, 118)
4. Gender	.11		
Organizational tenure	.04		
Organizational identification	.18*		
Negative affectivity	-.11		
OI $\times$ NA	.27**	.070**	9.54 (1, 117)

Note.  $N = 123$ .

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

Figure 1, as organizational identification increased, self-reported performance increased only for those with high negative affectivity. The self-reported performance of employees low in negative affectivity appears to have decreased as a function of organizational identification.

To examine the relationship of the interaction further, a simple slopes analysis was conducted on a high-NA subgroup and a low-NA subgroup. Using a mean split to determine subgroups, organizational identification was regressed on self-reported performance. For the high-NA subgroup ( $N = 55$ ), organizational identification explained 16.1% of the variance in self-reported performance ( $\beta = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The regression for the low-NA subgroup ( $N = 67$ ) was not significant ( $\beta = .021$ , *ns*).

Similar results were found for subgroups determined by 1 standard deviation above and 1 standard deviation below the mean. The simple slopes analyses confirm the visual interpretation of Figure 1, providing further support for the research hypothesis. That is, as individuals' organizational identification increased for those high in NA, their self-reported performance

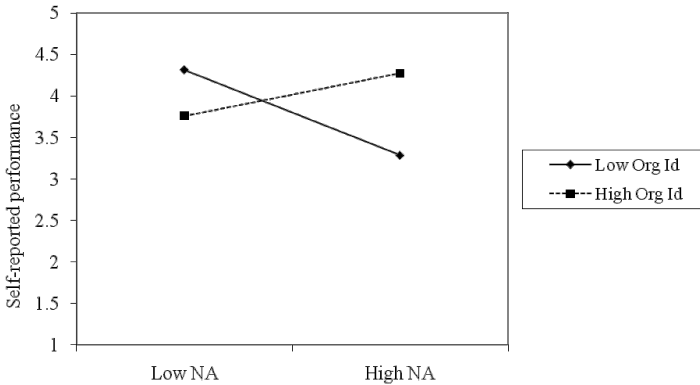


Figure 1. Organizational identification (Org Id), negative affectivity (NA), and performance: Sample 1.

increased. However, individuals reporting low NA did not change their self-reported performance as a function of organizational identification.

## Sample 2

### Method

#### Data Collection and Procedure

Data for Sample 2 were collected in the same manner as were the data for Sample 1. Students were given class credit for recruiting respondents who were at least 25 years of age, who were working full time (i.e., 30 hours per week or more), and who had at least 5 years of full-time work experience.

The respondents completed two surveys that were administered 1 month apart. In the first survey, control, antecedent, and moderating variables were collected; while in the second survey, the outcome variable was studied.

A variety of occupations and work positions were represented in the sample. Although 150 surveys were distributed at Time 1 and Time 2, the total number for respondents for both phases was 105 (56 males, 49 females; response rate = 70%). Furthermore, the respondents had an average of 19 years of work experience ( $M = 19.29$ ,  $SD = 12.11$ ) and an average tenure of 8 years at their current job ( $M = 8.27$ ,  $SD = 8.37$ ). The sample was representative of a cross-section of the working population, with various positions being represented (e.g., clerical to upper management). Specifically, 7% of the respondents were clerical workers, 27% were first-level employees, 18%

were middle managers, 27% were general management, and 21% were upper management.

### *Measures*

*Organizational identification.* Organizational identification was measured with a 13-item scale that was developed by Stoner, Perrewé, and Hofacker (2011). This measure was used because the data collected for the current study are part of a larger study that is designed to validate a new organizational identification scale. Sample statements are “When something bad happens to this organization, I personally feel hurt,” and “If asked if I belonged at this organization, I would say ‘Yes.’” Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement with the statements on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Coefficient alpha was .77.

*Negative affectivity.* Negative affectivity was measured with a 10-item scale that was developed by Watson et al. (1988). The respondents were asked to rate how they feel on attributes such as *distressed*, *irritable*, and *jittery*. The items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). Coefficient alpha was .88.

*Self-reported performance.* Self-reported performance was measured with an 11-item scale. The items asked respondents about their quantity and quality of work, relative to the average worker. Items in the scale were adapted from Tsui et al.’s (1997) task performance measure. Sample statements are “My quality of work is much higher than average,” and “My judgment when performing my main job is higher than average.” The items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Coefficient alpha was .93.

*Control variables.* As noted previously, organizational tenure and gender have been linked to several variables of interest in the present study. Therefore, as with Sample 1, we controlled for gender and organizational tenure during the analysis of Sample 2 data.

### *Analysis*

To test the research hypothesis that negative affectivity would interact with organizational identification to predict self-reported performance, we conducted the same four-step moderated hierarchical regression (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) in Sample 2 as we conducted in Sample 1. Because Sample 2 was a replication of Sample 1 to test a directional hypothesis, we used a one-tailed test of significance.

## Results

Bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. Table 4 reports the results from the hierarchical moderated regression. First, organizational identification ( $\beta = .04$ , *ns*) and negative affectivity ( $\beta = -.01$ , *ns*) did not explain additional variance in self-reported performance beyond that of the control variables. In the final step of analysis, the interaction term of Organizational Identification  $\times$  Negative Affectivity ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p = .03$ ) was significantly related to self-reported performance, and explained an additional 3.3% ( $\Delta R^2 = .033$ ) of the variance in self-reported performance.

Similar to Sample 1, we graphed the interaction to depict the interactive relationship visually. Using Dawson's (2006) graphing program, as seen in Figure 2, a similar illustration to that of Sample 1 appears. Specifically, as organizational identification increased, self-reported performance increased only for those with high negative affectivity. Conversely, self-reported performance of employees low in negative affectivity appears to have decreased as a function of organizational identification.

Simple slopes analyses were also conducted on NA subgroups to examine further the nature of the interaction. High- and low-NA subgroups were determined by a mean split. Neither the high-NA subgroup ( $N = 47$ ,  $\beta = .14$ , *ns*) nor the low-NA subgroup ( $N = 69$ ,  $\beta = -.02$ , *ns*) was statistically significant (similar results were found for subgroups determined by 1 *SD* above and 1 *SD* below the mean). Therefore, although Figure 2 is similar to Figure 1, the visual interpretation of Figure 2 is cursory. Nevertheless, even though the simple slopes analyses were not statistically significant, we still can conclude that individuals high in NA and individuals low in NA report divergent

Table 3

*Means and Correlations: Sample 2*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Organizational tenure	8.53	8.47	—			
2. Gender	0.47	0.50	.11	—		
3. Organizational identification	3.44	0.51	.24**	-.03	—	
4. Negative affectivity	1.66	0.53	-.11	-.07	-.11	—
5. Performance	4.06	0.57	.11	.08	.06	.00

Note.  $N = 105$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 4

*Results for Regression Analysis for Performance: Sample 2*

	<i>B</i>	$\Delta R$	$\Delta F$ ( <i>dfs</i> )
1. Gender	.06		
Organizational tenure	.13	.023	1.17 (2, 102)
2. Gender	.06		
Organizational tenure	.12		
Organizational identification	.04	.002	0.16 (1, 101)
3. Gender	.06		
Organizational tenure	.12		
Organizational identification	.04		
Negative affectivity	-.06	.003	0.32 (1, 100)
4. Gender	.07		
Organizational tenure	.12		
Organizational identification	.04		
Negative affectivity	-.01		
OI $\times$ NA	.19*	.033*	3.53 (1, 99)

Note. *N* = 105.

\**p* < .05.

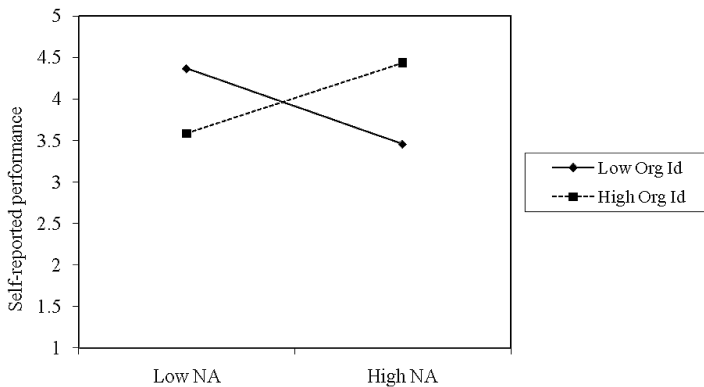


Figure 2. Organizational identification (Org Id), negative affectivity (NA), and performance: Sample 2.



perceptions of self-reported performance as organizational identification changes.

### General Discussion

Previous research has established a positive relationship between organizational identification and positive outcomes, such as performance, cooperative behaviors, and effort toward collective goals. However, there have been inconsistencies in empirical studies relating to moderating variables. Based on trait activation theory and underlying premises of social identity theory, it was hypothesized that organizational identification would increase self-reported performance for individuals high in negative affectivity, but not for those low in negative affectivity. The results from two data sets, using two different measures of organizational identification, provide support for the research hypothesis.

First, for both Sample 1 and Sample 2, the interaction term (Organizational Identification  $\times$  Negative Affect) was statistically significant when regressed on self-reported performance. In both samples, the interaction term explained additional variance in performance, beyond the main effects and controls (i.e., gender, tenure). Furthermore, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, it appears that the research hypothesis was indeed supported. Individuals high in NA reported higher performance as organizational identification increased, but performance remained constant for those low in NA.

To determine if individuals high or low in NA changed their reported performance as organizational identification increased, we conducted a series of simple slopes analyses. From the Sample 1 simple slopes analysis, we can conclude that individuals high in NA increased their reported performance as organizational identification increased, but organizational identification had no influence on reported performance for individuals low in NA. However, in Sample 2, the simple slopes analysis reveals only that individuals who differed in NA reported their performance differently as organizational identification changed.

Our research helps to inform trait activation theory and social identity theory. It appears that persons high in NA have the most to gain by the contextual cues of high organizational identification. Persons high in NA typically focus on the negative side of situations (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989) and discuss the negative aspects of work with coworkers (Zellars & Perrewé, 2001). However, when they identify with their organizations, it appears that the situational conditions mitigate their otherwise negative outlook and, as seen with other organizational identification research, social categories can enhance self-esteem (Hogg & Turner, 1985).

This identification process appears to translate into an enhanced perception of self-rated performance among persons high in NA. Interestingly, research to date has not supported the notion that persons high in NA are less productive (Wright, Cropanzano, Denney, & Moline, 2002). Therefore, our research illustrates that organizational identification has positive implications for persons high in NA in the form of perceived performance improvements that are likely to have a spillover effect into other positive outcomes. As previously noted, identification is believed to lead members to think and act in accordance with group norms (Van Dick et al., 2005). Persons high in NA may not necessarily change their interactions with others, but merely thinking differently about the organization (Dutton et al., 1994) can enhance performance and organizational outcomes.

A related body of literature is supportive of this notion that perceptions may lead to behavioral changes. In a recent series of experiments, merged identity between an actor and an observer led the observer not only to change their relevant self-perceptions, but it led to changes in their behaviors as well (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). That is, when a sense of shared identity is induced through perspective taking, observers see themselves as more self-sacrificing. When observers were told that they shared similar brainwave patterns with target others, they perceived themselves to be more self-sacrificing, sensitive to others, and somewhat less compliant. Even more importantly, relevant self-perceptions led to more helping behaviors, again supporting the notation that changes in perceptions can lead to changes in behavior (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). Although we did not test for actual changes in performance as judged by others, our findings provide a hopeful scenario for those high in NA.

As previously noted, persons high in NA have lower job satisfaction (Brief & Weiss, 2002) and are apt to be less optimistic that their efforts will lead to success (Wright & Staw, 1999). However, because enhanced performance may be the result of merely thinking differently about the organization—and not necessarily the result of interactions with others (Dutton et al., 1994)—our research supports the notion that organizational identification can indeed help persons high in negative affectivity to see the “glass as half full” with regard to their performance, even if their interactions with others are not necessarily linked to similarity and liking (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Turner, 1984).

### *Strengths and Limitations*

This paper yielded two main strengths that are worth highlighting. First, the hypothesis was supported in two different samples, using two alternative

measures of organizational identification, testing our hypotheses by using a cross-sectional sample of the working population. As such, we are able to infer that our findings are generalizable beyond one organizational context, one occupational type, and one measurement scale of identification. Second, because the research hypothesis was supported, this paper links two well researched areas (i.e., identification and affectivity) to predict self-report performance in a non-intuitive manner. That is, the findings reported in this paper are insightful in that they are the first, to our knowledge, to report on the positive moderating effect of negative affectivity on the organizational-identification/performance relationship.

Although this paper has several strengths, it is not without limitations. Specifically, one of the main limitations of the paper is that the performance measure (in both samples) was self-reported. This begs the question as to how negative affectivity and organizational identification influenced the variance in the performance measure. That is, did performance actually increase or did employees' self-reported performance increase as a result of negative affectivity and identification (i.e., perception rather than reality)? Research has noted that self-inflation of performance ratings is more likely to occur among employees who are high in certain personality traits, such as narcissism (e.g., John & Robbins, 1994) and self-esteem (e.g., Goffin & Anderson, 2007). It is unclear from our study if we have simply created more personality boundary conditions on who will self-inflate, or if we have uncovered boundary conditions as to who will actually expend more effort. Subsequent studies must be conducted to clarify our findings further by specifically examining the interrater difference between employees and managers.

Specifically, future research should attempt to replicate our findings using supervisor-reported performance as the dependent variable. If our findings are replicated, the managerial implication is such that managers should encourage individuals with high NA to develop an organizational identification so that their performance will increase. Conversely, managers may wish not to expend energy developing organizational identification among individuals low in NA because this will not necessarily lead to high performance. However, if our findings are not replicated using supervisor-reported performance as the dependent variable, managers would need to be aware that increasing organizational identification among individuals high in NA may not necessarily lead to increases in actual performance and may, in fact, lead to a false perception of the self.

A second limitation is that the hypothesis was tested using moderated regression from self-report measures. This has inherent statistical limitations; mainly, (a) possible spurious results because of common method variance (CMV); and (b) causality can only be inferred, rather than proven. However, although CMV is always a possible statistical influence, the correlations

between the variables of interest were not indicative of CMV. None of the main variables of interest were significantly correlated in Sample 2. For Sample 1, although organizational identification did significantly correlate with self-reported performance, the correlations ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ) were well below suspicion of CMV (Spector, 2006). Furthermore, for Sample 1 and Sample 2, independent (i.e., organizational identification), moderating (i.e., negative affectivity), and control (i.e., gender, organizational tenure) variables were measured 1 month before the dependent variable (i.e., self-reported performance). Therefore, although this method of data collection does not eliminate the possibility of CMV, it does give more control over possible spurious effects as a result of factors such as mood. Finally, CMV should not be of great concern for the hypothesis tested in the current study, given that we were testing for an interactive effect. As Harris and Kacmar (2005) noted, "Previous researchers have shown that CMV does not constitute a threat when testing for interaction effects" (pp. 349–350).

### *Research Implications*

The present research extends our understanding of dispositional differences in the relationship between organizational identification and performance. As Kreiner et al. (2006) discovered, certain occupations (particularly demanding occupations) cause members to struggle to find an optimal balance between the "me" and the "we." Perhaps for those high in negative affectivity, it may be more rewarding to belong to an institution, with the organization providing the answer to "Who am I?" as originally proposed by Ashforth and Mael (1989). That is, there may be multiplicative effects through strong organizational identification that can overcome one's cynicism that is often inherent in persons high in negative affectivity. Perhaps for individuals with high negative affectivity, the optimal balance is really a matter of finding the "we" in "me."

Our research provides additional empirical support for the trait activation theory. That is, we were able to demonstrate that individuals report differences in their behaviors that are perhaps contrary to their personalities as they increase identification with their employing organizations. This illustrates that personality traits may, in fact, become dormant or, rather, deactivated in certain situations. We suggest that researchers should examine additional moderating variables on the organizational-identification/self-reported performance relationship. Perhaps variables such as low self-esteem would yield similar results, illustrating that individuals with a positive perception of their relationship with their environment can overcome the negative effects of having a general negative perception.

Similarly, our research has extended the boundary conditions of trait activation theory to include individuals' perceptions of themselves in relation to their employing organizations. We are not, truly, examining a situational variable but, rather, how individuals view their personal associations with their situations. As individuals increase their identification with their organizations, certain personality traits may become more activated (or deactivated, as in our study). Our findings give credence to examining the interaction of traditional personality traits (e.g., negative affectivity) with additional individual psychological-level variables (e.g., organizational commitment). Research has substantiated a relationship between organizational commitment and performance (e.g., Francesco & Chen, 2004), yet perhaps this relationship is more pronounced for individuals high in negative affectivity.

In addition, the findings from the studies reported in this paper have implications for the positive psychology movement. Positive psychologists (e.g., Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) have contended that the "positive attributes of people and organizations" warrant academic attention (Nelson & Cooper, 2007, p. 3). Positive psychology examines constructs such as hope and optimism (Luthans, 2007), resilience and vitality (Cameron et al., 2003), and general human strengths (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), rather than focusing on the "disease and dysfunction" (Nelson & Cooper, 2007, p. 3) of organizations and employees.

Our findings illustrate that individuals with a negative disposition report higher performance as their sense of self becomes more intertwined with their employing organizations. That is, individuals with negative affect may be more motivated when appropriate factors are in place. Not only can strong identification influence improve one's sense of self-esteem (Hogg & Turner, 1985), but it is also believed to help individuals act in accordance with group norms (Van Dick et al., 2005), leading to improved outcomes in most research relating to individual- and organizational-level outcomes. Clearly, this is a positive perspective that allows us to remain hopeful of the benefits of organizational identification, even among those who have a traditionally negative outlook. We call for additional research that explores the boundaries of organizational identification and the types of persons who can benefit most from such contexts.

### *Practical Implications*

As positive psychology gains momentum, there is the possibility of a backlash against the exhibition of negative emotions and states in the workplace. Practitioners may become intolerant of the diversity of extreme personality types and resist hiring skilled individuals who may otherwise lack

the interpersonal skills that are promoted in positive psychology. However, our findings show that employees high in negative affectivity have the most to gain from organizational identification. For practitioners, this paper once again highlights that a happy worker does not always equate to a productive worker (Bowling, 2007). It may behoove organizations to employ a balance of individuals who are positive in nature, as well as those who are higher in negative affectivity, assuming that organizations are prepared to nurture and support a culture high in organizational alignment and identification. As is evident by this study, those high in negative affectivity may have perceptions of higher performance than their counterparts.

In order to aid in enhanced productivity, organizations may attempt to increase organizational identification, even among their cynical employees. This may be feasible for management to accomplish through the manipulation of symbols and rituals that reinforce what the institution stands for and represents (Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Dandridge, 1983). By increasing the distinctiveness of the organization, relative to other organizations, exuding a sense of pride for the organization, and making interorganizational performance differences salient (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), managers can increase employees' organizational identification, thus enhancing performance, even among persons who previously have been written off as too difficult or challenging.

The purpose of the present research was to explore the interactive effect of negative affectivity and organizational identification on self-reported performance. In two samples, it was illustrated that individuals with high negative affectivity were more likely to report increases in performance as a result of increases in organizational identification. This research expands the current conceptualization of the boundary conditions associated with trait activation theory.

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