

## The Communication Glue that Binds Employees to an Organization: A Study of Organizational Identification in Two Thai Organizations

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*Organizational communication scholars have paid scant attention to the motivations of people who choose careers in social service organizations. This study examined organizational identification in the context of two Thai social service organizations: government-run Community Development Department (CDD) and non-governmental Population and Community Development Association (PDA). The degree to which CDD members identified with CDD and PDA members identified with PDA was assessed by using the Organizational Identification Questionnaire constructed by George Cheney (1982). Comparison of CDD and PDA scores on Cheney's OIQ provided findings that mirror those of previous studies of organizational identification. Specifically, the level of organizational identification among employees who work for the non-governmental privately-run social-cause organization (PDA) was significantly higher than for employees who work for the government organization (CDD). Thus, the non-governmental organization appears to be more effective than the government organization in fostering employee identification. Interestingly, a factor analysis of Thai responses to the Cheney instrument revealed three dimensions that were different from the three dimensions theorized by Cheney (1982). While Cheney's conceptualization of identification included employees sense of membership, similarity, and loyalty to their organization, the Thai dimensions reflected life values ('pride in membership'), social values ('fit with organization'), and personal values ('comfort zone'). These findings hold important implications for communication scholars who study employee motivation in non-Western organizational contexts.*

**Keywords:** Organizational Identification; Thailand; Organizational Culture; Social Service Organizations

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Communication scholars argue that a person's organizational affiliation provides him or her with an 'organizational identity'. By internalizing that identity, the individual gains a sense of meaning or connection (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000), as well as a sense of status and prestige (Cheney, 1983a; Sass & Canary, 1991; Tyler, 1999). Organizational identification is recognized by communication scholars as a key determinant of employee morale and work behavior. The significance of the identification process is to direct employee efforts toward a number of organizationally beneficial outcomes, such as goal commitment, quality of performance, and job satisfaction (Cheney, 1983a, 1983b; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999; Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1967). As a result, organizational identification continues to be an important area for investigation, especially in contemporary organizations with their complex environments and high levels of competition (see, for example, Fontenot & Scott, 2000; Kilgard, 1999; Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998; Scott & Fontenot, 1999).

For-profit organizations often encourage employee identification through corporate awards, recognition, and benefits. Non-profit organizations are equally concerned with hiring and retaining a motivated workforce. However, as Dutton, Dukerich, and Harguail (1994) and Tyler (1999) have observed, those who work for social-cause organizations are not motivated primarily by economic rewards but, rather, by an intrinsic need for self-worth. Pratt (1998) argued that non-profit organizations associated with a social cause should be effective in fostering employee identification primarily because affiliation with the organization enhances an employee's self-worth. The employee feels he or she is part of something meaningful, desirable, and ameliorative (Pongsapich & Katalceradabhan, 1997).

Organizational communication scholars have generated a substantial body of literature concerning organizational identification, including identification within non-profit organizations; however, the research reported in this article charts new directions in two important ways. First, the organizations that serve as the focus for this investigation are not the traditional, Western-based organizations that have been the focus for the overwhelming majority of previous work. Instead, the two organizations that served as the sites for this research are located in Thailand. The work-related values that are part of the Thai culture could conceivably contribute to a different picture of employee identification than Western-dominated research has demonstrated to date. Thus, the first question guiding this research focused on whether the dimensions that have been posited as describing the construct of organizational identification within Western-based organizations would emerge when data collection occurred, instead, within two Thai organizations.

As a second point of distinction, this research presents an opportunity to examine organizational identification in two non-profit organizations that share similar objectives (community development) but that are different from each other in that one is a government-run organization and the other is a non-governmental organization. We believe it reasonable to postulate that, even when national culture and overall organizational mission are shared, meaningful differences will still exist in the extent of employee identification with their organization as well as in the values

and premises that guide employee decision-making. In other words, while national culture might very well have an effect on the dimensions that define organizational identification, organizational culture might serve to further distinguish the identification that occurs within similarly geographically situated but differently 'governed' organizations.

We begin with a necessarily brief examination of the concepts of culture and organizational culture, moving then to the Thai culture. That discussion is followed by an examination of the concept of organizational identification and specification of our research questions. The two organizations that served as sites for the research are introduced as part of the discussion of research method.

### **Organizational Culture, Thai Culture, and an Attempt to Craft a Link**

One frequently cited definition for culture is: 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (Hofstede, 1997: 127). Moving from that general conceptualization to the concept of organizational culture, as described in an allegory offered by Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, and Martin, organizational culture encompasses 'shared assumptions, priorities, meanings, and values' and is revealed in the 'rituals, myths, stories, and legends' shared within the organization (1985: 17).

The role of national culture within the culture of an organization is not without debate (see Nelson & Gopalan, 2003). It seems reasonable to claim that this situation is at least partially the product of confusion concerning the concept of 'culture' itself. Alvesson (1993: 1) noted that variations in the use of the word 'culture' are 'especially noticeable in organizational culture studies', attributing this situation to differences in the depth and scope of research in this area as well as to the fact that the study of organizational culture is multidisciplinary in nature. Similarly, Frost, Moore, Louis, and Martin (1991: 7) explained the absence of 'theoretical consolidation' by noting that 'organizational culture researchers do not agree about what culture is or why it should be studied'. In response to this situation and in defense of the concept, Schein (1991) described the role of culture within an organization as stabilizing and normalizing events so that day-to-day functioning is possible.

While recognizing that debate continues concerning both the influence of national culture on organizational culture and, perhaps more fundamentally, the value of treating organizations as cultures, our own experiences with organizations have underscored for us the value of the culture construct and of approaching organizations as 'cultured' (or 'enculturated') entities. As Van Maanen and Barley (1985) noted, one benefit of approaching organizations from a cultural perspective is that focus shifts from an individual level to a collective level while retaining the view of organizations as living (thus, evolving) entities that are the historic product of group problem solving. Organizational culture communicates the identity and function of the organization. Deal and Kennedy (1982) list a strong culture as one of the factors that defines sound business performance. The organizational culture

perspective highlights how an organization can socialize employees to support its objectives, goals, and values. As a result, employee identification (the focus of this research) is shaped, at least in part, by organizational culture (Cheney, 1983a,b, 1991; Cheney & Christensen, 1997; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Fontenot & Scott, 2000).

That said, we now turn attention to the Thai culture.

### Thai Culture

Similar to other cultures, the culture of Thailand involves shared values and beliefs that are learned through social interactions. Certainly a dominant influence on those shared values and beliefs is the influence of Buddhism, especially the Lanka Theravāda form of Buddhism which serves as the national religion of Thailand (see Hazra, 2000).

Buddhism serves as a psychological foundation within a variety of ways. As one example, the concept of karma is employed within Buddhism as an explanation for how and why things happen. Distinctions between good karma (in Thai, *bun wassana*) and bad *karma* (usually referred to as *kam*) are often invoked. *Bun wassana* is generally thought to be predestined and tied to good deeds done in the past. As such, one 'earns' future *bun wassana* (fortune, success, high status, good family) through good works done in the present. Similarly, a person's misdeeds today will result in *kam* (bad *karma*) in the future.

Buddhist teachings also place emphasis on the need to maintain harmony, peace, and control of emotions (both positive and negative) as the paths to self-preservation. As such, conflict and confrontation are not viewed as productive activities. There is a decided emphasis within Thai culture on non-violence and tolerance.

Komin (1990) argued that Thai values can be ordered hierarchically. The first four of the values identified by Komin are reflective of Buddhist teachings. The most important value, according to Komin, is that of ego orientation. Ego orientation involves recognition of personal ego, including maintenance of dignity, pride, and face by avoiding public confrontations, and maintaining status quo (the Thai concept of '*kreng jai*'). The next value that Komin pointed to is that of 'grateful and smooth relationship orientation'. This is followed by a 'flexibility and adjustment orientation'. Both of these orientations are related to social interaction and require caring, considerate attitudes and behaviors, as well as reciprocation of favors (in Thai, '*bhunkun*'). From that point, the remaining values, listed in order, are religio-psychical orientation, education and competence orientation, interdependence orientation, fun-pleasure orientation, and finally, achievement-task orientation.

Although Komin's research on Thai value orientations is now more than a decade old, these values are still generally thought to characterize Thai behaviors and interactions (see Stage, 1999). The one area of change relevant to any discussion of Thai organizations is that the economic turbulence of the 1980s and 1990s has resulted in more emphasis on working hard in contrast to the fun/pleasure

orientation. In fact, Vibulsri and Zeising's (1999) research indicated that Thais prioritize diligence as a major attribute for defining personal and job success.

The values of the Thai society as a whole are not the only values that are relevant to this research. An organization is, to some extent, a society in itself. In this sense, employee feelings regarding their organization are associated with their perceptions of their organization's culture (Kilgard, 1999). The two prominent Thai non-profit organizations selected as the sites for this research share a common mission, but that does not mean they share a common culture. One of the organizations is a non-governmental organization; the other organization is part of the Thai Ministry of the Interior. Both organizations are social-cause organizations; both are engaged in community development work; both are well known within Thailand, enjoying a positive reputation for public service.

While very similar in their mission, the two Thai not-for-profit organizations exhibit a variety of differences. In general, non-governmental organizations tend to be organic and flexible in responding to their environment and in how they go about achieving goals. Supervisors typically have full authority to reward or punish a subordinate according to the subordinate's contributions to the organization. Life-long employment with the organization is not guaranteed. In contrast, government organizations (in general) are machine-like with bureaucratic systems and a hierarchical emphasis (Flynn & Tannenbaum, 1993). According to Borvornwattana (1999), the work of Thai government officials is framed by laws, rules, and regulations with clearly written and delegated authority and responsibility. Government employees dare not go beyond their established authority and responsibility. There is an emphasis on status quo rather than innovation. Government employees enjoy high levels of job security and are protected by an administrative system that does not allow superiors to easily terminate a subordinate. As a result, superiors have limited authority when confronting employee problems. Top administrators are often political appointees and tend to work with short-term plans because their own positions are not secure (Borvornwattana, 1999). As a result, long-term planning is more difficult for governmental institutions than it is for non-governmental organizations.

With the foregoing as a foundation for thinking about both organizational culture and Thai culture, attention now turns to the concept of organizational identification.

### **Organizational Identification**

Burke (1969/1970) observed that individuals actively link themselves with elements in the social scene in order to compensate for the divisions they experience in their lives. He argued that identifying with something or someone divides the world in two parts: what is being identified with and what is not. To unite with one thing, an individual must separate from other things. People are separated from each other to begin with, and due to this fact, the organization, as a rhetor, strives to foster unity among its members by using rhetorical identification and communication.

Burke's discussion of organizational identification is useful for the purpose of understanding the development of individual-organization relationships (Bullis & Bach, 1991; Sass & Canary, 1991; Scott, 1997). In comparison with Burke, Simon's (1997/1945) discussion of identification positions organizational identification as a relationship that allows the organization to manage individual decision-making through communication. The two perspectives might seem different but are actually complimentary. Simon explained the essence of organizational identification from an administrative perspective. From this perspective, organizations communicate routine organizational premises, judgments, and decisions that are then employed by individuals in their daily organizational activities. Organizational identification is regarded as a relationship that permits the organization to manage individual decisions; employees who identify with their organization will (in theory) make decisions that benefit the organization.

On the issue of identification, Simon (1997/1945: 278) stated, 'the values and objectives that guide individual decisions in an organization are largely the organizational objectives—the service and conservation goals of the organization itself'. In an imposed process by those who are in authority, the values of the organization gradually become 'internalized' and are incorporated into the psychology and attitudes of organizational members. According to Simon, there are three psychological explanations for the identification that can occur: (1) personal interest in an organization's success, (2) transfer of private-management psychology (that is, an attitude of 'my' company), and (3) focus of attention (specifically, engaging in decision-making that is shaped by the goals of the organization). From Simon's point of view, organizational identification is a critical mechanism guiding employee decision-making and action.

George Cheney's theory is of particular importance to the present research. Grounding his work on Burke's identification theory, Cheney (1982) argued that organizational identification is both a product, or state, and a process. Identification is considered a product in terms of employee beliefs, attitudes, intentions, or any combination thereof. Identification is a process in the sense that it requires ongoing communication efforts that foster work dedicated toward organizational goals and objectives (Cheney, 1982, 1983a, 1983b).

Cheney (1983b) argued that employees who identify with the organization work out their identification through decision-making that is consistent with organizational goals and objectives. This supports the link between organizational identification and decision-making expressed in Simon's identification and decision-making theory. Tompkins and Cheney (1983) rephrased (with Simon's permission) the statement of the relationship between organizational identification and decision-making as 'A person identifies with a unit when, in making a decision, the person in one or more of his/her organizational roles perceives that unit's values or interests as relevant in evaluating the alternatives of choice' (1983: 144).

Patchen's (1970) work influenced not only Cheney's thinking but the work of many other scholars (see, for example, Bullis & Bach, 1991; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999; Ferraris,

Carveth, & Parrish-Sprowl, 1993; Rontondi, 1975). Of particular relevance is Patchen's description of organizational identification as being composed of three interrelated concepts: membership, similarity, and loyalty. These three concepts serve as the theoretic elements of Cheney's (1982) Organizational Identification Questionnaire, the instrument employed in the present research.

The first concept, membership, refers to feelings of belonging to or oneness with a collective or some social unit (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Patchen, 1970). The second concept, similarity, references a cognitive process based on the perception of 'matching' between oneself and another person or group. Perceived similarity between a member and his/her organization is in accordance with Simon's (1997/1945) psychology of identification in terms of viewing organizational success as a form of personal success. The third component of identification, loyalty, is generally determined by a long period of service rendered by an organizational member. A variety of studies can be cited that point to the importance of the relationship between organizational identification and intent to leave (turnover intention including absenteeism) (see, for example, Abrams, Ando, & Hinkle, 1998; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Scott et al., 1999). All three components of organizational identification—membership, similarity, and loyalty—are thought to be manifested in decision-making that is in the best interests of the organization (Tompkins & Cheney, 1983).

What is missing from the picture that has been painted thus far is the influence of national culture and/or organizational culture on organizational identification. Arguably, no matter what culture is examined, if employees identify with their organization, then that organization should benefit from a workforce that makes decisions that are in the organization's best interests. What is less clear, however, is whether membership, similarity, and loyalty are the key components of organizational identification across cultures. What is also unclear is whether two organizations that share the same national culture as well as mission, yet are different in some other respect (in this case, their existence as private-sector versus government-sector agencies), would display similar levels of identification among their members.

The foregoing discussions establish the foundation for posing the following questions concerning employee identification within PDA and CDD:

RQ1: When used within the context of a Thai non-profit organization, what is the factor structure of Cheney's Organizational Identification Questionnaire?

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in the level of organizational identification between PDA employees and CDD government civil servants?

RQ2a: Do employees of PDA differ from employees of CDD in terms of their sense of membership within their organization?

RQ2b: Do employees of PDA differ from employees of CDD in terms of their sense of similarity to other members of their organization?

RQ2c: Do employees of PDA differ from employees of CDD in terms of their sense of loyalty to their organization?

RQ3: What are the values and premises that guide Thai employee decision-making processes and reflect their identification with (or non-identification with) their employing organization?

### **Methodology**

Our discussion of methodology begins with an introduction to the two organizations that served as the sites for this research: the non-governmental Population and Community Development Association and the government-affiliated Community Development Department. We move from there to a description of the approaches taken in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### *Population and Community Development Association (PDA)*

In 1974, Mechai Viravaidya, a charismatic development practitioner, established the 'Community-based Family Planning Service' (CFPS). The primary mission of this organization was to reduce population growth through family planning. Using the Thai value of fun and pleasure seeking to overcome embarrassment associated with talking about sex, Khun Mechai<sup>1</sup> led a successful campaign to diffuse contraceptive use in Thailand. In so doing, he came to realize that solving population growth problems alone was not enough to improve the lives of the Thai people. Development of the rural communities and poverty alleviation were also required. Therefore, in 1977, the CFPS became the Population and Community Development Association (PDA), reflecting the broader mission of the evolving organization.

PDA has developed from its rather modest origins—a converted shop house on a street off a busy thoroughfare known as 'Sukhumvit'—to its current home, including an eight-story office building and compound containing a restaurant, cafeteria, health and sterilization clinic, handicraft store, and staff housing. In addition, through various projects, PDA has expanded to 14 offices in the north and northeast of Thailand. PDA staff size increased from 25 in 1974 to 800 in 2000. This increase was a product both of the addition of more social development workers and the creation of for-profit businesses which provide much of the financing needed for PDA's community development efforts (Viravaidya, 1997).

#### *Community Development Department (CDD)*

The Community Development Department (CDD) is a government-run organization under the Thai Ministry of the Interior and has been in existence since 1962. The mission of CDD includes (1) promoting and developing the learning process of individuals, families, and communities; (2) promoting the development of occupations and local funds for families and communities as a whole; (3) developing the potential of and supporting community organizations and volunteers, including



the interviewee's office or at a mutually convenient location. The interviews were conducted in Thai, were tape-recorded and then transcribed and translated into English.

## Results

The questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS/Windows 10.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The acceptable statistical significance level was specified as  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ . Cronbach's alpha for the research sample was 0.91 (a slight increase over the alpha achieved in the pilot study). With the reliability of the OIQ established for the Thai context, attention is now turned to RQ1. That question focused attention on the factor structure of the OIQ.

The OIQ is described by Cheney (1982) as theoretically consisting of the following dimensions: membership (assessed by nine items), similarity (assessed by six items), and loyalty (assessed by 10 items). Principal components factor analysis employing varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization was used to determine whether those same factors would emerge when the OIQ was used in Thailand with employees of two non-profit organizations. Factors were determined by employing commonly accepted guidelines. Specifically, a factor needed to be composed of a minimum of three items with each item exhibiting a minimum factor loading of 0.40 with no cross-loadings over 0.20 (Rao, Singhal, Ren, & Zhang, 2001). Additionally, the eigenvalue associated with a factor needed to be equal to or greater than 1. Three factors emerged; however, they were not the factors identified by Cheney (see Tables 1-3).

The first factor possessed an eigenvalue of 10.6 and explained 43% of the variance. This factor was composed of 10 items (see Table 2), four of which tap into membership, three into similarity, and three into loyalty. Looking across all 10 items, the shared characteristic seems to be that each deals in some manner with a 'life value' associated with membership in the organization. Thus, the decision was made to call this factor 'pride in membership'.

The second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.6 and accounted for 6% of the variance. Five items loaded on the second factor (see Table 2). Two of those items address membership, one addresses similarity, and the remaining two items address loyalty. Looking across these five items, the distinguishing characteristic appears to be a focus on individuals outside the organization, i.e. on how the employee describes him/herself to others, on how others view the organization and its activities. As such, this factor appears to deal with 'social values' and has been labeled 'fit with the organization'.

The final factor had an eigenvalue of 1.3 and explained 5% of the variance. This factor was composed of three items (see Table 2), one each from the list of items identified by Cheney as assessing membership, loyalty, and similarity. Interestingly, the items loading on this factor are the three OIQ items that are reverse-coded. All

Table 1 OIQ Factor Loadings Using Principal Components Analysis and Varimax Rotation

Items	Factor			Communalities
	1	2	3	
<i>MM</i>				
3*	0.499	0.549	4.374E-02	0.552
5	0.249	0.656	-2.383E-02	0.493
10*	0.566	0.533	9.831E-02	0.614
13	0.771	0.291	-2.176E-02	0.679
15	0.805	0.123	2.484E-02	0.664
19	-6.851E-02	-4.179E-02	0.790	0.600
23	0.678	0.350	2.117E-03	0.582
24	0.708	0.358	-1.625E-02	0.650
25	9.204E-03	0.586	1.447E-02	0.343
<i>SY</i>				
2	0.619	0.253	-9.984E-02	0.457
4*	0.583	0.445	4.886E-02	0.541
7	0.211	0.459	3.819E-02	0.257
17	0.702	0.199	-5.458E-03	0.533
18	-5.059E-02	-4.179E-03	0.790	0.627
21	0.610	0.390	-2.460E-02	0.524
<i>LY</i>				
1	0.613	9.056E-02	5.076E-02	0.387
6	0.249	0.708	8.022E-02	0.570
8*	0.550	0.543	8.165E-03	0.598
9*	0.662	0.497	-1.106E-02	0.684
11*	0.470	0.636	5.755E-02	0.629
12	0.281	0.483	-4.518E-02	0.314
14	0.724	0.248	6.524E-02	0.590
16	0.738	0.287	4.854E-02	0.629
20*	0.414	0.601	-5.130E-02	0.535
22	0.165	0.205	0.598	0.427
Eigenvalues	10.564	1.613	1.301	
Explained variance	42.25%	6.45%	5.20%	
Total variance		53.91%		

\*Seven items deleted due to problems in loading.

Note: MM = membership, SY = similarity, LY = loyalty.

three appear to share a focus on 'personal values'. Thus, the decision was made to label this factor 'comfort zone'.

The results of the factor analysis argued in favor of a modification of RQ2 (and its sub-parts) to focus subsequent analyses on a revised version of Cheney's OIQ. That revised version is composed of the 18 items that contributed to the factors just identified. The revised instrument has been titled the 'Thai Non-Profit Organizational Identification Questionnaire' (TNOIQ).<sup>4</sup>

Modified RQ2 called for a comparison of CDD and PDA employees with respect to their overall scores on the TNOIQ. The decision to, at least initially, examine the

**Table 2** Factors and Items Comprising the Thai Non-profit Organizational Identification Questionnaire (TNOIQ)

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*Factor 1: 'Pride in membership'*

I would probably continue working for \_\_\_\_\_ even if I didn't need the money. (1)

In general, the people employed by \_\_\_\_\_ are working toward the same goals. (2)

I have warm feelings toward \_\_\_\_\_ as a place to work. (13)

I would be quite willing to spend the rest of my career with \_\_\_\_\_. (14)

I feel that \_\_\_\_\_ cares about me. (15)

The record of \_\_\_\_\_ is an example of what dedicated people can achieve. (16)

I have a lot in common with others employed by \_\_\_\_\_. (17)

I find that my values and the values of \_\_\_\_\_ are very similar. (21)

I would describe \_\_\_\_\_ as a large 'family' in which most members feel a sense of belonging. (23)

I find it easy to identify with \_\_\_\_\_. (24)

*Factor 2: 'Fit with the organization'*

I often describe myself to others by saying, 'I work for \_\_\_\_\_' or 'I am from \_\_\_\_\_'. (5)

I try to make on-the-job decisions by considering the consequences of my actions for \_\_\_\_\_. (6)

We at \_\_\_\_\_ are different from others in our field. (7)

I become irritated when I hear others outside \_\_\_\_\_ criticize the company. (12)

I really care about the fate of \_\_\_\_\_. (25)

*Factor 3: 'Comfort zone'*

I find it difficult to agree with \_\_\_\_\_'s policies on important matters relating to me. (18)

My association with \_\_\_\_\_ is only a small part of who I am. (19)

I feel very little loyalty to \_\_\_\_\_. (22)

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TNOIQ with respect to the overall score as opposed to separate examinations of the individual factors was based on the fact that, within Western-based research, the OIQ has been treated as a single-score instrument. That is, despite the fact that organizational identification and the OIQ are theorized as being composed of three factors, those factors are viewed as highly interdependent and as collectively serving to define the identification construct. In a similar manner, we thought it appropriate to treat the three factors composing the TNOIQ as collectively defining organizational identification for the employees of PDA and CDD.

Scores obtained from the 18 TNOIQ items were calculated to get the total score for each person and then for each organization. To answer modified RQ22, a multivariate analysis of variance (Hotellings  $T^2$ ) was used. A comparison of the overall score for organizational identification on the TNOIQ, considering all three factors, revealed a statistically significant difference ( $F_{(3,398)} = 20.18287$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). PDA employees reported higher levels of organizational identification than did CDD employees.

Since a significant difference was found, univariate tests examining each factor were in order. The first test involved an ANOVA comparison of PDA and CDD with respect to pride in membership. A significant difference was found ( $F = 44.082$ ,  $df = 57, 401$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with PDA employees reporting higher mean scores for pride in membership ( $M = 61.10$ ,  $SD = 7.22$ ) than CDD employees ( $M = 54.83$ ,  $SD = 9.87$ ).

Table 3 TNOIQ Factor Loadings Using Varimax Rotation

Items	Factor			Communalities
	1	2	3	
<i>LV</i>				
1	0.625	4.716E-02	4.361E-02	0.394
2	0.635	0.227	-9.146E-02	0.464
13	0.747	0.313	-2.874E-02	0.667
14	0.729	0.220	7.215E-02	0.596
15	0.790	9.559E-02	6.128E-04	0.658
16	0.742	0.253	1.091E-02	0.636
17	0.724	0.122	-5.099E-02	0.547
21	0.618	0.361	-5.701E-02	0.533
23	0.670	0.371	-9.021E-03	0.602
24	0.692	0.411	-1.994E-02	0.664
<i>SV</i>				
5	0.304	0.617	-1.935E-02	0.474
6	0.297	0.721	8.091E-02	0.614
7	0.227	0.479	4.947E-02	0.283
12	0.293	0.531	-4.834E-02	0.370
25	2.678E-02	0.663	1.014E-02	0.440
<i>PV</i>				
18	-4.995E-02	-2.635E-02	0.789	
19	-9.841E-02	-7.442E-02	0.757	0.588
22	0.197	0.170	0.612	0.442
Eigenvalues	6.810	1.600	1.187	
Explained variance	37.83%	8.89%	6.59%	
Total variance	53.31%			

Note: LV = life values, representing 'pride in membership'; SV = social values, representing 'fit with the organization'; PV = personal values, representing 'comfort zone'.

A comparison of the mean scores for fit with the organization also revealed a statistically significant difference ( $F = 10.543$ ,  $df = 57, 401$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Again, PDA members reported higher mean scores ( $M = 30.93$ ,  $SD = 4.07$ ) than did members of CDD ( $M = 29.40$ ,  $SD = 4.07$ ).

The final comparison involved employee comfort zone. As was true of the other comparisons, a statistically significant difference was found ( $F = 3.220$ ,  $df = 57, 401$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) with employees of PDA reporting higher mean scores ( $M = 13.73$ ,  $SD = 3.79$ ) than employees of CDD ( $M = 12.60$ ,  $SD = 3.61$ ).

Attention is now turned to the interview data. We will begin with a brief introduction to our interviewees.

#### Interview Information

Analysis of the interview data involved a process, first, of reading and re-reading the interview transcripts multiple times. The lead researcher, as a native Thai, assumed primary responsibility with the other researchers assisting in the analysis process. In

this way, when questions were raised, it was possible to return to the original, Thai-language tape-recordings of the interviews as opposed to being limited to the English translations of the interviews.

In her discussion of approaches that can be employed in developing theory through the use of case study data, Eisenhardt (1989) describes the processes of 'within-case analysis' and 'cross-case analysis'. Both of these approaches were used in the current research.

The within-case analysis began with the creation of a description of each of the research sites. Aspects of that description have already been shared in our introduction to the two organizations. The within-case analyses continued, though, as we examined the information that emerged from the interviews that were conducted and sought to gain an even more sensitive picture of each organization as an independent entity.

The cross-case analysis involved a search for patterns. While a variety of approaches presented themselves for engaging in this cross-case analysis (see Eisenhardt), ultimately we decided that the objectives of this project would be best served through an attention to those 'first-order concepts' (see Van Maanen, 1979) that helped us to better understand the interviewees' organizational lifeworld. A version of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) *constant comparative method* was employed as we, first, sought to relate what we were learning from the interviews to the aspects of organizational identification emerging through the use of Cheney's OIQ. We then engaged in comparisons of the different incidents/stories, focusing attention on the experiences that (1) were common to our interviewees no matter their organizational affiliation, (2) distinguished the members of one organization from the other organization, and (3) distinguished higher identification members from lower identification members of an organization. Finally, we sought to identify those exemplar statements and stories that served to illustrate the process and product of identification within each organization.

Of our 30 interviewees (15 from CDD and 15 from PDA), 14 are women, and 16 are men. In age, the interviewees ranged from 27 to 58 years, and work experience with their organization ranged from five to 27 years (seven to 23 years with CDD, five to 27 years with PDA). With respect to education, two interviewees had less than a Bachelor's degree; 18 interviewees had a Bachelor's degree; and 10 interviewees had a Master's degree. Additional and/or more detailed description cannot be provided due to the need to maintain confidentiality. Although knowing, for example, an individual's level within the organization might be of value, some positions within each organization have only one occupant. As such, were we to be more detailed in our description of our interview pool, interviewee identity would be revealed.

In an attempt to provide readers with a sense of the extent to which a particular interviewee identified (or did not identify) with his/her organization, we have provided parenthetical indications as to whether the person we are quoting or paraphrasing was 'high', 'moderate', or 'low' on identification. These designations are based on a division of interviewees into three groups based on an examination of

overall TNOIQ scores. Low identification was defined by scores of 94 or lower (six CDD and four PDA interviewees fell into this group). Moderate identification was defined by scores between 97 and 107 (four CDD and six PDA interviewees fell into this group). High identification was defined by scores of 108 or higher (five CDD interviewees and six PDA interviewees fell into this group).

### **Pride in Membership**

The first factor identified in our analysis of the OIQ is one we have labeled 'pride in membership'. This factor appears to tap into personal values held by the questionnaire respondents. We will look, first, at feelings of pride within CDD followed by pride within PDA.

#### *Pride within CDD*

Dominant as a theme among the CDD interviewees was that they were very proud of being accepted by and recognized by the customers of their services, i.e. the rural Thai community. This view crossed levels of organizational identification and was shared by interviewees from the Bangkok headquarters as well as by fieldworkers. For example, a male CDD headquarters interviewee (low identification) stated: 'What makes me proud is that the people for whom I work accept me'. A field development officer (moderate identification) observed, 'CDD's officials are accepted by the people. Working with people without an aristocratic attitude, listening to the voice of the people—this has made us different from other government agencies'. Another administrator who works in the province (moderate identification) spoke of the close working relationship between district workers and community leaders. He joked that 'community leaders act like they are one of us'.

Feelings of pride, while emerging in all of our conversations with CDD employees, were particularly strong among interviewees who worked in the Bangkok headquarters. All six of the CDD interviewees from the headquarters expressed feelings of pride in the roles they serve and in the role of their organization in implementing government policies, such as the 'village fund' (an initiative whose purpose is to boost the Thai economy through grassroots efforts). On a negative note, the eight province-based interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with CDD for assuming responsibility for implementing government policies that are unrelated to social work. They cited instances when CDD had created additional work for them and, in their view, caused them (and, by extension, CDD) to lose their community development identity.

When accounting for their feelings of pride, our CDD interviewees who scored as moderate or high on identification typically spoke of signs that their superiors, colleagues, and/or rural Thais appreciate and respect their work for CDD. One of our Bangkok headquarters interviewees (moderate identification) spoke of receiving a 'double-step' salary increment when, due to economic constraints, everyone had

previously agreed to share equally in a step and a half increment. A general administrator (moderate identification) spoke of the pride he felt when he managed to gain acceptance from some 'stubborn' villagers. CDD interviewees who scored as low on identification were most likely to account for their pride through reference to the communities they serve. For example, one CDD development worker who ranked low on identification noted, 'others might not know what we are doing, but the people our work benefits know'.

#### *Pride within PDA*

Themes of 'making a difference' and being appreciated by the communities they serve were also in evidence among our PDA interviewees. One female interviewee (moderate identification) and one male interviewee (high identification) mentioned the difficult working conditions they must face (e.g. working when the weather is extremely hot). Each noted, though, the feelings of satisfaction they experience as they reflect on the contributions that their efforts have made to the community. A female fieldworker (low identification) spoke of her pride in the 'remarkable changes' that PDA programs have brought about.

All PDA employees expressed pride in being associated with Khun Mechai Viravaidya. Two male interviewees (one high in identification and one low in identification) both mentioned that their parents and other family members are proud of them because they work for Khun Mechai. Khun Mechai was described as a visionary leader who emphasized equal employment rights and the recognition of each individual's worth. One interviewee (high identification) referred to Khun Mechai's desire that 'PDA must continue its commitment to help the poor for at least 120 years'. This particular interviewee has adopted that philosophy as a personal mission.

#### **Fit with the Organization**

The second factor identified in our analysis of the OIQ was that of 'fit with the organization'. Examination of the five statements that compose this factor suggests a focus on how the organization appears to outsiders. Our label for the factor is based on an implied concern with the interviewee's social face or, put differently, with the impression that others will have of the interviewee because of the interviewee's membership in his/her organization.

#### *CDD Fit with the Organization*

All of our CDD interviewees expressed the philosophy that people have honor and are capable of learning things and developing if the opportunity is provided. They claimed to be very comfortable being associated with a 'people-based organization'.

Interviewees within all three identification groups (high, moderate, and low) offered claims concerning a close alignment between their personal philosophy and CDD's mission. A statement offered by one male development worker (low identification) was fairly typical: 'my work goal is the same as CDD's goals in making people self-reliant, educating them about the learning process—thinking by themselves and doing things by themselves'.

A slight rift existed between Bangkok headquarters interviewees and the field office interviewees. The Bangkok interviewees referred to occasions when CDD had been asked to implement a variety of government policies. For these interviewees, this was an indication that the Thai government placed a great deal of trust in CDD and CDD employees. As was mentioned earlier, though, for the fieldworkers, these activities were viewed as being unrelated to their primary organizational mission and as creating a 'confused' image or identity for the organization.

#### *PDA Fit with the Organization*

Our PDA interviewees shared a common view of PDA as an organization whose work is well recognized and where 'honesty and transparency' are the norm. As with CDD, occasionally PDA has worked with the Thai government as well as private institutions/organizations and international agencies. However, in the case of PDA, this relationship was consistently described as being in line with the PDA mission and as demonstrating the high regard held for PDA and its programs. In one example that was cited (the 'National Economic and Social Development Plan'), a PDA proposal to integrate assistance and contributions from the private sector in order to boost community development was adopted by the Thai government.

#### **Comfort Zone**

The final factor is 'comfort zone'. This factor is composed of three items, each of which speaks to a separation between self and organization. In a sense, this factor speaks to whether the individual views the organization as part of his/her personal identity and as reflecting personal values.

#### *CDD Comfort Zone*

For many CDD interviewees, issues of comfort with and loyalty to the organization were intertwined. In fact, few interviewees (either with CDD or with PDA) indicated they were entertaining thoughts of leaving their employer. One field-based interviewee (high identification) was typical of many of our interviewees in indicating that his employment with CDD was a logical extension of the major he had chosen in college (in his case, political science).

We have, at previous places in this report, referred to an emphasis in interviewee statements on their perception that their work is acknowledged and appreciated by



the clients they serve. Within each of the three identification groups, there were at least three interviewees who commented on this issue. For one female development worker (moderate identification), though, key to her 'comfort zone' was the fact that she personally accepted the policies of CDD: 'My work goals can be achieved by adopting CDD's policies when performing my work responsibilities. If I didn't adopt CDD's policies, my work contributions would not go the same direction as other CDD members. Neither CDD's goals nor my personal goals would be met'.

#### *PDA Comfort Zone*

All of our PDA interviewees expressed feelings of self-satisfaction and pride in terms of equal treatment as employees, freedom to generate new ideas, and having a chance to realize their potential through their work. In fact, most of our PDA interviewees used the Thai word for 'we' when answering questions. There were only a few situations when they used personal pronouns.

At the same time, there was an issue that emerged as problematic and as lessening the 'comfort zone' for a few respondents. That issue concerned the practice of transferring an employee from one work location to another. While two of our high identification interviewees mentioned shifting work locations as a positive situation (providing a chance to learn new things, work with different people), for two low identification interviewees issues related to work location were definitely negative. In one instance, a male fieldworker complained that his assignment placed him far from his family. He observed that the mission of PDA is to help elevate the quality of life of the poor, but those who work for PDA must often sacrifice the quality of their own lives. One other negative comment that we heard concerned the fact that, in order to fund its projects, PDA operates a number of for-profit activities (e.g. restaurants, a hotel). Although the activities themselves are considered entrepreneurial and examples of creative leadership, one interviewee (high identification) expressed discomfort with having to work on the profit-making side of PDA. This makes him feel 'too business-like'. His complete statement to us implied that he was far more comfortable wearing 'a monk's yellow robe' than a 'business man's suit and tie'.

#### **Values and Premises that Guide Decision-Making**

RQ3 focused on the values and premises that guide Thai employees with respect to their decision-making processes. The question asked what those values and premises are and whether they reflect identification with the employing organization. A clear majority of CDD and PDA interviewees indicated that they consider the organization's interests as relevant. They stressed a variety of things that they 'think about' when making decisions, some directly tied and others indirectly tied to the organization's interests.

*Communicated Values and Premises within CDD*

Most of the CDD interviewees thought that they had little authority in making decisions. This was true both for those who occupied positions as superiors and those in subordinate roles. They admitted they had a certain level of decision-making associated with their duties and responsibilities; however, beyond that, the final decision rested with higher-ups.

As for values, roughly half of the CDD interviewees explained that they see themselves as contributing to CDD's success and to the pursuit of its goals. A CDD senior executive (moderate identification) at a provincial bureau said he spends most of his time in fieldwork seeking feedback from the people CDD serves. Saturday and Sunday are the days he tackles his office work. A headquarters-based CDD female interviewee (moderate identification) who is in charge of a subdivision said, 'My work helps build CDD's reputation and acceptance'.

Two participants pointed to themselves as sources for decisional premises based on their own judgment and experiences. A female CDD senior development worker (high identification) said:

I consider the consequences for the people. CDD communicates working guidelines in performing our duties. We should stick to those guidelines. However, any works we do for the people that are not supported by the CDD's laws, rules, and regulations but are not contradicted by those laws, etc., we should do for the benefit of the people.

A female CDD headquarters interviewee (high identification) explained that her superior let her participate in decision-making during her last year of fieldwork. She described proposing an idea for a new approach to the problem of drug addiction and being given permission by her superior to 'do things my way'.

Several participants stated CDD communicated relevant information (mission, policies, goals, etc.) in the form of identification targets. A CDD male development worker (low identification) said, 'My work goal is the same as CDD's goals in making people self-reliant ...' A female CDD headquarters interviewee (high identification) stated, 'My work goal is to perform my work responsibilities in line with CDD's policies and mission'. Her superior (high identification) stated, 'I want to work in order that the goals of my division and those of CDD are achieved and that would support CDD's policies'. While most CDD members stated that CDD communicated goals, policies, or relevant information to foster identification, a few members stated they were, themselves, the source for their identification. The consequences of their decision-making were either for CDD's well being or for their customers (i.e. 'the people') or both.

*Communicated Values and Premises within PDA*

As previously noted, there were only a few situations when our PDA interviewees used personal pronouns. In most cases, their work-related decisions were embedded

in descriptions of their satisfied work lives as members of PDA. A male interviewee at a branch center (high identification) stated: 'I don't really consider what to do to get a double-step salary increment. I think only how best I can contribute to PDA's success regardless of ... reward or recognition. If I could get it, I would be happy. If not, I don't really care'. Another male interviewee (moderate identification) who is responsible for a for-profit PDA business said, 'I focus on goal achievement. If the goals are not achieved, I direct my effort until they are met. I have to sacrifice. Working here is my life. I give priority to my work'.

Essentially, all of the CDD and the PDA interviewees spoke to considering their organization's interests as relevant to on-the-job decision-making. They described their efforts as striving to contribute to a positive organizational image and a reputation for goal achievement and values maintenance.

### Discussion and Conclusion

We began this research with two questions in mind. The first question concerned the potential impact of national culture on the dimensions that describe organizational identification. The second question focused attention on the potential influence of organizational governance (defined, in this instance, as a distinction between being a government-run organization versus a private-sector organization). The results of our research suggest positive answers to both questions. That is, national culture appears to play a role in the dimensions that serve as a framework for organizational identification; further, organizational culture plays a role in extent to which employees identify with an employing agency.

Looking, first, at the issue of national culture, previous research concerning organizational identification has, in large measure, defined identification in terms of an employee's developing sense of membership in an organization, similarity or matching between self and the organization, and loyalty to the organization. As we shift focus from the traditional, Western-based sites of research to organizations that operate within a different cultural milieu, our research suggests a need to re-think the domains that describe organizational identification.

Our factor analysis of Cheney's (1982) OIQ produced factors that we have chosen to label *pride in membership*, *fit with the organization*, and *comfort zone*. Examination of the items loading on *pride in membership* suggests a combination of concerns related to feeling like one is part of a family. For example, the 10 items loading on pride in membership include: 'I would probably continue working for X even if I did not need the money', 'I have warm feelings toward X', and 'I would describe X as a large "family" in which most members feel a sense of belonging'. We posit that these feelings of warmth and acceptance are particularly important within collectivistic cultures and cultures where, traditionally, a great deal of loyalty has existed between employer and employees (as evidenced by careers spent with a single employer).

Similar to *pride in membership*, the items loading on *fit with the organization* tend to speak to a sense of belonging; however, in this case, there seems to be an element of

'defensiveness' involved. Note that, among the significant items are the statements: 'I become irritated when I hear others outside X criticize the company' and 'I try to make on-the-job decisions by considering the consequences of my actions for X'. There is a protective element to the statements involved with *pride in membership*—a kind of insider versus outsider (or in-group member versus out-group member) that is, again, reflective of distinctions drawn between collectivistic and individualistic cultures.

The third factor, *comfort zone*, involves three items that appear to tap into a sense of relationship between the organization and the employee's personal identity. This sense of relationship is perhaps best illustrated in the reverse-coded item that states: 'My association with X is only a small part of who I am'. At this point, it is, perhaps, important to remember that the organizations involved in our project are social service agencies. While we acknowledge engaging in speculation here, it certainly makes intuitive sense that individuals involved in a non-profit organization would locate at least a portion of their organizational identification in the extent to which that organization's policies and activities are aligned with the employee's own value system and that this alignment might be of greater importance in a non-profit organization than in a for-profit organization.

Turning to the relationship between organizational culture and organizational identification, the results of our research suggest that organizational culture does matter. Remember that both of the organizations that served as sites for our data collection are social service agencies. Additionally, they share very similar missions and are both well respected within Thailand. Despite these similarities, the members of PDA (the private agency) reported significantly higher identification with their organization as compared with the members of CDD (the government agency). This pattern of difference was supported by what we learned in our interviews. In comparison with PDA employees, CDD interviewees reported having a relatively weaker relationship with both other CDD members and with CDD itself. As government officials, the CDD interviewees performed their 'duties' according to 'commands' and 'orders'. This attitude is in accordance with Borvornwattana (1999), who argued that Thai government officials' work premises are framed by laws, rules, and regulations with clearly written, delegated authority and responsibility.

In contrast, PDA interviewees appeared to enjoy a closer, family-like relationship. They expressed the view that PDA is a public social welfare organization whose purpose is to raise the quality of life for Thai people. Their hero—Khun Mechai—is there to lead and to guide them. More so than the CDD interviewees, our PDA interviewees spoke of long-term plans and an organizational image/reputation that encourages their continuing efforts as employees.

#### *Limitations of this Effort and Recommendations for Future Research*

Due to the Thai culture of face saving, presenting the 'real' picture of their organization might have been seen as inappropriate (i.e. face threatening) by at

least some of the interviewees, especially those holding a negative view. Respondents might not have been confident about the confidential nature of the research process or how their statements would be reported. As such, it is certainly possible that at least some respondents focused on providing socially-desirable responses. At the same time, critical examination of the data (both the questionnaire data and the interview data) reveals a number of occasions when individuals either expressed less than 'ideal' identification with their employer and/or related negative stories concerning their association with their employer. As such, while caution is in order, we believe it appropriate to treat the picture presented here with a measure of confidence.

Our research suggests that the factor structure of Cheney's OIQ might be unstable in cross-cultural contexts and/or with employees of not-for-profit organizations. Our research also suggests that when questionnaire items and concepts developed with members of one culture are translated and implemented in another cultural system, their validity is suspect. In fact, a careful translation and back-translation of questionnaire items using Likert scales could, in itself, represent an imposition of dichotomous, linear thought among respondents whose worldview is relatively holistic (as is common in Buddhist thought). Future research should further test the reliability and validity not only of Cheney's OIQ but, within the Thai context, of the revised TNOIQ. Future studies of non-Western organizations by communication scholars can help to further refine the insights gained in the present study.

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### Notes

- [1] 'Khun' is a title of respect accorded to recognized leaders in Thailand.
- [2] The deleted questionnaires were omitted because of missing data that rendered the questionnaires unusable.
- [3] The pilot study was conducted with government school teachers in 'Wat Pa Pradoo School', located in Thailand's Rayong province. This school was selected because, as a rural government school, dedicated and committed teachers are required. The questionnaire was distributed to approximately 100 of the school's members. A total of 68 questionnaires were returned. Interviews were conducted with volunteers who provided assessments of the readability and clarity of the questionnaire.
- [4] The factor analysis was re-run with the TNOIQ to determine whether dropping the seven items that did not load had a significant negative impact on the overall stability of the instrument and the total proportion of explained variance (see Table 3). As before, the same three factors emerged in the analysis, and the TNOIQ accounted for 54% of the explained variance, which was approximately the same as had been realized with the OIQ.

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#### Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been with [PDA or CDD]?
2. Why did you originally choose to work for [PDA or CDD]?
3. What as the first position you held with [PDA or CDD]?
4. What is your current position (including duties, responsibilities, and decision-making) in the organization?
5. In your own words, describe the company's goals and values.
6. How were you informed about the rules and regulations for performing your work responsibilities? (Did your superior provide this information or did you acquire the information in another way?)
7. How does your organization (or your superior) motivate you to perform your work responsibilities? How do you want your organization (or your superior) to motivate you?
8. Does your organization or your superior inform you about the mission and the main purpose of the organization (or of the department you are currently working in)? How does that sharing of information occur? What do you think should be done to share information?
9. What are your work goals and responsibilities? Do your work goals support the overall goals of the organization? Explain.
10. What are some of the challenges that you face in trying to achieve your goals as an employee of this organization? (What else?) How do you go about handling or responding to those challenges?



11. What, if anything, does your organization do or your superior do that occasionally makes you think about quitting this organization and working for someone else? (If 'nothing', please tell me what makes you so committed to this organization.)
12. In your opinion, what do you think of your organization in terms of the organizational roles that exist? What is your opinion of the image that the organization tries to project?
13. What do you think other people think of your organization?
14. How do you view your relationship with your organization? Why do you view your relationship in that way? How has the relationship developed as it has?
15. What makes you feel proud to work here? What makes you feel not proud about working here?
16. Do you feel that you are accepted and part of the organization? Why/why not?
17. As a member of the organization, do you think that your work has contributed to the reputation of the organization? How? Why?
18. Does your supervisor allow you to participate in goal setting and decision-making? How?
19. Does your superior trust you? How is that trust demonstrated?20. How does the organization or your direct superior treat you?
21. Do you think that the organization provides opportunities for you to achieve your personal goals? In what ways? (If 'no', what would need to be done differently or change in order for this to happen?)