1. Details of applicant
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Website:
Duration: Application for an additional 0.2 fte research time during one year
Discipline: Organization science
Keywords: Social identity theory, networks, behavior in organizations

2. Title of the application
Social identity development: a network approach

3. Research proposal (3a + 3b = max 800 words)

3a. Problem statement and theoretical background
Critics of research in organizational behavior argue that the field is dominated too much by cross-sectional survey research, in which employees’ attitudes are used to predict their behavior in organizations. Furthermore, most theories depart from a very individualistic point of view; the social context of the organization is rarely considered, whereas most work situations require individuals to align with other individuals and groups. As a consequence, there is very little attention to the dynamics of organizational behavior, how attitudes and behavior co-vary with changes in the social context (Mowday & Sutton, 1993; Pfeffer, 1998; Ellemers, de Gilder & Haslam, 2004).

In our research program, we attempt to address these criticisms by connecting insights from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ouwerkerk, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 1998; Haslam, 2004), a well-founded group dynamic theory, to the sociological approach of network analysis (Tichy, Tushman, & Frombrun, 1979; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). During the fellowship, the applicant will contribute to this program by analyzing and reporting two longitudinal studies that were based on these theoretical perspectives.

The basic premise of social identity theory is that people strive to get – or maintain - a positive social identity (a social identity is that part of a person’s self-concept that derives from his or her group memberships). It has been shown that socio-structural characteristics, such as status of the group and the possibilities for social mobility, affect people’s identification with the group and subsequent behavior in a large variety of contexts (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Ouwerkerk, de Gilder, & de Vries, 2000).

According to social network theory, the interaction patterns among individuals determine the success or failure in performing group tasks. These interaction patterns affect the emergence of common identities, exchange of information, emergence of group norms, etc. (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Totterdell, Wall, et al., 2004).

An important feature of network analysis is that is overcomes one of the main problems in social identity research in organizations. In field situations, such as in organizations, people are members of several groups at the same time (e.g., team, unit, organization, union). Furthermore, these groups reflect the formal organization, group membership imposed by the organization, whereas people may identify more strongly with a self-chosen, more meaningful group, which may consist of part(s) of the formal group(s), but also of individuals from several formal groups from across the organization. Social network methodology makes it possible to pinpoint exactly to which group individuals belong – and to which they don’t - and thereby, for the first time, to fully test social identity theory in field settings.

We made a first step towards this goal by testing several hypotheses based on social identity theory in longitudinal studies in which operationalizations from both approaches were combined.
The longitudinal network approach makes it possible a) to observe the relevant social interactions of the respondents, as friendship and advice networks are measured, b) to study the dynamic interplay between social identity and group membership, as it can be established how changes in identification and other attitudes co-vary with changes in networks, and c) to analyze the results on two levels of analysis, as the network data and the attitudinal data can be used as both group level and individual level variables. Thus, with this approach the weaknesses of most organizational behavior research can be avoided.

3b. Method / Approach

Data for study 1 were collected in a three-wave longitudinal design from freshmen at the two locations (navy and army) of the Netherlands Defense Academy (total N = 190). Network data (friendship network and advice network) were collected, which yielded information about the affective and instrumental interaction patterns among the respondents. Furthermore, attitudes about several aspects of the respondents’ social relationships with the other freshmen were measured, as well as attitudes towards the organization (e.g., level of career-oriented commitment, identification with the organization).

Data were analyzed using Ucinet, software designed for network analysis. Network data were then incorporated in SPSS data files that included the attitudinal data, to perform correlational and regression analyses. Study 1 addressed the question whether individuals try to become associated with high status networks. This hypothesis is supported and, in line with social identity theory, especially people who identify weakly with their social group are using this group to get a better status position within the organization.

Longitudinal data for study 2 will be collected within the same organizations as of November 2007, and analyzed likewise. The second study focuses on the effects of changes in the network, by individuals who leave the friendship network. This is likely to affect the attitudes of the remaining members of the network (Krackhardt & Porter, 1985), thus triggering further changes in the network at later stages. We investigate how status and intra- and intergroup respect (Sleebos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2006) affect these relationships.

In all likelihood, there will be another round of data collection as of November 2008.

4. Key publications relevant to the present proposal (3 - 5)


Ouwerkerk, J.W., Gilder, D. de, & Vries, N.K. de. (2000) "When the going gets tough, the tough get going": social identification and individual effort in intergroup competition. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26, 1550-1559.


5. Time Plan (max ½ A4 or 100 words)

The tasks that will have to be performed are the updating of the literature study performed so far, some data analysis, and the writing of two articles. There is already a draft text for a first article on the 2006 data, which was presented at the VU workshop ‘Networks and social identity’ in June 2007 (Climbing the ladder: career-oriented commitment and strategic networking). For the second article, longitudinal data will have been collected by June 2008. The estimated numbers of hours needed to perform these tasks, based on prior experience, are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Hours needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Updating literature review</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finishing and submitting 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; article</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data analysis 2007 data</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Updating literature review</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing and submitting 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; article</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
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</table>
6. Relevance (scientific, societal; max 300 words)

Although the proposed project is firmly based in well-established theory and network methodology in itself is not new, the multi-disciplinary approach is innovative, as is the introduction of insights from social identity theory into network theory (and vice versa). The research is likely to lead to theoretical innovation and if not to innovation of the network methodology, than at least to gaining insight into the importance of network variables as determinants of behavior of individuals and groups in organizations. As stated in 3a, the specific methodology used in social network analysis provides opportunities to test aspects of social identity theory, by taking factual socio-structural measures instead of perceptions of the social situation, as is usually done. Furthermore, the longitudinal approach of the field studies adds greatly to the importance of this research, as we are now able to test the dynamics of identity emergence and identity change.

The impact of our research is not only scientific. Social identity theory was originally developed to understand intra- and inter-group processes and the emergence of inter-group antagonism in the broader society, in the end to be able to reduce conflicts among groups. In organizational settings, insights from social identity theory have also been used to reduce conflicts among groups within organizations (see Haslam, 2004) and to understand effects of mergers on employees (Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001). Although in our research it is not – as yet – attempted to intervene in organizational processes, one of the objectives for the participating organizations is to get a better understanding of the dynamics of social exclusion (people who have an isolated position in relevant networks), the development of intra- and inter-group relations and the emergence of inter-group conflicts and how these processes affect outcomes for the organization, such as team performance and turnover.

7. Expected output and contributions (7a - 7d = max 500 words)

7a. Expected output

The main objectives of the fellowship are to finish a first article and to write a second article, both based on empirical data. Both articles will be submitted to English-language refereed journals during 2008/2009. The results will be presented at several international conferences. The applicant will spend some time on intensifying contacts with researchers who are experts in social identity theory and/or network theory, and who have expressed their intention to cooperate with the network researchers of our department during the VU workshop 'Networks and social identity' in June 2007. One or two of them will be asked to comment on the articles before they will be submitted. The intensifying of the relationships with these experts is also important for the department as a whole.

7b. Contribution to the research program of the Department

The proposed research fits within the general program ‘strategizing for opportunities’. As the focus of the proposed research will be on intra-organizational processes, it can best be placed under theme 3, ‘organizations and change’, and more specifically under themes 3a ‘cohesion and effects on opportunity recognition’ and 3c ‘knowledge production, performance and external strategies’. The proposed project will be embedded in the theoretical and methodological expertise that is present within our department and the methodology department, with regard to social network analysis and intra-organizational processes such as identification and respect within and among groups. Since the start of the general research program, network theory has become a main focus of research, which will be extended by the start of several PhD projects and co-operation in the VU network institute.

7c. Contribution to the research mission of the CCSS

The proposed research also contributes to the mission of the CCSS research program as a whole. A comparison between the two organizations that are studied is relevant as the social structures within the two organizations are markedly different; e.g., at the Navy institute, teams are composed earlier, there are fewer opportunities to change teams and there is less interaction among teams as compared to the Army institute; all variables that are likely to lead to different dynamics in identity formation and inter-group relations. This situation offers the opportunity to test our hypotheses in different settings and to establish the degree to which our results can be generalized.
7d. **Additional value**
- What is the additional value of the proposal? Why is it not possible / would it be possible to conduct the proposed project within regular work time?
- Has the content of the proposal (similar subject matter) been submitted elsewhere? If yes, where?

A substantial amount of time is needed to attain the main objectives of the project. The analysis of network data, in combination with regular survey data, is time-consuming, as is the collection of longitudinal data. These tasks were – and will be – done mostly in regular work time. Furthermore, the applicant has committed himself to co-author articles based on successfully completed PhD-projects. The applicant strives for a long-term co-operation with the Netherlands Defense Academy (NLDA), eventually involving a PhD project. For this purpose, the revenues of this co-operation for the NLDA have to be made available to the NLDA within a reasonable time after the data collection. The proposal has not been submitted elsewhere.

8. **Replacement of applicant’s teaching obligations**
Replacement of the applicant’s teaching obligations is stated in the attached letter by the Head of the Dept. of *** in Appendix A.

9. **CV of applicant**
(including publication record)
Please add CV in Appendix B.

10. **I hereby declare that I have completed this form truthfully:**
Name: Dick de Gilder
Amsterdam, Date: 15 November, 2007

11. **Literature references (max 1 A4)**


