

Abstract

Organizational identity is observed to direct organizational change in response to changing external contexts (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Albert et al., 2000). As organizations are increasingly responding to dynamic stakeholder demands, it is becoming imperative for them to adopt hybrid or multiple identities (Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Glynn, 2008). It is interesting to know how organizations manage these multiple identities while still being true to its original, holistic conception of ‘who we are’. I set sail on this doctoral journey with this question in my mind.

Pratt & Kraatz (2009) introduced the concept of ‘organizational self’ in response to this debate about ‘single internal identity versus multiple, externally ascribed identities’. According to them, ‘organizational self’ can be thought of as an entity that unites and prioritizes between the multiple identities. The objective of this dissertation is to understand processes by which this sense of collective organizational self is formed to manage multiple identities. I have been fortunate to gain access to an organization, which has multiple subsidiaries, and which is trying to align them with a sense of commonness. I chose the multiple case study method to compare between these multiple subsidiaries and their identities.

The findings suggest three processes by which an organization defines and communicates the sense of organizational self: (1) introspective processes, (2) aligning processes, and (3) prioritizing processes. In addition to this, it is found that the organization has been balancing between two kinds of mechanisms in their effort to unite the multiple identities: integrating and differentiating mechanisms. The second part of this dissertation presents a process model, which describes how the processes of organizational translate in terms of ostensive and performative routines