

**MORALIZED IDENTITIES IN AND AROUND ORGANIZATIONS: AN IDENTITY  
WORK PERSPECTIVE**  
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## APPENDIX 1

### A TYPOLOGY OF MORALIZED IDENTITIES

Although a considerable number of identity ‘types’ have been commented upon by management scholars (e.g., Alvesson, 2010; Collinson, 2003; Knights and Clarke, 2014; Pratt, 2000) specific types and sub-types of moralized identities have not yet received focused attention. This appendix highlights four types of moralized identities (each with associated sub-types) prominent in the literature: supererogatory (self-sacrificial, conscience-objecting, philanthropic and leader-activist), moral (phronetic, authentic, called, and virtuous), amoral (intentional, casual, and mute), and immoral (self-deceptively hypocritical, morally stigmatized, authoritarian, and intentionally hypocritical).

The typology is based on a systematic review of the literature which involved three overlapping steps: data collection, data analysis, and synthesis (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010). Initially, we conducted a topic search using the Thomson Reuters Web of Science (Social Science) database to identify publications in business and management journals concerned with moral/ethical identities. A preliminary search using the phrase “*moral identit\**” OR “*ethic\* identit\**” across all fields resulted in 1314 results. To ensure that we identified a manageable number of papers and other works that were on-topic and within-discipline we restricted our search to FT50 journals plus a selection of other field-relevant journals (*Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *Academy of Management Perspectives*) which gave 172 results. We added 29 papers from our original larger set that had more than 100 citations to give a total of 201 papers. On reading the works a small number were found to be of marginal relevance and excised from our data set when both authors independently agreed that exclusion was merited. These were texts that made brief or minor mention of morality and/or identity but did not employ one or both concepts meaningfully in the studies they reported. We then examined the bibliographies of

articles to identify further relevant books, book chapters and journal articles yielding a total dataset of 429 publications. Based on Cronin and George's (2023) recommendations we engaged in processes of abstraction, exploration, integration, refinement and refocusing which continued until our typology was fully fledged.

In compiling this appendix, we refer occasionally to studies that explore peoples' constructions of self (where these are used by researchers to typify a specific kind of moralized identity) but focus mostly on researchers typifications of workers' moralized identities where identity work is often implied but not the principal concern. This 'typological approach' draws on an established tradition of identities theorizing and research which analyzes the identity types evident within a society, or in our case a literature (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Weigert, 1988). Identity types are labels or linguistic constructs developed through processes of selection and abstraction which permit comprehension and analysis of identities within an assortment of structural, historical, situational, and ecological conditions (Cosser, 1958; Klapp, 1962; Simmel, 1950, 1971). These moralized identity types subsume a range of motivations, psychodynamic phenomena, beliefs, values, discursive manoeuvres, symbols, and behaviors which constitute them (Bénabou and Tirole, 2011; Goffman, 1963; James, 1892; Vignoles, 2011).

### **Supererogatory Identities**

Scholarship has focused on supererogatory identities (those associated with 'good' actions and intentions that, within a social system, exceed what is normatively morally required) in relation to four major sets of activities: self-sacrifice, conscience-objecting, philanthropy, and leader activism.

*Self-sacrificers.* Self-sacrificial identities manifest as behavior that involves '...incurring great personal risk and cost' (Conger and Kanungo, 1987, p. 641) '...to maintain personal beliefs

and values' (Yorges et al., 1999, p. 428). These identities have been considered as forms of 'selfless leadership' (Tead, 1935), 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf, 1977) and in relation to the 'sacred' aspects of leading and managing (Grint, 2010). Self-sacrificial identities have also been associated with both transformational (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978) and charismatic (e.g., Conger and Kanungo, 1987; House and Shamir, 1993; Yukl, 1999) leaders. Self-sacrificial identities have been attributed to UK business school deans who claim selflessly to suffer losses for the benefit of their staff and institutions (Brown, Lewis, and Oliver, 2021). Generally, scholars suggest that self-sacrificing may elicit favorable perceptions and increased employee identification by visibly demonstrating exemplary behaviors such as loyalty and dedication (Choi and Mai-Dalton, 1998, p. 476; de Cremer and van Knippenberg, 2004, p. 141). Self-sacrificial identities feature prominently in literatures on, for example, volunteers (Donner, 1997; Weller, Brown, and Clarke, 2023), nurses (Pask, 2005), and religious organizations (Cormack, 2002).

***Conscience-Objectors.*** Conscience objectors are principled dissenters (Shahinpoor and Matt, 2007) and whistleblowers (Jos et al., 1989; Miceli and Near, 1994; Teo and Caspersz, 2011; Waytz et al., 2013) who expose wrongdoing often at considerable personal cost (Bird and Waters, 1987; Kenny et al., 2020; Munro, 2017; Stein, 2021). Whistleblowers are most often concerned to be moral (Avakian and Roberts, 2012), principled (Lennane, 2012), committed to 'doing right' (Ash, 2016, p. 16), a 'Good Samaritan' (Vandekerckhove and Tsahuridu, 2010, p. 372), and as 'saints' (Contu, 2014, p. 393). Munro (2017) analyzes Julian Assange as a parhessiast (i.e., someone defined by the key virtue of courage). Pinchot (2017) considers Elizabeth Whalen, an intern at Columbia Forest Products, who took issue with the use of toxic formaldehyde in plywood glues, and helped transform the organization into one that was more community sensitive. Guynn (2018) describes Google employee, Tariq Yusuf, who built a grassroots movement that campaigned effectively against harassment within the

organization. Jackall (1988) provides a substantial number of examples of middle managers who talked about how they had voluntarily taken a high moral stand only to unexpectedly experience disadvantage such as a manager called Brady who reported financial malfeasance up through the chain of command resulting in him being fired.

***Philanthropic identities.*** Philanthropic identities are often associated with social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial philanthropists – generally iconic figures such as Bill Gates, Conrad and Barron Hilton, Andrew Mellon, John D. Rockefeller and Henry Wellcome – who pursue not-for-profit social objectives ‘...through active investment of their economic, cultural, social and symbolic resources’ (Harvey et al., 2011, p. 428; Acs and Phillips, 2002; Anheier and Leat, 2006; Bishop and Green, 2008; Carnegie, 2006 [1889]; Dees, 2008; Harris et al., 2009). Experimental work suggests that many ordinary workers may also have philanthropic identities (Reed and Aquino, 2003; Weiss et al., 2021). Maclean and Harvey (2020), outline four generic philanthropic identities articulated by philanthropists they label ‘local heroes’ (who selflessly assist their local communities), ‘pillars of society’ (who craft identities as farsighted, virtuous, and committed), ‘social crusaders’ (who define themselves as fighting for social justice), and ‘game changers’ (who create identities as leaders with vision and a love of humanity) (Maclean et al., 2015).

***Leader-activist identities.*** Both formal and informal leaders may be leader-activists who ‘have inspired and mobilized others to take a moral stance with regard to issues affecting their organizations and society at large’ (Solinger et al., 2020, p. 504). These people are moral campaigners who, in seeking to revolutionize a moral system, challenge current orthodoxy. Solinger et al. (2020) cite as examples David Berdish at Ford Motor Company who initiated a new code of conduct within the automotive industry and Kevin Thompson at IBM who sought to establish a novel ethos through citizenship initiatives within the technology industry. One branch of this literature concerns a form of CEO socio-political activism where leaders take

bold public moral stances despite significant personal and corporate risk (Soergel, 2016). For example, Hambrick and Wowak (2021, p. 33), discuss Kenneth Frazier, CEO of Merck, who in 2017 resigned from President Trump's Manufacturing Council, following Trump's response to white nationalist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia (see also Branicki, et al., 2021; Gelles, 2018).

### **Moral Identities**

What counts as a 'moral' identity is heterogeneous and scholars have focused on four broad subtypes of putatively conventionally moral identities: phronetic, authentic, called, and virtuous.

***Phronetic Identities.*** One set of studies uses Aristotle's (1985) concept of phronesis – a form of 'practical wisdom' (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014, p. 235) which 'expresses the kind of person one is' (Nonaka et al., 2014, p. 369) – to show how managers find satisfactory solutions to workplace problems that confirm them (in their eyes) as being "'good" people' (Bardon et al., 2017, p. 959; Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014). This research depicts individuals as working on their moral identities within sets of contexts, relations and contingencies which require them pragmatically to make 'best possible' moral decisions given limited information and short timescales (Contu, 2023). For instance, Clarke et al. (2009, p. 328) analyze how managers in the aerospace division of a large corporation engaged in a quest for the practical sagacity '...to develop the necessary homeopathic sensitivity and reflexive maturity to make "good" decisions subject to their own judgement and the gaze of others'. Bardon et al. (2017) argue that there is a phronetic identity story-type that may be adopted by managers in their elaboration of moral identities. Complementary research has explored how managers work on their moral identities while grappling with challenging circumstances such as making welfare decisions for others

(Taylor et al., 2018), firing someone for incompetence (Bird and Waters, 1987, p. 9), and making hundreds of people redundant (Watson, 1994, p. 82).

***Authentic Moral Identities.*** Defined as ‘the loyalty of one’s self to its own past, heritage and ethos’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 117; Rook et al., 2024), as Fine (2003, p. 154) observes, we live ‘In a society that valorizes authenticity’ (Erickson, 1995; Gecas, 1994; Gergen, 1991; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005; Trilling, 1972). Research suggests people in organizations often characterize themselves as ‘authentic’ (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 305). One substantial stream of literature draws on Hochschild’s (1983) dramaturgical analysis of how service workers’ authenticity is compromised in their performance of emotional labour (Coupland et al., 2008). Another major literature is predicated on claims for authenticity to be the ‘root construct’ of choice for the study/practice of leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Diddams and Chang, 2012; Iszatt-White, et al., 2021; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). A further distinctive existentialist literature based on the work of Sartre employs ‘authenticity’ to analyze ‘...the human condition as a project of moral freedom’ (Weigert, 1988, p. 270) and to explore the anxieties which attach to the responsibilities associated with the creation of meaning through personal decision making.

***Called Moral Identities.*** Studies have also focused on those who claim to be ‘called’ to pursue a profession, or other form of work, associated with a particular set of moral attributes and prerogatives (Berg et al., 2010; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Duffy and Dik, 2013; Kreiner et al., 2006). For example, Bloom et al. (2020) analyze two types of ‘called professionals’: ‘discerners’, who author narrative identities in which they journey toward their destiny (their one true calling) and ‘explorers’ who fabricate identities in which they search actively for work they love. Bunderson and Thomson (2009) found that zookeepers who regarded their work as a calling often said that it was a moral duty or obligation to enact these identities. Kreiner et al. (2006) show how Episcopal priests often conceive their jobs as a calling associated with a

distinctive moral identity as nurturer, problem solver and workaholic. One stream of related theorizing and research concerns religious moral identities and their consequences for processes of organizing (e.g., Burton and Vu, 2021; Vitell et al., 2009, 2016).

***Virtuous Identities.*** With its origins in the writings of Aristotle (1985) on virtue, a literature has developed centred on the questions ‘What kind of person should I be?’ and ‘How should I live?’ (Jeong and Han, 2013, p. 47; MacIntyre, 1981; Wang and Hackett, 2020). In this approach, the ‘person of good character’ (Weaver, 2006, p. 343) is characterized as one who has cultivated virtuous dispositions, typically e.g., being trustworthy and able to make ‘sensible’ judgements regarding social settings and relationships. These studies are underpinned by twin assumptions that virtuous identities are rooted in a community, and that acting virtuously enables the achievement of certain ends, often including the further development of one’s own virtues (Koehn, 1995). Empirical studies of virtuous identities in organizations have frequently centred on leaders, with most work being normative rather than empirical (Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2018; Hannah and Avolio, 2011). Related theorizing and research associated with positive psychology identifies a particular kind of ‘positive’ work identity that ‘is infused with virtuous qualities’ or ‘master virtues’ in the form of wisdom, humanity, courage, and justice (Dutton et al., 2010, p. 268; Manz et al., 2008; Park and Peterson, 2003).

### **Amoral Identities**

Three broad representations of amoral identities in organizations (referring to people who decline to engage in moral reasoning) have attracted particular attention: the intentionally amoral, the unwittingly amoral, and the morally mute.

***Intentional Amoral Identities.*** One characterization of managers, especially in business organizations, is that they are necessarily, and self-consciously, amoral agents concerned

specifically with the efficient and effective ordering of material and knowledge resources (Friedman, 1970) and who exploit concepts of morality only as rhetorical devices to facilitate policy implementation (Mueller, Harvey, and Howarth, 2003). These depictions chime with studies that have found contentious issues such as ‘corporate greening’ tend to be subject to individual and institutional processes of amoralization’ (Crane, 2000, p. 673) which position them as technical issues devoid of moral content (Fineman, 1996). A broad range of scholars (e.g., MacIntyre, 1981; Shepard et al., 1991) identify a category of ‘intentionally amoral managers’ who, as Donald and Goldsby (2004, p. 21) assert, deliberately ‘separate their personal ethics from the practice of business’. Hosmer (1994, p.192) estimates that ‘...90% of the senior executives active in business, have adopted the “create value for the shareholder and maximize profits of the firm” view of managerial responsibility’. Similarly, Molthan-Hill (2014) proposes that, if they do so at all, managers justify themselves morally only regarding the ends they aim for (see Johnson’s (2008) analysis of Carly Fiorina at Hewlett-Packard). As Roberts (1984, p. 288) contends, ‘...typically it is the pursuit of the survival and growth of the “organization as a whole” that for most managers is the assumed moral basis of their action and that provides them with a blanket justification for a whole variety of practises’.

**Casual Amoral Identities.** Managers’ amoral identities, it is often suggested, are adopted because of their casualness, carelessness, and inattentiveness: ‘the vast majority of managers are amoral’ and ‘the average manager is amoral most of the time’ (Carroll, 1987, p. 12). Managers work lives it is argued are intense, demanding, and busy so that there is simply no opportunity for them to consider the moralized implications of their decisions. For Drumwright and Murphy (2004, p. 11) managers are often afflicted by a ‘moral myopia’ that can vary in severity from short-sightedness to complete blindness. As an advertising executive in their study claimed, apparently without irony, ‘It’s really hard to be unethical in this business even if you wanted to’ (p. 12). Ailon (2015) accounts for business leaders’ casual amorality in terms

of deeply embedded corporate discourses which ‘transfer...the moral compass from the “self” to the “market”’ (p. 93), so that they exist in a ‘moral void...largely incapable of significant moral subjectivity’ (p. 94). The most thorough examination of casual amoral identity work is that offered by Jackall (1988, p. 194) who attributes it to the routinization of work so that ethical issues are quotidian, unremarkable, and thus fail to register as significant together with ‘bureaucratic compartmentalization’ that provides ‘rationales’ for people not to know about problems or bother finding out about them.

***Morally Mute Identities.*** Those in organizations, especially managers, are very often represented as ‘morally mute’, i.e., unwilling to engage with moral issues at work or to define themselves as moral beings (Bird and Waters, 1989; Kreps and Monin, 2011). Drumwright and Murphy (2004) describe people as compartmentalizing moral issues, often because they are concerned that raising ethics issues will damage their reputation as competent businesspeople and are anxious about opening a ‘Pandora’s Box’ of intractable issues. Seeking to explain the rise of morally mute managers, Bird and Waters (1989) argue that it is a function of (i) managers need to maintain good relations with others; (ii) a prevalent view that moral talk is anti-problem solving; and (iii) uneasiness about speaking out in ways that might expose their ethical illiteracy and threaten personal advancement (see also Drumwright and Murphy, 2004; Kreps and Monin, 2011). Huhtala et al. (2020) describe a category of ‘moral identity diffused’ leaders who seek to distance themselves from moral issues. Trevino et al. (2003, p. 20) report some ethics officers who maintained that ‘you can be ethical and be a leader but you may not choose to put ethics at the forefront of your leadership’. As a manager in Molthan-Hill’s (2014, p. 297-8) study said seeking to justify his silence on ethical issues, ‘...you’ve got to separate my opinions from what are the best interests of the organisation...sometimes you have got to put your own personal opinions to one side’.

## **Immoral Identities**

Four specific immoral identity types have attracted particular attention, the self-deceptively hypocritical, the intentionally hypocritical, the morally stigmatized, and the authoritarian.

***Self-Deceptively Hypocritical Identities.*** A distinctive stream of theorizing and research describes how people in organizations may sub-consciously enact immoral identities, that is, identities that they might, if brought to consciousness, deny, disown or in some other way rationalize. Berman (1970, p. 60) describes ‘the determination of men [sic] to hide themselves not merely from others, but from themselves’. Goffman (1959, p. 81-82) argues there are often things that a person ‘will not be able to tell himself’, and that ‘self-delusion constantly occurs’. Self-deception is a means by which people guard themselves against awareness of their moral transgressions, and thus defend, their sense of self-consistency, maintain self-esteem, and avoid anxiety (Lönnqvist et al., 2014). This scholarship dovetails with a substantial stream of psychodynamics research that shows how people are prone to denial, fantasy, rationalization, and other psychic defenses against unease and fear (Freud, 1936; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2020). The ‘self-deceptively immoral identity’ type, who appears to others as hypocritical, is well attested (Caldwell, 2009), and demonstrated in laboratory settings (Batson et al., 1999), though detailed case studies of them are rarer (Brown and Jones, 2000).

***Intentionally Hypocritical Identities.*** Knowing and deliberate hypocrisy is regarded as a form of moral weakness or failure associated with the pursuit of self-interest (Batson, 2011; Caviola and Faulmüller, 2014) in which people seek the self-social rewards associated with altruism while avoiding the costs accompanying it or the punishments that attach to its absence (Batson et al., 1999). An established literature focuses on the intentionally hypocritical identities of organizational actors (Andersen and Høvring, 2020; Brunsson, 1993; Fassin and Buelens, 2011; Foote, 2021; Greenbaum et al., 2015; Lammers et al., 2010; Trevino et al., 2000). These people are often described by impression management theorists as preoccupied ‘...with

‘looking good’ in organizations’ (Edwards et al., 2019, p. 747; Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983; Taylor et al., 2018). Researchers have identified examples of leaders who claim to favor diversity but do not enact pro-diversity policies (Thomas, 1990), assert the importance of good work-life balance but themselves work long hours (Paustian-Underdahl and Halbesleben, 2014), and employees who claim to endorse safety regulations while violating them (Leroy et al., 2012). Leader hypocrisy particularly has attracted considerable attention, for example at Enron (e.g., Ailon, 2015; Edwards et al., 2019; Fusaro and Miller, 2002), Panera Bread (Effron et al., 2018) and among British members of parliament (Brown and Jones, 2000).

***Morally stigmatized.*** A stigmatized identity is one tainted by ‘an attribute that is deeply discrediting’ and which reduces an individual ‘from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one’ (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). One form of stigmatization involves an individual or group being discredited because of some perceived moral identity flaw or spoil (Goffman, 1963). Across the social sciences there are studies of the morally stigmatized identities of, for example, mental patients (Anspach 1979), the homeless (Snow and Anderson 1987), and the relatives of murderers (May, 2000). Toyoki and Brown (2014) argue that in their study prisoners are stereotyped and stigmatized frequently as ‘generically criminal’ by prison staff and that implicit in accounts of some prisoners was that they viewed themselves as immoral, though often with the caveat that they were seeking to improve. Van Maanen (1978) showed how American policemen characterize certain members of the public as ‘assholes,’ a term imbued with moral meaning, and which establishes them as having stained or flawed identities. Slay and Smith (2011) analyze the stigmatized identities and stigma management strategies of African American journalists. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) discuss the morally stigmatized identities that attach to a range of occupations associated with ‘dirty work’ such as prostitution (Bryan, 1965), janitorial work (Gold, 1952), butchery (Meara, 1974), and grave digging (Petrillo, 1990).

*Authoritarian.* A distinct program of research concerns various types of autocratic or authoritarian (Adorno et al, 1950; Harms et al., 2018) managers and leaders such as the ‘bureaucratic individual’ (Thompson, 1961), ‘despotic leader’ (De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008), and dictator (Wintrobe, 1990). Authoritarians are constructed as self-interested, exploitative, domineering, controlling and vengeful (Aronson, 2001; Bass, 1990; House and Howell, 1992; Howell and Avolio, 1992). One of the many variants of authoritarian leaders and managers is that of the petty tyrant, described by (Ashforth, 1994, p.755) as one who ‘...lords his or her power over others’ and engages in behaviors including ‘arbitrariness and self-aggrandizement, belittling others, lack of consideration, a forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging initiative, and noncontingent punishment’. There are positive accounts of authoritarians, especially in the leadership literature which recognizes that a directive style can sometimes be effective (Muczyk and Reimann, 1987). Mostly, however, authoritarians in their many guises are characterized as engaging in ‘destructive’ (Schyns and Schilling, 2013), ‘abusive’ (Aryee, et al., 2008) and other unethical practices which may have severe consequences for followers including job tension and emotional exhaustion.

### **Reflections on a Typological Approach**

Our systematic review led us to identify the principal moralized identity types and sub-types evident in the management and organization studies literature and order them into a classification scheme. As Collier, LaPorte, and Seawright (2012, p. 217) argue, typologies help with ‘forming and refining concepts, drawing out underlying dimensions, creating categories for classification and measurement, and sorting cases’. By making purposeful connections between what have largely been regarded previously as unrelated studies we have made informed distinctions and discerned complementarities between them. Our typological approach encourages consideration of how substantial literatures on distinct moralized

identities in organizations form elements of a broader and only rarely recognized project. In terms of future research this typology provides a potentially generative tool for analysis.

A typology, however, also has its limitations, not least of which is that it requires researchers to make distinctions between different types and subtypes that rely on processes of interpretation. For example, all the sub-types of ‘supererogatory’ identities may also be regarded as kinds of ‘moral’ identities. This is an important point for reflection, and the moralized identity types that we advance are, perhaps, best regarded as ‘ideal types,’ which can be used to draw together and compare an array of otherwise apparently disconnected studies (Stapley et al., 2022). Moreover, our typology incorporates the limitations of the literature it draws on, such as its focus on single, often decontextualized, and generally neatly differentiated sorts of moralized identities. This is problematic because it cannot account adequately for important aspects of how dynamic, embedded, multiple, sometimes ‘simultaneously salient’ (Ramarajan, 2014, p. 602) identities are continuously worked on by embedded individuals in work organizations. It is to address these shortcomings that we analyze moralized identities from an IWP and develop our framework (Gill and Brown, 2026).

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