



**Cognitive and Affective Organizational Identification  
of Frontline Employees**

—

**An Investigation  
in a Customer Complaint Context**

**Inauguraldissertation**

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**List of Abbreviations**

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
cf.	confer
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
DV	Dependent Variable
DW-Test	Durbin Watson Test
Ed.	Edition/Editor
Eds.	Editors
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
e.g.	exempli gratia
et al.	et alii
H	Hypothesis
i.e.	id est
IV	Independent Variable
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Criterion
KS-Test	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test
MSA	Measure of Sample Adequacy
n.a.	not available
n.s.	non-significant
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares-Regression
p.	pagina
pp.	paginae
RESET	Regression Equation Specification Error Test
RMSEA	Root-Mean-Square-Error of Approximation
SCT	Self-Categorization Theory
SE	Standard Error
SIA	Social Identity Approach

SIT	Social Identity Theory
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
SW-Test	Shapiro-Wilk Test
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
VHB	Verband der Hochschullehrer für Betriebswirtschaft e.V.
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

**List of Symbols**

$a_1$	Surface Test Value of the Slope of the Congruence Line
$a_2$	Surface Test Value of the Curvature of the Congruence Line
$a_3$	Surface Test Value of the Slope of the Incongruence Line
$a_3$	Surface Test Value of the Curvature of the Incongruence Line
$b_0$	Absolute Term of the Regression
$b_k$	Unstandardized Regression Coefficient of the Independent Variable k
$\varepsilon$	Error Term
F	Test Value of the F-Statistic
n	Sample Size
$p$	Significance Level
$r^2$	Squared Correlations
$R^2$	Coefficient of Determination
$\chi^2$	Chi-Squared Value
X	Component 1 of the Congruence Measure
$X^2$	Component 1 of the Congruence Measure Squared
XY	Interaction Effect between Components X and Y
Y	Component 2 of the Congruence Measure
$Y^2$	Component 2 of the Congruence Measure Squared
Z	Outcome Variable of the Polynomial Regression





# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Over the past two decades, both marketing research and practice have acknowledged an increasing importance of managing the identification of *frontline employees* with their organizations, in the quest for finding drivers of excellent service performance (Ahearne *et al.* 2013, p. 625). The underlying concept, namely the Social Identity Approach (SIA), proposes that an individual's sense of identity is partly determined by his or her membership of a social group, i.e. the organization (*cognitive* identification), serving the need for social security and that he or she attaches an emotional value to this membership (*affective* identification), serving the need for self-enhancement (cf. Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). Based on these social group membership(s), individuals make sense of their social environment by categorizing other individuals as either being part of the group they identify with (*in-group*) or as being part of other groups (*out-groups*). While in-groups are perceived with *favor*, out-groups are rather reflected upon with *disparagement* (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 13).

First introduced to organizational contexts over 25 years ago by the seminal work of Ashforth and Mael (1989), an extensive body of research has evolved subsequently, indicating that organizational identification is a driver of numerous desirable organizational outcomes, such as reduced turnover intentions and improved work performance of employees, because they perceive their organization to be more positive and are more willing to contribute to the success of their in-group (Lee *et al.* 2015; Riketta 2005). Some scholars have gone as far to argue that organizational identification “makes organizational life possible” (Haslam *et al.* 2003, p. 357), in the first place.

Specifically in the frontline employee domain, a considerable importance has been attached to organizational identification in the service sector, because those employees act as the ultimate voice and face of their organizations towards external stakeholders (Hartline *et al.* 2000, p. 35; Korschun *et al.* 2014, p. 21) and must perform behaviors that put the organization's interests first and foremost (Netemeyer *et al.* 2012, p. 1052). Thereby, frontline employees work in a multi-

faceted social landscape and serve as boundary-spanners between the organization (*in-group*) and customers (*out-group*) (Korschun 2015, p. 612). This job feature not only makes them the primary reflection of the organization's image, but also the most critical players to the financial success of service organizations (Bitner *et al.* 1994, p. 95; Homburg *et al.* 2009, p. 38; Sirianni *et al.* 2013, p. 108; Stock 2016, p. 4259).

The boundary-spanning role is, however, often challenging, as the frontline employee is subject to requirements of both the organization (e.g., efficiency and effectiveness) and the customer (e.g., attention and good service quality), which can make him or her feel caught in the middle of a "three-cornered fight" between these two parties (Bateson 1985, p. 67). In fact, this tension is considered to be a consistent feature of the frontline employee job (Singh 2000, p. 15) and, in response to it, fostering the organizational identification of frontline employees is regarded as a valuable opportunity to align the individual goals of the frontline employee with those of the organization (Bartel 2001, p. 387).

Research on organizational identification in this area shows, indeed, overwhelming support for the notion that highly identified frontline employees act in their organization's best interests and show higher work-related efforts (Bartel 2001), are more willing to "go the extra mile" to satisfy customer needs (van Dick *et al.* 2006) and, ultimately, generate higher customer satisfaction and higher sales figures (Lichtenstein *et al.* 2010; Maxham *et al.* 2008; Wieseke *et al.* 2012), for instance. As indicated above, these positive effects of organizational identification are mainly explained by the reasoning that the stronger the organizational identification of frontline employees is, the stronger they link their personal success to the organizational success and the stronger their sense of identity is entwined with the organization, leading to a shared fate and goal congruence (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 23; Bartel 2001, p. 386; Dutton *et al.* 1994, p. 239; Kraus *et al.* 2015, p. 490).

All in all, this research stream is surprisingly one sided in two ways. First, by relying on the notion that frontline employees with a high organizational identification have a shared sense of identity with the organization, scholars are almost exclusively concerned with the *cognitive* dimension of organizational identification, while neglecting the *affective* dimension (Edwards 2005, p. 214). In other

words, studying how frontline employees *think* about their self in relation to their organization has taken precedent over studying how frontline employees *feel* about their self in relation to their organization (cf. Wolter and Cronin 2016, p. 397). Specifically, it is poorly understood and insufficiently studied, whether both dimensions necessarily lead into the same direction, how one dimension can or cannot compensate for a lack of the other and what consequences arise, when there is a widening of a gap (*incongruence*) versus an agreement (*congruence*) between the importance of the organizational membership to a frontline employee's sense of identity (cognitive organizational identification) and the magnitude of his or her positive emotions associated with that membership (affective organizational identification). Second, with regard to the investigated consequences of organizational identification, research in the frontline employee context strongly concentrates on positive outcomes of organizational identification, while research on negative outcomes is virtually a void to date (Kraus *et al.* 2015, p. 487).

Both limitations come rather as a surprise given that, first, in the original conceptualization of organizational identification, the construct is unambiguously defined to be two-dimensional, with a *cognitive* and an *affective* dimension (Tajfel and Turner 1986). There is, moreover, a large conceptual consensus in the subsequent literature that the affective dimension is a key part of the construct (van Dick 2001, p. 271) and must not be neglected (Edwards 2005, p. 216; Johnson *et al.* 2012, p. 1143). Most importantly, both dimensions are driven by unique self-motives, making a differentiated view on them a prerequisite to understand the holistic concept of organizational identification. Despite this, the empirical examination of the construct so far focuses on the cognitive dimension.

Second, the emphasis on positive outcomes is surprising, given that the primary goal of developing the SIA was to understand intergroup *conflict* and *discriminatory behaviors* of in-group members towards out-group members, in the first place (Haslam 2001, p. 27). Specifically, the SIA proposes that minimal conditions of group assignment are sufficient cause for individuals to discriminate against out-group members (Al Ramiah *et al.* 2011, p. 46), particularly when the out-group members negatively appraise the in-group, because with increasing identification, this devaluation is perceived to affect the personal sense of identity and poses an *identity threat* to the individuals (Elsbach and Kramer 1996, p. 442; Tajfel and

Turner 1986, pp. 19). As such, the SIA rather served as an explanation for *negative* outcomes of social identification and it is remarkable that this detrimental potential of identification processes has been largely overlooked by previous research. Especially, given that frontline employees act as boundary-spanners in a multigroup environment and, as representatives of their in-group, are naturally confronted with out-groups for the majority of their working time (Korschun 2015, p. 612).

In this light, especially the customer complaint context appears to be a fruitful field for investigating the role of both dimensions of organizational identification of frontline employees. Customer complaints are a daily reality in the working life of frontline employees and represent *confrontational* and often uncivil service exchange situations, where customers, as out-group members, devalue the organization of frontline employees, i.e. their meaningful social identity and in-group (cf. Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 48). Frontline employees have a crucial role in this context, as they are the first to receive the complaint and represent the closest and immediate interaction to the customer (Walsh *et al.* 2015, p. 500). Particularly, based on the reflections above, two hearts should paradoxically beat in the breasts of highly identified frontline employees. On the one hand, they should feel the urge to handle the complaint in a way that is beneficial to the organization and by extension to the positivity of their sense of self (cf. Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 23; Hogg 2001, p. 187; Kraus *et al.* 2015, p. 490). On the other hand, the complaint is likely perceived as a threat to their identity, and feeling personally offended could result in an urge to retaliate against the complainant (cf. Korschun 2015, p. 615; Skarlicki *et al.* 2008, p. 1335).

Understanding the role of both dimensions of organizational identification in this paradox and, more generally, which traits determine the behavior and coping strategies of frontline employees with such confrontational interactions is paramount for organizations (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 221; Kunz and Hogreve 2011, p. 244) because complaints are ‘moments-of-truth’, which often decide the future of a customer-organization relationship (Knox and van Oest 2014, p. 42; Tax *et al.* 1998, p. 60). As such, handling customer complaints “embodies the acid test of a firm’s customer orientation” (Homburg and Fürst 2005, p. 95) and is regarded as the heart of customer relationship management (Stauss and Seidel 2004). By investigating the concept of organizational identification in the complaint context,

this dissertation, therefore, not only contributes to an improved understanding of social identification processes of frontline employees but the SIA is also suggested to be a parsimonious framework to understand the behavior of frontline employees in this context.

In fact, substantial deficiencies are evident in this behavior with approximately 50% of all complaining customers reporting to be unsatisfied with the way frontline employees handled their complaints (Estelami 2000, p. 287). The top complaint generating industry is the restaurant industry, where complaint handling is especially reported to be poor, although good service quality is particularly valued by customers in this industry (Statista 2014a). Simultaneously, the financial leverage of an effective complaint handling is evident, given that unsatisfactorily handled complaints lead to a ‘double-deviation effect’, where customers are disappointed by the service twice, which ultimately increases the churn rate (Bitner *et al.* 1990, p. 80). Lowering the churn rate by 1%, in turn, is shown to increase the organizational value by 5% on average (Gupta *et al.* 2004, p. 17). Furthermore, when frontline employee resolve the customer complaint satisfactorily, complainants have been shown to become even more loyal and profitable to the organization than customers who never complained – a phenomenon often referred to as the ‘service recovery paradox’ (Hart *et al.* 1993, p. 148). Finally, it is well recognized that retaining existing customers is significantly less costly than acquiring new customers (Gursoy *et al.* 2007, p. 358).

Despite the significant practical relevance, it is not only that frontline employees often provide poor complaint handling but it is also that they actively sabotage the customer service (Harris and Ogbonna 2006, p. 543). Studies in the frontline employee context find that up to 90% of all participating frontline employees state that service sabotage is a daily reality in their organizations (Harris and Ogbonna 2002, p. 163), mostly because they feel unfairly treated by customers (Skarlicki *et al.* 2008, p. 1335). The potential additional costs of such sabotage behaviors can hardly be estimated because only a small share of such behaviors is ever detected. However, they are assumed to be immense at least and could even threaten the organizational survival (Harris and Ogbonna 2002, p. 166).

In summary, both researchers and practitioners in the domain of complaint handling are clearly in need of a conceptual framework that helps to understand, how

frontline employees cope with customer complaints (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 221), why they often provide poor complaint handling (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 46) and engage in service sabotage (Harris and Ogbonna 2012, p. 2027).

Based on the reflections on organizational identification of frontline employees above, one can conclude that organizational identification has the potential to affect the customer-directed complaint handling behavior of frontline employees in both a *beneficial* way, due to an increased goal congruence between the frontline employee and the organization and a *detrimental* way, through increased perceptions of the customer as an adversarial out-group member. To resolve this seemingly paradox, it appears worthwhile to empirically investigate the role of frontline employees' organizational identification in the complaint context, by disentangling the effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification, since these dimensions serve different underlying self-motives and are likely to play distinct roles. From a manager's perspective, it is, however, insufficient to solely identify detrimental and beneficial effects of organizational identification but there is also a need for potential remedy strategies, aiming at mitigating the negative effects. Applied to the context of this dissertation, it is valuable to know, how the effects of both dimensions of organizational identification can be steered. Therefore, the dissertation at hand aims at addressing the following three research questions, which are unanswerable by prior research.

1. How are cognitive and affective organizational identification of frontline employees related to their complaint handling intentions, respectively?
2. Beyond that, does it matter if the cognitive organizational identification is in congruence or in incongruence with the affective organizational identification of frontline employees with regard to their complaint handling intentions?
3. What actions could the management design in order to manage the effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification and organizational identification (in-)congruence of frontline employees on their complaint handling intentions?

## 1.2 Course of the Dissertation

In order to address the aforementioned three research questions, this dissertation is divided into seven chapters (a structured overview of the course of this dissertation is illustrated in Figure 1). Subsequent to this introductory **chapter 1**, in **chapter 2** the Social Identity Theory (section 2.1) and the Self-Categorization Theory (section 2.2) will be explained to provide the theoretical foundations that underlie this dissertation.

Based on these theoretical basics, in **chapter 3**, the central concept of organizational identification will be outlined (section 3.1) and differentiated from related constructs. Moreover, frontline employees will be introduced as the relevant subject of study (section 3.2). A focus will lie on the exposed position of frontline employees as boundary-spanners between the organization and the customers, in general, and the importance of service encounters with customers and complaint handling, in specific, to carve out the thematic scope of the dissertation. Specifically, *collaborative handling of the complaint* and *sabotage of the complainant's service* will be identified as the focal outcome variables in the customer complaint context in this dissertation.

In **chapter 4**, a systematic literature review will be provided. First, the procedure and scope of this review will be explained (section 4.1), and the two research areas most relevant to the dissertation at hand, namely organizational identification of frontline employees (section 4.2) and complaint handling of frontline employees (section 4.3), will be reviewed. Based on these reviews, the research gaps will be identified (section 4.4).

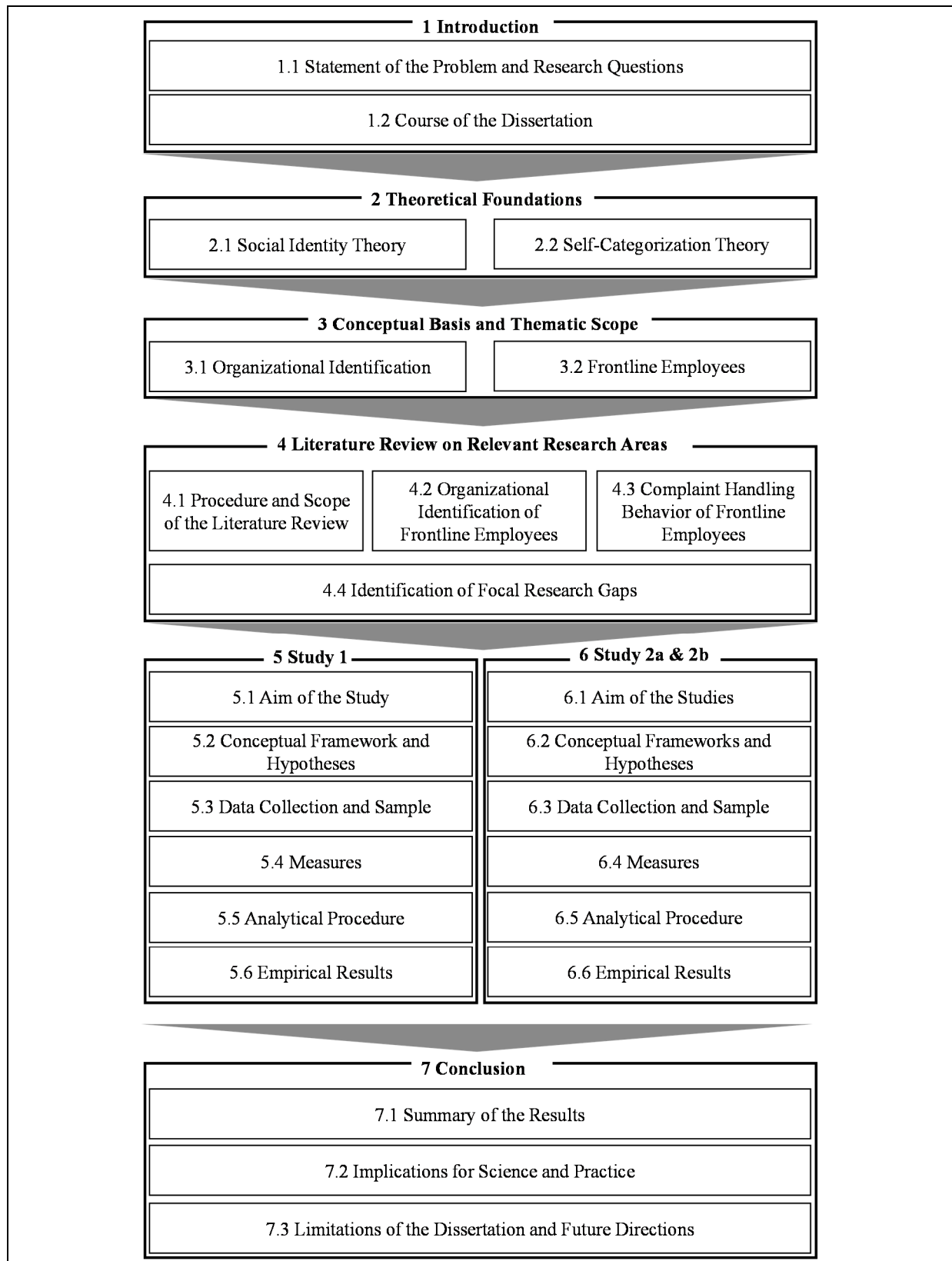
**Chapter 5** pertains to Study 1, which addresses the **first two research questions** with an empirical investigation in the university context ( $n = 294$ ). The aim of this study will be defined (section 5.1), a conceptual framework will be presented and hypotheses will be formally derived (section 5.2). Furthermore, the procedure of the data collection, as well as the characteristics of the final sample will be described (section 5.3) and it will be illustrated, how the focal constructs were measured (section 5.4). Subsequently, the analytical procedure underlying the empirical investigation will be explained (section 5.5) and the empirical results of this investigation will be presented (section 5.6). Next to the hypotheses testing, these

results also include the testing of psychometric criteria, assumptions of the analytical procedure, additional analyses and a discussion of the findings of Study 1.

**Chapter 6** deals with the second part of the empirical investigation in this dissertation, namely Study 2a (n = 178) and Study 2b (n = 178), which were conducted in the restaurant industry. In addition to answering the **first two research questions**, Study 2a and Study 2b also address **research question 3**, by introducing two moderators, namely *perceived availability of a service script* (Study 2a) and *reframing the complainant as an in-group member* (Study 2b), to the empirical model. Similar to the structure employed in chapter 5, first, the aim of the studies will be defined (section 6.1) and conceptual frameworks will be developed along with formal hypotheses (section 6.2). In the following, the data collection and final sample will be described (section 6.3), the measurement of all focal constructs will be outlined (section 6.4) and the analytical procedure of the empirical investigation will be explained (section 6.5). Subsequently, the empirical results will be presented for both Study 2a and Study 2b, including psychometric properties, assumption and hypotheses testing, additional analyses and, finally, the discussion of the relevant findings (section 6.6).

The dissertation concludes in **chapter 7** with a summary of the results of the investigation (section 7.1). Based on these findings, implications for both science and practice will be derived (section 7.2). Finally, as with all research, the dissertation at hand has some limitations, which will be mentioned and capitalized on to provide directions for future research (section 7.3).





**Figure 1: Course of the Dissertation**

Source: Author's illustration.

## 2 Theoretical Foundations

### 2.1 Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) is part of the Social Identity Approach (SIA), which provides the overarching framework for this dissertation and represents the theoretical underpinning for the empirical model. It is, therefore, of major importance for the comprehensiveness of the hypotheses development and the discussion of the most striking results. Besides SIT (Tajfel and Turner 1979), its later extension, the Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) (Turner *et al.* 1987) is summarized under the term SIA (Haslam 2001, p. 26). Both theories are described and discussed in this and the subsequent section.

#### *Minimal Group Paradigm*

The SIT has been developed by Tajfel and colleagues throughout the 1970s and primarily aims at understanding the nature of intergroup conflicts and behavior, in general, and intergroup discrimination, in specific (Haslam 2001, p. 27). In their first experiments, the authors tried to identify the “minimal” conditions that would induce discrimination in favor of the group the respective participants belonged to (*in-group*) and to the disadvantage of members of other groups (*out-groups*) (Tajfel 1970 and Tajfel *et al.* 1971). This series of experiments is accordingly often referred to as “minimal group studies” (e.g., Haslam 2001, p. 27). The conditions were minimal because there was “minimal in-group affiliation, anonymity of group membership, absence of conflicts of interest, and absence of previous hostility between the groups” (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 9), as well as absence of “any utilitarian or instrumental link between the subjects’ responses and their self-interest” (Tajfel 1974, p. 67).

Specifically, in one experiment subjects were first asked to estimate the number of dots shown to them on a rapidly changing screen and then led to believe that they were either part of an under-estimator- or an over-estimator-group (here and in the following, Tajfel 1974, pp. 67). In a second experiment, the alleged assignment was made by asking for the preference for two abstract painters, Klee and Kandinsky, and the participants were accordingly either assigned to the Klee- or the Kandinsky-group. In both experiments, the true assignment to the respective

groups was purely random. Afterwards, the subjects were asked to divide points worth a small amount of money between two other subjects, knowing their own membership and the membership of the respective other two subjects but not knowing their *identities* (only code numbers were shown). The results indicated that – despite the ‘minimal’ conditions of meaningless group membership – the participants showed a significant in-group favoritism and divided a higher share of the points to the anonymous members of their *in-group* rather than to members of their *out-group*.

In follow-up experiments, the researchers introduced different alternatives to the subjects. Specifically, they could choose whether to apply a strategy that yields in a distribution that a) is fair (equal), b) maximizes the joint profit, c) maximizes the in-group profit or d) maximizes the difference in favor of the in-group. Results showed that it was even more important for individuals to maximize the difference in favor of the in-group rather than choosing a fairness strategy, maximizing the joint profit or the in-group profit. In other words, for no rational reason and even at the price of sacrificing the own advantages, individuals tended to discriminate against members of different groups they did not even know – with the classification criteria being meaningless (Turner *et al.* 1979, p. 200). The mere act of forming groups was sufficient cause for provoking intergroup competitive and discriminatory behavior and favoring the in-group (Turner 1975b, p. 5). Subsequently, these findings were confirmed by several other studies (e.g., Brewer 1979; Brown and Turner 1981; Turner 1982).

In response to some researchers criticizing that the findings were driven by the participants’ in-group similarity in performance (i.e. under- or over-estimating the dots), other studies replicated the results with experimental settings that made the assignment of groups *explicitly* random, thereby ruling out this possibility (Allen and Wilder 1975; Billig 1973; Billig and Tajfel 1973; Brewer and Silver 1978; Locksley *et al.* 1980; Turner *et al.* 1983). The results remained stable, even when conflicts with obvious self-interest were introduced to the participants (Turner 1978). In summary, it appeared that in-group favoritism seems to be a remarkably omnipresent characteristic of intergroup relationships (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 13).

What is especially striking in these results is that they contradict established economic models, such as the model of economic self-interest (Akerlof and Kranton 2010), and that beating the out-group seems to be the dominant motivation for action, although there is no "objective" conflict of interests or [...] deep-seated motive that it [*author's note: the discriminatory behavior*] may serve". Nevertheless, "doing "better" seems to be more important than "doing good" (Haslam 2001, p. 29).

*The Self-concept: A Consolidation of Social Identities and the Personal Identity*

Tajfel's explanation for this irrational phenomenon is that individuals use their group membership to define themselves and aim at establishing a positive distinction from relevant other groups (here and in the following, Tajfel 1972, pp. 39–40). The author argues that in his series of studies, money/points were the only dimension that allowed for a positive comparison and the subjects used this dimension, accordingly, to maximize the difference in favor of their in-group – an interpretation which has found ample support by subsequent research (Brewer 1979; Hogg and Abrams 1988; Turner and Giles 1981; van Knippenberg and Ellemers 1990). "[This] distinction from the 'other' category provided [...] an identity for their own group, and thus some kind of meaning to an otherwise empty situation" (Tajfel 1972, pp. 39–40).

Based on these findings, Tajfel developed the concept that in addition to a personal identity, individuals have various social identities, which determine their attitudes and behavior essentially. The author integrated and summarized the results outlined above in a theoretical framework, the SIT. This theoretical framework is based on the notion of social identity, which is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). A social group, such as the Klee- or Kandinsky-group, is generally defined as "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and their membership in it" (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 15). Accordingly, social identities complement the personal identity and co-determine an individual's self-concept,

thereby contributing to the person's sense of who they are, how it feels to be them (Haslam 2001, p. 31) and to the "creat[ion] and defin[ition of] the individual's place in society" (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 40).

The basic idea behind this approach consequently goes far beyond the minimal group paradigm. It is that individuals, in general, rarely interact with each other on a purely individual basis. Interactions are rather determined by various social group memberships, making the theoretical implications broadly applicable to various contexts (here and in the following, Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 8). For instance, if a physician talks to a homeopath, it is unlikely that they purely interact on an individual level. They would more likely perceive themselves as members of different social groups and the interaction will be partially determined by these memberships. It should be noted, however, that interactions which are *fully* determined by social group memberships and not at all influenced by interindividual relationships are as rare, as purely individual interactions.

Indeed, an example of a rare situation, in which individuals possibly interact on a purely collective basis might be a war, in which soldiers of opposing armies are confronted with each other, whereas the other extreme form might be the relationship between husband and wife. Nevertheless, even these examples are arguable and common experience suggests that most social situations lay somewhere on a continuum between both poles.

The authors conclude, however, that, in general, the more severe an intergroup conflict is, the more "members of the opposite groups will behave toward each other as a function of their group memberships, rather than [behave] in terms of their individual characteristics or interindividual relationships" (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 8) and the more they "tend to treat members of the out-group as undifferentiated items in a unified social category" (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 11).

### *Basic Assumptions and Theoretical Principles of SIT*

In line with these remarks, SIT is generally based on three assumptions, which are closely connected to some theoretical principles, discussed in Table 1 (here and in the following, Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16).

	<b>Assumption</b>	<b>Theoretical Principle</b>
(1)	Individuals have an inherent aspiration to maintain or enhance their self-esteem, i.e. they have a need for a positive self-concept.	Individuals aim at enhancing or maintaining a positive social identity.
(2)	Individuals associate any social group (membership) with positive or negative value connotations and if a social identity is evaluated as positive or negative depends on the evaluations of those groups relevant to an individual's social identity.	Individuals aim at positively evaluating their own social identity by drawing (favorable) in-group/out-group comparisons.
(3)	Individuals evaluate social groups with reference to relevant other groups by socially comparing value-laden attributes and characteristics. Whereas a positively discrepant comparison yields high prestige, a negatively discrepant comparison results in low prestige.	Individuals employ coping strategies, such as leaving the group or trying to improve their own group, when their own social identity is negatively distinct from others.

**Table 1: Assumptions and Theoretical Principles of the SIT**

Source: Author's illustration.

### *The Self-esteem Hypothesis*

Basically, these assumptions and the associated theoretical principles lead to the hypothesis that the inherent pressure of individuals to evaluate the in-group positively through comparisons with the out-group(s) is the very reason, why social groups try to differentiate themselves from other groups (Tajfel 1978a, p. 27). This notion has also found empirical support (Haslam *et al.* 1996; Haslam *et al.* 1997) and is referred to as the 'self-esteem hypothesis' or 'self-enhancement hypothesis' because individuals use their social identity to feel good about themselves, i.e. enhance their self (Hogg 2001, p. 187). However, the SIT also suggests that the degree, to which this intergroup differentiation takes place, is mainly contingent upon three variables (here and in the following, Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16). First, individuals must consider their group membership to be important, in terms of internalizing the group's identity as a significant aspect of their self-concept and 'being' identified. Second, the situation of interest must allow for intergroup comparisons in terms of certain relevant dimensions, such as relational

attributes. Third, the out-group must be relevant to the in-group, for instance, by being proximal, similar or situationally salient.

### *Individuals' Coping Strategies with Threatened Social Identities*

Although social groups aim at being superior to the given out-group(s), in some situations in-group/out-group comparisons are unfavorable, which has direct effects on the individual's social identity, self-concept and self-esteem. Tajfel and Turner (1986, here and in the following, pp. 19) outline three strategies individuals employ, in order to cope with such negative or threatened social identities. The first strategy suggests a disidentification with the in-group. Individuals would psychologically disassociate with the group and/or physically leave the group to join another more prestigious group. This strategy is referred to as "individual mobility" and describes an individualistic approach that produces a personal but not a group solution. Naturally, the context must in general allow for such a group change and it is more likely for situations, in which changing groups is not associated with substantial (social) costs. Tajfel and Turner (1986, here and in the following, pp. 9) describe an interpersonal-intergroup belief system continuum with two extremes – social mobility and social change. A belief system characterized by social mobility implies that individuals have flexible group memberships, which can be easily changed, when they are unsatisfactory. In contrast, a belief system characterized by social change is rather characterized by static group memberships, which can hardly be changed and group members must, therefore, change the group itself in order to move up from a low prestige to a high prestige group – they must *be* the change.

The second strategy is termed "social creativity" and describes the cognitive process of altering or redefining a comparative situation that is unfavorable to the in-group in a way that makes the in-group appear superior to the out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986, pp. 19). This strategy may involve changing the output/performance dimension that is relevant for the comparison. For instance, a football club that is not successful in terms of results, may change the relevant dimension to the size of fanbases and now find itself superior to more successful clubs. Another tactic is to change the out-group and make comparisons with inferior social groups. For example, a football club could no longer compare itself to Champions League clubs but rather to clubs that play in a lower league and are inferior with

regard to their performance. Changing the evaluation of attributes that were initially perceived as being negative into a positive one is also a tactic the authors refer to as social creativity. A prominent example is that during the Black Power Movement, the ethnic group of blacks used the slogan “Black is beautiful”, in order to reframe the racist negative connotation into a positive one. Essentially, social creativity, thus, means that in-group members try anything possible to justify their superiority.

The third strategy is referred to by Tajfel and Turner (1986, pp. 20) as “social competition” and describes that individuals directly confront out-group members, in order to revise the negative comparison and re-establish the positive distinctiveness of their in-group. Football fans might argue with each other about the superiority of their respective favorite clubs, with the ultimate goal to win the argument and restore the feeling of superiority.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that intergroup conflict or competition can result from either social or realistic (instrumental) competition (Turner 1975a, p. 25). Whereas social conflicts arise from social comparison, such as in the minimal group experiments and the resulting self-evaluation, real conflicts accrue when there is “real” self-interest involved and the group goals are in fact incompatible (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 17). These incompatible group goals can be represented by the division of scarce resources, such as power and prestige in a complaint situation. Such a conflict is rather characterized by profound antagonism between the in-group and the out-group(s) (Oberschall 1973, p. 33).

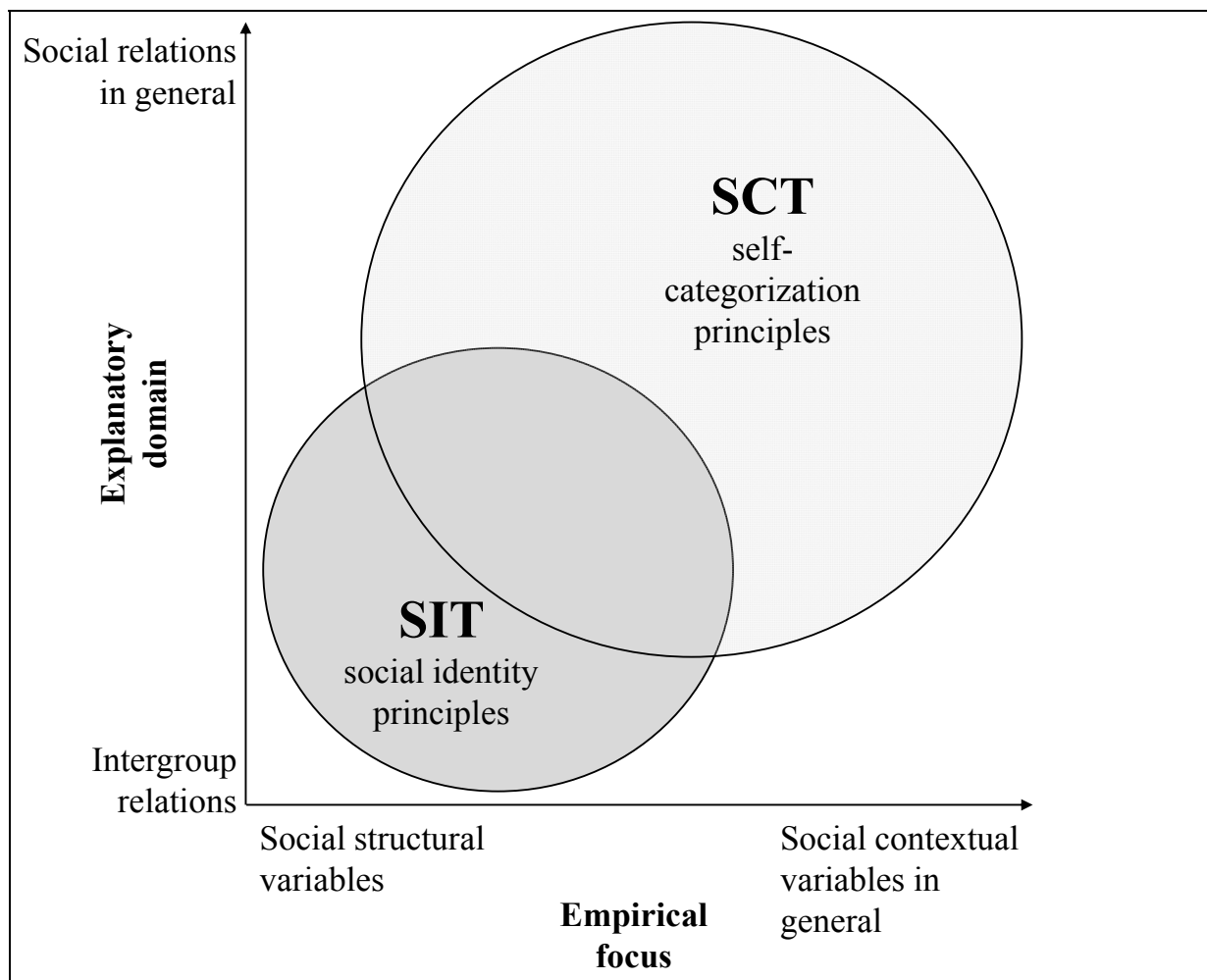
## **2.2 Self-Categorization Theory**

### *The Broader Concept of SCT*

Despite the undisputed relevance of the SIT to understanding intergroup processes, the theory has some limitations (Haslam 2001, p. 42). Particularly, SIT falls rather short in explaining how, when and why a specific social identity becomes salient (Wharton 1992, p. 67), i.e. psychologically active and defining for an individual (Turner *et al.* 1994, p. 455). To shed light on these remaining issues, Turner and colleagues developed the SCT (Turner 1982; Turner 1984; Turner *et*



*al.* 1987; Turner *et al.* 1994), which represents a much broader concept and is not restricted to intergroup and social structure issues but rather incorporates social relations and social contextual variables, in general (Haslam 2001, p. 43). Accordingly, it is not a replacement of the SIT but a richer theory that incorporates some of the ideas of SIT and further refines them. SCT focuses on the question, how individuals are at all able to act as a group, rather than on explaining specific group behavior (Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 42). Figure 2 illustrates schematically the explanatory profiles of both theories and how they overlap.



**Figure 2: Explanatory Profiles of the SIT and the SCT**

Source: Author's illustration, based on Haslam (2001, p. 43).

### *Hierarchy of Identities within the Self-concept*

Particularly, the idea that individuals have a personal identity and one or more social identities that contribute to an individual's self-concept, defined here as "the set of cognitive representations of self available to a person" (Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 44), is picked up by the SCT (Turner 1999, p. 10). According to the theory, the personal identity and the social identities are hierarchically ordered in the individual's self-concept and three levels of abstraction of self-categorizations can be distinguished (here and in the following, Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 45). At the superordinate level, an individual categorizes his- or herself as a member of the human species, as opposed to other forms of life. At the intermediate level, an individual categorizes his- or herself in terms of the memberships in various social groups, what is referred to as social identities. At the subordinate level, an individual defines him- or herself as the unique person he or she is, what is referred to as the personal identity.

The personal identity is based on unique personal attributes, such as physical or psychological characteristics and traits and, therefore, it serves as a basis for interindividual comparisons and categorizes the social environment into "me" and "not me" (Onorato and Turner 2004, p. 259). In contrast, social identities are based on memberships in formal or informal groups, such as gender, nationality or organizational affiliation (Turner 1982, p. 18). Thereby, social identities help to make simplifications for intergroup comparisons through building social categories and categorizing the social world into "us" and "them" (Onorato and Turner 2004, pp. 259). This categorization is based on the principle of meta-contrast, i.e. maximum similarity within in-groups and maximum difference between in-groups and out-groups on relevant dimensions (Turner *et al.* 1987, pp. 46). Identifying with a social group is predicted to be as much an expression of the self as is the personal identity – an idea which is central to the SCT (Onorato and Turner 2004, pp. 259).

### *The Uncertainty Reduction Hypothesis*

SCT predicts that depending on the social situation, the personal identity is relatively suppressed and an identity from the pool of various social identities is salient and becomes determining for the individual's behavior (Turner *et al.* 1987,

p. 54). The salience of a social identity initializes a process of depersonalization, whereby personal characteristics fade into the background and “individuals tend to define and see themselves less as differing individual persons and more as interchangeable representatives of some shared social category membership” (Turner *et al.* 1994, p. 455). SCT predicts that such individuals tend to behave as a prototype for a member of their respective in-group (here and in the following, Hogg and Reid 2006, pp. 10).

Prototypes are defined as context-dependent features that exemplary, ideal group members possess and that represent shared beliefs about what characterizes the in-group and relevant out-groups. In this sense, prototypes do not only *describe* individuals’ behavior. They also serve as a guideline and validation of how in-group members should behave, i.e. they also *prescribe* individuals’ behavior. This prescription and validation of behavior by other group members serves an important human motive – reducing subjective social uncertainty (Hogg 2000, p. 224; Hogg 2001, pp. 187; Reid and Hogg 2005, p. 804). The ‘uncertainty reduction hypothesis’, therefore, predicts that it is not only that social identification processes are motivated by a self-enhancement motive – as outlined in 2.1 – but also by a social uncertainty reduction motive. The according hypothesis adds to an idea that SIT has already introduced and is common to any social species: individuals use groups as a social shelter from outside threats (Tajfel 1974, p. 67). This hypothesis has received support from social psychology, showing subjective uncertainty to be one of the most important motives for individuals to socially identify (Grieve and Hogg 1999, p. 936; Hogg *et al.* 2007, p. 141).

### *Fit and Accessibility of Social Identities*

However, whether a social group membership is at all salient in a given context is in general predicted to depend on two factors: the *fit* to a given social situation and the *accessibility* of the social identity, in the given situation (Turner 1985, p. 102). The idea of social category fit dates back to the work of Bruner (1957) and describes the degree, to which the characteristics of a ‘created’ social categorization fits reality on the relevant dimensions (here and in the following, Haslam 2001, p. 50). Only if the social category constitutes a sound way of understanding and interpreting the social stimuli, fit is considered to be high. Turner *et al.* (1987,

here and in the following, p. 55) further differentiate fit into *comparative* and *normative fit*.

Comparative fit infers from the meta-contrast principle and measures the “degree to which the similarities and differences perceived between people or their actions correlate with some classification” (Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 55). Accordingly, in a given social context, the social category with maximum intergroup and minimum intragroup difference will be salient. For instance, being a non-native speaker in a German class would make the ‘nationality category’ salient, because it is a relevant characteristic in the given context that distinguishes this student from the rest of the students. Contrastingly, this category is unlikely to be salient in a sports class because other individual characteristics than the native language, such as the athletic ability are relevant in this context.

Normative fit complements comparative fit by referring to the degree, to which the actual behavior matches the expected, stereotypical behavior associated with the social group. Referring to the example mentioned above, if the non-native speaker is perfectly fluent in German, it is again unlikely that the ‘nationality category’ is invoked because the stereotypical intergroup differences between native and non-native speakers are not salient.

The *accessibility* (also referred to as perceiver readiness (Haslam 2001, p. 49) of a social identity is defined as “the readiness with which a stimulus input with given properties will be coded or identified in terms of a category” (Bruner 1957, p. 133). This readiness is to a large extent determined by the relative importance of this category to the individual’s self-concept and, consequently, by his or her identification with the social group (Haslam 2001, p. 52). The more accessible a social identity is to an individual, the less input is required to make this identity salient because there is a broad range of stimuli that is perceived to be congruent with the category characteristics and the less likely it is that other less accessible social identities will be salient (Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 55).

Moreover, a social identity is more likely to be salient, if it is new to an individual (Kawakami and Dion 1995, pp. 560). For instance, a freshly graduated teacher might be very aware of his ‘new’ group membership and behave very consciously as a role model for young students. A social identity is also more likely to be

salient, if it is explicitly mentioned (Hogg and Turner 1985, p. 267). A teacher who is asked his opinion “as a teacher” is likely to answer prototypically for the social group of teachers. Finally, if there is any form of social identity/intergroup conflicts with other social groups or any type of discrimination, social identity salience is more likely (Turner 1982, p. 16; Wagner and Ward 1993, p. 241). If there is a sports competition between schools for example, students are predicted to be more aware of their group belonging to a particular school.

### *SIA in a Nutshell*

As outlined in the previous sections, the SIA represents a hybrid of two theoretical streams of research and incorporates the ideas of the SIT and the SCT. Ultimately, both theories can be broken down to their two core hypotheses that individuals use their social identities, first, in order to enhance their self-esteem, i.e. feel better about their selves (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 40) and, second, in order to reduce social uncertainty (Hogg 2001, p. 187). In other words, the process of social identification comprises an *affective* aspect, largely derived from the SIT, that includes emotional features associated with the group membership, such as pride and happiness, and a *cognitive* aspect, largely derived from the SCT, that is characterized by a self-definition in terms of the group membership and the categorization of the social world (Albert *et al.* 1998). This conclusion is also in line with Tajfel’s original conceptualization of social identity discussed earlier, which implies that it describes the “knowledge of membership” (*cognitive* aspect) and “the emotional value attached to that membership” (*affective* aspect) (1978b, p. 63).

## 3 Conceptual Basis and Thematic Scope

### 3.1 Organizational Identification

#### 3.1.1 Evolution and Definition

The theoretical principles and implications of the SIA constitute the most dominant theoretical framework for the concept of organizational identification (Edwards 2005, p. 211). Therefore, the following section will explain, how organizational identification relates to the SIA and how the concept has been developed over time.

The SIA has been transferred to the relationship between employees and their organization in the late 1980s by Ashforth and Mael (1989), for the first time. In their seminal work, these authors suggested that social identification processes do apply to employees, with their organizations being the social category they identify with. The authors argue that past work on organizational identification that has not been built on the SIA, has confused it with other concepts and they define it to be characterized by the perception of oneself as being psychologically intertwined with the organization's fate and as being one with or belonging to the organization (*ibid.*, pp. 21-23). This definition is based on the idea of self-categorization (SCT) (Turner *et al.* 1987), yet largely neglects the idea of using social identities to enhance the self-esteem (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

Accordingly, Ashforth and Mael (1989) view social identification with the organization “as a perceptual cognitive construct that is not necessarily associated with any specific behaviors or affective states” (here and in the following, p. 21). This idea of organizational identification as a purely cognitive construct has laid the foundation for a stream of research that still represents a large part of research on organizational identification.

In addition, the authors propose three principles that describe organizational identification, in their view. First, they propose that individuals experience successes and failures of the social group they identify with, i.e. the organization, as personal successes and failures. Second, Ashforth and Mael differentiate social identifica-

tion from internalization and argue that identification is based on self-categorization, while internalization is based on sharing values and attitudes. It is noteworthy that this proposition inevitably implies that identification does not necessarily include sharing the group's identity and, again, directly contradicts the assumption of the SIT that internalization of group membership is an important aspect of identifying with a group (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16) (see 2.1). Third, the authors suggest that social identification with a group is similar to the process of identifying with a person (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 22).<sup>1</sup> In summary, the authors connect ideas from the differing concept of group identification (Tolman 1943) with ideas from the SIA (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 21). This leads to a divergence from the original conceptualization of social identification (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner *et al.* 1987) and a neglect of the affective aspect (Edwards 2005, pp. 214).

Dutton *et al.* (1994), however, build on the notion that organizational identification is a purely cognitive construct and add another meaningful work to this stream of research. The authors define organizational identification as the “cognitive connection” that arises between an individual and the organization, when the individuals’ “self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity” (here and in the following, p. 239). However, they make some refinements and add that, consistent with the SIA, organizational identification increases, when this social identity is more salient than other identities that are part of the self-concept and when the self-concept is characterized to a great extent by the same features that define the organization as a social category. Thereby, the authors converge towards the original ideas of the SCT, on the one hand. On the other hand, they still neglect the emotional component that is derived from SIT.

This approach has also been adopted by other researchers, most prominently represented by Pratt (1998) (“Organizational Identification occurs when an individual’s beliefs about his or her organization become self-referential or self-defining” (p. 172)) and Rousseau (1998) (“[Organizational] Identification is a cognition of self in relation to the organization” (p. 218)). It is noteworthy that this conceptual

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of interpersonal identification is not further discussed within the scope of this dissertation. Interested readers are referred to Ahearne *et al.* (2013) and Kraus *et al.* (2015), for recent empirical work in this field of research.

view suggests that the cognitive dimension of organizational identification increases employees' performance, since identified employees tend to take the organization's perspective, make the organization's goals their own goals and interpret the organization's success as a common fate (Edwards 2005, pp. 207). According to this view, cognitively identified employees should always act in the organization's best interest (van Knippenberg and van Schie 2000, p. 138). However, a second important feature of cognitive organizational identification is that criticism about the organization from the outside is perceived as a personal insult (Mael and Ashforth 1992, p. 122).

Complementary, a different stream of research (Abrams and Moura 2001; Bergami and Bagozzi 1996; Ellemers *et al.* 2004; van Dick 2001), focused on the fundamental difference between the "cognitive only"-research-stream and the propositions of Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Turner *et al.* (1987). This caused a debate in the literature, as to whether the affective aspect of social identification has to be included in the concept of organizational identification or not. In this stream of research, it is argued that one must not neglect the affective dimension, as it is "a key part of the construct" (van Dick 2001, p. 271) and that "organizational identification engages more than [...] our brains, it engages our hearts" (Harquail 1998, p. 225). The essential conclusion from this debate is that "it is difficult to explain the emotive power of identification [needed to] move one to act" by solely focusing on cognition (Bergami and Bagozzi 1996, p. 5) and that "it seems difficult to maintain the position that organizational identification is purely cognitive in nature" (Edwards 2005, p. 216).

Thus, the idea that organizational identification has a multidimensional nature has recently been gaining ever more attention across disciplines, including applied psychology (Ashforth *et al.* 2008) and marketing (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006) and it is also particularly in line with literature on the interaction between cognition and affect, in general (e.g., Fabrigar and Petty 1999). Following these conclusions and the original conceptualization of social identification, organizational identification is defined here as *that part of an employee's self-concept, which derives from his or her knowledge of a shared identity with the organization together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership of that organization* (based on Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). This definition clearly indicates



the two-dimensionality of the construct, namely the *cognitive* and the *affective* component.

### 3.1.2 Differentiation from Related Constructs

Despite the prevalence of organizational identification in various fields of research, it is still frequently confounded with similar, yet distinct constructs. Therefore, this section aims at distinguishing organizational identification from and setting it into context to these relevant other concepts.

#### *Organizational Commitment*

First of all, organizational identification is frequently confused with the concept of organizational commitment (Edwards 2005, p. 217; Hughes and Ahearne 2010, p. 83). There is a broad consensus that organizational commitment is a three-dimensional construct incorporating a normative, a continuance and an affective component (Meyer and Allen 1991).

Normative organizational commitment describes the perceived obligation to remain in the organization, continuance organizational commitment represents the perceived costs of leaving the organization and affective organizational commitment describes the emotional attachment to the organization (Meyer and Allen 1991, pp. 67). This conceptualization describes a state of attachment that is driven by an economic calculus between the benefits and costs of being attached or unattached to an organization and limits the affective component to a feeling of allegiance and faithfulness (Gilliland and Bello 2002, p. 25; van Knippenberg and Sleebos 2006, p. 574).

One can conclude that organizational commitment is “essentially an attitude toward the organization that develops from exchange-based factors” (Hughes and Ahearne 2010, p. 83). This social exchange process implies that the relationship between employees and their organization is based on the trade-off of effort and loyalty on the employee side, for instance, and benefits, such as wage and recognition, on the organization side (e.g., Blau 1986; Gould 1979; Levinson 1965). Naturally, such a social exchange assumes that employees and the organization represent distinct psychological entities (Levinson 1965; Rousseau and Parks

1993). Accordingly, organizational commitment is rather a measure for the strength of a relationship between two or more separate psychological entities (van Knippenberg and Sleebos 2006, p. 574). This also implies that once the relationship strength decreases because the employee's performance and the organizational rewards become unbalanced, for example, the organization can be replaced and the individual easily establishes commitment towards any new other organization.

Organizational identification by contrast is based on the concept that individuals derive parts of their self-concept from the organizational membership and includes a sense of common fate and the feelings associated with particularly that (Johnson *et al.* 2012, p. 1143). This assumption of oneness and shared identity, i.e. the self-definitional aspect, is incompatible with the idea of organizational commitment and represents the largest conceptual difference between the two concepts (Hughes and Ahearne 2010, p. 83).

Furthermore, organizational commitment lacks an underlying theory to shape and structure a comprehensive understanding of antecedents and outcomes of this construct (Johnson *et al.* 2012, p. 1143). Contrastingly, organizational identification is rooted in the SIA and offers a rich and strong theoretical and conceptual explanatory approach, which allows for an integrative understanding of the relationship between organizational identification and antecedents and consequences (e.g., Hogg and Terry 2001; Turner *et al.* 1987).

Furthermore, once established, organizational commitment is assumed to be temporarily stable and independent of the context, as it is conceptualized as an enduring positive attitude towards the organization (Gautam *et al.* 2004, p. 305). As outlined earlier (2.2), SCT predicts the exact opposite for social identification, namely that a social identity – although deeply rooted in the individual's self-concept – can be salient or not depending on the social situation (Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 54). This applies just as to organizational identification, making the degree of identification salience with the organization strongly context specific.

## *Involvement*

It also worth noting that organizational identification differs from the concept of involvement. Defined in various ways depending on the context (Andrews *et al.* 1990, p. 27), involvement generally refers to the perceived relevance of an object or an activity to an individual, depending on this individual's personal needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 342). Applied to an organizational context, involvement has been defined as the psychological connection that an individual has with his or her work functions or the dedication with which an individual performs his or her job and specific work tasks (e.g., Keller 1997; Morrow 1983; Rabinowitz and Hall 1977). Although this concept can be roughly located in a similar research domain as organizational identification, involvement does not capture the self-definitional processes described in the SIA. This conclusion is shared by various researchers who also showed the empirical distinctiveness of both constructs (Mael and Tetrick 1992; Riketta 2005).

## **3.2 Frontline Employees**

### 3.2.1 Boundary-Spanning Role

Now that the concept of organizational identification and its two-dimensionality has been outlined, in the following, frontline employees will be identified as the central subjects of study.

Although, research on frontline employees has markedly increased over the last years in the marketing research domain, no universally accepted definition, what a frontline employee precisely is has existed until very recently (Plouffe *et al.* 2016, p. 107). Therefore, the thematic scope of what is referred to here exactly as a frontline employee has to be clarified in a first step. Following Plouffe *et al.* (2016, here and in the following, p. 107), two types of frontline employees have to be distinguished.

The first type is defined to be a less skilled customer service employee, who is particularly concerned with delivering excellent service to one group of stakeholders, i.e. the customers. Examples for this type of frontline employees are wait-

ers or retail clerks (e.g., Ma and Dubé 2011; Schepers *et al.* 2012). Research conducted in the marketing domain has largely focused on this first type, which is distinct from the second type of frontline employees in that he or she does not fulfill a ‘truly’ strategic role (here and in the following, Plouffe *et al.* 2016, p. 107). Strategic in this context refers to marketing goals, such as customer acquisition or key account management and those strategic frontline employees, thus, carry titles, such as ‘Key Account Manager/Executive’ or ‘Sales Representative’. It should be noted at this point that in line with the majority of research, the focus of this dissertation will be on customer service frontline employees, although some of the implications do also apply to strategic frontline employees, as will be discussed later.

As outlined in 3.1, the organization is a compelling target for employees’ social identification, in general, as it can be highly salient and can offer an ample source to derive parts of the self-concept (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989; Dutton *et al.* 1994). The organization as a target is, however, particularly relevant for frontline employees because they act as boundary-spanners between the organization and external stakeholders in their everyday work (here and in the following, Korschun *et al.* 2014, p. 21). Those organizational identification processes can be observed anecdotally, when frontline employees at organizations, such as McKinsey, refer to themselves as “Meckies” or refer to McKinsey as “The firm”.

The work environment of frontline employees is characterized by a multifaceted social landscape, since they have to suit the needs of at least two different parties, i.e. the organization and the customer. Such a multifaceted social landscape provides a fertile ground for frontline employees to draw intergroup comparisons because, first, other groups are generally present and salient and, second, the organizational group membership is naturally used to define the relationships with these other groups (Bartel 2001, pp. 379). Ultimately, frontline employees act on behalf of their organization towards the customer group (or other external stakeholders) (Korschun 2015, p. 612). Bateson (1985, p. 67) notes that frontline employees are involved in a “three-cornered fight”, in which the organization demands efficiency and effectiveness, the customer expects attention and a good service quality and frontline employees finds themselves “caught-in-the-middle”, having to choose sides. It can be concluded that this tension is a consistent feature of the

frontline employee job (Singh 2000, p. 15), making it a relevant subject of studying outcomes of organizational identification.

In particular, Korschun (2015, here and in the following, pp. 615) points to the *paradoxical effect* of organizational identification on frontline employees. In his conceptual work, the author suggests that with increasing cognitive organizational identification, the behavior of frontline employees becomes more of an expression of the employee's affiliation with the organization. This, in turn, leads to an increased cooperative behavior towards fellow employees but, simultaneously, to an increased antagonistic behavior towards external stakeholders. The underlying idea is based on the theoretical assumption that being a member of a social group is "a primary determinant of intergroup conflict, irrespective of objective causes" (Al Ramiah *et al.* 2011, p. 46). Korschun (2015, here and in the following, pp. 615) concludes that increasing organizational identification makes the boundary between external stakeholders and the frontline employee more salient, accentuating the sense that this stakeholder is an outsider to the own social group and, therefore, contributing to the perception of him or her as a potential adversary and driving corresponding adversary behavior. Though such an "us-versus-them" approach is in line with the SIA, it also contradicts the common assumption in marketing research that frontline employees high in organizational identification inevitably act in the best interests of their organizations (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989), making the potential effect of organizational identification paradoxical, as it may harm firm-customer relationships.

### 3.2.2 The Service Encounter

Beyond the differentiation between strategic and non-strategic frontline employees, one can also distinguish between frontline employees who sell goods and frontline employees who focus on delivering services, which has immediate consequences for the importance of the interpersonal interaction between the frontline employee and the customer (Solomon *et al.* 1985, p. 99). Technically, service represents an effort and a good is an object for sale (here and in the following, Rathmell 1966, pp. 32). However, most organizations' offerings cannot strictly be classified either or but rather fall somewhere on a continuum between pure service at the one extreme and pure goods at the other extreme. The most compel-

ling difference is, however, that an offering, which is product-focused can compensate better for a bad service, as the customer is primarily concerned with the product itself. An offering that is largely service-focused can, conversely, hardly compensate for a bad service, as the customer is strongly concerned with the service itself (here and in the following, Solomon *et al.* 1985, pp. 99). While the person-to-person interaction is important in both cases, in a product-focused offering it “is [thus] often overshadowed by a focus on the more tangible product attributes, and the customer’s more enduring interaction with the product itself”.

For example, if a customer buys a new mobile device, he will likely still be satisfied with the product and consider future purchases, even if the staff in the retail shop was rude, given that the product meets or exceeds his expectations. Contrastingly, if a customer visits a restaurant for dinner and the service is very poor, even a high quality meal is unlikely to leave the customer satisfied and make him come back.

Consistent with this conclusion, research confirms that particularly in the service marketing domain, the face-to-face interaction between frontline employees and the customer, termed ‘service encounter’, is highly relevant in the customer assessment of overall service quality and satisfaction (Bitner *et al.* 1994, p. 96; Blodgett *et al.* 1997, p. 186). As Bitner *et al.* (1990, p. 71) put it: “The service encounter frequently *is* the service from the customer’s point of view”. The boundary-spanning role that customer service frontline employees are exposed to, hence, make them the immediate face of the organization’s successes or failures towards customers (Bitner 1992, p. 57; Bitner *et al.* 1994, p. 95; Homburg *et al.* 2009, p. 38; Sirianni *et al.* 2013, p. 108; Solomon *et al.* 1985, p. 99; Stock 2016, p. 4259). This holds especially true for services that require a close and personal contact between the frontline employee and the customer (Meuter *et al.* 2005, p. 61). It is for particularly this reason, why the dissertation at hand focuses on customer service frontline employees rather than on frontline employees who primarily focus on selling goods.

### 3.2.3 Complaint Handling

#### 3.2.3.1 Complaints

Now that frontline employees have been defined and the focus on service frontline employees has been carved out, the thematic scope of this dissertation is further narrowed down to one special feature of the frontline employee job, namely the handling of customer complaints. Customer complaints are defined as customer-initiated negative feedback to the organization (Knox and van Oest 2014, p. 43) and, therefore, generally pertain to situations, in which customers are dissatisfied with the organization's products or services (Bell *et al.* 2004, p. 116). These situations are inconsistently referred to in the literature, reaching from performance failure (e.g., Brady *et al.* 2008) to service failure (e.g., Hess *et al.* 2007) and critical incident (e.g., van Doorn and Verhoef 2008) to complaint (e.g., Homburg and Fürst 2005). Specific aspects of the situation may differ, depending on the studies' context but on a general level, all these terms refer to a situation, where a customer is dissatisfied, complains and the relationship between the organization and the customer is at risk. To be consistent, this dissertation will use the term complaint throughout. Complaint situations and service encounters are conceptually closely interlinked, in that both represent social exchanges characterized by a close interaction between a frontline employee and a customer (Mattila and Patterson 2004, p. 336).

#### *Complaints as an Intergroup Conflict*

Referring to the multigroup environment of a frontline employee outlined above, the situation, in which a customer directs his or her complaint about an organization to a frontline employee is, however, primarily characterized by the following intergroup conflict: customer out-group versus frontline employee in-group (organization). More specifically, conceptual work on organizational identification implies that a customer complaint is likely to be perceived as a devaluation of the in-group by an out-group member with increasing organizational identification of the frontline employee (cf. Korschun 2015, p. 616). The customer complaint context can, thus, essentially be interpreted as an extreme form of the minimal group experiments, where an out-group member devaluates the in-group and the frontline employee has to decide, how to handle this devaluation.

The group conflict is characterized by a dissatisfied customer seeking to get a remedy for his inconvenience and, as such, represents a conflict with real self-interests involved (cf. Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 17). This is a crucial feature of the situation because real conflicts are assumed to be a driver of profound antagonism in intergroup conflicts (Oberschall 1973, p. 33), as outlined earlier (see 2.1).

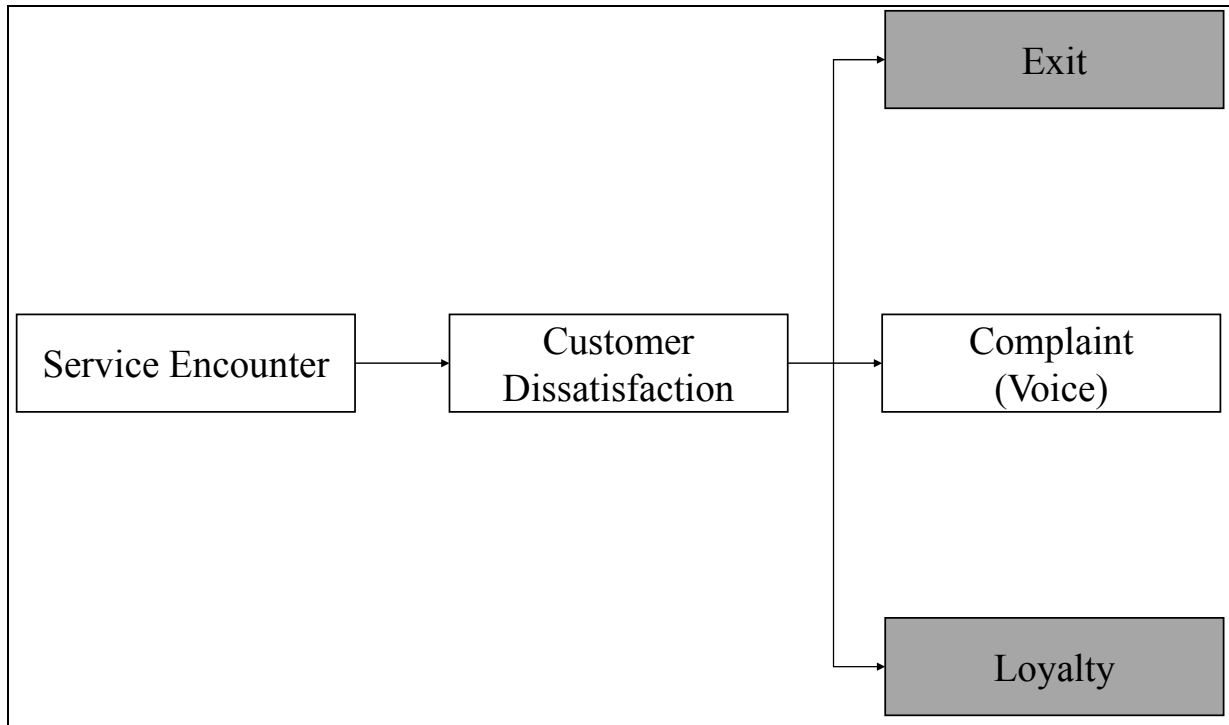
### *Conceptualizing Complaints*

In order to understand how customer complaints fit into the collectivity of available coping strategies *on the customer side* (Stephens and Gwinner 1998, p. 173), complaints are conceptualized from a *customer perspective*, as opposed to the *frontline employee perspective* employed in the remainder of this dissertation and embedded into the two most prominent frameworks (Gursoy *et al.* 2007, p. 360), in a first step.

First, Hirschman (1970) in his seminal work distinguishes three potential ways a customer can react to a situation, in which he or she is dissatisfied with the organization. First, customers can terminate the relationship and stop using the product or service. This strategy represents a corrective market mechanism and assumes that competitors are available to the customer. If this assumption is met, the customer's revenue is shifted to a different company and the organization is punished through this loss in profit (Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987, p. 339). Second, customers can simply overlook the dissatisfaction and stay loyal, a strategy that is most likely to appear in a monopolistic market, where no alternative is available to customers (Singh and Wilkes 1996, p. 354). Third, customers can actively express their dissatisfaction and complain, a strategy referred to as voice. This voice strategy is contradictory to the exit-strategy, as it does not rely on the market to improve the customer situation but the customer him- or herself takes the initiative to change the dissatisfying situation (here and in the following, Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987, p. 339). Thus, it can be interpreted as a political action, rather than an economic one. Customers actively seek to change the organization's practices/offerings or to get a remedy for their inconvenience. Obviously, this dissertation focuses on the voice strategy, where customers directly give their negative feedback about the organization to a specific frontline employee. Figure 3 depicts



the framework from Hirschman (1970). The exit- and the loyalty-options are marked with a grey background, as they are not further explored within the scope of this dissertation.



**Figure 3: Illustration of the Hirschman-Framework**

Source: Author's illustration.

Second, Day and Landon (1977) distinguish behavioral responses from non-behavioral responses in their taxonomy of customer complaints and conceptualize potential behavioral responses towards dissatisfaction as either being *public* or *private* actions. Private actions specifically include negative word-of-mouth (Gursoy *et al.* 2007, p. 360). In such situations, organizations lose the opportunity to remedy the problem and retain the customer, likely resulting in customer defection (Fornell and Wernerfelt 1987, p. 337). Moreover, the organizational reputation might be damaged due to negative word-of-mouth (Richins 1983, p. 76) and valuable customer feedback cannot be obtained. Consequently, organizations encourage the voicing of customer dissatisfaction, but towards the organization (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 221; Stephens and Gwinner 1998, p. 173). If a customer directs his or her complaint to the organization, this would conceptually be considered to be an example of a public action strategy (Gursoy *et al.* 2007, p. 360).

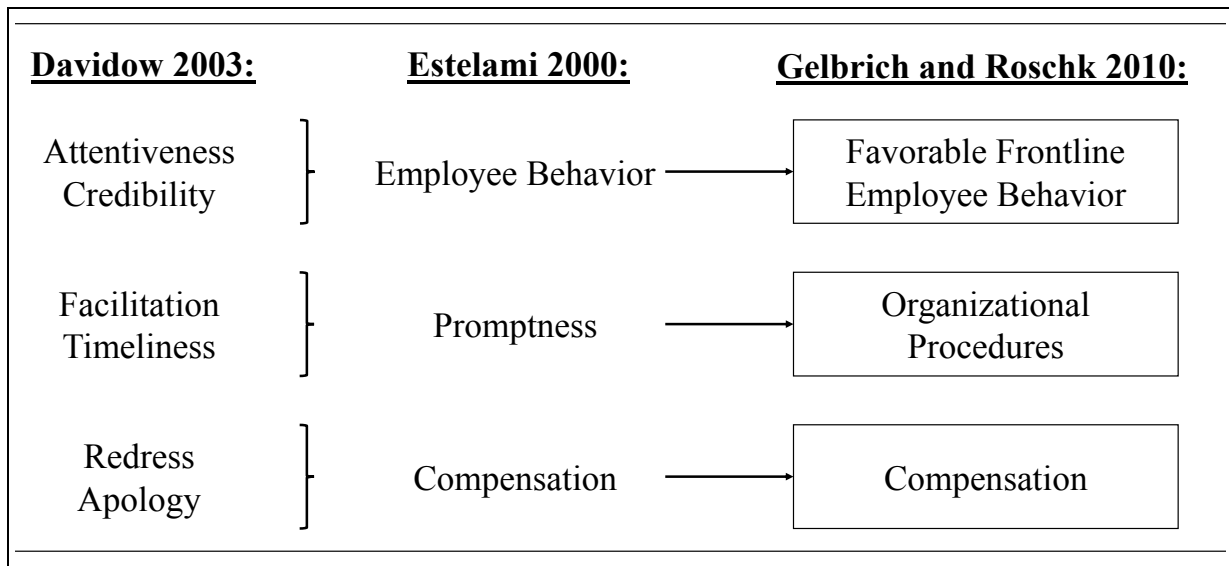
### 3.2.3.2 Complaint Handling Behavior

Once the complaint has been voiced by a customer, the frontline employee is forced to react to the complaint and to handle it (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 46). Frontline employees are key players, as they are the first to receive the complaint and represent the closest interaction to the customer (here and in the following, Walsh *et al.* 2015, p. 500). Furthermore, they play the role of a gate keeper in the complaint handling process, deciding what to do and how to process the provided feedback. This individual complaint handling behavior is understood to be one of the most important aspects (Tax *et al.* 1998, p. 60) and sometimes even called the heart of customer relationship management (Stauss and Seidel 2004). It is a critical ‘moment of truth’ that determines, if a customer relationship is maintained, can even be nurtured or if it terminates (Tax *et al.* 1998, p. 60).

Literature on customer outcomes in the complaint handling process highlights this special role by outlining that, when customers receive a satisfactory complaint handling by the frontline employee after one service failure, they show paradoxically higher satisfaction, increased positive word-of-mouth and repurchase intentions than customers that never complained (‘service recovery paradox’) (Maxham and Netemeyer 2002). Furthermore, the notion of a “double deviation effect” (Bitner *et al.* 1990) has gained support, when two consecutive unsatisfactory recovery attempts occur or if frontline employees provide an unsatisfactory complaint handling, in response to a second service failure.

Complaint handling behavior conceptually does not limit to the frontline employee’s immediate attempt to resolve a service failure but is broadened by the concept of learning from the service failure (Tax *et al.* 1998, p. 61). Therefore, the impact of complaint handling on the organization’s performance is guided through two independent paths, the *organizational learning path* and the *customer response path* (here and in the following, Yilmaz *et al.* 2016, pp. 944). Whereas the first focusses on improving business processes, by using the information obtained from the complainants, the latter is concerned with creating satisfied customers. As this dissertation is primarily concerned with the frontline employee customer interaction and only indirectly interested in explaining organizational learning processes, the remainder of this section will focus on the customer response path.

Past research has identified three main classes of organizational response behavior, defined as “the actual action itself taken by the organization [in response to a complaint]” (Davidow 2003, p. 232), on the customer response path. While Davidow (2003) introduced attentiveness and credibility of the frontline employee, facilitation and timeliness of the response, as well as redress and apology from the organization to the customer, as the three most important categories, Estelami (2000) summarized them as employee behavior, promptness and compensation. As illustrated in Figure 4, these categories were again summarized in three slightly broader classes by Gelbrich and Roschk (2011), which will be used in this dissertation to facilitate the positioning of the conceptual domain of this dissertation. The authors distinguish between favorable frontline employee behavior, organizational procedures and compensation (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011, p. 3).



**Figure 4: Classification of Organizational Responses**

Source: Author’s illustration, based on Gelbrich and Roschk (2010), p. 3.

Favorable frontline employee behavior represents the interpersonal aspect inherent to complaint handling processes and describes “empathic, friendly, responsible, careful, and informative behavior” of the frontline employee (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011, p. 3). This customer oriented behavior is characterized by attentiveness, active and credible information exchange and the creative search for mutually beneficial, integrative solutions (Homburg *et al.* 2011, pp. 56). Such a behavior of serving and helping customers represents the very heart of and can, thus, be defined essentially as the frontline employees’ service performance in a complaint

context (Liao and Chuang 2004, p. 42). Accordingly, this first type of organizational response to customer complaints will play a major role in the dissertation at hand. To be more specific, favorable frontline employee behavior in the complaint context will be referred to as *collaborative handling of the complaint*, in the remainder of this dissertation (Study 1 and Study 2a & 2b).

Organizations can also differ in their organizational procedures that are implemented for customer complaint situations. Since complaints result from a customer's dissatisfaction with the organization, a slow response may reinforce the negative experience with the organization (Estelami 2000, p. 289). Thus, it is crucial that an organization provides its frontline employees an efficient and straightforward process to promptly handle a complaint (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011, p. 3). An example for an organizational procedure that facilitates a timely response to a customer complaint is providing the frontline employees with a behavioral guideline (Homburg and Fürst 2005, p. 98). The role of organizational procedures in the complaint handling process will be introduced in this dissertation in Study 2a and Study 2b.

The third class of organizational responses is compensation and can be further distinguished into *tangible* and *intangible* compensation (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011, p. 3). Tangible compensation refers to refunding or replacing a product or service and, as such, represents a monetary or cash-equivalent value that the organization gives to the complainant (Estelami 2000, p. 289). Intangible compensation, on the contrary, represents a psychological redress from the organization to the customer (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011, p. 3). As complaint situations often include perceived social loss, such as loss of face or a threatened self-esteem, an apology, displaying regret for the failure or taking the complainant seriously through the search for an integrative solution and active listening, can help to restore social equity and redistribute self-esteem. It is apparent that the psychological compensation is closely interrelated with collaborative handling of complaints, i.e. taking the customer serious, trying to understand the problem and figuring out a win-win solution. Therefore, the psychological component of compensation is only implicitly investigated through this outcome variable. However, tangible compensation will not be examined in this dissertation.

### *Outcomes of Complaint Handling Behavior of Frontline Employees*

As the remainder of this dissertation will focus on *determinants* of frontline employees' response behavior, the following section will provide a brief overview on the *customer side consequences* of different frontline employee behaviors, in order to set the dissertation and its findings into context. In fact, research on frontline employees' complaint handling has largely focused on these customer outcomes of service recovery behaviors (e.g., Homburg and Fürst 2005; Maxham and Netemeyer 2002). The overview will, however, not go into too much detail, since these effects are beyond the empirical scope of this dissertation. However, the following discussion is necessary to understand the thematic positioning of this dissertation and the investigated relationships.

Two meta-analyses by Gelbrich and Roschk (2011) and Orsingher *et al.* (2010) provide a comprehensive overview of what insights research on customer responses to frontline employees' complaint handling behaviors has to offer. In general, this stream of research is characterized by a strong emphasis on customer justice perceptions of the frontline employee's complaint handling (e.g., Tax *et al.* 1998). Despite the fact that if a customer is satisfied with the complaint handling or not depends on both the complaint handling *and* the customer characteristics (Homburg *et al.* 2010, p. 280), some general patterns in the customers' response have been identified. Specifically, Orsingher *et al.* (2010) find in their analysis of 60 independent studies that customers' justice perceptions play a major role, when explaining customers' satisfaction with complaint handling.

In other words, the degree to which a customer is satisfied with the way his or her complaint is handled by a frontline employee, strongly depends on the perception that this handling behavior (re-)establishes distributive, interactional and procedural justice. Customer satisfaction with complaint handling, in turn, increases customers' positive word-of-mouth. An overall effect on general satisfaction and return intention is not found by the authors. However, they show that positive word-of-mouth is a driver of customers' return intention, providing an indirect link between complaint handling satisfaction and return intention. A limitation of this meta-analysis is, however, that the meta-analytic model starts off with customer justice perceptions, yet does not investigate, what frontline employee behaviors drive these perceptions.

Gelbrich and Roschk (2011) have overcome this limitation by distinguishing the three aforementioned types of potential organizational responses to customer complaints. Their meta-analytic framework introduces compensation, favorable employee behavior and organizational procedures as drivers of customers' justice perception. Similar to Orsingher *et al.* (2010), the justice perceptions are again shown to translate differently into increased post-complaint transactional and cumulative satisfaction and customer behavioral intentions, such as loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. In particular, the authors highlight that in service settings, it is of major importance to pay close attention to interactional justice, since this is the most important predictor of cumulative customer satisfaction and consequently positive word-of-mouth and loyalty in this sector. This finding is explained by the interpersonal nature of service settings and a more intense employee-customer interaction than in other industries (Gelbrich and Roschk 2011, p. 38). As favorable frontline employee behavior is the strongest predictor of interactional justice perceptions, it can be concluded that a special emphasis of research on complaint handling in service settings should lie on how such behaviors can be fostered.

This result is also supported by qualitative research. With help of a means-end approach and two laddering techniques, Gruber *et al.* (2006) and Gruber *et al.* (2009) have analyzed interviews with customers and find that customers especially value favorable frontline employee behavior, such as active listening, taking the customer seriously and the active search for a beneficial solution. Estelami (2000) add to the verification of the importance of favorable frontline employee behavior in the service sector and illustrates that collaborative behavior has a strong positive impact on customers' complaint handling satisfaction. With regard to service organizations, Homburg and Fürst (2005) also point to the relevance of establishing guidelines and creating a favorable internal environment for frontline employees. The authors show that particularly in a business-to-consumer context (as opposed to a business-to-business context) and especially in the service sector (as opposed to the manufacturing sector), providing guidelines to the employees improves customer justice perceptions, which increases complaint as well overall satisfaction and loyalty.

At this point, it can be concluded that customer satisfaction with complaint handling is an important determinant of overall customer satisfaction and future customer behavior towards the organization, such as loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. It can also be concluded that whether or not a customer is satisfied with the complaint handling, strongly depends on the collaborative frontline employee behavior and organizational procedures and that this is particularly true for the service sector. In this light, the dissertation's focus on frontline employee behavior and organizational procedures in the complaint handling process seems to be valid.

### 3.2.3.3 Service Sabotage Behavior

The complaint handling strategies referred to in 3.2.3.2 all have in common that they are desirable<sup>2</sup> and represent expected in-role behavior from the organizational perspective, as they aim to re-establish a damaged customer relationship. However, frontline employees tend to employ undesirable behavior towards customers in some situations (Skarlicki *et al.* 2008, p. 1336). A prominent example of undesirable behaviors is *sabotage of the customer service* (Harris and Ogbonna 2002, p. 163).

Service sabotage is defined as an act of retaliation from the frontline employee towards the customer, in a way that he or she disrupts the customer service and damages the customer relationship on purpose (here and in the following, Skarlicki *et al.* 2008, p. 1336). Retaliation behaviors include “harming a target believed to have caused harm, regardless of whether the behavior redistributes resources” (*ibid.*, p. 1336). Consistent with prior research, the conceptualization of frontline employees' service sabotage behavior employed in this dissertation, thus, includes all behaviors “that are intentionally designed negatively to affect service” (Harris and Ogbonna 2002, p. 166).

The very definition of ‘retaliation’, however, implies that sabotage behaviors are preceded by a *perceived* mistreatment of the frontline employee by the customer, in the first place (Skarlicki *et al.* 2008, p. 1336). If a frontline employee feels

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<sup>2</sup> This assumption excepts the case of an ‘unreasonable’ monetary compensation, since there is a natural limit of compensation for customers a frontline employee should not exceed, otherwise he or she would financially harm his or her organization.

mistreated though depends on the degree, to which he or she perceives him- or herself to be “treated with dignity and respect, and personal attacks are refrained from” (Rupp and Spencer 2006, p. 971), i.e. the degree, to which he or she *feels* harmed. This feature suggests that whether or not a frontline employee perceives to be mistreated is a strongly subjective, perceptual issue (here and in the following, Skarlicki *et al.* 2008, p. 1336). A customer interaction that is perceived to be unfair and, thus, as a mistreatment by one frontline employee, need not necessarily be perceived as a mistreatment by another employee. However, it has to be noted that perceived mistreatment of frontline employees by customers and, therefore, sabotage is especially endemic in the service domain (Harris and Ogbonna 2002, p. 163; Harris and Reynolds 2003, p. 145; Reynolds and Harris 2006, p. 97).

Particularly, the confrontational nature of a customer complaint situation makes such a service interaction rather prone to frontline employees’ perceptions of a personal attack and, thus, a perceived mistreatment than a more civil customer service exchange (cf. Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 48). This perception is even more likely, when organizational identification is strong, given that a customer complaint about the organization is perceived by the frontline employee as a devaluation of his or her in-group by an out-group member, with increasing organizational identification (cf. Korschun 2015, p. 616). Consequences of this perception are hurt feelings and feelings of embarrassment and ultimately a desire for revenge (Harris and Ogbonna 2009, p. 329).

According to Reynolds and Harris (2006), sabotage behavior can be classified as a “during- the-incident”-frontline employee tactic to deal with offending customers as perceived, as opposed to “pre-incident” tactics, such as mental preparation, and “post-incident” tactics, such as talking to colleagues (p. 100). Although the authors categorize sabotage behaviors in different classifications, reaching from ignoring difficult customers to manipulating the servicescape (Reynolds and Harris 2006, p. 100), which specific sabotage behaviors are likely to be employed by frontline employees strongly depends on the context (Harris and Ogbonna 2009, p. 327). Therefore, qualitative in-depth interviews will be conducted in Study 2a, in order to obtain all relevant dimensions of service sabotage behaviors in the specific context of this dissertation.



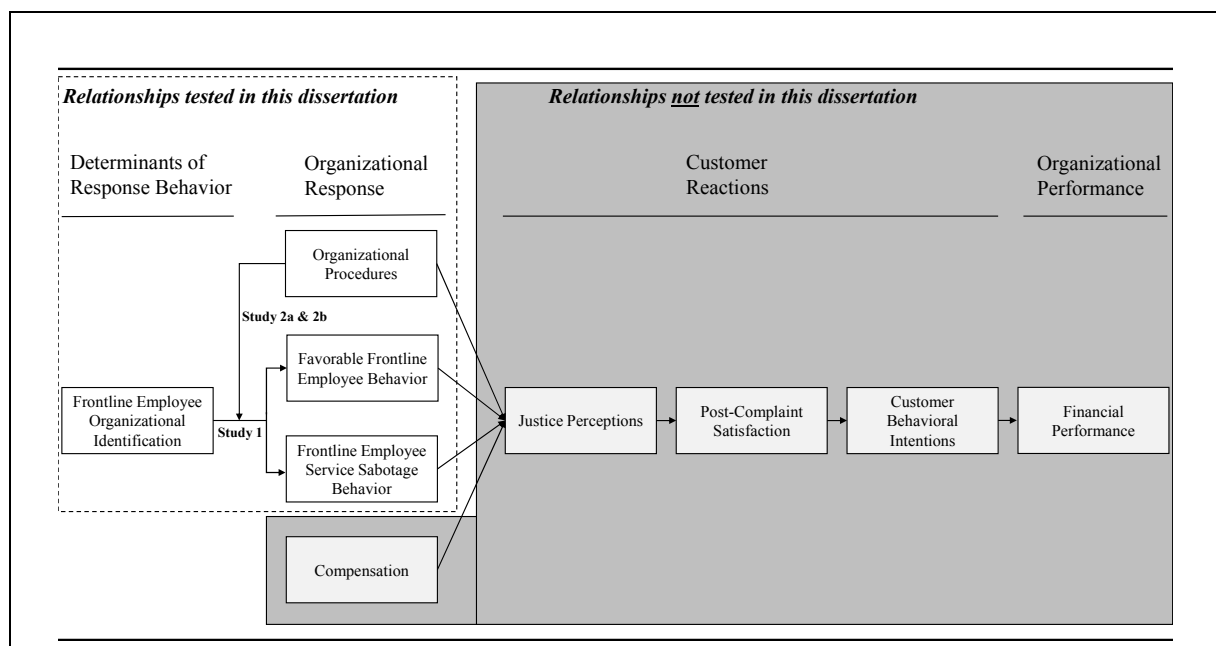
However, the motivation of a frontline employee to sabotage and the related *general* sabotage behavior, he or she is likely to choose can be classified (Harris and Ogbonna 2009, pp. 327). Specifically, research identifies four main types of service saboteurs, whereby it is important to note that frontline employees do not exclusively fall into one of these categories but are rather likely to employ more than one form of sabotage. The four general types of service saboteurs are apathetics, customer revengers, thrill seekers and money grabbers.

Apathetics are characterized by an indifference towards customer needs and likely to always go the path of least resistance. These employees are unlikely to actively sabotage but rather deteriorate the service by being slow, uninspired and poor performers in general. Their credo is “If there is an easier way, let’s do it”. In the case of a complaint or a perceived harm by the customer in general, such frontline employees are likely to passively retaliate by refusing to take any extra effort to avoid further service failures or to restore customer satisfaction. Customer revengers on the opposite actively and immediately direct their frustration to the customers by harming the customer (relationship) and worsening the customer’s service experience. Harris and Ogbonna (2009) characterize such frontline employee as the “antithesis of the ideal service worker” (p. 327), although the authors also acknowledge that those employees are often well accepted and can be very productive and constructive in other situations. Revenge behaviors can generally be classified as either being designed to create personal gratification or to take revenge on behalf of others. In the case of personal gratification, a frontline employee perceives him- or herself to be attacked by a customer and takes revenge on the customer based on this perception. In the latter case, the frontline employee perceives one of his or her fellow frontline employees to be mistreated and, accordingly, takes revenge for him or her, employing an “us-versus-them” approach. While the motivation is different in nature, the outcome is virtually the same; a customer revenger would directly harm the relationship between the organization and the customer.

Thrill seekers sabotage customer service because they are bored and view the sabotage behaviors as a welcome distraction from their perceived monotony. Those employees often sabotage openly to co-workers with the ultimate goal to amuse an audience of fellow frontline employees. It is notable that their primary aim is amusement and the corresponding sabotage behaviors do not fall into the scope

of retaliation behaviors, as defined in this dissertation, i.e. presupposing a perceived harm by the customer. Money grabbers are strongly motivated through self-interest and are willing to harm the customer experience in any possible way, as long as this behavior increases their income. Analog to thrill seekers, this type of service sabotage is largely independent of the customer and a potential personal attack, since it exclusively has to do with maximizing own profits.

In summary, it becomes apparent that although the occurrence of service sabotage does not limit to the context of customer complaints, sabotaging the service of a complaining customer appears to be more likely than sabotaging customers in more civil interactions. Accordingly, service sabotage is conceptualized in this dissertation as a potential response behavior.<sup>3</sup> Figure 5 provides an overview that facilitates the understanding of the conceptual positioning of this dissertation and clearly indicates, which relationships will be tested and which relationships will not be tested, as previous research has already found evidence for the latter.



**Figure 5: Conceptual Positioning of the Dissertation**

Source: Author's illustration, based on Gelbrich and Roschk (2011), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here that depending on the specific service sabotage behavior, service sabotage and favorable employee behavior are not necessarily mutually exclusive, i.e. both are conceptually distinct constructs and not just positive and negative poles of the same continuum. A frontline employee can very well actively listen, ask for reasons and be friendly on the outside and still sabotage the service by serving another cold meal, for instance.

In summary, Chapter 3 has some important implications for the dissertation at hand, which will be briefly summarized now, in order to facilitate the reader's understanding. First, it was outlined that organizations are a likely target for employees' social identification processes and that this organizational identification comprises two dimensions. The *cognitive* dimension is characterized by a shared identity but also the perception of criticism to be a personal issue. The *affective* dimension covers the emotional value, an employee derives from his or her membership. Second, it was shown that organizations are an even more likely target for social identification processes of frontline employees, as those employees are boundary-spanners and have to function in a multigroup environment on behalf of their organization. Third, it was highlighted that especially service frontline employees and the service encounter with customers are a relevant subject of study, since these interactions are assumed to be the key driver of customers' overall satisfaction in the service sector. Particularly, complaints were conceptualized as a difficult service interaction, in which a customer devaluates the organization towards a frontline employee. The frontline employee, in turn, is expected to respond to the complaint in a way that re-establishes the customer relationship. However, contingent upon how strong the frontline employee perceives the complaint to be a personal attack, he or she is more likely to employ sabotage behaviors towards the complainant. In this context, organizational identification conceptually plays an ambivalent role, as it predicts frontline employees to a) act on behalf of the organization that usually acts in the best interests of its customers and b) to perceive customers rather as adversaries and drive intergroup conflicts.

Based on these conceptual explanations, Chapter 4 will provide a rather comprehensive literature review on the relevant research areas. Specifically, it will be examined to what extent prior research has addressed the *outcomes* of cognitive and affective organizational identification and what is known about *determinants* of favorable employee behavior in the complaint handling process and service sabotage behaviors. Finally, the research gaps, which underlie this dissertation, will be identified.

## 4 Literature Review on Relevant Research Areas

### 4.1 Procedure and Scope of the Literature Review

The literature review will be divided into two major subchapters dealing with, first, organizational identification and, second, complaint handling, since these two research streams will be brought together in this dissertation.

In general, the selection of relevant articles is based on an online search, using Business Source Premier and Google Scholar. Articles that were assessed to be relevant, were also reviewed for other thematically suitable references. Next to the thematic fit, academic standards were considered, by primarily choosing articles that were published in peer-reviewed journals. Specifically, the (VHB) JOURQUAL 3 ranking was used to assess the quality of the articles and journals that are ranked as A+, A, B or C journals were preferred, since these journals assure the highest academic standards and findings can be assumed as being valid. However, if articles included findings that contribute to the understanding of this dissertation but have not been published in a peer-reviewed journal, exceptions were made and these articles were included as well.

In addition to quality constraints, the literature review was also subject to thematic constraints. Specifically, this dissertation focusses on the *outcomes* of organizational identification of frontline employees and, therefore, articles that are not located in this domain were excluded from the literature review, unless they offered relevant insights. For instance, although the definition of frontline employees limits to the service sector in this dissertation, the literature review does also include studies on frontline employees who focus on selling goods and on ‘regular’ employees, when those articles offered transferable results. In order to understand, which drivers and barriers prior research has identified with regard to complaint handling, the literature was reviewed for articles that deal with *determinants* of favorable employee behavior towards the customer. The literature review on *determinants* of service sabotage behavior was extended to studies outside the complaint literature, since research on this topic is relatively scarce with only one study explicitly addressing the link between customer complaints and service sabotage (Tao *et al.* 2016). After the existing literature has been reviewed, the most

important research gaps will be identified in section 4.4 and addressed in the remainder of this dissertation.

## **4.2 Organizational Identification of Frontline Employees**

### **4.2.1 Outcomes of Cognitive Organizational Identification**

Prior to discussing the literature on outcomes of cognitive organizational identification, it will be briefly discussed how the construct is measured, since this is critical for setting the findings into context. Despite the significance of the conceptual debate about the cognitive and affective dimensions of organizational identification (discussed in 3.1.1) and the conclusion that organizational identification “involves a significant affective element” (Wieseke *et al.* 2007, p. 268), an operational discussion about the measurement of both dimensions has largely been neglected. Research has instead rather focused on a cognitive measure of the construct (Johnson *et al.* 2012, pp. 1143).

Specifically, the by far most frequently used scale to measure organizational identification, in general, and in the marketing research domain, in particular, (Edwards 2005, p. 220; Riketta 2005, p. 362) is the Mael-scale. This six-item measure has been introduced to explicitly measure the cognitive dimension of organizational identification (Mael and Ashforth 1992, p. 105). The items of this 7-point Likert scale are as follows and were adapted to the respective context by subsequent research:

1. When someone criticizes (name of organization), it feels like a personal insult.
2. I am very interested in what others think about (name of organization).
3. When I talk about this organization, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’.
4. This organization’s successes are my successes.
5. When someone praises this organization, it feels like a personal compliment.
6. If a story in the media criticized the organization, I would feel embarrassed.

It is notable that Mael and Ashforth (1992, p. 105) claim that organizational identification is purely cognitive and that their scale measures the construct as such. This claim is important, as it is challenged by some researchers. In fact, it becomes apparent that while some researchers define organizational identification to be a

purely cognitive construct and use the Mael-scale (e.g., Ahearne *et al.* 2013; Bell and Menguc 2002; Dukerich *et al.* 2002; Hekman *et al.* 2009), others claim it to be a two-dimensional construct, yet, still use the same unidimensional scale (e.g., Homburg *et al.* 2009; Wieseke *et al.* 2009; Wieseke *et al.* 2007). For these reasons, following the original authors (Mael and Ashforth 1992), research that has been carried out using the Mael-scale is classified in this dissertation as empirical research on cognitive organizational identification, although some authors use the affective dimension in their rationale.

A plethora of research has been conducted on cognitive organizational identification in various fields (see Riketta 2005 and Lee *et al.* 2015 for meta-analyses), reaching from marketing (e.g., Homburg *et al.* 2009), to organizational behavior (e.g., Johnson and Ashforth 2008) and general management (e.g., Hekman *et al.* 2009). The remainder of this section aims at providing a comprehensive and integrative literature review on all relevant findings from the various disciplines to the dissertation at hand. For that purpose, findings are subsumed under the categories *employee-related outcomes*, *performance-related outcomes* and *customer-related outcomes*. Accordingly, the literature review is structured with regard to findings, not studies, which is why some articles may appear in more than one category. A summary of all relevant studies and a classification of the respective outcomes is provided in Table 2, at the end of this section.

### *Employee-related Outcomes*

A large deal of research in the field of cognitive organizational identification has been carried out on employee-related outcome variables. In general, prior research suggests that employees, who are highly identified like working for their organization more and have a higher job satisfaction (Gammoh *et al.* 2014; van Dick *et al.* 2004a; van Knippenberg and Sleebos 2006; van Knippenberg and van Schie 2000). The authors argue that such employees have a more favorable perception of their work situation and perceive even negative or difficult situations at work as less detrimental and rather as an obstacle in the way of the organization's goals that necessarily needs to be resolved (van Dick *et al.* 2004a, p. 353). Furthermore, organizational identification implies that the organization and thus the job/membership are linked to the self and individuals tend to evaluate parts of their self more positively, in turn, making the evaluation of job satisfaction more favorable

(van Knippenberg and van Schie 2000, p. 141; van Knippenberg and Sleebos 2006, p. 575).

On the one hand, this increased job satisfaction directly translates into decreased turnover intentions, mediating the effect of organizational identification on turnover intentions (van Dick *et al.* 2004a). On the other hand, research also shows that there is a significant direct link between organizational identification and turnover intentions (Cole and Bruch 2006; Edwards and Cable 2009; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006; van Knippenberg and Sleebos 2006). The reasoning behind this effect is that employees with a high cognitive organizational identification derive a large part of their self-concept from their organization (Edwards and Cable 2009, p. 658). Leaving the organization would, consequently, not only result in losing the job but result in a loss of a substantial identity share, which, in turn, makes intentions to leave unlikely and rather provides a good argument to stay (van Dick *et al.* 2004a, p. 352).

Besides job satisfaction and intentions to stay within the organization, which can be classified as rather general perceptions of and attitudes towards the employee-organization relationship, cognitive organizational identification has also been shown to affect specific work behaviors. Particularly, van Knippenberg and van Schie (2000) illustrate that cognitively identified employees are more enthusiastic and engaged in performing their job, i.e. that identification increases job involvement. The rationalization behind these findings is that employees' increased performance is in the organization's best collective interest and highly identified employees have an increased work motivation to positively influence the organization's performance (van Knippenberg 2000, p. 360).

In a frontline employee context, research also shows that a strong cognitive organizational identification leads to a higher perseverance in the job performance and to higher work-related efforts of employees with the ultimate goal to promote the organization's success (here and in the following, Bartel 2001, p. 387). This reasoning again relies on the assumption that cognitive organizational identification ties the organization's success to the self. In a similar vein, Badrinarayanan and Laverie (2011) illustrate that sales representatives exert higher sales efforts, when they are highly cognitively identified. However, it is not only a higher effort

that is exerted but this effort is also more productive than those of weakly identified employees (Celsi and Gilly 2010, p. 525) because highly identified employees work with more conscientiousness and courtesy, for instance (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000, p. 556). Those employees are also more willing to actively participate in the organization through taking over organizational functions and even making financial contributions (Mael and Ashforth 1992). It is in line with this stream of research that cognitively identified employees pay closer attention to the consequences of specific organizational behaviors and engage more in those behaviors that are beneficial to the organization and conform to group norms and values (Lam *et al.* 2010, p. 65).

Larson *et al.* (2008) also find that frontline employees with a high cognitive organizational identification have a higher confidence in their selling skills. The authors argue that there are two lines of arguments that explain this effect (here and in the following, p. 276). First, cognitive organizational identification implies shared characteristics and an overlap between the organization's identity and one's own identity. This perceived overlap makes it easier for the employee to work and sell on behalf of the organization, as compared to an organization that is more distinct from the employee's self. Second, the authors argue that a high cognitive organizational identification suggests that the employee strongly perceives the organization to be attractive and that identifying with such an attractive organization also helps him or her to be more confident about his or her own abilities. In other words, employees are convinced and, thus, more convincing.

A significant body of evidence has also been found on the theoretical notion that social identification with the organization leads to favorable behavior towards the in-group, i.e. the organization (Bartel 2001; Bell and Menguc 2002; Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Dukerich *et al.* 2002; van Dick *et al.* 2006; van Knippenberg 2000). Specifically, Bartel (2001) shows that with increasing cognitive organizational identification, frontline employees have a stronger tendency to engage in interpersonal cooperation within the organization. These cooperative behaviors include task-related helping and assisting behaviors towards colleagues but also affiliation behaviors that aim at improving colleagues' work relationships, for instance, through listening to others' problems. Those cooperation behaviors ultimately aim at improving the organizational processes and its performance.



Van Dick *et al.* (2006) add to that by showing that cognitive organizational identification increases the likelihood of frontline employees to “go the extra mile”, which they refer to as organizational citizenship behavior. Other research defines organizational citizenship behavior to consist of altruism, sportsmanship and civic virtue (Bell and Menguc 2002; Bergami and Bagozzi 2000) and find strong evidence for a positive relationship between cognitive organizational identification and such behaviors as well, in both frontline employee and ‘regular’ employee contexts. Dukerich *et al.* (2002) investigate the role of cognitive organizational identification in the context of physicians in health care systems. Similar to the results discussed above, the authors find that with increasing cognitive organizational identification, physicians are more likely to cooperate within the health care system. This finding is underpinned by the conceptual reasoning that “strong identification with an organization makes cooperative behavior toward other organizational members likely because of a heightened sense of in-group (organizational) trust and reciprocity, heightened social attraction toward in-group members, and presentation of a favorable image of the organization to self and others” (Dutton *et al.* 1994, pp. 254).

Closely related to cooperation and organizational citizenship behaviors, research on cognitive organizational identification has also focused on employees’ extra-role behaviors (Dukerich *et al.* 2002; Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014; Mael and Ashforth 1992; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006). Extra-role behaviors more specifically describe beneficial behaviors outside the regular job, which ultimately means behaviors outside the customer interaction for frontline employees (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014, p. 313; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006, p. 208). In particular, research has shown that cognitive organizational identification is a driver of participation in the organization’s brand development, such as “proactive employee behavior that goes beyond the job description and indicates active, responsible involvement in nurturing and building the organization’s brand” (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014, p. 313). The explanation for such effects is very similar to that discussed above, namely that identification processes align the organization’s goals with one’s own goals.

Furthermore, strongly identified frontline employees are more likely to share positive word-of-mouth and, thus, contribute to a positive image of the organization (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014; Mael and Ashforth 1992). Olkkonen and

Lipponen (2006) explicitly distinguish between extra-role behaviors that are directed towards the organization and those directed towards the work unit and show that cognitive organizational identification especially fosters those extra-role behaviors that are directed towards the organization. Their definition of extra-role behaviors pertains to discretionary beneficial behaviors that go beyond the existing role expectations (Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006, p. 208). Finally, Dukerich *et al.* (2002) illustrate that employees are more likely to voluntarily participate in committees and task forces in order to improve the organization, when they have a high cognitive organizational identification.

In the service sector, tendencies of employees to act on behalf of the organization appear to especially translate into more customer oriented behaviors (Celsi and Gilly 2010; Homburg *et al.* 2009; Johnson and Ashforth 2008; Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos 2014; Wieseke *et al.* 2007), where customer orientation can be broadly defined as the frontline employee's understanding of customer needs and adapting the organization's response to satisfy those needs better than the competition (Johnson and Ashforth 2008, p. 289). This finding is in line with the reasoning that most service organizations define customer orientation as a central determinant of organizational success, a desirable behavior and, accordingly, a core characteristic of their identity (Wieseke *et al.* 2007, pp. 269). Acting customer oriented, thus, becomes an expression of the organization's identity and, as such, a prototypical behavior of an ideal in-group member (here and in the following, Homburg *et al.* 2009, p. 43). As outlined in section 2.2, highly identified frontline employees are more likely to engage in prototypical behaviors, according to the SIA. Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) also find a significant effect of cognitive organizational identification on customer orientation but expand this finding by also showing that cognitive organizational identification is a driver of behaviors that are congruent with the organization's core characteristics, in general. Finally, Celsi and Gilly (2010) show that cognitive organizational identification is the starting point of a chain of effects, which ultimately results in frontline employees' stronger customer focus.

While the idea that cognitive organizational identification links the personal goals to the organizational goals has gained much empirical attention, the theoretical notion that social identities might be subject to external threats in the frontline

employee context, which, in turn, can cause detrimental consequences of cognitive organizational identification, has been predominantly neglected in the marketing literature so far. Similarly, evidence on this notion in related fields of research is fragmented (Conroy *et al.* 2017, p. 184). One qualitative study investigated potential coping strategies of cognitively identified employees with external threats (Elsbach and Kramer 1996). Specifically, the authors exposed members from eight “top-20” business schools to the 1992 Business Week survey rankings of U.S. business schools. It appeared that this exposure posed a threat to the members’ social identity, when their business school was ranked lower than others and challenged their own perceptions of a highly valued social identity. Consistent with the SIA, members responded to this threat by trying to make sense of the perceived external threat, for instance, through highlighting other more favorable identity dimensions or through drawing interorganizational comparisons that were not captured by the ranking (social creativity) (see section 2.1).

Most of the evidence on coping with identity threats, stems however from literature on business ethics (Conroy *et al.* 2017, pp. 187). Specifically, this literature stream suggests that employees engage in unethical behaviors, such as cooking the books, if this behavior ostensibly helps the organization to keep its positive image, although it harms the organization’s reputation and the faith of stakeholders in the long run (Umphress *et al.* 2010). On a more general note, Vadera and Pratt (2013) conclude that employees with a high cognitive organizational identification engage in behaviors they think are favorable to the organization, though, in fact, they harm relevant out-groups. Moreover, employees tend to rationalize organizational wrongdoing in a way that minimizes reputational damage to the organization because by extension it would harm their own reputation (Ploeger and Bisel 2013). Specifically, those employees with high cognitive organizational identification defend the organization, even when it is clearly guilty (e.g., in discriminating against women). Similarly, Zavyalova *et al.* (2016) show in a university context that employees give their organization the benefit of the doubt, when the organization has done something wrong (e.g., improper financial aid, violation of legislations etc.) and rather attribute the wrongdoing to external factors, in order to reduce the perceived identity threat. In line with this finding, research suggests that employees with a high cognitive organizational identification are particularly vulnerable to identity threats and engage in unethical behavior, such as

lying, in order to cope with and minimize the perceived threats (Leavitt and Sluss 2015).

The use of rationalizations has also been identified by qualitative research, showing that employees with a high cognitive organizational identification justify corrupt behavior by rationalizing that they are “at war” with external entities, such as competitors or regulators (Campbell and Göritz 2014). Finally, conceptual research in this domain suggests that employees with a high cognitive organizational identification tend to perceive harm to their organization as a direct affront to their identity (Zuber 2015). This personal victimization is proposed to lead to unethical response behavior to the harm. The author argues that, for instance, if a customer fraudulently returns a purchased product, the employee may feel personally harmed by this unethical behavior, although the organization is damaged and he or she is not personally affected, and will react unethically in an act of retaliation (p. 161).

#### *Performance- and Customer-related Outcomes*

Besides findings on effects of cognitive organizational identification on employee-related outcomes, research implies that cognitive organizational identification has an impact on performance- and customer-related outcomes, such as sales performance and customer satisfaction (Kraus *et al.* 2015), as well. This impact has to a large proportion been found in studies that investigated the employee-related outcomes as mediators in the relationship between cognitive organizational identification and performance- and customer-related outcomes (e.g., Homburg *et al.* 2009; Larson *et al.* 2008; Lichtenstein *et al.* 2010; van Dick *et al.* 2006). Nevertheless, there is also evidence for a direct effect of cognitive organizational identification on performance and customer outcomes (Ahearne *et al.* 2013; Kraus *et al.* 2015; Netemeyer *et al.* 2012; Wieseke *et al.* 2009; Wieseke *et al.* 2012). However, this research largely relies on the same underlying mechanisms, which will be discussed below, without explicitly testing them in their conceptual frameworks (e.g., Netemeyer *et al.* 2012, p. 1052). Therefore, in the dissertation at hand the discussion of these studies on direct effects is limited to the conclusion that cognitive organizational identification significantly increases the organizational performance and positive customer outcomes, such as customer

satisfaction (Ahearne *et al.* 2013). The exact underlying mechanisms will be discussed in the following sections.

One of the most prominent studies testing indirect effects has been provided by Homburg *et al.* (2009) who introduce an alternative, social identity-based path to the conventional service-profit chain (Heskett *et al.* 1994; Heskett *et al.* 2003). The authors show that cognitive organizational identification triggers a chain reaction through increasing customer-company identification and customer orientation, which increases customer loyalty and customer willingness to pay, ultimately resulting in an increased financial performance of the firm. The authors' reasoning is threefold (here and in the following, Homburg *et al.* 2009, pp. 42). First, they argue that highly identified frontline employees are more apt to act favorably towards the customers who, in turn, have a higher quality perception of the organization and are, thus, more inclined to identify themselves with the organization. Second, highly identified employees tend to act prototypical for the organization and more clearly communicate the core identity of the organization, making it easier for customers to identify. Third, highly identified employees are more likely to show positive emotions towards customers, again, making customer-company identification more likely. Lichtenstein *et al.* (2010) and Netemeyer *et al.* (2012) find similar evidence in their studies and replicate the finding that cognitive organizational identification is a driver of customer-company identification, which translates into increased annual customer spending. Similarly, Korschun *et al.* (2014) find a significant direct effect of cognitive organizational identification on frontline employees' job performance.

While the indirect effects of cognitive organizational identification on organizational performance is rather complex in the aforementioned studies (e.g., Homburg *et al.* 2009), other research finds more straightforward mechanisms. Larson *et al.* (2008), for instance, find an indirect effect of cognitive organizational identification on behavioral performance through an increased selling confidence. Hughes and Ahearne (2010) show effort to be an important mediator in the relationship between cognitive organizational identification with an organizational brand and brand performance, which, in turn, increases overall performance. Similarly, the authors find extra-role behavior to mediate the relationship between cognitive organizational identification and brand performance.

This finding is supported by Maxham *et al.* (2008), who, however, explicitly distinguish between in-role behavior, and extra-role behavior directed towards the customer and the organization. In the form of a retail value chain, the authors show that cognitive organizational identification has a positive impact on these behaviors, which, in turn, increase customer evaluations and ultimately store performance and average customer transaction value. The authors also provide evidence for indirect effects on customers' purchase intention, satisfaction, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. van Knippenberg (2000) proposes a value chain with cognitive organizational identification as the initiating variable, which increases employees' motivation and, ultimately, the financial performance of the firm.

Van Dick *et al.* (2006) test organizational citizenship behaviors as a mediator in the relationship between cognitive organizational identification and annual sales figures and find strong support for this effect, as well as for a positive effect on positive customer perceptions of the service encounter. Complementary, Bell and Menguc (2002) find organizational citizenship behaviors to mediate the positive effect of cognitive organizational identification on favorable customer perceptions of the provided service quality.

Besides direct and mediated positive effects of cognitive organizational identification on performance, other research has illustrated that cognitive organizational identification increases employees' work performance to a larger degree, when perceived organizational support is high and that it can buffer the negative effect of a psychological contract violation on work performance (Hekman *et al.* 2009). In another study conducted by Wieseke *et al.* (2012), the authors show that in *absence* of organizational identification, a high work team identification leads to frontline employees' negative stereotypes towards the organization's headquarter, which translate into harmful consequences for sales performance and customer satisfaction with the employee-customer interaction. It is, thus, concluded that cognitive organizational identification should be fostered in order to prevent these effects (Wieseke *et al.* 2012).

Given the large body of research investigating positive outcomes of high cognitive organizational identification, it is conspicuous that very little is known about potential negative effects of social identification processes with organizations in a marketing context (Wieseke *et al.* 2012, p. 1). In fact, only one study directly

examines such negative effects. In this study, Kraus *et al.* (2015) investigate the detrimental outcomes of a tension in sales managers' and sales representatives' cognitive organizational identification. Organizational identification tension here refers to the divergence between the strength of sales managers' cognitive organizational identification and the strength of sales representatives' cognitive organizational identification (Kraus *et al.* 2015, p. 487). While the authors illustrate that an increasing cognitive organizational identification *congruence* between sales managers and sales representatives results in an increased sales performance and customer satisfaction, an increasing *incongruence*, contrastingly, results in a decreasing sales performance and customer satisfaction. Thereby, the authors contribute to an understanding that cognitive organizational identification must not necessarily yield positive outcomes but that situations exist, in which the outcomes can be far from desirable and fostering cognitive organizational identification could do more harm than good.

#### *Relevant Findings from Social Psychology Research*

Apart from findings from the management and marketing discipline discussed above, research in the field of social psychology has revealed some findings on social identification with a group, in general, that are of particular relevance to the dissertation at hand and will, therefore, briefly be discussed in this paragraph. Specifically, this stream of research finds evidence for the idea that with increasing identification with a group, individuals tend to feel emotions on a group- rather than on an individual level (Smith *et al.* 2007). These group-level emotions can be triggered by an even subtle activation of cognitive social categorization (Moons *et al.* 2009; Seger *et al.* 2009). Most importantly, Mackie *et al.* (2000) show that individuals tend to experience anger towards out-groups and have a desire to take actions against out-groups, such as confronting, opposing or arguing with them, when they perceive the in-group to be strong and the situation is of confrontational nature. Notably, this research is not explicitly based on the SIA but solely refers to the concept of self-categorization. It is therefore treated in this dissertation to rather contribute to the research stream on cognitive organizational identification.

The following Table 2 gives an overview of the studies discussed above.

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Ahearne, Haumann, Kraus and Wieseke (2013) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (A)	▪ 285 sales managers, 1528 sales representa- tives from an organization in the B2B sector	▪ Organizational iden- tification is a driver of sales performance and customer satisfaction with sales interac- tions.	▪ Customer- related ▪ Performance- related
Badriana- rayana and Laverie (2011)* <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (B)	▪ 168 sales representatives from a retailer	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of sales effort and brand advocacy.	▪ Employee- related
Bartel (2001) <sup>†</sup>	Administra- tive Science Quarterly (A+)	▪ 219 employees of a meal delivery organization	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of interpersonal cooperation within an organization, advo- cacy participation and work effort.	▪ Employee- related
Bell and Menguc (2002) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Retailing (A)	▪ 276 salespeople from a retail insu- rance organization	▪ Organizational iden- tification is a driver of organizational citizen- ship behaviors (i.e. al- truism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue), which, in turn, increases cus- tomer perceptions of service quality.	▪ Customer- related ▪ Employee- related

*Table continues on the next page.*



<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Campbell and Göritz (2014)	Journal of Business Ethics (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualitative data with semi-structured interviews from 14 independent experts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employees with a high cognitive organizational identification justify corrupt behavior by rationalizing that they are “at war” with external entities, such as competitors or regulators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Celsi and Gilly (2010) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 607 employees of a Marketing Science Institute member company and a high-technology firm</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 472 non-marketing employees of a hospital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of promise accuracy towards customers, which, in turn, increases effectiveness, pride and finally customer focus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Cole and Bruch (2006)	Journal of Organizational Behavior (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1056 officers, 1049 middle-managers and 1050 workers of a steel manufacturer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification decreases turnover intentions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Conroy, Henle, Shore and Stelman (2017)	Journal of Organizational Behavior (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conceptual study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research on negative outcomes of cognitive organizational identification is fragmented and underrepresented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Dukerich, Golden and Shortell (2002)	Administrative Science Quarterly (A+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 1504 physicians</li> <li>▪ Study 2 (follow-up): 285 physicians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of cooperative behavior and extra-role behavior.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Edwards and Cable (2009)	Journal of Applied Psychology (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 997 employees from different job types</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of intent to stay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Elsbach and Kramer (1996)	Administrative Science Quarterly (A+)	▪ 43 business school members	▪ When the target of organizational identification is threatened, individuals cope by highlighting favorable dimensions of the identity.	▪ Employee-related
Gammoh, Mallin and Bolman Pullins (2014) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (B)	▪ 246 sales representatives from different industries	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.	▪ Employee-related
Hekman, Bigley, Steensma and Hereford (2009) <sup>†</sup>	Academy of Management Journal (A+)	▪ 133 physicians	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of work performance.	▪ Performance-related
Homburg, Wieseke and Hoyer (2009) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 258 frontline employees of a travel agency matched with 597 customers in 109 travel agencies	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of customer orientation and customer-company identification which, in turn, increases willingness to pay, loyalty and in consequence firm financial performance.	▪ Customer-related ▪ Employee-related ▪ Performance-related
Hughes and Ahearne (2010) <sup>*†</sup>	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 260 sales representatives from 18 large distributor sales organizations	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of sales effort, extra-role behavior and, consequently, sales performance.	▪ Employee-related ▪ Performance-related

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Korschun (2015)	Academy of Management Review (A+)	▪ Conceptual study	▪ Frontline employees with a high cognitive organizational identification perceive external stakeholders as out-group members and will behave more adversarial and less collaborative.	▪ Employee-related
Korschun, Bhattacharya and Swain (2014) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 221 financial service employees	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of job performance.	▪ Performance-related
Kraus, Haumann, Ahearne and Wieseke (2015) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Retailing (A)	▪ 285 sales managers matched with 1528 sales representatives from an organization in the B2B sector	▪ If sales managers' and sales representatives' cognitive organizational identification diverge, customer satisfaction and sales performance decrease.	▪ Customer-related ▪ Performance-related
Lam, Kraus and Ahearne (2010) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 43 sales directors, 285 sales managers and 1528 sales representatives from a cleaning and sanitizing organization	▪ Organizational identification increases market orientation transfer between managers, which, in turn, increases sales performance.	▪ Employee-related
Larson, Flaherty, Zablah, Brown and Wiener (2008) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (A)	▪ 574 independent sales representatives working with a large direct selling firm	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of selling confidence, which, in turn, increases behavioral performance.	▪ Employee-related ▪ Performance-related
Lichtenstein, Netemeyer and Maxham III (2010) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Retailing (A)	▪ 306 sales managers matched with 1615 sales representative matched with 57656 customers from a retail Organization	▪ Sales managers' organizational identification is a driver of sales representatives' organizational identification, which, in turn, increases customer organizational identification, leading to an increased firm financial performance.	▪ Employee-related ▪ Performance-related

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Service Research (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 124 service employees from a retail bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of brand-congruent behavior, customer-oriented behavior, participation in brand development and positive word-of-mouth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Mackie, Devos and Smith (2000)	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (n.a.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 60 undergraduate students</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 94 undergraduate students</li> <li>▪ Study 3: 92 undergraduate students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individuals tend to experience anger towards and have a desire to take actions against out-groups, such as confronting, opposing or arguing with them, when they perceive the in-group to be strong and the out-group negatively appraises the in-group.</li> </ul>	n.a.
Mael and Ashforth (1992)	Journal of Organizational Behavior (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 297 university alumni</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of support for the organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Maxham III, Netemeyer and Lichtenstein (2008) <sup>†</sup>	Marketing Science (A+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1615 sales representatives from 306 retail stores matched with 57656 customers from a retail organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification drives in-role performance and extra-role performance towards customers and towards the organization. This leads to an increase in sales, satisfaction, purchase intention, loyalty and word-of-mouth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Performance-related</li> </ul>
Moons, Leonard, Mackie and Smith (2009)	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (n.a.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experiment 1: 87 undergraduate students</li> <li>▪ Experiment 2: 124 undergraduate students</li> <li>▪ Experiment 3: 150 undergraduate students</li> <li>Experiment 4: 55 undergraduate students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individuals with a high in-group identification tend to experience emotions on a group-level.</li> </ul>	n.a.
Netemeyer, Heilman and Maxham III (2012) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Applied Psychology (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1484 sales representatives from 212 retail stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of customer identification and customer spending.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Performance-related</li> </ul>
Ploeger and Bisel (2013)	Management Communication Quarterly (n.a.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 318 employees (convenience sample)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employees with a high cognitive organizational identification tend to rationalize organizational wrongdoing in a way that minimizes reputational damage to the organization because it would harm their own reputation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Riketta (2005)	Journal of Vocational Behavior (B)	▪ Meta-Analysis	▪ Organizational identification is distinct from commitment and related to various work-related outcomes.	▪ Employee-related
Seger, Smith and Mackie (2009)	Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (n.a.)	▪ Experiment 1: 98 university students ▪ Experiment 2: 82 university students	▪ Activating a social identity leads to a convergence of individual emotions and group-level emotions for individuals high in group identification.	n.a.
Smith, Seger and Mackie (2007)	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (n.a.)	▪ Study 1: 110 psychology students ▪ Study 2: 445 psychology students	▪ With increasing group identification, individuals tend to feel emotions on a group-level.	n.a.
Umphress, Bingham and Mitchell (2010)	Journal of Applied Psychology (A)	▪ Study 1: 224 randomly selected individuals called to jury duty by a southeastern U.S. county circuit court ▪ Study 2: 400 employees recruited with help of StudyResponse.com	▪ Employees engage in unethical behaviors, such as cooking the books, if this behavior ostensibly helps the organization to keep its positive image, although it might harm the organization's reputation and the faith of stakeholders in the long run.	▪ Employee-related

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Vadera and Pratt (2013)	Organization Science (A+)	▪ Conceptual study	▪ Employees with a high cognitive organizational identification engage in behaviors, they think are favorable to the organization, though, in fact, they harm relevant out-groups.	▪ Employee-related
van Dick, Grojean, Christ and Wieseke (2006) <sup>†</sup>	British Journal of Management (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: Multi-sample with call center agents, teachers, bank employees, clinical hospital employees etc.</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 94 teachers</li> <li>▪ Study 3: 138 employees of further education college</li> <li>▪ Study 4: 153 sales managers from travel agencies</li> </ul>	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of organizational citizenship behaviors, favorable customer perceptions and financial performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> <li>▪ Performance-related</li> </ul>
van Knippenberg (2000)	Applied Psychology: An International Review (C)	▪ Analysis based on literature review	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of work motivation, task performance and contextual performance (equivalent to organizational citizenship behaviors).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> <li>▪ Performance-related</li> </ul>
van Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006)	Journal of Organizational Behavior (A)	▪ 133 faculty members of a university	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction and decreases turnover intentions.	▪ Employee-related

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
van Knippenberg and van Schie (2000)	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 79 local government employees</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 163 university employees</li> </ul>	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of job satisfaction and job involvement.	▪ Employee-related
Wieseke, Ahearne, Lam and van Dick (2009) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Marketing (A+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 285 sales representatives of a pharmaceutical company</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 1005 frontline employees of a travel agency</li> </ul>	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of individual sales performance and business unit financial performance.	▪ Performance-related
Wieseke, Kraus, Ahearne and Mikolon (2012) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 1548 sales representatives from a cleaning and sanitizing organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of sales performance and customer satisfaction with sales interactions and decreases headquarter stereotypes.</li> <li>▪ In absence of organizational identification, high work unit identification leads to negative headquarter stereotypes, which, in turn, decrease sales performance and customer satisfaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Performance-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*



<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Wieseke, Ullrich, Christ and van Dick (2007) <sup>†</sup>	Marketing Letters (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 309 frontline employees</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 236 frontline employees</li> </ul>	▪ Organizational identification is a driver of customer orientation.	▪ Employee-related
Zavyalova, Pfarrer, Reger and Hubbard (2016)	Academy of Management Journal (A+)	▪ 7,368 university-stakeholder group-year observations on donations matched with NCAA major infractions over the period of four years	▪ Employees give their organization the benefit of the doubt, when the organization has done something wrong (e.g., violation of legislations etc.) and rather attribute the wrongdoing to external factors, in order to reduce the perceived identity threat.	▪ Employee-related
Zuber (2015)	Journal of Business Ethics (B)	▪ Conceptual study	▪ Employees with a high cognitive organizational identification tend to perceive harm to their organization as a direct affront to their identity and, thus, feel to be a victim.	▪ Employee-related

\* Study investigates brand identification

† Study focuses on frontline employees

**Table 2: Overview of Studies on Outcomes of Cognitive Organizational Identification**

Source: Author's illustration.

#### 4.2.2 Outcomes of Affective Organizational Identification

The empirical examination of the affective dimension of organizational identification has received relatively little attention, as compared to the cognitive dimension. This comes especially as a surprise, as research on cognitive organizational identification in part directly refers to the affective dimension in developing hypotheses, yet does not empirically examine the construct as having two dimensions. For instance, Wieseke *et al.* (2007) describe the SIA to include two components, a “hot” component, capturing affective organizational identification and a “cold” component, capturing cognitive organizational identification. However, the authors do not empirically disentangle these dimensions.

Few studies exist that empirically approach the two-dimensionality of the construct and explicitly measure the affective dimension (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Johnson *et al.* 2012; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006; van Dick *et al.* 2004a; van Dick *et al.* 2004b; van Dick *et al.* 2005). A summary of all relevant studies and a classification of the respective outcomes is provided in Table 3, at the end of this section. However, even of those few studies, some authors argue that “organizational commitment best reflects affective identification with the organization or parts of it” (van Dick 2001, p. 271) and, accordingly, use measures for affective commitment as a proxy for affective organizational identification (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006). However, it is again important to note here that affective commitment is a conceptually distinct construct from affective organizational identification and that this conceptual distinction also translates into an empirical distinction (e.g., Riketta 2005).

Additionally, Olkkonen and Lipponen (2006) combine items, which measure cognitive organizational identification and items, which measure affective commitment into one construct and argue that this scale measures organizational identification. However, this procedure does not allow for measuring distinct effects of the two dimensions of organizational identification (Edwards 2005). Accordingly, the authors show that their general concept of organizational identification is a driver of extra-role behavior and decreases turnover intentions, however, fall short in explaining the unique effects of each dimension. Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) treat cognitive organizational identification and affective commitment as empirically distinct constructs and show affective commitment to be a mediator in the

relationship between cognitive organizational identification and organizational citizenship behaviors.

In order to be able to fully capture the effects of affective organizational identification, van Dick *et al.* (2004b) developed scales, which explicitly measure the affective dimension with two items. Surprisingly, although the authors illustrate that cognitive and affective organizational identification are empirically distinct and that affective organizational identification is more closely related to work-related attitudes, such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors, subsequent research has hardly elaborated on these findings. Van Dick *et al.* (2004a) and van Dick *et al.* (2005) do apply the distinct measurements, however, do not explore or report if and how the distinct dimensions affect outcome variables differently but rather confirm the findings that organizational identification ‘in general’ increases job satisfaction and extra-role behavior and decreases turnover intentions.

This shortcoming in prior research on organizational identification has recently been addressed by Johnson *et al.* (2012). In a first step, the authors have reviewed all existing measures of organizational identification and extracted all items that tapped into the cognitive and into the affective dimension. Based on this extensive review, the authors developed measures that are specifically designed to measure both dimensions (see section 5.4.1 for the items used by Johnson *et al.* 2012). Johnson *et al.* (2012) show that cognitive organizational identification and affective organizational identification are empirically separate dimensions that are driven by distinct self-motives. Particularly, cognitive organizational identification is driven by a need to reduce social uncertainty (rather based on the SCT), and affective organizational identification is driven by a need for self-enhancement (rather based on the SIT). Furthermore, the study reveals that cognitive and affective organizational identification explain unique variance in employees’ organizational commitment, involvement, satisfaction and citizenship behaviors. Notably, all effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification have the same direction.

Encouraged by these findings, the reasoning that cognitive and affective organizational identification are distinct dimensions that have unique underlying self-motives and explain unique variance has just recently been recognized in a related

stream of research, namely in research on *customer identification* with the organization (Wolter and Cronin 2016). Specifically, Wolter and Cronin (2016) add that the two dimensions not only explain unique variance but that they affect some customer attitudes and behaviors in opposite ways. For example, the authors find significant evidence for a positive effect of cognitive customer identification and a negative effect of affective customer identification on resistance to organizational repositioning. This effect is explained by the motive of customers high in affective identification to enhance their selves even more by a beneficial change in the core identity, while customers high in cognitive identification enjoy the security of their core identity and refuse any change.

Furthermore, the authors highlight the importance of examining the two dimensions of identification separately and point out the risks of combining both dimensions in a higher order construct or of investigating only one dimension, since this can lead to misleading conclusions. The authors also explicitly call for research that examines potential interaction effects of cognitive and affective identification (Wolter and Cronin 2016, p. 411). Notably, research on opposing effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification, as well as research on interaction effects of both dimensions, in general, is a void to date.

The following Table 3 gives an overview of the studies discussed above.

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) <sup>†</sup>	British Journal of Social Psychology (n.a.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 409 food service employees,</li> <li>283 electronics manufacturer employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of cooperative-ness and altruistic behaviors towards the organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Johnson, Morgeson and Hekman (2012)	Journal of Organizational Behavior (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Study 1: 112 undergraduate management students</li> <li>▪ Study 2: 749 upper-level undergraduate management students</li> <li>▪ Study 3: 156 employees of a university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cognitive and affective organizational identification are empirically separate dimensions that are driven by distinct self-motives</li> <li>▪ Cognitive and affective organizational identification explain unique variance in organizational commitment, involvement, satisfaction and citizenship behavior.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Olkkonen and Lipponen (2006)	Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 160 employees of a research institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of extra-role behavior and decreases turnover intentions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Outcomes</b>
Van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, Wagner, Ahlswede, Grubba, Hauptmeier, Höhfeld, Moltzen and Tissington (2004a) <sup>†</sup>	British Journal of Management (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sample 1: 244 bank employees</li> <li>▪ Sample 2: 69 bank employees</li> <li>▪ Sample 3: 150 call center agents</li> <li>▪ Sample 4: 170 hospital employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of job satisfaction and decreases turnover intentions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher and Christ (2004b) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study 1: 515 school teachers</li> <li>Study 2: 233 school teachers</li> <li>Study 3: 358 bank accountants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification has distinguishable dimensions.</li> <li>▪ Affective organizational identification is most closely related to work-related attitudes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions and organizational citizenship behaviors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher and Christ (2005) <sup>†</sup>	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 464 school teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational identification is a driver of extra-role behavior and increases with increasing category salience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
* Study investigates brand identification		† Study focuses on frontline employees		

**Table 3: Overview of Studies on Outcomes of Affective Organizational Identification**

Source: Author's illustration.

### 4.3 Complaint Handling Behavior of Frontline Employees

#### 4.3.1 Determinants of Favorable Frontline Employee Behavior

Despite the fact that frontline employees are probably the most critical players in the complaint handling process (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 46), research that deals with determinants of frontline employees' behavior, when confronted with a complaint, is relatively scarce. Due to this scarcity, the literature review is not explicitly structured with help of categories. Nevertheless, studies that offer similar findings are discussed together. In general, findings can be classified as being either customer-, organization- or employee-related. An overview of the studies can be found in Table 4.

Yoon *et al.* (2004) show that the degree, to which a frontline employee receives organizational support and the degree, to which the customer participates in the complaint handling process positively influences the level of provided service effort, which has an indirect effect on employee service quality (as perceived by the customer) through an increased job performance. Moreover, the level of perceived supervisory support has an analogous indirect effect on service quality.

The notion of organizational support is introduced to the complaint handling process as well by Homburg and Fürst (2007), who specifically examine the role of human resource management supportiveness and a customer-oriented corporate culture on frontline employees' defensive behaviors towards complaints. The authors categorize defensive organizational behavior into three distinct types. First, frontline employees' behavior can be defensive with regard to complaint acquisition, i.e. frontline employees do not actively seek feedback from dissatisfied customers or react unfriendly, when confronted with it. Second, behavior can be defensive by not effectively transmitting the complaint to those responsible within the organization. Finally, frontline employees' behavior is classified defensive, when the complaint is not effectively utilized (no effective complaint handling, complaint analysis and decision making). Not surprisingly, Homburg and Fürst (2007) find that each type of defensive behavior towards customer complaints leads to a decreased customer complaint satisfaction and decreased complaint-based improvements within the organization, as perceived by managers. How-

ever, the authors also find that increasing the supportiveness of the human resource management with respect to complaint management and increasing the customer orientation of corporate culture both are organizational instruments to reduce defensive organizational behaviors towards complaints.

The negative impact of defensive organizational behavior is consistent with prior research, showing a ‘vicious circle of customer complaints’, in which an increased proportion of customer complaints leads to an increased suppression of the responsible organizational unit and the inaction caused by this suppression again leads to an increased number of complaints (Fornell and Westbrook 1984). Other research reveals as well that it is common at all hierarchical levels (frontline employees, supervisors and managers) that organizational members systematically conceal customer complaints (Harris and Ogbonna 2010). Frontline employees’ motives to hide complaints are predominantly personal protection, perceived customer unpleasantness, serial complaint avoidance and alienation (ibid., p. 271).

Bell *et al.* (2004) find support for a positive effect of perceived organizational support on frontline employees’ commitment to customer service. Nevertheless, the authors show that this effect is negatively moderated by customer complaints.<sup>4</sup> The boundary-spanning role of frontline employees and the perception of a “three-cornered fight” (Bateson 1985, p. 67) they are exposed to, seems to increase in a customer complaint situation and frontline employees become “sandwiched” between the organization’s expectations and the expectations of the customer they serve (Bell *et al.* 2004, p. 121). In such a situation, organizational support with regard to customer orientation is perceived to be ineffectual by frontline employees, although the organization has best intentions and exerts substantial efforts. On the contrary, the effect of supervisory support is found to be positively moderated by customer complaints, since this is a type of *social* support that helps frontline employees to deal with these stressful situations.

Customer complaints are also found to exert a direct negative effect on frontline employees’ commitment to provide customer service (Bell and Luddington 2006).

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<sup>4</sup> Here and in Bell and Luddington (2006), the customer complaint measure is a count of the number of complaints (i.e. customer feedback provided formally to the store management either in written form or verbally in a person-to-person interaction or by telephone) over a three-months period of time, prior to the distribution of the questionnaires.



The authors argue that customer complaints are a form of negative feedback that increases perceived role stress because the complaint occurs although the frontline employee has the best intentions. This perception decreases morale, which ultimately leads to a decreased commitment to customer service. Interestingly, Bell and Luddington (2006) show that this negative effect is reduced for frontline employees who have a high positive affectivity and the authors are, thus, the first to introduce a moderator on the individual frontline employee level. The reasoning behind this effect is that frontline employees with a high positive affectivity are apt to perceive and interpret external stimuli in a way that supports positive emotions. Applied to the complaint context, these frontline employees view complaints “as a potential source of improvement, rather than as a reflection of their lack of ability or poor performance” (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224).

Finally, Maxham and Netemeyer (2003) provide first insights on what drives frontline employees to “go the extra mile” and to employ extra-role behaviors towards the complaining customer. The authors show that when frontline employees share the organizational values and perceive high levels of organizational justice, they are more likely to engage in customer-directed extra-role behaviors. These extra-role behaviors have a positive effect on customers’ justice perceptions and mediate the effect of shared values and organizational justice on customer justice perceptions. Furthermore, the authors illustrate that customers’ justice perceptions increase overall customer satisfaction, satisfaction with complaint handling, purchase intention and positive word-of-mouth and serve as a mediator in the relationship between frontline-employees’ extra-role behaviors and the aforementioned customer outcomes.

The following Table 4 gives an overview of the studies discussed in this section.

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Determinants</b>
Bell and Luddington (2006)	Journal of Service Research (A)	▪ 432 frontline employees from 124 stores of a retail chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer complaints negatively affect frontline employees' commitment to customer service.</li> <li>▪ This negative effect is reduced by frontline employees' positive affectivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Bell, Menguc and Stefani (2004)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (A)	▪ 392 frontline employees from 115 stores of a retail chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer complaints negatively moderate the relationship between organizational support and commitment to customer service and moderate positively the relationship between supervisory support and commitment to customer service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Organization-related</li> </ul>
Fornell and Westbrook (1984)	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 305 firms with formal organizational units for handling consumer affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing customer complaint proportions lead to an organizational suppression by the unit that receives the complaints</li> <li>▪ This inaction again increases customer complaints, resulting in a vicious circle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organization-related</li> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> </ul>
Harris and Ogbonna (2010)	British Journal of Management (B)	▪ Qualitative interviews with 25 managers, 25 supervisors and 57 frontline employees of a retailer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Frontline employees, as well as managers and supervisors conceal customer complaints in systematic ways.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*

Authors (Year)	Journal (Ranking)	Sample	Relevant findings	Classification of Determinants
Homburg and Fürst (2007)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (A)	▪ 110 managers from 110 firms in the service and manufacturing industry, 550 complainants	▪ Defensive organizational behavior towards complaints decreases customer complaint satisfaction and manager perceived complaint-based improvements and can be reduced by supportiveness of the human resource management and a customer-oriented corporate culture.	▪ Organization-related
Maxham III and Netemeyer (2003)	Journal of Marketing (A+)	▪ 320 complainants-service agent response pairs from an electronics retailer	▪ Employees' perception of shared values and organizational justice increase customer-directed extra-role behaviors, which have a positive effect on customers' overall satisfaction, satisfaction with recovery, purchase intention and positive word-of-mouth, mediated by customer justice perceptions.	▪ Employee-related ▪ Organization-related
Yoon, Seo and Yoon (2004)	Journal of Services Marketing (C)	▪ 277 frontline employees of a retail bank matched with 1120 customers	▪ Organizational support and customer participation increase service effort which, in turn, increases job satisfaction. ▪ Organizational, supervisory support and customer participation increase job satisfaction, which, in turn, increase employee service quality.	▪ Customer-related ▪ Organization-related

**Table 4: Overview of Studies on Determinants of Favorable Frontline Employee Behavior**

Source: Author's illustration.

#### 4.3.2 Determinants of Frontline Employee Service Sabotage Behavior

While the phenomenon of employee sabotage in the manufacturing industry is widely acknowledged, frontline employee service sabotage is a relatively new research topic with few empirical studies and limited quantitative findings (Harris and Ogbonna 2006, p. 543). Therefore, this chapter is again not explicitly structured into categories, but a classification of the discussed determinants into customer-, organization- and employee-related determinants can be found in Table 5, at the end of this section.

Harris and Ogbonna (2002) were the first to introduce the notion of employee sabotage to the service sector, and found in qualitative interviews with frontline employees that sabotaging the customer service is surprisingly prevalent in this sector. The authors identify four classes of antecedents, namely individual, group and role, organizational and environmental factors, and three categories of consequences of service sabotage behaviors, namely employee consequences, service performance and firm performance.

In subsequent research, the authors explore the underlying motives that lead to service sabotage, again with help of qualitative interviews. Harris and Ogbonna (2012) differentiate between financial, group reasons, employee-firm-oriented, stress-related and customer-driven motives. Financial motives refer to frontline employees who change the service in a customer-relationship-harming way, in order to increase their monetary rewards. For example, employees who are paid on an hourly basis provide slower service to increase their pay. Group-related motives pertain to sabotage behaviors that employees employ in order to be socially approved by colleagues. In fact, the interviews revealed that public acts of sabotage are regarded as sources of intra-group status. Employee-firm-oriented sabotage behaviors are not customer directed but rather represent sabotage behaviors between colleagues or between the employee and his or her boss, i.e. making the other's job as difficult as possible due to personal differences. Stress-related motives center on the employee's need to relieve stress. Frontline employees report that they are exposed to a high level of stress and pressure and that sabotaging the customer service represents a potential outlet to reduce this stress. Finally, most closely related to the conceptualization of service sabotage as retaliation behaviors is the customer-driven motive, as this describes the desire to harm the

service of a particular customer (group), in order to take revenge for a previously perceived mistreatment.

The notion of customer mistreatment is the most prevalent research theme in the domain of service sabotage and has been investigated with help of both qualitative (Harris and Reynolds 2003) and quantitative methods (Kao et al. 2014; Skarlicki et al. 2008; Tao et al. 2016; Wang et al. 2011). Harris and Reynolds (2003) refer to customer mistreatment as dysfunctional customer behavior in their qualitative research and suggest it to increase frontline employees' desire to sabotage the service, as this is a possibility to retaliate against the customer. This finding is supported by quantitative research in the call center sector. Skarlicki *et al.* (2008) find that perceived customer injustice, i.e. customer mistreatment, is a driver of service sabotage and that this effect depends on the degree, to which the frontline employee has a moral identity. In a similar vein, Wang *et al.* (2011) show that customer mistreatment increases service sabotage and that this effect is particularly strong for frontline employees with high negative affectivity. More generally, Kao *et al.* (2014) add to that by illustrating that customer-caused stressors, especially customer mistreatment, have a stronger positive effect on service sabotage than colleague- or supervisor-caused stressors. Finally, Tao *et al.* (2016) are the first to explicitly examine the relationship between customer complaints and service sabotage and find that frontline employees experience greater anger, when the customer complains in an angry tone and when the failure is attributed to the customer.

The most comprehensive empirical examination of service sabotage has been provided by Harris and Ogbonna (2006) who test a refined and extended version of Harris and Ogbonna's (2002) conceptual model. Most important for the dissertation at hand are the findings that employees' need for social approval by work colleagues is a driver of service sabotage behavior and that service sabotage, in turn, increases employees' self-esteem and employees' perceptions of team spirit.

The following Table 5 gives an overview of the studies discussed in this section.

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Determinants</b>
Harris and Ogbonna (2002)	Journal of Service Research (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualitative interviews with 182 employees from four organizations in the hospitality industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Service sabotage is introduced by exploring, describing and classifying such behaviors.</li> <li>▪ A conceptual model of antecedents and consequences is provided.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> <li>▪ Organization-related</li> </ul>
Harris and Ogbonna (2006)	Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 259 frontline employees in the hospitality industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Empirical examination of a refined and extended version of Harris and Ogbonna's (2002) conceptual model.</li> <li>▪ Among others, employees' need for social approval by work colleagues increases service sabotage, which, in turn, decreases employees' performance, quality and customer-rapport perceptions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Harris and Ogbonna (2012)	Service Industries Journal (C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualitative interviews with 70 frontline employees in the hospitality industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Five motives are identified that drive frontline employees' sabotage behaviors: financial, customer-driven, stress-related, group reasons and employee-firm-oriented motives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Determinants</b>
Harris and Reynolds (2003)	Journal of Service Research (A)	▪ Qualitative interviews with 106 customers, frontline employees and managers in the hospitality industry	▪ Suggests dysfunctional customer behavior to increase the frontline employees' desire to retaliate, take revenge and sabotage the customer.	▪ Customer-Related
Kao, Cheng, Kuo and Huan (2014)	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (B)	▪ 420 frontline employees and 30 supervisors in the hospitality industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-caused stressors (as opposed to colleague-caused and supervisor-caused stressors) are more strongly related to service sabotage (as opposed to turnover intentions and sick leave).</li> <li>▪ Service climates in the organization reduce this negative effect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Organization-related</li> </ul>
Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld and Walker (2008)	Journal of Applied Psychology (A)	▪ 358 customer service representatives from a call center	▪ Perceived customer injustice is a driver of service sabotage, this effect is moderated by frontline employees' moral identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer-related</li> <li>▪ Employee-related</li> </ul>
Tao, Karande and Arndt (2016)	Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice (C)	▪ 178 sales representatives from a variety of retailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Frontline employees experience greater anger, when they blame the customer for the service failure rather than themselves.</li> <li>▪ When the customer complains in an angry tone, in addition, frontline employees experience even greater anger, perceive more emotional labor, develop stronger revenge intentions and are less committed to customer service.</li> </ul>	▪ Customer-related

*Table continues on the next page.*

<b>Authors (Year)</b>	<b>Journal (Ranking)</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Relevant findings</b>	<b>Classification of Determinants</b>
Wang, Liao, Zhan and Shi (2011)	Academy of Management Journal (A+)	▪ 131 call center agents for tele- phone and cell phone products	▪ Perceived customer mistreatment is a driver of service sabo- tage; this effect is stronger for frontline employees with high negative affectivity and lower for employ- ees with high self-ef- ficacy for emotional regulation, high job tenure and high ser- vice rule commit- ment.	▪ Customer- related ▪ Employee- related

**Table 5: Overview of Studies on Determinants of Frontline Employee Service Sabotage Behavior**

Source: Author's illustration.



#### 4.4 Identification of Focal Research Gaps

The literature review provided in chapter 4 reveals important findings for the dissertation at hand. However, it also reveals that there are substantial gaps in the empirical examination of the constructs of interest. Figure 6 illustrates the research gaps addressed in this dissertation and lists key references in the relevant research areas. Those parts of the illustration, which appear to be highlighted in grey, represent research gaps and it will be briefly outlined below why it is important to address them. In particular, Figure 6 shows that the empirical examination of the construct organizational identification so far has been rather unilateral.

First, the vast majority of research has dealt with the cognitive aspect of organizational identification, while neglecting the affective aspect (Johnson *et al.* 2012) (as is indicated by the grey shaded space on the right hand side of the illustration). This scarcity in empirical research is surprising given that the two-dimensionality of the construct is broadly acknowledged conceptually and given the consensus that the effects of organizational identification cannot be fully understood by focusing on only the cognitive dimension (e.g., Wieseke *et al.* 2007).

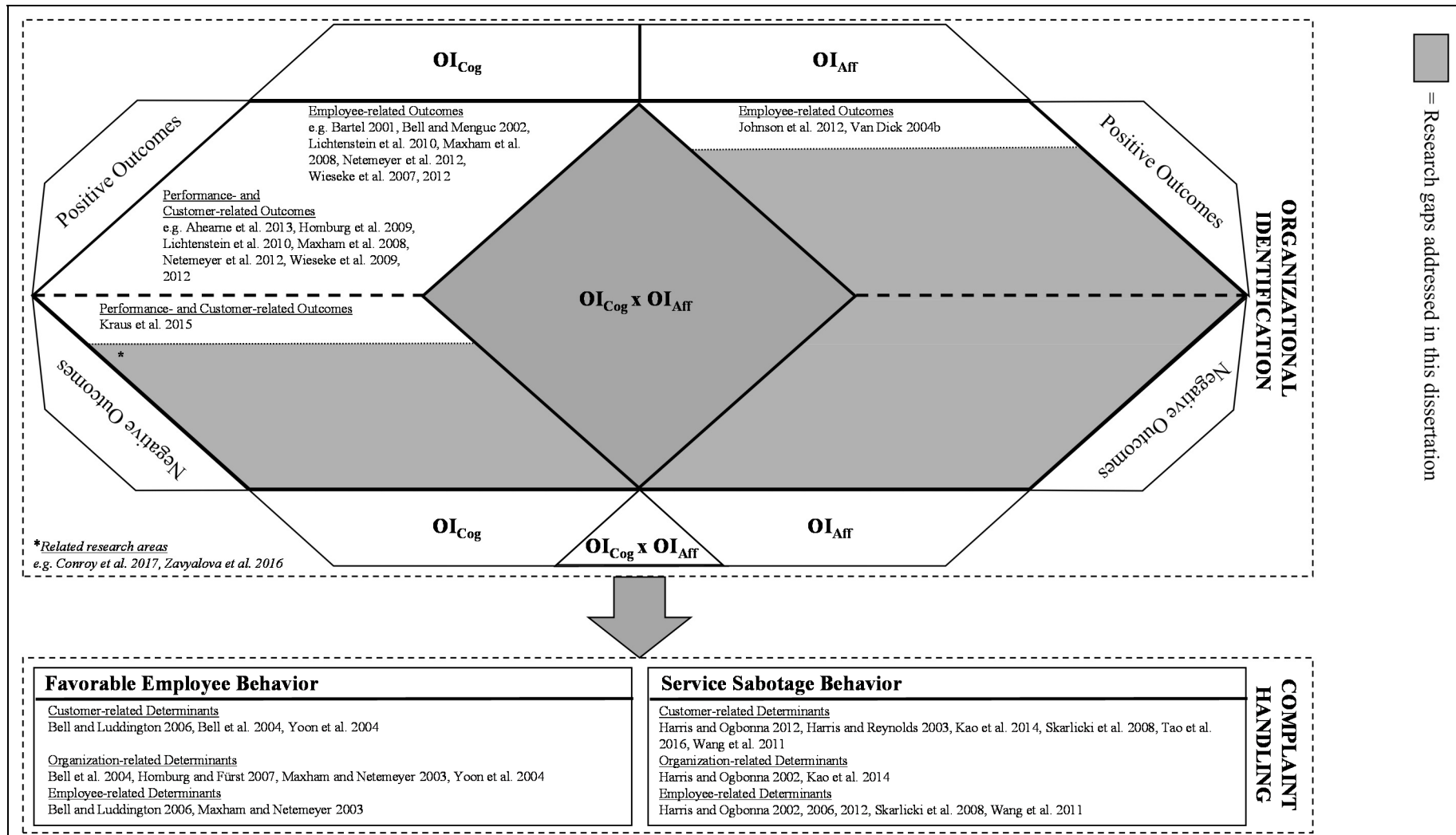
Second and closely related to this neglect in empirical research, prior marketing literature on the cognitive dimension largely relies on the assumption that high cognitive organizational identification ties the organization's success to the perceived individual success and, thus, suggests that employees high in cognitive organizational identification will always and unconditionally act in the organization's best interests (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989). In consequence, this stream of research has almost exclusively focused on positive outcomes, while the possibility of negative effects has been widely ignored (Kraus *et al.* 2015), although studies from related research areas provide evidence that cognitive organizational identification, indeed, can foster negative outcomes, such as unethical behaviors (e.g., Conroy *et al.* 2017). Specifically, while it is well-researched that frontline employees' in-group favoritism increases with increasing organizational identification, research on potentially increasing out-group discrimination and antagonism as well as the application of an "us-vs-them" approach of frontline employees towards customers, limits to conceptual work on cognitive organizational identification (Korschun 2015).

This comes especially as a surprise, since the primary purpose of the underlying theoretical framework – the SIA – was to establish an understanding of intergroup *conflict* in the first place and intra-group *favoritism* is rather regarded as the mechanism that drives out-group antagonism (Haslam 2001, p. 27). Again caused by a strong focus on the assumption of goal alignment between the organization and the individual, achieved through the identification process, this research stops at the point, where intra-group favoritism occurs, thereby ignoring the potentially detrimental consequences. When the notion of intra-group favoritism derived from the SIA is well replicable in organizational settings, the question arises, however, why out-group discrimination and antagonism should not, as it is a direct consequence within the concept of social identification (e.g., Tajfel 1974). In spite of this, if and in what ways out-group discrimination and antagonism occurs at the frontline employee-customer interface is a void to date in the empirical research. Empirically investigating this research gap is of major importance, as it contributes to understanding the potentially “dark” and paradoxical side of organizational identification in the frontline employee context (cf. Korschun 2015). This research gap is illustrated in Figure 6, by the grey shaded area in the negative outcomes section of both cognitive and affective organizational identification.

Third, the idea that cognitive and affective organizational identification are driven by distinct self-motives according to the SIA (Tajfel and Turner 1986) as well as empirical findings (Johnson *et al.* 2012) suggest that the effect of one dimension does not necessarily have the same direction as the other dimension, in every context. Research on customer-company identification in fact points into exactly this direction (Wolter and Cronin 2016). Specifically, while cognitive organizational identification arises from a need for social security, affective organizational identification serves the motive of self-enhancement (Johnson *et al.* 2012). Applied to the research context of this dissertation, this has strong implications, as it indicates that a complaint is likely to be perceived as an attack on one’s own social shelter, i.e. the in-group, and security from an individual with high cognitive organizational identification. Contrastingly, research suggests that individuals high in positive affectivity are more likely to perceive complaints as a chance to improve the organization (Bell and Luddington 2006). Drawing on this finding, it can be concluded that this should be especially true, when this positive affectivity has an organization-related character, i.e. when affective organizational identification is high.

These fundamental differences between cognitive and affective organizational identification make it especially interesting to investigate, if and how one dimension of organizational identification can compensate for a lack of the other dimension and what behavioral consequences arise from a mutually high identification, referred to here as an *organizational identification equilibrium*, as opposed to effects of an incongruent identification, with one dimension being substantially lower than the other, referred to here as an *organizational identification dissonance*. In particular, if a widening of the gap between cognitive and affective organizational identification is associated with negative consequences, this would raise the question of whether contexts exist, in which increasing a frontline employee's cognitive or affective organizational identification could do more harm than good. An empirical investigation of interaction effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification has not been conducted yet (Wolter and Cronin 2016), as illustrated by the grey shaded rhombus between both dimensions in Figure 6. In summary, research to date provides only indications for the potential effects of both organizational identification dimensions and their interplay in the complaint handling context (e.g., Johnson *et al.* 2012; Wolter and Cronin 2016).

Finally, by choosing the customer complaint context as the research setting, this dissertation also contributes to the scarce literature on individual drivers and barriers of frontline employees' favorable behavior (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003) and service sabotage (Tao *et al.* 2016) in the complaint handling process. The SIA is suggested as a parsimonious theoretical framework that helps to understand the psychological processes that underlie frontline employees' behavior in a psychologically challenging situation, such as a customer complaint. Since this dissertation is the first to introduce the concept of organizational identification to frontline employees' complaint handling (as illustrated by the grey shaded arrow in Figure 6) and existing literature provides only insufficient evidence, an empirical investigation of the research questions will be conducted and discussed in the next chapters.



**Figure 6: Illustration of the Research Gaps in the Marketing Literature**

Source: Author's illustration.

## 5 Study 1

### 5.1 Aim of the Study

Based on the previous reflections, the overarching aim of Study 1 is to answer research questions 1 and 2 by developing a conceptual and an empirical understanding of the roles that cognitive and affective organizational identification of frontline employees play in the customer complaint context. Specifically, a focus will lie on frontline employees' intentions to *collaboratively handle the complaint* and their intentions to *sabotage the complainant's service* as the dependent variables because those have been identified to play a crucial role in service recovery.

In order to achieve this overarching aim, the effects of cognitive organizational identification and affective organizational identification will be disentangled and an SIA-based investigation of the complaint context and its implications for frontline employees with high versus low degrees of either organizational identification dimension will be elaborated. Moreover, a new congruence perspective on organizational identification will be introduced and consequences of congruent versus incongruent scenarios on both organizational identification dimensions will be elaborated.

### 5.2 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Before deriving formal hypotheses, it is necessary to investigate, whether a customer complaint situation is a relevant subject to study effects of organizational identification, i.e. if the organizational identity is at all likely to be salient in this context. Therefore, the assumptions concerning the salience of the organizational identity will be briefly assessed.

First, a customer complaint situation represents a conflict between two groups, the organizational group (in-group) and the customer group (out-group), which makes it likely that the frontline employee rather behaves as a function of his or her group membership than in terms of his or her individual characteristics, according to the SIA (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 8) (see also section 2.1). Against this background, the likelihood of a salient organizational identity should be high.

Second, the comparative and normative fit and the accessibility of the social identity determine, whether it is salient in a given context or not (Turner 1985, p. 102) (see also 2.2). Comparative fit is considered to be high in a customer complaint situation, as the confrontational nature of the customer feedback should highlight the boundary between the customer and the organization group (Korschun 2015, p. 616) and classifying the complainant into the customer group represents a sound way of understanding and interpreting the situation (cf. Haslam 2001, p. 50). Normative fit is considered to be high as well, since complaining represents a stereotypical behavior associated with the customer group and again invokes the difference between both groups (here and in the following, cf. Turner *et al.* 1987, p. 55).

Finally, the accessibility of the organizational identity determines the salience of a social identity. Accessibility depends on the degree of cognitive organizational identification because this dimension of organizational identification defines the relative importance of the organizational identity to the frontline employee's self-concept and, thus, determines the input required to make the identity salient (the higher the relative importance, the higher the range of stimuli that are likely to activate the social identity).

In conclusion, customer complaints appear to be a relevant subject to study effects of organizational identification and, therefore, formal hypotheses will be derived, in the following.

### *Direct Effects*

Strong cognitive organizational identification means that frontline employees derive a large part of their self-concept from their membership of the organization (Tajfel 1978b, p. 63) and that the personal and the organizational identity, hence, have a large overlap (Bergami and Bagozzi 2000, p. 559; Larson *et al.* 2008, p. 273). The process of deriving self-defining attributes from the organization serves the need of frontline employees for social security and defines their place in the social world (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 40). When customers complain about the organization, frontline employees with a high cognitive organizational identification are likely to perceive the complaints as a devaluation of their in-group by out-group members (Korschun 2015, p. 620; Tajfel and Turner 1986,

p. 10). Since the organizational identity and the personal identity have a large overlap, complaints about the organization are also perceived to be complaints about large parts of the own self-concept. As prior research suggests, employees high in cognitive organizational identification are particularly vulnerable to identity threats (Leavitt and Sluss 2015) because the organizational identity becomes such an integral part of the self that their identity predominantly depends upon the organization. As such, those frontline employees are likely to perceive complaint situations as a direct affront and serious threat to their identity (cf. Elsbach and Kramer 1996; Ploeger and Bisel 2013; Tajfel and Turner 1986).

The SIA indicates that individuals, who face an identity threat have several potential coping strategies (Tajfel and Turner 1986, pp. 19). The first one, namely individual mobility, is unlikely to be engaged in because being employed in an organization represents a static group membership, which does not allow for flexible group changes (Tajfel and Turner 1986, pp. 9). Specifically, the frontline employee cannot leave his or her social group, i.e. the organization and join the customer group, in a complaint situation. The second strategy, namely social creativity, is more likely to be employed (Ploeger and Bisel 2013, p. 156). Social creativity describes the cognitive process of altering or redefining a comparative situation that is unfavorable to the in-group, in a way that makes the in-group appear superior to the out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986, pp. 19) (see also section 2.1). In the context of interest, the complaint affects the superiority of the in-group detrimentally, as it highlights a potential weakness of the organization. However, it is oftentimes not unequivocally clear, which party has caused the service failure, which led to the complaint (Tao *et al.* 2016, pp. 265). This characteristic makes the situation prone to subjective interpretations, and enables frontline employees to give their organization the benefit of the doubt and attribute the failure rather to external factors, such as the customer (Zavyalova *et al.* 2016, p. 258). This coping mechanism helps to minimize the perceived identity threat (Leavitt and Sluss 2015, p. 587). In a complaint about a cold dinner, for instance, the cause could be a) attributed to the kitchen or a slow service and, thus, the organization or b) attributed to the customer who talked too much before he or she started eating, who has a peculiar sense of hot and cold or who just wants to get some extra food. Apparently, there are many ways, a customer complaint could be redefined in a manner that blames the customer and his or her behavior and not the organization and, thus, re-establishes in-group superiority.

One compelling strategy for frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification should, thus, be to attribute the underlying service failure to the customer, instead of the own organization (cf. Ploeger and Bisel 2013, p. 162). This form of social creativity would save the face, as no weakness of one's social identity has to be admitted and the superiority of the in-group over the out-group remains and is even fostered. Such a psychological process would also particularly be in line with the widely accepted notion that individuals seek information that strengthens their preexisting attitudes and beliefs and that they interpret disconfirming information in a way that makes it consistent with their beliefs again (Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Festinger 1957; Fiske and Taylor 1984). Moreover, it would be in line with findings suggesting that increased cognitive organizational identification fosters beliefs that the organization is performing well (Dutton *et al.* 1994) and that frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification engage in a biased defensive information processing in the direction of their preferred conclusions (cf. Einwiller *et al.* 2006, p. 187). Applied to the study's context, the interpretation of the complaint situation as being caused by the customer enables the frontline employee to keep viewing his in-group in a positive light.

Based on these explanations, cognitive organizational identification should decrease collaborative handling of the complaint for two reasons. First, a frontline employee high in cognitive organizational identification should have a lowered willingness to be collaborative, ask for exact reasons to understand the nature of the failure and search for solutions because from his or her subjective viewpoint, the failure has not likely been caused by the organization and there is, hence, nothing to understand or learn from it or to compensate for. Second, it is unlikely that frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification have a personal interest in the satisfaction and loyalty of a customer who unjustly devaluates their in-group and by extension their identity. Instead, the perception of the customer as an unjustly complaining out-group member should decrease the frontline employee's ambition to actively promote the organization-customer relationship. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H1:** *As the level of frontline employees' cognitive organizational identification increases, collaborative handling of the complaint will decrease.*



Besides social creativity, social competition has also been introduced as a potential coping strategy of individuals in the face of an identity threat (Tajfel and Turner 1986, pp. 19). From a theoretical SIA perspective, the specific situation of a customer complaint is particularly likely to trigger social competition in the form of intergroup discrimination, for the following reasons.

First, frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification have by definition strongly internalized the organizational identity as a significant aspect of their self-concept (here and in the following, cf. Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16). Second, the complaint situation does allow for intergroup comparisons, indeed, it is an exemplary situation for competition because either one side has made a mistake or the other. Third, the out-group naturally represents a relevant, proximal and situationally salient group, as it is the organization's target group. It can be concluded that all three variables that determine the degree, to which intergroup differentiation and discrimination occurs, according to the SIA (see also section 2.1), should have high scores in the complaint situation and, thus, that discriminating the customer is a likely strategy for frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification.

Specifically, if an alleged group assignment in a relatively meaningless situation is sufficient cause for individuals to discriminate against others at the price of sacrificing the own advantages, as has been shown in the minimal group studies (Turner *et al.* 1979, p. 200; see also section 2.1), a situation with meaningful groups, such as the organization and the customers, in a conflict with real, incompatible self-interests (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 17), such as a complaint situation, should especially foster profound antagonistic behaviors (Oberschall 1973, p. 33) and the application of an "us-vs-them" approach (Korschun 2015, p. 615). This idea is in line with empirical research suggesting that increased cognitive organizational identification increases perceptions of the organization to be strong and that this perception drives offensive action tendencies towards out-group members who devalue the in-group (cf. Mackie *et al.* 2000) and with research showing that social group membership on its own is a driver of intergroup conflict, irrespective of objective causes (Al Ramiah *et al.* 2011). It is also in line with conceptual work, indicating that along with an increased cooperativeness towards in-group fellows (e.g., Bartel 2001; Dukerich *et al.* 2002), high cognitive

organizational identification drives antagonistic behaviors towards external stakeholders (Korschun 2015, pp. 615), even if this behavior is unethical (Vadera and Pratt 2013, p. 173).

Research on service sabotage provides guidance, how such an unethical, customer-directed discriminatory behavior could be set up in the complaint context. As outlined above, frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification should be more likely to blame the customer rather than the own organization for the service failure in order to save their face. Prior research indicates that such an attribution of the failure to the customer is a driver of service sabotage of its own because it increases anger and retaliatory behaviors against the perpetrator (Tao *et al.* 2016; Zuber 2015). Moreover, employees with high cognitive organizational identification perceive the complaint targeted at their organization as a direct affront to their identity and view themselves as a victim of inappropriate customer behavior (Zuber 2015, p. 161). Such a perceived customer mistreatment, in turn, has been shown to be a strong driver of the desire to retaliate against the customer and consequently of service sabotage behaviors, as well (Harris and Reynolds 2003; Kao *et al.* 2014; Skarlicki *et al.* 2008; Tao *et al.* 2016; Wang *et al.* 2011). In Harris and Ogbonna's (2009) taxonomy of service saboteurs, those frontline employees are considered to be customer revengers (see also 3.2.3.3), who perceive themselves to be attacked by the customer and take direct revenge based on this perception (*ibid.*, p. 328). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H2:** *As the level of frontline employees' cognitive organizational identification increases, sabotage of the complainant's service will increase.*

With regard to the affective dimension of organizational identification, the SIA indicates that frontline employees with a high affective organizational identification derive strong positive emotions from their membership in the organization (Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). This characteristic has two important implications for the potential effect of affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint.

First, this process serves the individual's need for self-enhancement (Hogg 2001, p. 187; Johnson *et al.* 2012, p. 1143; Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16). The more positive the social identity of the organization is, accordingly, the more frontline

employees can use their membership in the organization to feel good about themselves, i.e. the more this need for self-enhancement is satisfied (Johnson *et al.* 2012, p. 1143). It can be assumed that a frontline employee is well aware that a collaborative handling of the complaint contributes to increased customer satisfaction and, thus, the positivity of the organization to a larger degree than a less favorable behavior would because it includes the search for mutually beneficial solutions and active listening to the customer (Homburg *et al.* 2011, p. 57). It follows that frontline employees high in affective organizational identification should have a stronger personal interest in restoring the organization-customer relationship and contribute to a positive customer perception by behaving collaboratively towards the customer, as this behavior sustains or even increases the positivity of the social identity and, thereby, helps to satisfy their need for self-enhancement (cf. Hogg 2001, p. 187).

Second, the feature that frontline employees high in affective organizational identification derive strong positive emotions from their membership indicates that they have a strong and positive organization-related affectivity. Prior research on positive affectivity in general suggests that this trait helps to understand customer complaints rather as a potential information source for personal improvements, than as a reflection of personal weaknesses and failure (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224). Analogously, when the complaint is organization-related, a positive organization-related affectivity should help frontline employees to perceive the customer complaint as a welcome source for organizational improvement rather than as an acknowledgement of organizational weakness. Accordingly, frontline employees high in affective organizational identification should be more willing to take responsibility for the cause and for resolving the complaint and will do anything in their hands to understand the problem, in order to prevent it for the future. Since collaborative handling of the complaint aims at stimulating an information flow and understanding the cause and nature of the customer complaint (Homburg *et al.* 2011, p. 57), it represents a likely strategy to gather the information needed to change the organization in a way that is beneficial to the own self-concept. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H3:** *As the level of frontline employees' affective organizational identification increases, collaborative handling of the complaint will increase.*

With regard to the prediction of the effect of affective organizational identification on service sabotage, the reasoning outlined above is well applicable. It can be analogously assumed that frontline employees are aware that sabotaging the complainant's service leads to an even stronger customer dissatisfaction, since this behavior directly aims at harming the organization-customer relationship (e.g., Harris and Ogbonna 2012, p. 2034). This increased dissatisfaction would, in turn, decrease the positivity of the social identity of the organization and is, thus, directly contradictory to the underlying motive of affective organizational identification, i.e. enhancing the self (Hogg 2001, p. 187). Against this background, it seems unlikely that frontline employees high in affective organizational identification would engage in service sabotage behaviors towards complaining customers.

Furthermore, research on service sabotage provides two more arguments that suggest a negative relationship between affective organizational identification and service sabotage. First, the reasoning that affective organizational identification decreases the frontline employee's tendency to blame the customer of an unjustified complaint but rather regard the complaint as a potential source of organizational improvement makes the perception of being mistreated by the customer unlikely (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224; Rupp and Spencer 2006, p. 971). As noted earlier, this perception of customer mistreatment is one of the major drivers of service sabotage behaviors (e.g., Skarlicki *et al.* 2008; Wang *et al.* 2011) and its absence should, thus, decrease intentions to sabotage the complainant's service. Second, prior research finds that frontline employees use service sabotage to boost their self-esteem (Harris and Ogbonna 2006, p. 545). It is argued here that with increasing affective organizational identification the need for self-enhancement is increasingly satisfied (Johnson *et al.* 2012, p. 1143), which should, in turn, decrease tendencies to search for other sources of self-enhancement, such as sabotage behaviors. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H4:** *As the level of frontline employees' affective organizational identification increases, sabotage of the complainant's service will decrease.*

*Interaction Effect*

The arguments that lead to the hypothesized effects of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service were based on the assumption that a complaint represents an identity threat to the respective frontline employee high in cognitive organizational identification (cf. Elsbach and Kramer 1996; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Zuber 2015). It was argued that this perception inhibits the frontline employee to act in the organization's best interest and a) rather reduces collaborative handling of the complaint and b) instigates customer-focused antagonism (cf. Korschun 2015, pp. 615 f.). However, if and to what extent the customer complaint is perceived to be an identity threat by a frontline employee with a high cognitive organizational identification should also depend on the level of his or her affective organizational identification, for the following reasons.

As outlined previously, affective organizational identification represents a form of organization-related emotional buffer towards external influences that helps to interpret seemingly negative information as potential improvements and, thus, to transform this negativity into a positivity (cf. Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224). This positivity, in turn, should help to neutralize perceptions of a frontline employee high in cognitive organizational identification that the customer complaint is a fundamental threat to his or her self-concept.

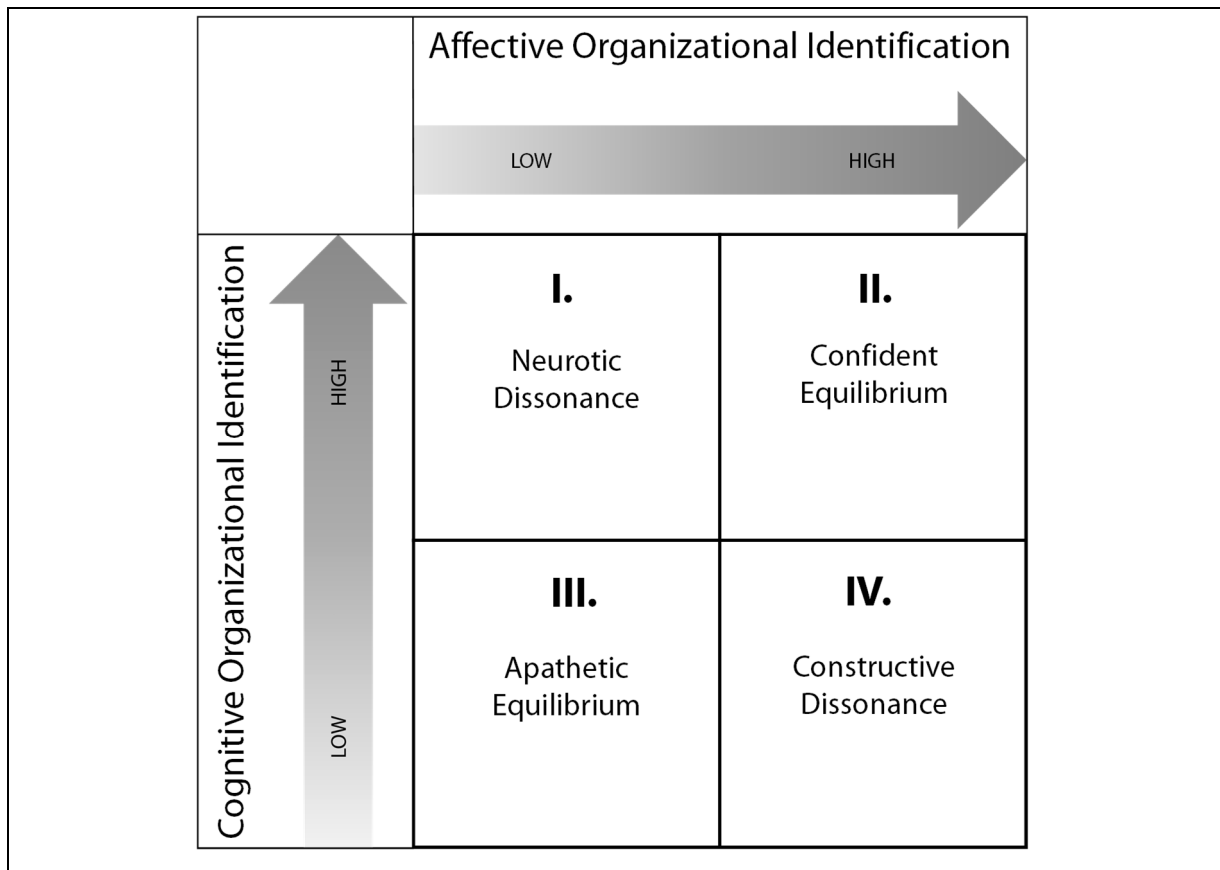
When the customer complaint is less perceived as a fundamental threat to the own identity, the argument underlying the effects of cognitive organizational identification changes. Specifically, feeling less offended should allow frontline employees with a high cognitive organizational identification to view the complaint from a more neutral, objective standpoint, which requires a) less social creativity to reframe the situation in one's own favor and b) less antagonistic retaliation actions. Those frontline employees should have an increased interest in taking ownership of the problem to be solved (cf. Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 49), i.e. turn the dissatisfied customer into a satisfied customer, because with increasing cognitive organizational identification, the personal stakes involved in the situation are increased (cf. Ashforth and Mael 1989; Edwards 2005). In other words, the presence of a high affective organizational identification should help to unfold the beneficial potential of the linkage between the organizational social identity

and the personal identity associated with cognitive organizational identification, neutralize perceptions of an identity threat and, consequently, reduce the negative effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint and the positive effect on sabotage of the complainant's service. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H5:** *As the level of affective organizational identification increases, a) the negative effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint will be attenuated and b) the positive effect of cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service will be attenuated.*

#### *Effects of Organizational Identification Incongruence*

Cognitive organizational identification and affective organizational identification constitute one conceptual domain, namely organizational identification (e.g., Johnson *et al.* 2012). Therefore, it seems reasonable to investigate the effects of both dimensions in relation to each other in more detail and study the consequences of both dimensions being congruent, i.e. equally high or low, or being incongruent, i.e. one dimension significantly higher or lower than the other (cf. Wolter and Cronin 2016). Prior to formally deriving hypotheses about effects of congruent and incongruent organizational identification on frontline employees' complaint handling intentions, however, the character of the different forms of congruence and incongruence requires further discussion. Specifically, a matrix can be constructed, emphasizing the two main types of organizational identification incongruence and the two main types of organizational identification congruence (see Figure 7). It is important to note here that the following characterization is contingent upon the customer complaint context. Although the incongruence/congruence states are supposed to be the same in any other context, they may well vary depending on the context in their nature and their consequences.



**Figure 7: Classification of the Four Main Types of Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence**

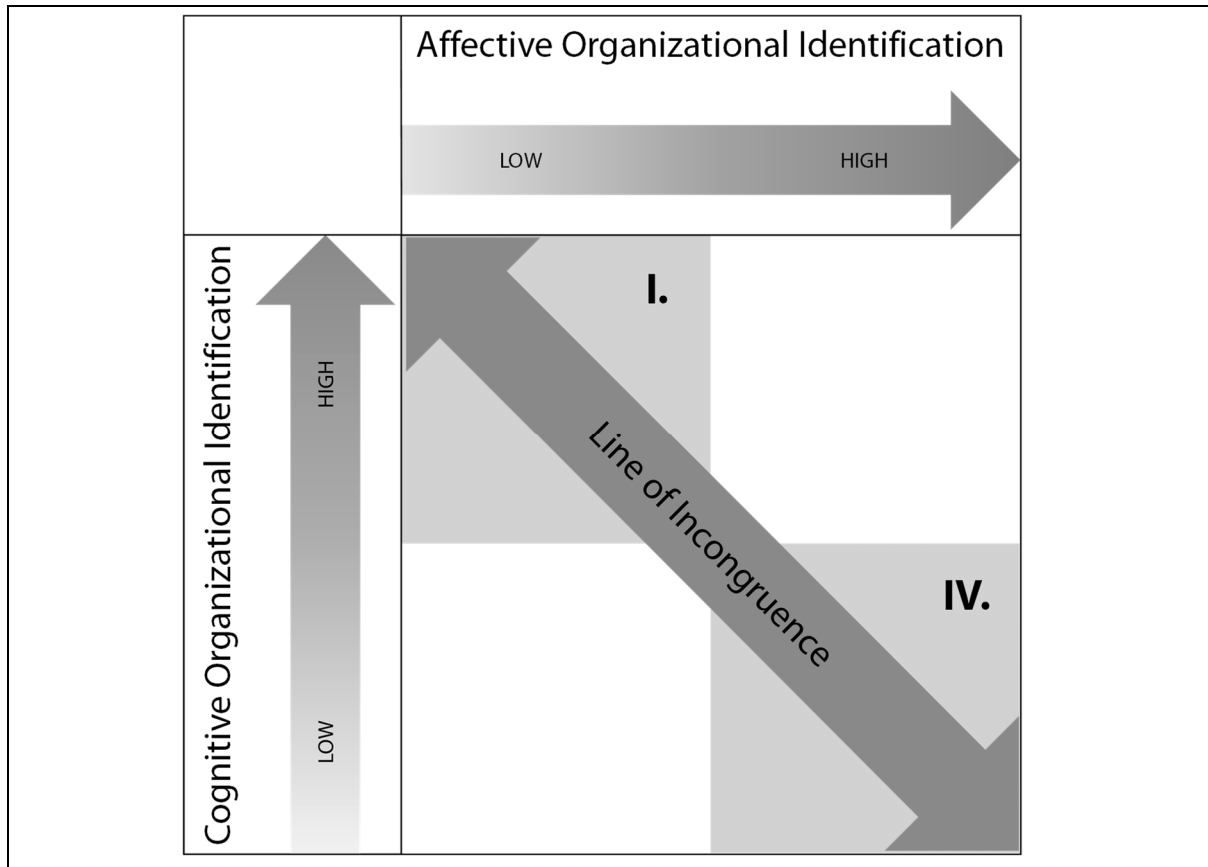
Source: Author's illustration.

First, the two main forms of organizational identification incongruence (I. and IV.) will be characterized, the consequences for a customer complaint context will be derived and formal hypotheses will be developed. The same procedure will follow for organizational identification congruence.

The first form of organizational identification incongruence is characterized by a substantially higher cognitive organizational identification, as compared to affective organizational identification (I.) and the second form is characterized by a substantially lower cognitive organizational identification, as compared to affective organizational identification (IV.).<sup>5</sup> When recapitulating the definition of both forms of organizational identification, either type of incongruence describes a state, in which an individual, i.e. the frontline employee, holds two relatively con-

<sup>5</sup> An explanation of which deviation between both dimensions is considered to be empirically significant follows in chapter 5.5.

tradictory ideas of his or her organizational membership, i.e. social identity. Figure 8 illustrates that although the two main types of incongruence can be broadly distinguished, the exact incongruence in a frontline employee's organizational identification can be represented by any point along the 'line of incongruence'.



**Figure 8: Potential States of Organizational Identification Incongruence**

Source: Author's illustration.

The first main type of incongruence (I.) is characterized by relatively weak positive emotions attached to the organizational membership (low affective organizational identification) but this membership is very dominant in the self-concept (high cognitive organizational identification) (cf. Tajfel 1978b, p. 63), represented by the upper left quadrant of Figure 8. This should lead to a cognitive dissonance because this type of incongruence implies that a large part of the self-concept is associated with relatively weak positive emotions, which should, in turn, cause an unconscious desire to derive more positive emotions from such a large part of the identity, in order to satisfy the self-enhancement motives (Hogg 2001, p. 187).



Contrastingly, the second main type of incongruence (IV.) is characterized by relatively strong positive emotions attached to the organizational membership (high affective organizational identification) but this membership is relatively detached from the own self-concept (low cognitive organizational identification) (cf. Tajfel 1978b, p. 63), represented by the lower right quadrant of Figure 8. This imbalance should lead to an unconscious desire to integrate the positive organizational membership more strongly into one's own identity because it represents a fruitful source for satisfying the underlying motive of social security (Hogg 2001; Johnson *et al.* 2012). For whatever reasons, this desire remains unfulfilled in an incongruence state of organizational identification, which should cause discomfort and stress, i.e. cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957).

It is argued, however, that the magnitude of the experienced stress in a complaint situation is stronger for the former type of incongruence (I.), for the following reasons. The absence of strong positive emotions associated with the membership combined with the strong, identity-establishing meaning of the membership to the frontline employee's self-concept should make the employee considerably vulnerable to negative customer information, such as a complaint. This type of incongruence (I.) represents a substantial deviation from the theoretically ideal situation, in which the employee can use his or her social identity to enhance the self (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16). Therefore, it is referred to here as a state of "neurotic dissonance", see Figure 7. The neurotic dissonance is even fueled in a customer complaint situation, as this complaint challenges the in-group superiority and, thus, amplifies the dissonance by providing an indirect evidence that it is probably adequate to associate relatively weak positive emotions with the organization and, thus, from large parts of the self-concept. It has already been illustrated by prior research that customer complaints are a stressful situation for frontline employees, since they act as boundary-spanners between the organization and the customer and must serve both sides (Bateson 1985, p. 67; Bell *et al.* 2004, p. 121; see also section 3.2.1). This stress should be increasingly stronger with a widening gap between cognitive and affective organizational identification because the associated higher level of dissonance produces stress on its own.

On the contrary, the type of incongruence, where cognitive organizational identification is substantially lower than affective organizational identification (IV.), can be regarded as a "constructive dissonance", see Figure 7. It is constructive in

the sense that the criticized social identity, i.e. the organization, plays a minor role in the frontline employee's self-concept (cf. Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 63). The complaint is, thus, perceived to be not as fundamental and does not highlight the dissonance with regard to the organizational identification dimensions as much. Indeed, the detached view associated with the relatively low cognitive organizational identification, in combination with the strong positive organization-related affectivity could be of help in a situation that is prone to perceived personal objections and animosities, such as a customer complaint.

Following this line of argument, a neurotic dissonance (I.) is expected to cause higher degrees of stress than a constructive dissonance (IV.) in a customer complaint situation. An increased stress level, in turn, has already been shown by prior research to require cognitive capacities and, consequently, to reduce interpersonal job performance, in general (Motowidlo *et al.* 1986). In a similar vein, it is argued here that frontline employees should be decreasingly capable to provide a collaborative handling of the complaint with a widening "neurotic dissonance". Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H6:** *As the level of frontline employees' organizational identification incongruence increases, collaborative handling of the complaint will decrease at an increasing rate, when the incongruence is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is significantly more pronounced than affective organizational identification.*

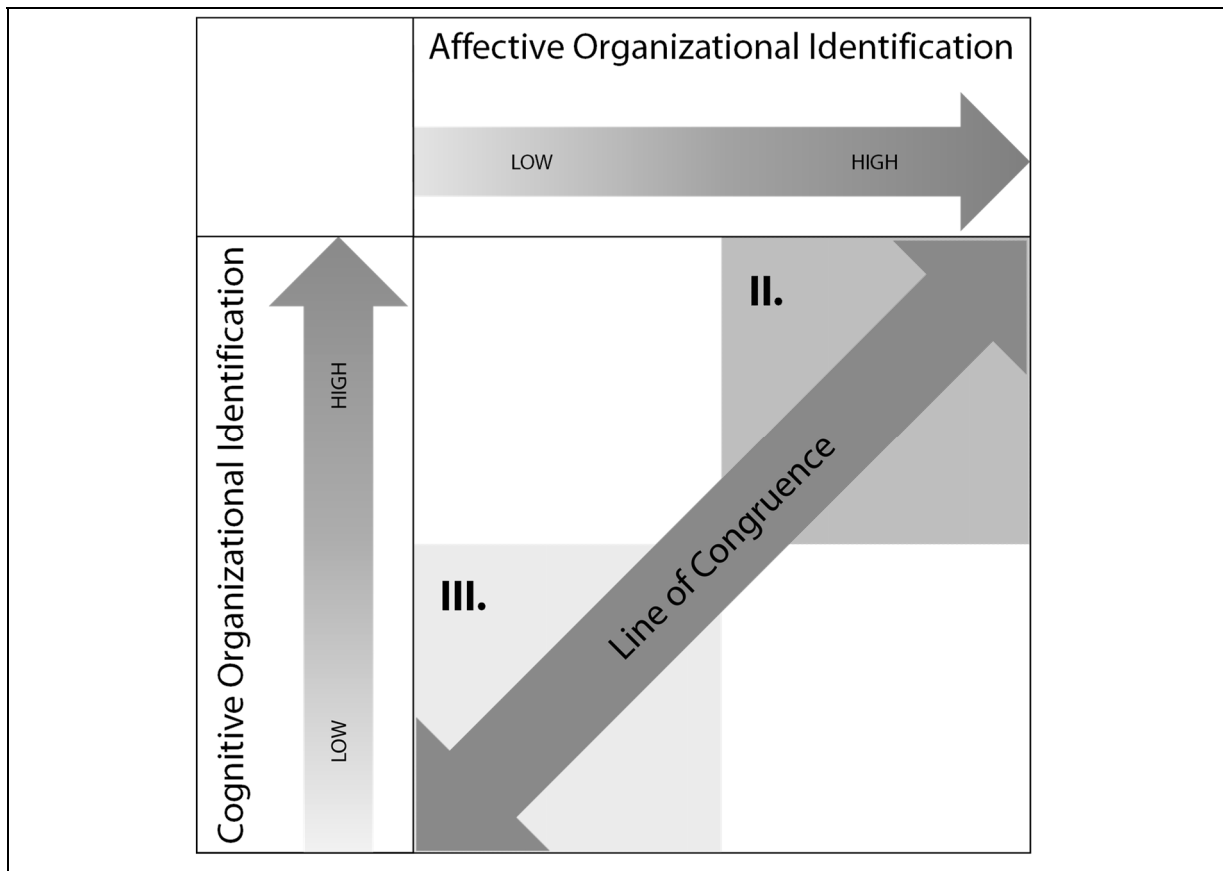
Furthermore, frontline employees with a neurotic dissonance are unlikely to be able or willing to tactfully handle the aggravated and demanding customer. Their organizational identification-related mental imbalance should be especially activated in the midst of the harsh, organization-related criticism from the customer and they may more quickly feel unfairly treated and become frustrated (cf. Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 49). The increasing levels of frustration and stress associated with an increasing "neurotic dissonance" in the complaint situation require an outlet for the frontline employee to relieve the stress. Prior research shows that sabotaging the customer service represents a frequently employed strategy to relieve stress (Harris and Ogbonna 2012, p. 2036). Particularly, when the stress is caused by the customer, there is an increased likelihood that frontline employees sabotage him or her in order to retaliate against the stressor and to

relieve their high stress levels (Kao *et al.* 2014, p. 760). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H7:** *As the level of frontline employees’ organizational identification incongruence increases, sabotage of the complainant’s service will increase at an increasing rate, when the incongruence is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is significantly more pronounced than affective organizational identification.*

*Effects of Organizational Identification Congruence*

Similar to organizational identification incongruence, two types of organizational identification congruence can be distinguished (II. and III.). Figure 9 illustrates that the congruence in a frontline employee’s organizational identification can be represented by any point along the line of congruence.



**Figure 9: Potential States of Organizational Identification Congruence**  
 Source: Author’s illustration.

First, frontline employees can be equally highly identified with regard to cognitive *and* affective organizational identification (II.). This form suggests that a large identity share is derived from the organizational membership by the frontline employee and that this large share is equivalent to the strong positive emotions associated with that membership (cf. Tajfel 1978b, p. 63), represented by the upper right quadrant of Figure 9. The second type of organizational identification congruence implies that both dimensions are equally low (III.), i.e. a small share of the self-concept is derived from the organizational membership and equivalently weak positive emotions are associated with the membership, represented by the lower left quadrant of Figure 9. The equivalence of both dimensions implies that cognitive and affective organizational identification are well-balanced and the affective positivity complies with the meaning of the social identity for the self-concept. Such a state is referred to here accordingly as an equilibrium and it is argued that this mental and emotional equilibrium is associated with significantly lower levels of stress in a customer complaint situation than an incongruence state.

However, it is argued that each main type of organizational identification congruence has its unique implications for frontline employees' complaint handling behavior. The first type of congruence (II.) indicates that the organizational social identity is strong, very determining for the frontline employees' behavior and that he or she should feel very comfortable, when this social identity is activated because of the degree of positive emotions associated with it (cf. Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). Accordingly, this equilibrium is referred to here as a "confident equilibrium". The confidence associated with such an equilibrium should help frontline employees in a social identity activating situation, such as a customer complaint, to keep a clear head and the experienced levels of stress should be relatively low. Specifically, the complaint is likely perceived to constitute a problem in the way of the organization's and, thus, the personal success, and needs to be resolved (here and in the following, Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 49; van Dick *et al.* 2004a, p. 353). Accordingly, a confident equilibrium should not only lead to a solution-oriented approach but, in line with prior research on organizational identification (*ibid.*), should moreover motivate the frontline employee to take ownership of the problem and to exert extra effort to satisfy the customer.

In a congruence state, where both dimensions of organizational identification are equally low (III.), it is rather likely that frontline employees employ a more apathetic approach to the customer complaint and its handling process. The equilibrium is, accordingly, characterized as an “apathetic equilibrium”, as the small identity share that is derived from the membership, as well as the lack of positive emotions about the membership indicate that those frontline employees should not care to a large degree about the organization’s well-being. Neither does the organization’s performance contribute to a perceived personal success or failure (cf. Ashforth and Mael 1989), nor does a success or failure of the organization change the frontline employee’s emotional state (cf. Edwards 2005). Again, relatively low levels of (experienced) stress can be expected because of the equilibrium and the relatively uninvolved perspective on the complaint situation.

It is likely that those frontline employees characterized by an “apathetic equilibrium” will go the path of least resistance and perform the minimum required in-role behavior, i.e. ask for the exact reason of the problem and try to figure out a solution that does not cause any further problems (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 46). Such behavior can be rather interpreted as a strategy to avoid penalties and dismissal than as a proactive customer-oriented solution approach (Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 225). While both the “apathetic” and the “confident equilibrium” should be characterized by frontline employees experiencing low stress levels and having relatively more cognitive capacities to resolve the customer problem, it is, thus, argued that frontline employees with an increasing “confident equilibrium” will engage increasingly stronger in collaborative handling of the complaint because their shared fate with the organization represents an inherent personal motivator. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H8:** *As the level of frontline employees’ organizational identification congruence increases, collaborative handling of the complaint will increase at an increasing rate, when the congruence is in such a way that cognitive and affective organizational identification increase simultaneously.*

In line with the reasoning above, it is also argued that reduced stress levels lead to a reduced tendency of frontline employees to relieve stress by sabotaging the complainant’s service. These tendencies should, however, be even more reduced for frontline employees who are characterized by a confident equilibrium because,

based on the SIA, it can be assumed that such frontline employees should have the confidence to handle a challenging situation, such as a customer complaint and should also care more about the organization's well-being, as it is closely interlinked with the own perceived success (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 21) and the own emotional state is contingent upon the organization to a larger degree (cf. Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). Actively harming the organization-customer relationship would, thus, be contradictory and intentions to do so should be decreasingly lower for an increasing organizational congruence. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H9:** *As the level of frontline employees' organizational identification congruence increases, sabotage of the complainant's service will decrease at an increasing rate, when the congruence is in such a way that cognitive and affective organizational identification increase simultaneously.*

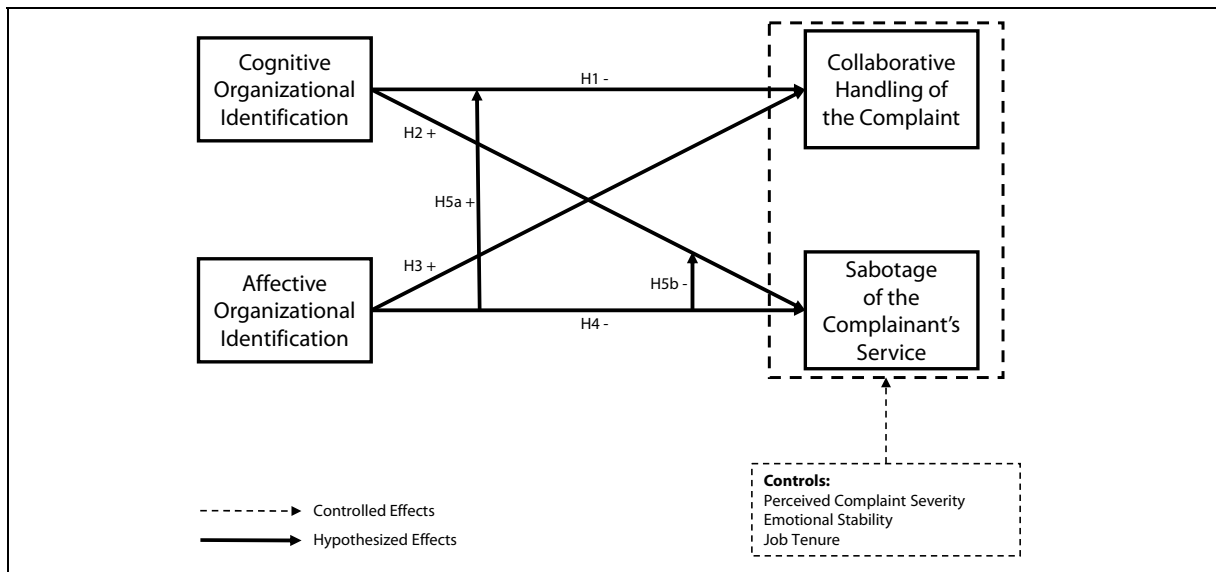
#### *Control Variables*

Furthermore, it is likely that it is not only the effects hypothesized above that influence this model, but that other variables need to be controlled for, in order to rule out the possibility that they confound the hypothesized effects. First, perceived complaint severity is controlled for. The research design of the study includes three experimental conditions with varying degrees of complaint severity (see section 5.3). As the way, in which a customer voices his or her complaint to the frontline employee has been shown to have an effect on the frontline employee's complaint handling behavior (Bell and Luddington 2006; Tao *et al.* 2016), the perception of the complaint severity is included as a control variable in the empirical model. It is controlled for the *perception* and not for the experimental condition (as a dummy variable) because it matters the most, how the frontline employee has perceived the complaint severity. Second, prior research has shown that job tenure influences complaint handling behavior in a way that more senior frontline employees show lower tendencies to sabotage the complainant, even when they feel mistreated (Wang *et al.* 2011). Since it is possible that employees with a higher job tenure naturally feel stronger bonds to their organization, the effect of job tenure on the behavioral intentions of frontline employees is controlled for in the empirical model, to avoid confounding effects with cognitive organizational identification. Finally, the general emotional stability of frontline employees is controlled for, to rule out the possibility that the effects are

solely driven by a general lack of ability to deal with stressful situations that may confound the effects of cognitive organizational identification.

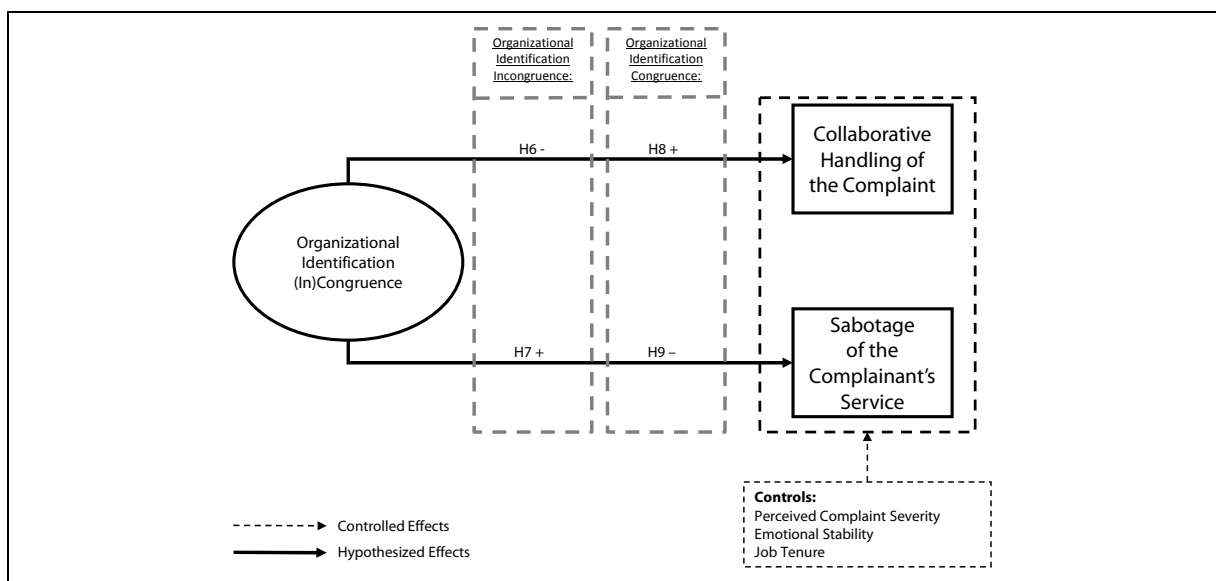
*Overview of the Conceptual Framework*

Figure 10 and Figure 11 provide an overview of the conceptual framework of Study 1.



**Figure 10: Conceptual Framework of Study 1 Capturing H1 - H5**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 11: Conceptual Framework of Study 1 Capturing H6 - H9**

Source: Author's illustration.

### 5.3 Data Collection and Sample Description

Data was collected from university employees with help of an online survey over the period of two months, from mid-November 2015 to mid-January 2016. University employees are eminently suitable to the given research questions, as a large part of their work-time is characterized by contact with students (teaching, consulting etc.) and they act as representatives of the university towards them. Consequently, the external perception of the university and its qualities depends almost exclusively on the behavior of their employees. Moreover, university employees should be familiar with complaint situations, for instance, when students are unsatisfied with the lecture, examinations or their grades. As outlined in section 3.2.1 for frontline employees in general, in these situations, they find themselves “caught in the middle” of a “three-cornered” fight, where the university demands an efficient and effective way of working and the student expects the employees’ full attention and demands an exclusive treatment (cf. Bateson 1985, p. 67). It can be concluded that this tension is a consistent feature of the job of a university employee, making this occupation group a relevant subject of study.

The questionnaire was subdivided into three parts. First, after opening the link to the online survey, respondents were directed to a welcome page with general information about the questionnaire. Second, they were asked on the subsequent page to imagine that they were randomly selected to represent the university at an open house day, where only students with an excellent bachelor degree and interesting practical experience were exclusively invited. Respondents were informed that the ultimate goal of this event was to attract these students and, thus, to ensure future research excellence at the university. While this first part of the scenario was the same for all respondents, the second part varied and respondents were randomly exposed to one of three complaint scenarios (between-subject design) (Campbell 1957, pp. 303–305; Sarris 1990, p. 75; Shadish *et al.* 2002, p. 263). All three scenarios included the description of a situation, in which a student complains that he or she was told in advance to be able to submit his or her application documents at the event but could neither find the correct contact person him- or herself nor has anyone been able to help him or her so far. Most importantly, the student particularly complained about the university and its employees in general and asked the respective university employee for help. While this information was



held constant, the complaint about the university varied in its degree from a relatively friendly to a relatively unfriendly complaint. Prior research has identified complaint severity as a direct antecedent of complaint handling behavior (Bell and Luddington 2006). This procedure, thus, ensured variance in the degree of the complaint and allowed to account for the variance explained by this context factor. Accordingly, a manipulation check, measuring the perceived complaint severity served as a control for the potential confounding effects of the complaint degree in the main analyses (see section 5.6.3) (Sarris 1992, pp. 180–186).<sup>6</sup>

The final part of the survey contained the actual questionnaire, where data was collected for all model variables. In order to reduce common method bias, the dependent variables were measured relatively at the beginning of the questionnaire, whereas the independent variables were measured at the end of the questionnaire. On the one hand, this procedure counterbalances the question order, which, in turn, neutralizes method biases by controlling the retrieval cues triggered by the question context (Podsakoff *et al.* 2003, p. 888). On the other hand, a maximum of temporal separation is achieved within the scope of the survey, which, in turn, reduces respondents' ability and/or motivation to use their previous answers to infer subsequent answers (Podsakoff *et al.* 2012, p. 549).

Before the data collection started, the survey was sent out to 15 respondents (who were excluded from the subsequent data collection), in order to test for the comprehensiveness of the survey and to assess the time needed to complete the survey. Based on this feedback, the survey was slightly adapted (Iacobucci and Churchill 2010, pp. 223). For the regular data collection, the online link to the survey was sent directly to university employees via e-mail lists. If an e-mail list was not directly accessible, deans of the faculties were contacted and asked to distribute the survey on the author's behalf to members of their respective faculty. This procedure was repeated with a reminder via e-mail one week after the last completed survey (it was assumed that one week of non-response was an indicator for a saturation in participation activities). The survey was sent out one final time to the same population, again after one week of no further response after the reminder via e-mail. This third wave of the survey was accompanied by the announcement that each fully completed survey would be rewarded by a donation of 5 € to a

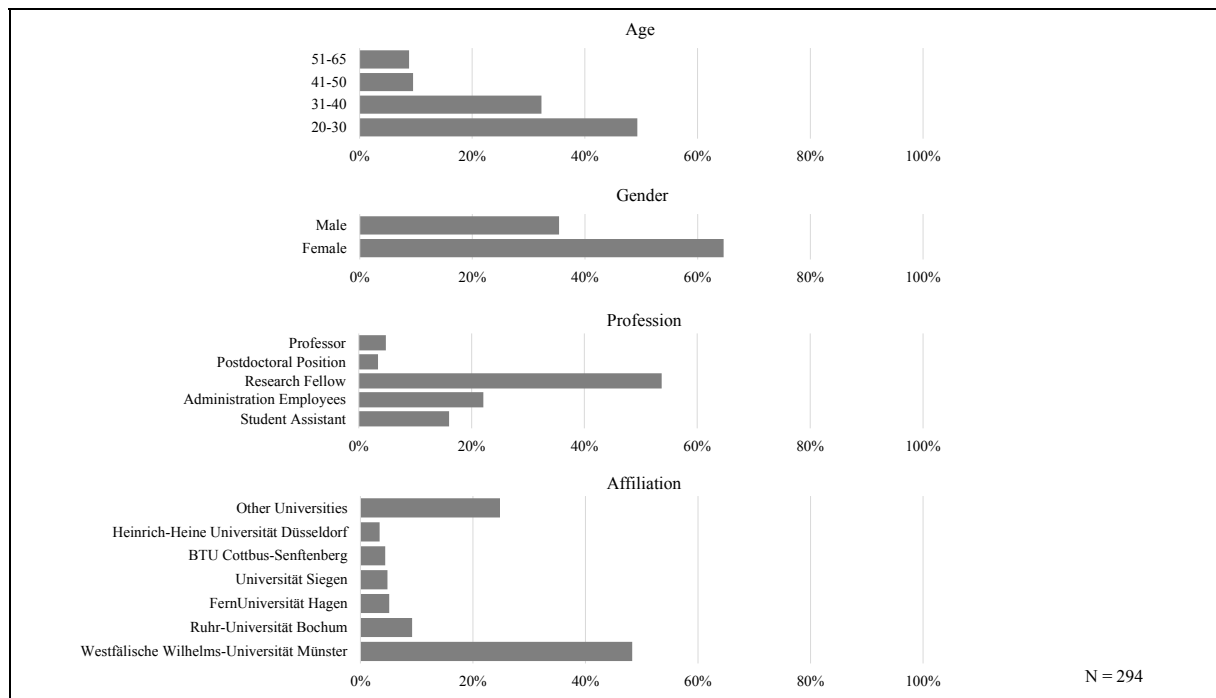
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<sup>6</sup> See Table 41 in Appendix A for the scenario descriptions.

charitable organization by the research team. In total, 26 additional respondents completed this incentivized survey. This subsample will be used for controlling potential non-response bias in the sample (see section 5.6.4). In total, the online link was opened by 923 respondents and completed by 342 respondents, corresponding to a completion rate of 37.05%. To ensure that only data from respondents who have thoroughly read and completed the survey will be used for the analyses, 48 respondents were excluded from the sample because either their completion time was conspicuously low as compared to other respondents (< 8 minutes) or they gave the wrong answer to a screening question. Respondents were asked whether in the scenario a student got lost and asked for the way, when in fact he or she did not (see Table 41 in Appendix A). This procedure yielded a final sample of 294 respondents.

Figure 12 provides an overview of selected descriptive statistics of the final sample. It is apparent that nearly half of the sample (49.3%) is between 20 and 30 years old and nearly one third (32.3%) is between 31 and 40 years old, which is likely a consequence of the fact that most of the respondents are research fellows (53.7%). The second largest group of employees are administration employees who represent 22.1% of the total sample, followed by student assistants with 16.0%. Postdoctoral employees (3.4%) and professors (4.8%) represent the smallest shares of the sample. With regard to gender, female respondents are overrepresented in the sample with a total share of 64.6%.

Although the online survey was broadly distributed across Germany and respondents from 27 universities participated in the study, the largest share of respondents (48.3%) has their affiliation at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Respondents from the Ruhr-Universität Bochum represent the second largest share with 9.2%. The rest of the sample is diversified across universities. Figure 12 shows a list of all universities with ten and more respondents.



**Figure 12: Sample Descriptives (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

## 5.4 Measures

### 5.4.1 Independent Variables

The concept of organizational identification plays a major role in this dissertation and the disentanglement of affective and cognitive organizational identification is crucial to the study's contribution. Therefore, the scales developed by Johnson *et al.* (2012) were used in this study, as the authors were the first to develop a distinct measurement of both constructs. The scales were adapted to the context of the study and measure the identification of an employee with his or her university. The respective items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale and are presented in Table 6 for affective organizational identification and in Table 7 for cognitive organizational identification.

<b>Affective Organizational Identification</b>		
Variable	Items	Source
Labels		
ID_aff1	I feel happy to be an employee of my university.	
ID_aff2	I am proud to be an employee of my university.	adapted from Johnson et al.
ID_aff3	It feels good to be an employee of my university.	2012
ID_aff4	I enjoy being an employee of my university.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 6: Measurement of Affective Organizational Identification (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Cognitive Organizational Identification</b>		
Variable	Items	Source
Labels		
ID_cog1	Being associated with my university helps me to express my identity.	
ID_cog2	My sense of self overlaps with the identity of my university.	adapted from Johnson et al.
ID_cog3	My membership in the university is very important to my sense of who I am.	2012
ID_cog4	It influences the way I think about myself, when my university is criticized.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 7: Measurement of Cognitive Organizational Identification (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

#### 5.4.2 Dependent Variables

In order to measure the degree, to which the frontline employee intends to make use of a customer oriented approach in the complaint situation and to behave in a way that meets the customers' needs and leads to customer satisfaction in the long run (Saxe and Weitz 1982, p. 344), a scale developed by Homburg *et al.* (2011) was used in this study, labeled collaborative handling of the complaint. The items were adapted to the study's context, measured on a 7-point Likert scale and are presented in Table 8.

<b>Collaborative Handling of the Complaint</b>		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
v_84	I would be very attentive to the student's complaint.	
v_85	I would ask the student for the exact reasons of his/her complaint.	
v_86	I would actively try to create a win/win situation for both the student and my university.	adapted from Homburg et al. 2011
v_87	I would be very committed to resolve the student's problems.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 8: Measurement of Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

The second dependent variable assesses the degree, to which an employee intends to sabotage the complainant's service after the complaint and was adapted to the study context from Mackie *et al.* (2000). These authors used this scale in a socio-psychological research setting on intergroup behaviors. The items of the 7-point Likert scale are illustrated in Table 9.

<b>Sabotage of the Complainant's Service</b>		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
	The student's complaint leads me to ...	
v_62	... confront the student.	
v_63	... oppose the student.	adapted from Mackie et al. 2000
v_64	... argue with the student.	
v_65	... get verbally aggressive towards the student.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 9: Measurement of Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

### 5.4.3 Control Variables

The 7-point Likert scale used to measure emotional stability was adopted from John and Srivastava's (1999) big five personality trait taxonomy and is presented below in Table 10.

Emotional Stability		
Variable	Items	Source
Labels		
v_141	I can easily handle stress.	adopted from John and Srivastava 1999
v_142	It is hard to annoy me.	
v_143	I stay calm in tense situations.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 10: Measurement of Emotional Stability (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

In order to measure the degree, to which the employee perceives the complaint about the organization as severe, a new scale was developed and measured as well on a 7-point Likert scale. The three items are shown below in Table 11.

Perceived Complaint Severity		
Variable	Items	Source
Labels		
v_272	The student massively complains about my university.	new scale
v_282	The student attacks my university.	
v_283	The student devalues my university.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 11: Measurement of Perceived Complaint Severity (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

## 5.5 Analytical Procedure

The hypotheses proposed in this study will be tested with help of polynomial regressions with response surface analysis (e.g., Edwards 1994; Edwards 2002; Edwards and Cable 2009; Harris *et al.* 2008). This analytical procedure is particularly well suited, when the consequences of a discrepancy between two independent variables (i.e. two components of a congruence measure) are a central consideration (Ahearne *et al.* 2013, p. 636). Specifically, it overcomes statistical and interpretational shortcomings of alternative methods, such as difference scores. In the difference score method, one uses the squared or absolute difference between two independent variables, and thereby combines two distinct measures into one measure (here and in the following, Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 550). This procedure confounds the single effects and does not allow any interpretation with regard to

which independent variable is a stronger driver of the outcome variable or whether a discrepancy in one direction has more severe consequences than a discrepancy in the other direction. Polynomial regression with response surface analysis offers several advantages over this procedure.

First, it allows to assess how congruence between two independent variables  $X$  and  $Y$  relate to an outcome variable  $Z$  (here and in the following, Shanock *et al.* 2010, pp. 544). Within the scope of the method, two independent variables are considered congruent, when the level of the two measures is within one half standard deviation of each other. Second, polynomial regression with response surface analysis allows to examine the effect of the degree of incongruence between two independent variables on an outcome variable. Incongruence between two independent variables is defined as a discrepancy of more than one half standard deviation between the two measures. Third, the method allows to assess, how the direction of incongruence between two independent variables relates to an outcome variable. Direction of incongruence refers to whether variable  $X$  is more than one half standard deviation lower than variable  $Y$  or more than one half standard deviation higher than variable  $Y$ .

Prior research has used the features of this methodological approach, for instance, to assess the effect of actual versus desired levels of job attitudes on satisfaction (Edwards 1994; Edwards 2002; Edwards 2007) or the effect of agreement or disagreement in ratings between supervisors and subordinates on goal accomplishment (Gibson *et al.* 2009). Over the last five years, polynomial regression with response surface analysis has also been applied to research on organizational identification, particularly to examine the (in-)congruence in interpersonal identification between sales managers and sales persons (Ahearne *et al.* 2013; Kraus *et al.* 2015).

To examine the consequences of (in-)congruence between two independent variables, using the polynomial regression approach, the outcome variable  $Z$  is regressed on the simple components of the congruence measure  $X$  and  $Y$  (centered at their scale midpoints), the squared components of the congruence measure  $X^2$  and  $Y^2$  and the interaction term between the two components  $XY$  (here and in the following, Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 545). Accordingly, the general form of the

equation to test for consequences of a congruence measure using the polynomial regression approach can be written as:

$$(1) Z = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Y + b_3X^2 + b_4XY + b_5Y^2 + \varepsilon,$$

while  $\varepsilon$  denotes an error term.

On the one hand, the results from the polynomial regression can be used to assess the simple effects of the components of the congruence measure and the linear interaction between both components on the outcome variable (here H1 to H5). On the other hand, the obtained coefficients  $b_1$  to  $b_5$  can also be used for a more nuanced interpretation of the consequences of (in-)congruence (here H6 to H9) (Ahearne *et al.* 2013, p. 636). Specifically, one can use the coefficients to plot a three-dimensional response surface pattern, representing the slope and curvature of the line of perfect congruence between the two independent variables  $X$  and  $Y$  and the slope and curvature of the line of incongruence between the independent variables (Harris *et al.* 2008, p. 669; Shanock *et al.* 2010, pp. 545). Studying the slope and curvature of the congruence line offers information about the direction and functional form of the relationship between congruence of the two components and the outcome variable. Conversely, the slope and curvature of the surface of the incongruence line offer insights about the direction of change in the outcome variable, when the incongruence increases, and which type of incongruence, i.e.  $X > Y$  or  $X < Y$ , causes stronger changes in the outcome variable.

Formally, the surface along the congruence line is calculated by substituting  $Y$  by  $X$  in Equation (1) (here and in the following, Ahearne *et al.* 2013, p. 636; Kraus *et al.* 2015, p. 498):

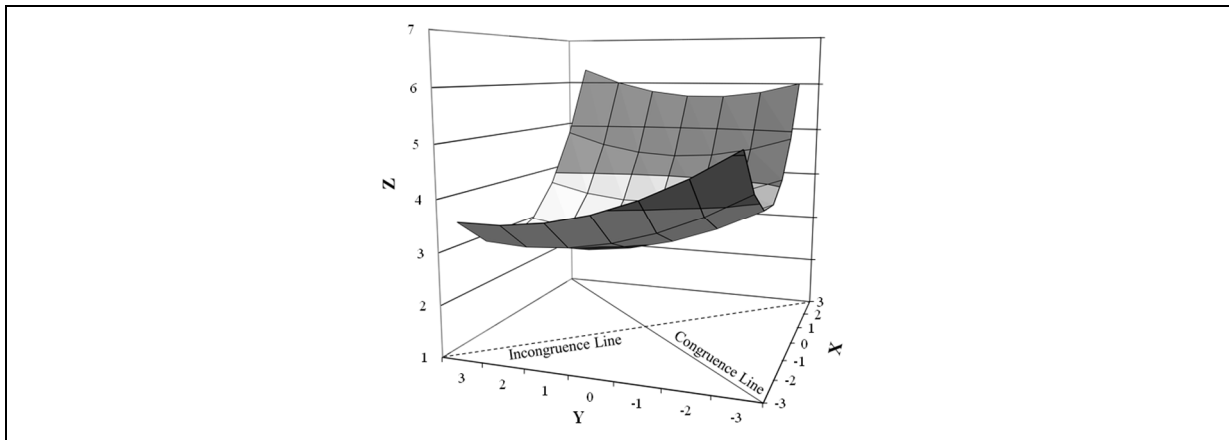
$$(2) Z = b_0 + (b_1 + b_2)X + (b_3 + b_4 + b_5)X^2 + \varepsilon.$$

$$(3) Z = b_0 + a_1X + a_2X^2 + \varepsilon.$$

In Equation (2)  $b_1 + b_2$  represents the slope of the surface and  $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$  reflects the curvature of the surface along the line of perfect congruence. For reasons of simplicity, in Equation (3)  $b_1 + b_2$  is subsumed under the coefficient  $a_1$  and  $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$  is subsumed under the coefficient  $a_2$ . Figure 13 depicts an exemplary three-



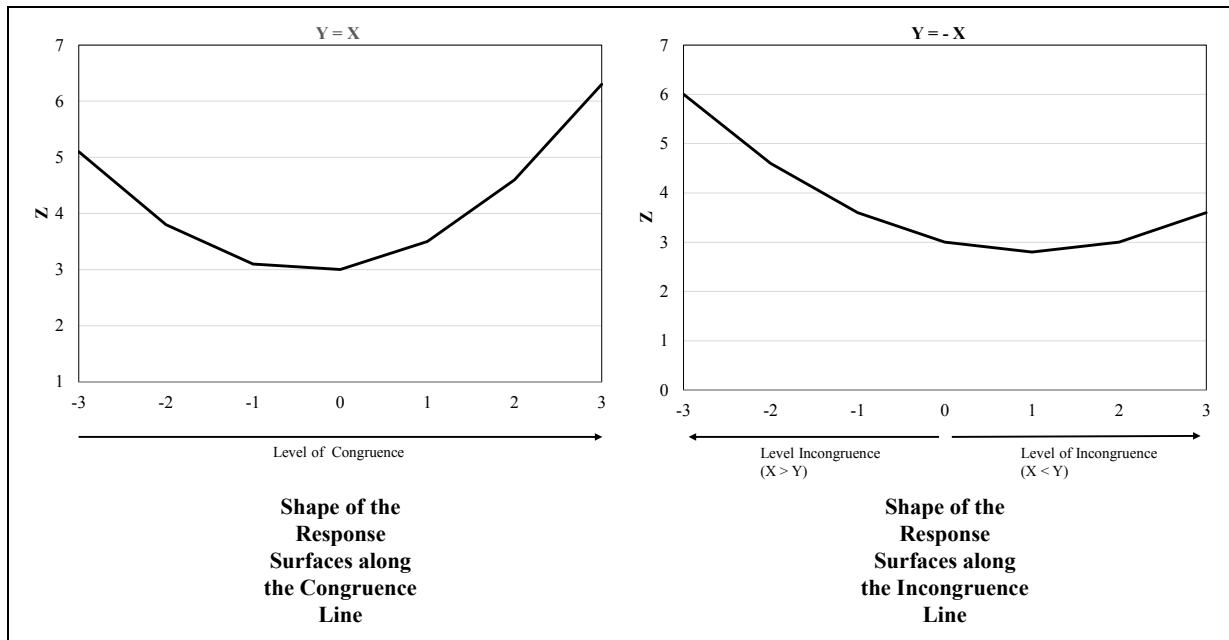
dimensional response surface plot, where both the slope ( $a_1$ ) and the curvature of the surface along the congruence line ( $a_2$ ) are positive and significant.



**Figure 13:** Exemplary Three-dimensional Response Surface Plot of the Relationship between the Outcome Variable Z and the (In-)Congruence between the Component Measures X and Y

Source: Author's illustration.

A positive and significant coefficient  $a_1$  indicates that the outcome variable Z increases as both components of the congruence measure X and Y increase (here and in the following, Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 549). Accordingly, a negative and significant  $a_1$  would have suggested that the outcome variable decreases with increasing levels of the independent variables. In the given example,  $a_2$  is positive and significant as well, indicating a non-linear slope of the congruence line in such a way that the outcome variable increases at an increasing rate, when both components of the congruence measure increase simultaneously (convex surface, upward curving). In Figure 13 the shape of the response surface along the congruence line is illustrated by the area reaching from the front of the graph to the end of the graph. It is also explicitly illustrated in the left-hand part of Figure 14. If an employee's actual pay level is increasingly congruent with his or her desired pay level, for example, this may have the outlined increasingly positive effects on his pay level satisfaction. A negative and significant  $a_2$ , in contrast, would have indicated a concave surface along the congruence line (downward curving).



**Figure 14: Exemplary Shape of the Response Surfaces along the Congruence and Incongruence Lines**

Source: Author's illustration.

The surface along the incongruence line is formally calculated by substituting  $Y$  by  $-X$  in Equation (1) (here and in the following, Ahearne *et al.* 2013, p. 636; Kraus *et al.* 2015, p. 499):

$$(4) Z = b_0 + (b_1 - b_2)X + (b_3 - b_4 + b_5)X^2 + \varepsilon.$$

$$(5) Z = b_0 + a_3X + a_4X^2 + \varepsilon.$$

In Equation (4),  $b_1 - b_2$  represents the slope of the incongruence line and  $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$  represents the curvature of the incongruence line. For reasons of simplicity, in Equation (5)  $b_1 - b_2$  is subsumed under the coefficient  $a_3$  and  $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$  is subsumed under the coefficient  $a_4$ . As  $Y$  is substituted by  $-X$ , the origin of the  $X$ -axis represents a situation of congruence.<sup>7</sup> Positive values of  $X$  reflect incongruence, where  $X$  is larger than  $Y$  and negative values of  $X$  reflect situations of incongruence, where  $Y$  is larger than  $X$  (see also Figure 13). In the given example, the coefficient assessing the curvature,  $a_4$ , is positive and significant. This points to a convex surface (upward curving) along the incongruence line, indicating that with

<sup>7</sup> Since all independent variables should be centered at their scale midpoints, zero is a meaningful value.

increasing levels of incongruence, the outcome variable increases at an increasing rate. Figure 13 illustrates this shape of the surface along the asymmetry line from the lower left corner to the upper right corner of the graph. In the right-hand part of Figure 14, a two-dimensional illustration of the isolated surface along the incongruence line is presented to highlight the curvature. Conversely, a negative and significant  $a_4$  would have suggested a concave response surface (downward curving).

Finally, the slope of the incongruence line, estimated by  $a_3$ , offers information about how the direction of incongruence relates to the outcome variable. In the given example,  $a_3$  is positive and significant, indicating that the outcome variable is higher, when the direction of incongruence is in such a way that  $X$  is larger than  $Y$ . This is also emphasized by Figure 13 and the right-hand part of Figure 14, where the outcome variable reaches its maximum in the situation of incongruence, where  $X$  is larger than  $Y$ . For example, an increasing incongruence in such a way that an employee's actual pay ( $X$ ) is larger than his or her desired pay ( $Y$ ) may have the outlined positive effects of incongruence ( $X > Y$ ) on his pay level satisfaction. A negative and significant  $a_3$  would have suggested that the outcome variable is higher, when the direction of incongruence is in such a way that  $Y$  is larger than  $X$ . A non-significant  $a_3$  would have indicated that the slope equals zero, i.e. the effects of incongruence are the same regardless of the direction of incongruence.

## 5.6 Empirical Results

### 5.6.1 Reliability and Validity of the Measures

As a first part of the empirical examination of Study 1, the reliability and validity of all latent constructs that are used in the model were inspected in order to ensure a good fit of the measurement model. While reliability refers to the absence of a *random error* source in the variation of a measure (e.g., situational factors or varying degrees of a respondent's concentration), validity refers to the absence of a *systematic error* source in the measurement (e.g., halo effects or social desirability bias) and is, thus, an assessment of the conceptual correctness of the measure (Churchill 1979, p. 65). It is apparent that a valid measure is always reliable, whereas the opposite is not necessarily true (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 129).

Validity is one of the major requirements, a measurement model has to fulfill in order to ensure that the measures used in the study indeed measure what they are supposed to measure (e.g., Cook and Campbell 1979, p. 23) and that results drawn from the study are generalizable (e.g., Homburg and Giering 1998, p. 111). If the measurement model lacked a good fit, coefficients of the empirical model would be flawed as well (Bagozzi *et al.* 1991, p. 421; Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 128). A “valid measurement is [thus regarded as] the sine qua non of science” (Peter 1979, p. 6).

In order to ensure validity, the goodness of fit of the measurement model was assessed by a two-step procedure suggested by Weiber and Mühlhaus (2014) for reflective measurements.<sup>8</sup> The authors recommend to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) first, followed by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The criteria used in an EFA are often referred to as first generation methods (e.g., Fornell 1982), as they are largely based on correlations only and assess if a latent construct is unidimensional but do not account for measurement errors, nor allow for inference statistical tests (Hildebrandt 1984, p. 44). The decisions made in EFA are rather based on rules of thumb than on reliable theory (e.g., Cronbach 1947; Cronbach and Meehl 1955; Campbell 1960; Campbell and Fiske 1959) and are based on very restrictive assumptions (Gerbing and Anderson 1988, pp. 190; Hildebrandt and Temme 2006, p. 624). Assessing the unidimensionality of a construct is, however, a key requirement of testing its reliability (Gerbing and Anderson 1988, pp. 186) and running an EFA is, thus, reasonable.

Based on the EFA results, a CFA was conducted in order to test and assess the now prespecified relationships between the unobserved, latent constructs and the respective observed indicators. CFA is superior to EFA in that it allows to assess the goodness of fit of the factor model by testing reliability and validity with inference statistical tests and also provides an assessment of the goodness of the global measurement model, as well as for partial model structures (Homburg and Giering 1998, p. 115). Criteria used in a CFA are, therefore, also referred to as second generation methods (e.g., Fornell 1982).

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<sup>8</sup> Since all measures used in the study are reflective measurements, a discussion on the exact differences between reflective and formative constructs is neglected, as well as a discussion on how to assess reliability and validity of formative constructs (see Weiber and Mühlhaus (2014, p. 262).

The EFA and CFA were conducted for all latent constructs used in the model simultaneously, as this procedure allows to assess the theoretically derived relationships between the indicators and the respective constructs (Homburg and Giering 1998, pp. 123). As introduced in section 5.4, latent constructs used in the study are cognitive organizational identification and affective organizational identification as for the independent variables, collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service as for the dependent variables and emotional stability and perceived complaint severity as for the control variables. Job tenure is included in the model as a dummy coded variable and can, therefore, be excluded from the factor analysis.

#### 5.6.1.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis

Following the recommendations of Weiber and Mühlhaus (2014, p. 133), the EFA was conducted by using principal axis analysis, as this procedure differentiates the indicator variances according to their communalities and their specific single remaining variance and is, therefore, in accordance with the assumptions that a) there is some measurement error in the model and that b) correlations between the indicators are caused by the extracted factors and not vice versa (reflective constructs). The number of extracted factors was determined by the Kaiser criterion, which states that the number of extracted factors is equal to the number of eigenvalues greater than one (Kaiser 1974, pp. 31). Since it can be assumed that there is a certain level of correlation between the factors, oblique-angled Promax Rotation was selected as the rotation method. For a more detailed discussion about different rotation methods, see Mulaik (2010, pp. 272).

The results of the EFA regarding the overall adequacy of the sample for a factor analysis are shown in Table 12.

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin-Criterion</b>	<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Total Variance Explained</b>
.823	.000	71.92%

**Table 12: Sample Adequacy for a Factor Analysis (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

First, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Criterion (KMO) value of .823 is well above the recommended thresholds of .8 (Kaiser 1970, p. 405) or .6 respectively (Kaiser 1974, pp. 111) and indicates that a factor analysis is reasonable for the given data (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 342). The KMO is regarded as the best available indicator for testing the correlation matrix and its application is, thus, recommended before conducting any type of factor analysis (Stewart 1981, pp. 57; Dziuban and Shirkey 1974, pp. 360).

A second important indicator for the sample adequacy is Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which tests the null hypothesis that all variables in the population are uncorrelated, or to be precise, that the correlation matrix is coincidentally different from the unit matrix (Dziuban and Shirkey 1974, pp. 358). The test statistic reported in Table 12 is highly significant with a  $p$ -value of nearly .0005 and, thus, suggests that the null hypothesis should be rejected. In other words, it can be assumed that the variables in the population are indeed correlated and that a factor analysis is reasonable (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 341).

Finally, the EFA supports the theoretically sound six factor solution, and the Total Variance Explained of 71.92% can be regarded as a very good result for 22 indicators (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 144).

Table 13 shows the Cronbach's Alpha of each construct and the item-wise results of the EFA.

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation</b>	<b>MSA Criterion</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
<b><i>Independent Variables</i></b>			
Affective Organizational Identification			.927
ID_aff1	.864	.845	
ID_aff2	.725	.939	
ID_aff3	.887	.827	
ID_aff4	.861	.869	
Cognitive Organizational Identification			.856
ID_cog1	.773	.851	
ID_cog2	.748	.847	
ID_cog3	.683	.913	
ID_cog4	.608	.806	
<b><i>Dependent Variables</i></b>			
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint			.697
v_84	.564	.776	
v_85	.479	.666	
v_86	.520	.820	
v_87	.434	.839	
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			.800
v_62	.649	.892	
v_63	.623	.877	
v_64	.710	.757	
v_65	.608	.775	
<b><i>Control Variables</i></b>			
Emotional Stability			.685
v_141	.401	.661	
v_142	.505	.593	
v_143	.610	.646	
Perceived Complaint Severity			.928
v_272	.837	.847	
v_282	.875	.794	
v_283	.847	.831	

**Table 13: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Nearly all constructs exceed the recommended threshold of .7 for Cronbach's Alpha (Nunnally 1978, p. 245), which is one of the most popular and important measures of internal consistency reliability and is considered to be the "absolutely [...] first measure one calculates to assess the quality of the instrument" (Churchill 1979, p. 68). Only the values of collaborative handling of the complaint and emotional stability are below the threshold. However, since the deviation is only marginal and other authors suggest a threshold of .6 in exploratory research phases (Robinson *et al.* 1991, p. 13), these results are considered to be acceptable.

Additionally, the Corrected-Item-to-Total Correlations are reported as a measure of selectivity of the indicators (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 139). The correlations exceed the recommended threshold of .5 (Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 343; Shimp and Sharma 1987, p. 282), for almost every indicator. The values for  $v_{85}$ ,  $v_{87}$  and  $v_{141}$  are slightly below the threshold. As a deletion of these indicators did not lead to an increase in the respective Cronbach's Alphas, these indicators, however, were kept in the model.

Finally, the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) is reported. The MSA is a disaggregated form of the KMO and can, thus, be interpreted similarly, though it is calculated for each single indicator (Brosius and Brosius 1998, p. 823). All MSA values exceed the recommended threshold of .5 (Kaiser and Rice 1974, pp. 111), which means that there is no need to exclude any indicator from the measurement model.

All in all, the EFA suggests that the measures of the latent constructs are sufficiently reliable. However, as noted earlier, the EFA uses first generation methods, which are rather limited in their ability to measure reliability and validity (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982; Fornell 1982; Homburg and Giering 1998). Therefore, in a second step a CFA was conducted based on the now prespecified relationships identified by both theory and the EFA (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 142).

#### 5.6.1.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The first generation criteria discussed so far did not take into account potential measurement errors and are not able to statistically test validity of the measurement model (Jöreskog 1967; Jöreskog 1969; Jöreskog 1970; Jöreskog 1971a; Jöreskog 1971b). For that purpose, a CFA was conducted, again for all latent constructs simultaneously.

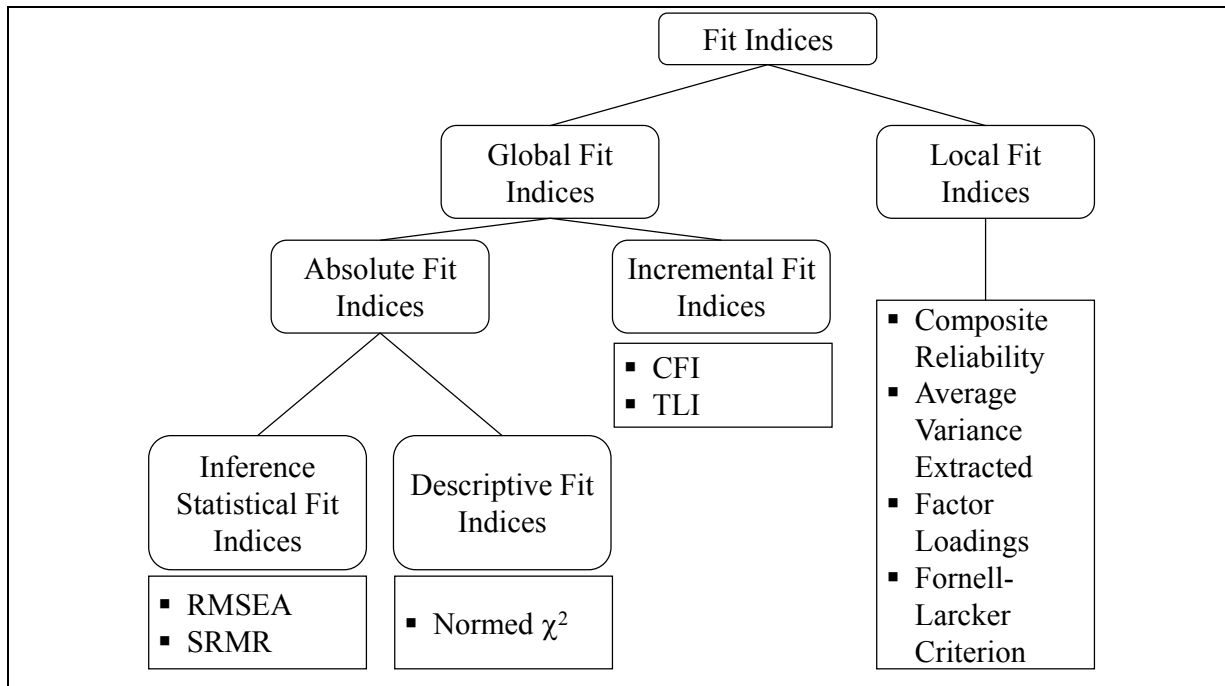
Before empirically examining the constructs, however, one has to ensure that *face validity* of each construct is given (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 157). *Face validity* describes the contentual fit of the measure to its construct and cannot be empirically tested, but is assessed by experts (Cronbach and Meehl 1955, p. 282; Nunnally 1978, pp. 79). In the given study, all measures have been adopted from



prior research and were, thus, assessed by several experts in the field beforehand. Therefore, *face validity* can be assumed.

However, the empirical notion of validity, i.e. that a construct measures what it intends to measure, in the following is referred to as *construct validity*, can be assessed in a CFA by evaluating its three sub-dimensions, namely *convergent*, *discriminant* and *nomological validity* (Peter 1981, p. 135). While *convergent validity* describes the degree, to which two or more indicators of the same construct are in agreement and is based on the assumption that indicators of one and the same factor should be highly correlated (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982, p. 468), *discriminant validity* refers to the distinctiveness between measurements of different constructs and is based on the assumption that indicators of different factors should have a low correlation (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982, p. 469). *Nomological validity* is defined as the degree, to which the relationships between two or more constructs are confirmed within the context of a larger theory (nomological network) (Bagozzi 1979, p. 23; Campbell 1960, p. 547; Hildebrandt 1984, p. 42; Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 161). Therefore, *nomological validity* will implicitly be assessed in the hypotheses testing section (5.5.3).

Figure 15 gives an overview of all indices used in this study, to assess the different validity dimensions, as well as the global fit of the measurement model. First of all, the local fit-indices on the right hand side are of interest, as they can be used to assess *convergent* and *discriminant validity* (e.g., Homburg and Giering 1998, p. 122).



**Figure 15: Selected Goodness of Fit Indices in Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Source: Author's illustration, based on Homburg and Baumgartner 1995, p. 165.

Table 14 provides the results of the CFA with regard to local fit indices, namely the significance of factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion, all of which will be discussed in detail below.

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Fornell-Larcker Criterion</b>
<b><i>Independent Variables</i></b>				
Affective Organizational Identification		.932	.776	✓
ID_aff1	.917			
ID_aff2	.749			
ID_aff3	.939			
ID_aff4	.905			
Cognitive Organizational Identification		.858	.605	✓
ID_cog1	.878			
ID_cog2	.820			
ID_cog3	.756			
ID_cog4	.638			
<b><i>Dependent Variables</i></b>				
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint		.804	.511	✓
v_84	.743			
v_85	.589			
v_86	.631			
v_87	.540			
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service		.834	.560	✓
v_62	.659			
v_63	.657			
v_64	.872			
v_65	.784			
<b><i>Control Variables</i></b>				
Emotional Stability		.818	.601	✓
v_141	.482			
v_142	.624			
v_143	.880			
Perceived Complaint Severity		.928	.812	✓
v_272	.878			
v_282	.934			
v_283	.891			

$p < .01$  for all factor loadings

**Table 14: Local Fit Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

First, all factor loadings are larger than .4 and significant on a 1% level, strongly indicating that the null hypothesis stating that factor loadings are 0 in the population should be rejected (Anderson and Gerbing 1993, p. 2; Bagozzi *et al.* 1991,

p. 434; Hildebrandt 1984, p. 46; Homburg and Giering 1998, p. 124). Second, composite reliability is above the recommended threshold of .6 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988, p. 80) for all constructs, showing that the indicators are a good measurement for the respective construct (Bagozzi and Baumgartner 1994, p. 402). Third, the AVE exceeds the recommended threshold of .5 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988, p. 80), again confirming the above. Based on these results, one can assume that *convergent validity* is given.

In order to test for *discriminant validity*, the widely acknowledged Fornell-Larcker-criterion was applied (Fornell and Larcker 1981). This criterion requires that the AVE of each factor is larger than the squared correlation of this factor with every other factor (Fornell and Larcker 1981, p. 46) and is fulfilled for every factor in the given study.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, *discriminant validity* can be assumed, as well.

In addition to testing for *construct validity* using local fit-indices, CFA also allows for measuring the *global fit* of the measurement model using, first, absolute fit indices, which can be further differentiated into descriptive and inference statistical fit-indices and, second, incremental fit-indices (Homburg and Baumgartner 1995), all of which are shown in the left hand part of Figure 15. Global fit measures serve to assess how well the model fits the actual data (Homburg and Baumgartner 1995, p. 162). The values for all relevant indices are presented in Table 15.

Criterion	Value
Normed $\chi^2$	1.99
RMSEA	.058
SRMR	.063
CFI	.945
TLI	.935

**Table 15: Global Fit-Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<sup>9</sup> See Table 42 in Appendix A for details.

The normed  $\chi^2$  value is a descriptive fit-index and is calculated by dividing the value of the  $\chi^2$ -test statistic by the degrees of freedom.<sup>10</sup> Most researchers recommend that this ratio should not exceed 2.5 (Homburg and Baumgartner 1995, p. 172), while others suggest a stricter threshold of 2.0 (Byrne 1989, p. 55). A value of 1.99 can, thus, be considered as being very good.

Moving to the inference statistical fit-indices, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is an important index that assesses, whether the model is a good approximation of reality (Steiger 1990, pp. 173). Whereas a RMSEA  $\leq$  .05 is considered to represent a close model fit, a value of  $\leq$  .08 is considered to represent a reasonable model fit and values above .10 are deemed as unacceptable (Browne and Cudeck 1993, pp. 136). In the study at hand, the value equals .058, which again indicates a reasonable, almost close model fit.

Lastly as for the inference statistical fit-indices, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) (Bentler 1995; Jöreskog and Sörbom 1986) has become a standard index, with values close to 0 indicating that the empirical covariances are equal to the model-theoretic ones (Weston and Gore Jr. 2006, pp. 742). The cutoff value is .10 (Bentler 1995, p. 17), again with some researchers recommending a stricter threshold of .05 (Homburg *et al.* 2008, p. 88). The SRMR in the given study equals .063, suggesting that the model fit is at least reasonable.

In addition to the absolute fit-indices discussed above, two important incremental fit-indices were calculated. First, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) shows, if the specified model has a better fit than a null model that does not specify any relationships among the constructs (Bentler 1990, pp. 238). Values above .9 are deemed good and a CFI of .945 can, thus, be regarded as an indicator for a very good model fit. The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) (also Nonnormed Fit Index) can be interpreted analogously but compensates for the effect of model complexity (Hu and Bentler 1998, p. 428) and should as well be above .9 (Bollen 1989, p. 273), which is the case here with a value of .935.

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<sup>10</sup> Using the  $\chi^2$ -test (also Likelihood-Ratio Test) as an inference statistical fit-index is critical for several reasons and was, therefore, not conducted in this study. For a detailed discussion of the problems related to the  $\chi^2$ -test, see e.g. Bentler and Bonett (1980), Reinecke (2014) or Weiber and Mühlhaus (2014).

### 5.6.2 Assumptions Testing

The applicability of polynomial regression with response surface analysis to a given research question and the corresponding dataset is subject to some method specific assumptions and to the general assumptions of multiple linear regressions (Edwards 2002, p. 360). First, the specific assumptions of polynomial regression will be explored ((a) – (c)), followed by listing the general assumptions of multiple linear regression ((1) – (6)).

(a) The two independent variables of interest “must represent the same conceptual domain” (Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 544). In the given case, the constructs cognitive and affective organizational identification stem from the overall conceptual domain of organizational identification. Therefore, a discrepancy between these two constructs is meaningful and interpretable with regard to the dependent variables, examined in this study.

(b) Both independent variables have to be measured on the same scale to make the degree of (in-)congruence determinable (Edwards 2002, p. 361).<sup>11</sup> Since cognitive organizational identification, as well as affective organizational identification both have been measured on a 7-point Likert scale, this assumption is met and the discrepancy can be assessed in a meaningful way.

(c) Before making use of an analytical procedure such as polynomial regression with response surface analysis, it is reasonable to inspect, how many of the respondents in the data set indeed have a substantial discrepancy between the two independent variables of interest and in what direction. In case of only few respondents with substantially discrepant values, an (in-)congruence perspective would be of rather low practical value (Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 547). Therefore, one has to define which discrepancy between the two independent variables is considered to be substantial. For this purpose, following Fleenor *et al.* (1996, p. 494), the ratings on the 7-point Likert scales were standardized as z-scores with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 for both cognitive and affective organ-

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<sup>11</sup> In case that different scales have been used for the measurement of the two predictor variables, Harris *et al.* (2008) suggest to standardize the scales and, thereby, make them comparable.

izational identification, in a first step. This procedure ensures that potential asymmetrical effects on the (in-)congruence classification that could be caused by unequal variances are eliminated (Brutus *et al.* 1996, p. 5; Edwards 1994, pp. 74). Once the respondents' scores are standardized, Fleener *et al.* (1996, p. 494) suggest that those respondents that have a (standardized) rating on the one predictor that is more than one-half standard deviation above the (standardized) rating on the other predictor are considered to have a discrepancy between the scores in a way that the one predictor score is substantially larger than the other predictor score. Similarly, respondents with scores on the one predictor that are more than one-half standard deviation below the other predictor scores are considered to have a discrepancy between the scores in a way that the one predictor score is substantially lower than the other predictor score. If the deviation between the scores is within the range of one-half standard deviation, such respondents are considered to have congruent ratings.

Applied to the study's case, the ratings of cognitive and affective organizational identification were standardized and, subsequently, compared with each other per respondent. Respondents that have a score on cognitive organizational identification that is more than one-half standard deviation above their respective score on affective organizational identification were categorized into the "Cognitive organizational identification > Affective organizational identification" group.<sup>12</sup> Table 16 indicates that 27.2% of the overall sample have such an incongruence in their organizational identification. Respondents that have a score on cognitive organizational identification that is more than one-half-standard deviation below their respective score on affective organizational identification were categorized into the "Cognitive organizational identification < Affective organizational identification" group. Table 16 indicates that 28.2% of the overall sample have such an incongruence in their organizational identification. Finally, the respondents with a deviation in their scores that lies within one-half standard deviation were classified into the "Cognitive organizational identification = Affective organizational identification" group and represent 44.6% of the overall sample.

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<sup>12</sup> The standard deviation of cognitive organizational identification served as a basis for this classification.

<b>Identification Constellation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Cognitive > Affective Organizational Identification	27.2
Cognitive = Affective Organizational Identification	44.6
Cognitive < Affective Organizational Identification	28.2

**Table 16: Proportions of (In-)Congruence Constellations of Organizational Identification (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

These results indicate that more than half of the overall sample (55.4%) have substantial deviations in their organizational identification dimensions. Based on these findings, one can conclude that it makes sense to explore, how incongruence in the organizational identification of frontline employees affects their behavioral intentions towards complainants (cf. Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 547) and, accordingly, that the third assumption of polynomial regression is fulfilled.

Finally, polynomial regression is a multiple regression technique and, as such, is subject to the usual assumptions of this analytical procedure (Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 544). Since the assumption of an errorless measurement of the independent variables has already been tested in section 5.5.1, the remainder of this section deals with the remaining six assumptions of multiple regression analysis (e.g., Hair 2010, pp. 181; Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, pp. 181) listed below.

- (1) Correct specification
- (2) No endogeneity
- (3) Constant variance of residuals (homoscedasticity)
- (4) Independence of residuals (no autocorrelation)
- (5) Normality of residuals
- (6) Absence of multicollinearity

Assumption (1) refers to the correct specification of the form of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable, i.e. that the relationship is a linear one, and that all relevant variables are included in the model. More technically, this means that the expected value of the residuals equals zero (Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 331; Wooldridge 2009, pp. 24–27). The assumption that all relevant variables are in the model is satisfied through the theoretical framework (Back-



haus *et al.* 2011, pp. 84–86). The correct specification of the form of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable can be formally tested by the Regression Equation Specification Error Test (RESET) (Ramsey 1969, pp. 361). This test compares the explanatory power of a linear model to the explanatory power of a model that is extended by non-linear effects. A significant test statistic indicates that allowing for non-linearity improves the model and that a linear model would suffer from misspecification. The Ramsey RESET is, therefore, conducted for the relationship between affective and cognitive organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint, as well as for the relationship between the same independent variables and sabotage of the complainant's service. Both tests are significant ( $F_{\text{Collaborative Handling}}(3, 279) = 3.21, p = .0235$ ;  $F_{\text{Sabotage}}(3, 279) = 4.14, p = .0068$ ), supporting the view that a non-linear modeling is suitable to the given relationships and ensures consistency of the prediction.

Assumption (2) pertains to the problem that occurs, when the independent variables included in the model correlate with the residuals of the regression (Wooldridge 2009, p. 86). If any independent variable does correlate significantly with the residual term, this variable is referred to as an endogenous explanatory variable and the model consequently suffers from endogeneity (Ebbes *et al.* 2011, p. 1115). Endogeneity, in turn, can cause biased (inconsistent) regression coefficient estimates and can have three general reasons: omitted variables, measurement error of the independent variables and simultaneity (Antonakis *et al.* 2014, p. 117). While a large body of research has arisen in the last two decades on how to identify (e.g., Kuksov and Villas-Boas 2008; Villas-Boas and Winer 1999) and correct for endogeneity (e.g., Antonakis *et al.* 2014), there is an overall consensus that as long as the independent variables are not correlated with the residuals, i.e. predictors “inside” the model do not correlate with any variable “outside” the model, endogeneity is not a problem and the estimates of the regression coefficients can be assumed to be consistent (e.g., Antonakis *et al.* 2014, p. 99; Petrin and Train 2010, p. 4). In line with this, all independent variables of the study are analyzed with regard to a potential correlation with the residual terms of both models. As presented in Table 43 and Table 44 in Appendix A, all correlations are non-significant. Hence, it can be assumed that endogeneity is not a problem in the study at hand and that all regression coefficient estimates are consistent.

Assumption (3) postulates that the variance of the error term must not depend on the level of the respective predictor variable (Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 335; Wooldridge 2009, p. 53) and can be formally tested by the Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg Test<sup>13</sup> (Cook and Weisberg 1983, pp. 2–5). This test examines in an additional regression, how well the independent variables predict the squared residuals. A low explanatory power indicates that homoscedasticity can be assumed, while a high explanatory power suggests that the squared residuals are systematically related to the independent variables, and that heteroscedasticity is present (Baum 2006, p. 145; Wooldridge 2009, p. 272). In the study at hand, the Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg Test is conducted for both regressions. In both cases, the  $\chi^2$ -distributed test statistic is significant ( $\chi^2_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}}(1) = 27.84, p < .0005$ ;  $\chi^2_{\text{Sabotage}}(1) = 50.83, p < .0005$ ), suggesting to reject the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity. Accordingly, assumption (3) is violated, which indicates a decrease in efficiency of the prediction but not a decrease in consistency (Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 335; Wooldridge 2009, p. 53). However, whether heteroscedasticity at all has any substantial influence on the predictions can be tested by using robust standard errors in the regression (Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 335). Additional analyses using robust SEs did not show any changes in the (non-) significance of the regression coefficients compared to the initial models and it can, therefore, be assumed that the model is robust towards heteroscedasticity.

Assumption (4) requires that the residuals are independent of each other, i.e. that the error terms do not correlate (Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 332). In a cross-sectional data set this assumption pertains mainly to a random autocorrelation, since there are no intertemporal relationships between the residuals and the data is sorted randomly (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, pp. 92; Wooldridge 2009, p. 350). A formal test for autocorrelation has been developed by Durbin and Watson (1951). The Durbin-Watson test (DW test) statistic can obtain values between 0 and 4 with values close to 0 indicating a positive correlation between the residuals, values close to 4 indicating a negative correlation between the residuals and values close to 2 suggesting that the residuals are uncorrelated (Field 2013, p. 221; Leeflang *et al.*

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<sup>13</sup> This test has been developed by Breusch and Pagan (1979) and Cook and Weisberg (1983) independently from one another. It must not be confused with the Breusch-Pagan Test used in SUR regressions.

2000, p. 339). In the study at hand, the DW test statistics are close to 2 ( $DW_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = 2.059$ ;  $DW_{\text{Sabotage}} = 1.930$ ) and it can, therefore, be assumed that autocorrelation is not a problem and the data do not have to be sorted differently.

Assumption (5) refers to the distribution of the residuals and requires that all error terms are normally distributed (here and in the following, Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 96). However, in an Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS), this assumption is only relevant for statistical significance tests, such as t-tests or F-tests. The regression coefficients do not require this assumption. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (KS test), as well as the Shapiro-Wilk test (SW test) allow for a formal examination of the residuals' distribution. Both test statistics are significant in the given study (KS test<sub>CollaborativeHandling</sub> = .081,  $p < .0005$ ; SW test<sub>CollaborativeHandling</sub> = .946,  $p < .0005$ ; KS test<sub>Sabotage</sub> = .099,  $p < .0005$ ; SW test<sub>Sabotage</sub> = .959,  $p < .0005$ ), indicating that the hypothesis that the residuals are normally distributed cannot be maintained. However, these tests are rather imprecise for larger samples and following the central limit theorem, it can be assumed that linear regressions with sample sizes of  $N > 40$  are robust against any deviation from a normal distribution of the residuals. In other words, the statistical significance tests maintain their validity independent of the residuals' distribution and assumption (5) is, therefore, violated but to an uncritical extent.

Assumption (6) requires that there is no perfect linear relationship between the independent variables (Field 2013, p. 220; Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 347). High correlations between the predictor variables (multicollinearity) would cause shared variance and would consequently a.) decrease the ability to predict the respective dependent variable and b.) exacerbate to determine the relative influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable (Hair 2010, p. 201; Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 347). The regression coefficients would, therefore, be biased and unreliable (Wooldridge 2009, pp. 95). One very simple way to detect potential problems of multicollinearity is to examine the correlation matrix for the independent variables and check, whether there are any correlations larger than .9 (Hair 2010, p. 200). A more elaborate way of testing the assumption is to measure the degree, to which the variance of one independent variable is explained by the other independent variables (Wooldridge 2009, p. 96). Therefore, the tolerance test statistic is calculated, indicating the degree, to which each independent variable is *not* explained by the other predictor variables (Hair 2010, p. 204). High values larger

than .1 suggest that multicollinearity is not a severe problem (here and in the following, Giere *et al.* 2006, p. 687; Kennedy 2003, p. 223). Another test statistic that is commonly accepted to assess multicollinearity is the inverse of the tolerance value, the variance inflation factor (VIF), which should be smaller than 10, accordingly. Polynomial regression is prone to multicollinearity because the linear terms of the independent variables are included in the model, as well as the quadratic terms and the interaction effect between the two focal variables, naturally leading to rather high correlations. Therefore, the independent variables are centered around the midpoint of their scales prior to analysis, a procedure explicitly recommended by Edwards (1994, pp. 74).

Table 17 shows that all tolerance values are larger than .1 ( $\geq .143$ ) and the VIFs are smaller than 10 ( $\leq 6.985$ ), accordingly, for all independent variables. Consequently, it can be assumed that multicollinearity is not an issue in the study at hand.

	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Affective Organizational Identification	.143	6.985
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.145	6.910
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	.517	1.936
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	.151	6.631
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	.302	3.314
Perceived Complaint Severity	.939	1.065
Emotional Stability	.963	1.038
Job Tenure Dummy 1 (< 1 year)	.722	1.385
Job Tenure Dummy 2 (1 year)	.717	1.395
Job Tenure Dummy 3 (2 years)	.712	1.405
Job Tenure Dummy 4 (3 years)	.736	1.358
Job Tenure Dummy 5 (4 years)	.758	1.319
Job Tenure Dummy 6 (5 years)	.898	1.114

**Table 17: Tolerance Values and VIFs (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Now that all assumptions have been tested, Table 18 gives a final overview of all assumptions, the criteria used to assess these assumptions, the respective results and their interpretations.

Assumption	Criterion	Results	Interpretation
<b><i>Specific Assumptions of Polynomial Regression</i></b>			
(a) Same conceptual domain	Theory	Organizational Identification	IVs originate from the same concept ✓
(b) Same scale	Measurement	IVs are measured on a 7-point scale	Measurement is comparable ✓
(c) Substantial number of respondents with discrepant values	Standardized z-scores with a deviation larger than one-half SD	See Table 16	Approximately half the sample has substantially discrepant values ✓
<b><i>General Assumptions of Multiple Regression</i></b>			
(1) Correct Specification	Ramsey RESET Test	$F_{CH}(3, 279) = 3.21$ $p = .0235$ $F_{SAB}(3, 279) = 4.14$ $p = .0068$	non-linear relationship between IVs and DV ✓
(2) No Endogeneity	Correlation of IVs and residuals	No significant Correlations	Endogeneity is not a problem ✓
(3) Constant Variance of Residuals	Breusch-Pagan/ Cook-Weisberg Test	$\chi^2_{CH}(1) = 27.84$ $p < .0005$ $\chi^2_{SAB}(1) = 50.83$ $p < .0005$	Heteroskedasticity is present to an uncritical extent ✓
(4) Independence of Residuals	Durbin-Watson Test	$DW_{CH} = 2.059$ $DW_{MA} = 1.930$	Autocorrelation is not a problem ✓
(5) Normality of Residuals	Kolmogorov-Smirnov / Shapiro-Wilk Test ; Sample Size	$KS\ Test_{CH} = .081$ $p < .0005$ $SW\ Test_{CH} = .946$ $p < .0005$ $KS\ Tests_{SAB} = .099$ $p < .0005$ $SW\ Tests_{SAB} = .959$ $p < .0005$	Sample size is sufficiently large to assume normality of residuals ✓
(6) Absence of Multicollinearity	Variance Inflation Factor / Tolerance	VIFs < 10 Tolerance > .1	No evidence for severe multicollinearity ✓
<i>Note:</i> CH = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint; SAB = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			

**Table 18: Results of the Assumption Testing (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

In summary, all general assumptions of a multiple regression, as well as the specific assumptions of a polynomial regressions are fulfilled or not critical and, consequently, there are no formal reasons *not* to conduct a multiple (polynomial) regression.

### 5.6.3 Hypotheses Testing

Preliminary to the hypotheses testing, correlations, means and standard deviations of the used variables were calculated (see Table 19). As expected, cognitive and affective organizational identification correlate moderately high. While affective organizational identification is positively correlated with collaborative handling of the complaint ( $\rho = .23$ ), cognitive organizational identification shows a non-significant correlation ( $\rho = .10$ ). On the contrary, cognitive organizational identification is positively correlated with sabotage of the complainant's service ( $\rho = .21$ ), while its correlation with affective organizational identification is non-significant ( $\rho = .07$ ). Collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service show a negative correlation ( $\rho = -.24$ ). A detailed analysis of the hypothesized effects follows in this section.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Affective Organizational Identification</b>							
<b>2. Cognitive Organizational Identification</b>	.47 **						
<b>3. Collaborative Handling of the Complaint</b>	.23 **	.10					
<b>4. Sabotage of the Complainant's Service</b>	.07	.21 **	-.24 **				
<i>Control Variables</i>							
<b>5. Emotional Stability</b>	.10	.05	.18 **	-.18 **			
<b>6. Perceived Complaint Severity</b>	.09	.03	-.09	.53 **	-.09		
<b>7. Job Tenure</b>	-.17 **	-.11	.01	-.15 *	.03	-.09	
<i>Mean</i>	4.92	2.97	5.84	2.04	4.64	4.27	4.13
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	1.50	1.39	1.03	1.11	1.27	2.12	2.17

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 19: Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

In order to test the proposed hypotheses, two polynomial regressions were conducted with collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service as the respective outcome variable ( $Z$ ). Affective organizational identification ( $X$ ) and cognitive organizational identification ( $Y$ ) reflect the two components of the congruence measure. Equation (1) and Equation (2) present the two estimated models in general notation:

$$(1) Z_{\text{Collaborative Handling of the Complaint}} = b_{0(1)} + b_{1(1)}X + b_{2(1)}Y + b_{3(1)}X^2 + b_{4(1)}XY + b_{5(1)}Y^2 + \text{Control Variables} + \varepsilon.$$

$$(2) Z_{\text{Sabotage of the Complainant's Service}} = b_{0(2)} + b_{1(2)}X + b_{2(2)}Y + b_{3(2)}X^2 + b_{4(2)}XY + b_{5(2)}Y^2 + \text{Control Variables} + \varepsilon.$$

Table 20 depicts the unstandardized regression coefficients ( $b$ ) along with the standard errors (SE) of the two polynomial regressions. These results lend support to most of the hypotheses. The direct effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint is negative, as hypothesized in **H1**, and marginally significant ( $b_{2(1)} = -.187, p < .1$ ). **H2** gains support, as the positive effect of cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service is significant ( $b_{2(2)} = .238, p < .05$ ). In support of **H3**, the effect of affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint is positive, as expected, and strongly significant ( $b_{1(1)} = .432, p < .01$ ). Similarly, the effect of affective organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service is significant ( $b_{1(2)} = -.206, p < .05$ ) and has the hypothesized negative direction, lending support to **H4**. With regard to the proposed interaction effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification, the polynomial regression analyses reveal mixed results. First, the effect is positive and significant ( $b_{4(1)} = .134, p < .01$ ) on collaborative handling of the complaint, in support of **H5a**. In fact, a graphical inspection of the interaction effect reveals that high levels of affective organizational identification, combined with high levels of cognitive organizational identification, increase collaborative handling of the complaint (see Figure 26 in Appendix A). The interaction effect on sabotage of the complainant's service has the expected direction but is non-significant ( $b_{4(2)} = -.063, p = .153$ ). Therefore, **H5b** has to be rejected. Although not hypothesized, the effect of the quadratic term of affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint is negative and marginally significant ( $b_{3(1)} = -.046, p < .1$ ), indicating that beyond a specific point, the positive effect of affective organizational identification changes into a negative one.



<b>Independent Variables</b>		Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint			Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service		
		<b>b (SE)</b>		<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>b (SE)</b>		<b>Hypotheses</b>
Affective Organizational Identification	b <sub>1</sub>	.432 (.099) ***		<b>H3 ✓</b>	-.206 (.093) **		<b>H4 ✓</b>
Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>2</sub>	-.187 (.106) *		<b>H1 ✓</b>	.238 (.100) **		<b>H2 ✓</b>
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>3</sub>	-.046 (.028) *			.037 (.026)		
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>4</sub>	.134 (.046) ***		<b>H5a ✓</b>	-.063 (.044)		<b>H5b ✗</b>
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>5</sub>	-.001 (.033)			-.023 (.031)		
<b>Controls</b>							
Emotional Stability	b <sub>6</sub>	.135 (.045) ***			-.126 (.042) ***		
Perceived Complaint Severity	b <sub>7</sub>	-.039 (.027)			.265 (.026) ***		
Job Tenure Dummy 1 (< 1 year)	b <sub>8</sub>	-.059 (.185)			.175 (.174)		
Job Tenure Dummy 2 (1 year)	b <sub>9</sub>	-.105 (.195)			.218 (.183)		
Job Tenure Dummy 3 (2 years)	b <sub>10</sub>	-.039 (.184)			.132 (.173)		
Job Tenure Dummy 4 (3 years)	b <sub>11</sub>	-.135 (.188)			.124 (.177)		
Job Tenure Dummy 5 (4 years)	b <sub>12</sub>	.215 (.196)			.014 (.185)		
Job Tenure Dummy 6 (5 years)	b <sub>13</sub>	-.121 (.312) ***			.090 (.293)		
Constant	b <sub>0</sub>	5.375 (.177) ***			2.349 (.166) ***		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.137			.333		
<b>Surface Tests:</b>							
Slope symmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> +b <sub>2</sub> )	a <sub>1</sub>	.245 (.070) ***		<b>H8 ✓</b>	.032 (.066)		<b>H9 ✗</b>
Curvature symmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> + b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )	a <sub>2</sub>	.087 (.033) ***			-.049 (.032)		
Slope asymmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> - b <sub>2</sub> )	a <sub>3</sub>	.619 (.193) ***		<b>H6 ✓</b>	-.444 (.182) **		<b>H7 ✓</b>
Curvature asymmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> - b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )	a <sub>4</sub>	-.181 (.061) ***			.077 (.058)		

\*  $p < .1$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 20: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Although the results of the linear interaction are informative in foreshadowing the effects of organizational identification congruence, in order to assess, whether the results lend support to **H6** through **H9**, the traditional regression coefficients do not provide final evidence but rather a response surface analysis has to be conducted. For this purpose, the calculated surface values ( $a_1 - a_4$ ) will be interpreted, which indicate the surface of the slope and curvature of the congruence and incongruence line (see section 5.5). Moreover, to aid and enhance the interpretation of the results, three-dimensional response surface plots will be provided for collaborative handling of the complaint (see Figure 16) and sabotage of the complainant's service (see Figure 17) as the dependent variables.

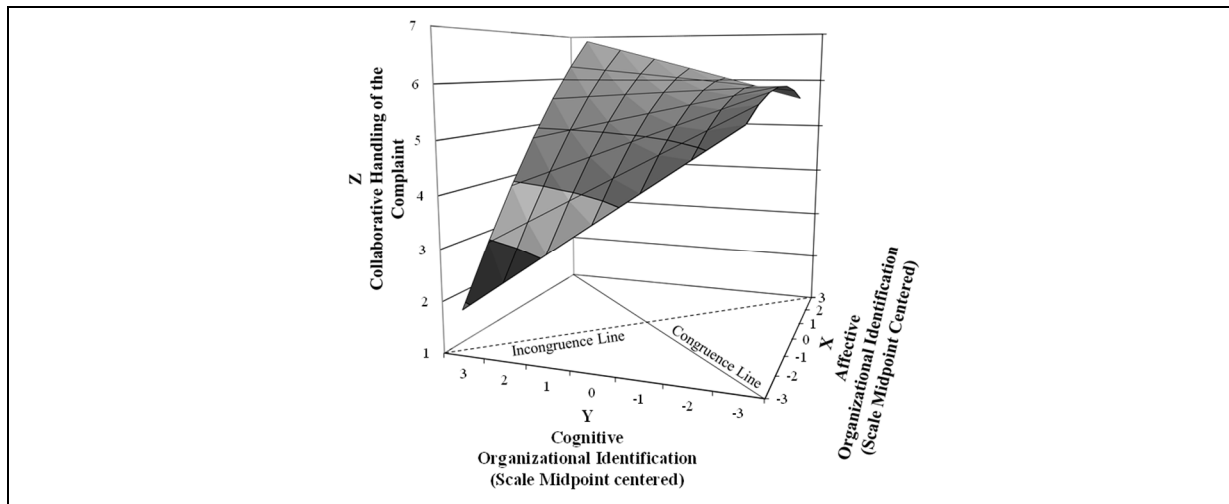
**H6** pertains to the effect of an incongruence in organizational identification, in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is significantly higher than affective organizational identification, on collaborative handling of the complaint. To study the general effect of an incongruence between cognitive and affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint, the coefficient  $a_4$ , representing the curvature along the asymmetry line ( $X = -Y$ ), provides insights. The coefficient is negative and strongly significant ( $a_{4(1)} = -.181, p < .01$ ), indicating a concave surface (downward curving). In other words, collaborative handling of the complaint decreases more sharply as the degree of organizational identification incongruence increases in general (independent of the exact direction of the incongruence). How the direction of the organizational identification incongruence is related to collaborative handling of the complaint can be investigated with help of  $a_3$ . This coefficient represents the slope of the  $X = -Y$  line (asymmetry line) as it relates to the outcome variable. In support of **H6**, the strongly significant and positive coefficient ( $a_{3(1)} = .619, p < .01$ ) indicates that collaborative handling of the complaint is lower, when the incongruence is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is higher than affective organizational identification, than vice versa.

Figure 16 illustrates these results<sup>14</sup>, depicting that at the upper right corner of the graph, where affective organizational identification is high combined with low cognitive organizational identification, collaborative handling of the complaint is

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<sup>14</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 27 (b) in Appendix A.

relatively high, whereas at the front left corner of the graph, where cognitive organizational identification is high combined with low affective organizational identification, the slope sharply decreases, resulting in a very low collaborative handling of the complaint.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 16:** Three-dimensional Response Surface Plot of the Relationship between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 1)

Source: Author's illustration.

With regard to **H8**, the coefficients  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  are of interest. First,  $a_1$  assesses the slope of the symmetry line ( $X = Y$ ). The positive and strongly significant coefficient ( $a_{1(1)} = .245, p < .01$ ) suggests that there is a linear relationship along the line of perfect organizational identification congruence, as it relates to collaborative handling of the complaint. However, the positive and strongly significant coefficient  $a_2$  ( $a_{2(1)} = .087, p < .01$ ) indicates that the symmetry line has a non-linear slope, i.e. organizational identification congruence relates positively to collaborative handling of the complaint and has a convex surface (upward curving). Thus, in support of **H8**, when cognitive and affective organizational identification increase simultaneously, collaborative handling of the complaint will increase more

<sup>15</sup> Note: The graphical illustrations serve an enhanced understanding of the relationships, however, they have to be interpreted with caution, since the points to plot are partially derived from extrapolation and do not necessarily represent actual data (Harris *et al.* 2008). However, prior analysis (see section 5.6.2) has already revealed that approximately 55% have significantly incongruent values (evenly distributed in both directions), as this is an assumption of the method. Therefore, it can be assumed that the graphical illustrations depict a rather good representation of the data.

sharply. These results are illustrated in Figure 16, showing that from the front right corner of the graph, where cognitive and affective organizational identification are simultaneously low, to the back of the graph, where cognitive and affective organizational identification are simultaneously high, the slope has an upward curving and reaches its maximum point on the Z axis.<sup>16</sup>

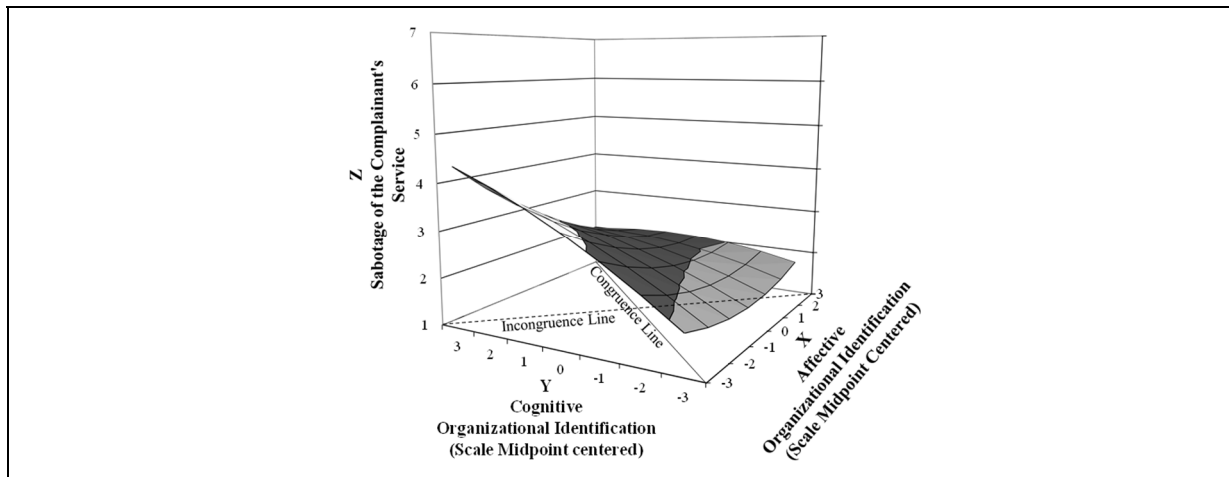
**H7** and **H9** refer to the effects of an organizational identification (in-)congruence on sabotage of the complainant's service. The coefficient  $a_4$  has the expected direction ( $a_{4(2)} = .077, p = .184$ ), but its insignificance indicates that an incongruence between cognitive and affective organizational identification per se does not have an effect on sabotage of the complainant's service. However, the significant  $a_3$  coefficient ( $a_{3(2)} = -.444, p < .05$ ) implies that when the incongruence is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is significantly higher than affective organizational identification, the level of sabotage of the complainant's service is significantly higher than in a vice versa incongruence, lending support to **H7**.

Figure 17 illustrates graphically that at the upper right corner of the graph, where affective organizational identification is high combined with low cognitive organizational identification, sabotage of the complainant's service is relatively low, whereas at the left corner of the graph, where cognitive organizational identification is high combined with low affective organizational identification, the slope sharply increases, resulting in relatively high sabotage of the complainant's service.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 27 (a) in Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 27 (d) in Appendix A.



**Figure 17:** Three-dimensional Response Surface Plot of the Relationship between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 1)

Source: Author's illustration.

**H9** has to be rejected, as  $a_1$  ( $a_{1(2)} = .032, p = .627$ ) and  $a_2$  ( $a_{2(2)} = -.049, p = .126$ ) are not significant. These results indicate that an organizational identification congruence does neither linearly nor non-linearly relate to sabotage of the complainant's service. This is also underlined graphically by the marginal slope and curvature along the line of symmetry ( $X = Y$ ) from the front right to the back left of the graph in Figure 17.<sup>18</sup>

### *Control Variables*

With regard to the control variables, emotional stability is positively related to collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b_{6(1)} = .135, p < .01$ ) and negatively related to sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b_{6(2)} = -.126, p < .01$ ), as expected. The effect of perceived complaint severity on sabotage of the complainant's service has the expected positive direction and is strongly significant ( $b_{7(2)} = .265, p < .01$ ) and the job tenure dummy variable 6 (capturing job tenure  $\geq 5$  years) is negatively related to collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b_{13(1)} = -.121, p < .01$ ). All other effects of the control variables are non-significant but were not excluded from the model because they were assessed to be important to avoid potential confounding results. However, a robustness check follows in section

<sup>18</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 27 (c) in Appendix A.

5.6.4, where all control variables will be excluded from the model and results of the re-estimated model will be presented.

#### 5.6.4 Additional Analyses

Beyond the main analyses, some additional analyses were conducted in order to assess the robustness of the findings. First, despite the substantial conceptual differences between organizational identification and organizational commitment, studies who examined the empirical distinctiveness find inconsistent results with correlations reaching from close to 0 to .8 and above (Riketta 2005, p. 362). Moreover, some studies use measurements of affective commitment as a proxy for measuring affective organizational identification (e.g., Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006). In this light, it seems important to rule out the possibility that affective commitment and affective organizational identification are virtually the same empirically. Therefore, an EFA with all items of affective commitment and affective organizational identification was conducted, in a first step.

Principal axis analysis was used with the number of extracted factors being determined by the Kaiser-criterion (Kaiser 1974, pp. 31). Based on the assumption that there is a certain level of correlation between both factors, oblique-angled Promax rotation was selected as the rotation method. The EFA reveals a two factor solution with all items of affective organizational identification loading on one factor and all items of affective commitment loading on the other factor. In a second step, the correlation between both constructs was calculated. A Pearson correlation coefficient of .64 ( $p < .01$ ) suggests a rather high correlation. Therefore, in a final step, the analyses conducted to test the hypotheses were repeated and affective organizational identification was replaced with the measurement of affective commitment, in order to assess whether both constructs yield the same results. In summary, the only finding that is replicable compared to the main analysis with affective organizational identification is that affective commitment does have a positive effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b = .158$ ,  $SE = .067$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The effect on sabotage of the complainant's service is non-significant ( $b = .004$ ,  $SE = .061$ ,  $p = .949$ ), as well as all other findings of the main analyses.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 45 in Appendix A.

Second, while in the dissertation at hand a two-dimensional measurement of organizational identification was used, the majority of prior research has used the unidimensional scale of Mael and Ashforth (1992), partially arguing that the construct is purely cognitive (e.g., Bell and Menguc 2002, p. 135) and partially arguing that the Mael-scale captures both dimensions (e.g., Wieseke *et al.* 2007, p. 268). This line of reasoning raises some concerns. First, using the same operationalization while interpreting the construct inconsistently in different ways appears to be an unrewarding procedure in order to understand the underlying processes and provide conclusive results. In the first place, the mere fact that the scale is as ambiguous that it is interpreted by some researchers as being purely cognitive, and as being both cognitive and affective by others, raises serious questions about its reliability and validity. Second and most importantly, this procedure does not allow to disentangle, if an effect is driven by the cognitive, the affective or both dimension(s). The last concern is closely related, namely, that if a study claims organizational identification to be a two-dimensional construct and uses the Mael-scale to capture both dimensions, the two-dimensionality should be demonstrable in a factor analysis. Interestingly, no study to date has attempted to disentangle the supposedly two dimensions and to empirically show that the scale is indeed two-dimensional.

In order to assess, whether the argument applies that the Mael-scale covers both the cognitive and affective component of organizational identification, an EFA was conducted with the items of the Mael-scale, testing whether the scale is unidimensional or if it in fact contains two sub-dimensions, as argued by several researchers (e.g., Wieseke *et al.* 2007). The results clearly indicate a one factor solution. In a second step, the correlation between the two organizational identification dimensions, as measured in this dissertation, and the Mael-scale was calculated to set the findings of this study into the context of prior research. The results show Pearson correlation coefficients of .54 ( $p < .01$ ) for affective organizational identification and of .47 ( $p < .01$ ) for cognitive organizational identification. Contrary to the common assumption that the Mael-scale is purely cognitive in nature, this finding, thus, indicates that the Mael-scale rather captures the affective component of organizational identification. Moreover, the main analyses are repeated with the Mael-scale, instead of the two-dimensional measurement, to understand which effects the “traditional approach” would have yielded. Traditional regres-

sion analyses were conducted here, as polynomial regression requires two components and the Mael-scale is unidimensional. The analyses indicate that organizational identification, measured by the Mael-scale, has a positive effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b = .182$ ,  $SE = .042$ ,  $p < .01$ ), yet has no significant effect on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b = .063$ ,  $SE = .041$ ,  $p = .123$ ).<sup>20</sup>

Third, in order to test, whether the results of the main analyses are robust, the analyses were tested without the control variables, except for perceived complaint severity, as this control captures the experimental conditions. These robustness checks indicate that the models are stable, as no change in the significance of the coefficients is detected.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, a reduced model was estimated for each outcome variable without the quadratic effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification. The results yet again underscore the significance of the direct effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification and their interaction effect on both outcome variables.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, since the participation in the survey was on a voluntary basis for employees, it could be that there is a selection bias in the sample in favor of employees who have a strong organizational identification and are, thus, more willing to participate in organization-related activities, such as research activities of the university. To rule out this possibility, the scores of cognitive and affective organizational identification of the subgroup of participants who only participated with an incentive ( $n = 26$ ) was compared to the rest of the sample ( $n = 268$ ) and a Levene-test of Equality of Variances was conducted for cognitive and affective organizational identification. Results indicate that there are neither significant differences between the variances of cognitive organizational identification ( $F = 2.412$ ,  $p = .121$ ) nor between the variances of affective organizational identification ( $F = 3.155$ ,  $p = .077$ ) in the subsample as compared to the rest of the sample. In other words, employees who participated without an incentive do not differ significantly in their organizational identification as compared to the subjects who participated only with an incentive. This finding is also supported by the non-significant t-tests, conducted to compare the means of both variables in the sub-samples

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<sup>20</sup> Detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 46 in Appendix A.

<sup>21</sup> Detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 47 in Appendix A.

<sup>22</sup> Detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 48 in Appendix A.



(cognitive organizational identification:  $p = .435$ ; affective organizational identification:  $p = .356$ ). Thus, it can be assumed that non-response bias is not a problem in the study at hand.

### 5.6.5 Discussion

The results presented in the previous chapters show support for most of the hypothesized effects, indicating that it is indeed valuable to investigate the role of both dimensions of organizational identification in the complaint context and pointing to the importance of studying their interplay. Thereby, Study 1 contributes to answering the first two research questions, underlying this dissertation.

First, it was shown that cognitive organizational identification of frontline employees has a negative impact on their intentions to be collaborative in their complaint handling and a positive impact on their intentions to sabotage the complainant's service. Thereby, the study at hand contributes to the scarce literature on the "dark side" of organizational identification, in general, and cognitive organizational identification, in specific (e.g., Ahearne *et al.* 2013; Korschun 2015; Kraus *et al.* 2015). While prior research has almost exclusively relied on the assumption that cognitive organizational identification ties the own goals to the organizational goals and is, therefore, beneficial by definition (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989; Bartel 2001), the fundamental implications of the SIA, namely that social identification is a major driver of intergroup conflict and discrimination (Tajfel and Turner 1986), have found little attention so far (Korschun 2015, p. 611). In line with the dominating research stream on the beneficial nature of social identification processes in organizations (e.g., Lichtenstein *et al.* 2010; Maxham *et al.* 2008; Netemeyer *et al.* 2012; Wieseke *et al.* 2009), one would have concluded that a frontline employee high in cognitive organizational identification would either rationally analyze the complaint situation and solve it in the organization's best interest (cf. van Dick *et al.* 2004a, p. 353; van Knippenberg and van Schie 2000, p. 138) or would intuitively know what is the right thing to do on behalf of his or her organization (cf. Celsi and Gilly 2010, p. 525; Homburg *et al.* 2009, pp. 42).

However, employing a more differentiated perspective, the study at hand identified the complaint context as a fertile ground for intergroup conflict between the

organizational in-group and the customer out-group, where an increase in cognitive organizational identification is not necessarily beneficial. The confrontational nature of a complaint about the organization (Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 48) seems to threaten the self-concept of frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification, leading to reduced collaborative behavior and customer-directed antagonism in the form of service sabotage, as a consequence. Additional analyses showed that employing a “traditional” empirical approach, where organizational identification is measured as a unidimensional construct with the most commonly used Mael-scale (Mael and Ashforth 1992), would have yielded results that conform the reasoning that organizational identification is beneficial in the complaint context (increases in organizational identification lead to increases in collaborative handling of the complaint) and would have peculated the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification.

Furthermore, the study at hand points to the importance of the largely neglected affective dimension of organizational identification (e.g., Edwards 2005). It was shown that it is rather affective organizational identification that drives favorable outcomes in the complaint context. Specifically, it was illustrated that a strong affective organizational identification increases frontline employees’ collaborative handling of the complaint and decreases sabotage of the complainant’s service. It appears that the strongly positive membership-related emotions associated with high levels of affective organizational identification seem to help frontline employees to interpret complaints rather as a form of feedback (cf. Bell and Ludington 2006, p. 224), which can be used to improve the organizational social identity and make it appear even more positive, thereby, contributing to fulfilling the inherent need of self-enhancement (e.g., Hogg 2001). Notably, it was also illustrated that affective organizational identification need not be confused with affective commitment, as both constructs have been shown to be empirically distinct and have unique consequences in the study at hand. These results raise questions on the validity of prior research that used affective commitment measures as a proxy for affective organizational identification (e.g., Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Olkkonen and Lipponen 2006).

Moreover, the significant linear interaction effect of cognitive and affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint points to the relevance of affective organizational identification in the relationship between

cognitive organizational identification and this outcome variable. Specifically, it seems to be a buffer against the negative feedback from outside the organization and reduces the detrimental consequences of cognitive organizational identification. However, the interaction effect on sabotage of the complainant's service was not significant, although it had the expected negative direction and, thus, tended to reduce the positive effect of cognitive organizational identification on this outcome variable. Therefore, in the study at hand no significant evidence was provided that affective organizational identification indeed helps to substantially reduce the increases in service sabotage intentions, associated with high levels of cognitive organizational identification.

Although not hypothesized, the quadratic term of affective organizational identification had a marginally significant negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint. This finding indicates that affective organizational identification might only increase collaborative handling of the complaint to a certain level. Beyond this specific level of affective organizational identification, the direction of the effect changes from a positive into a negative one, suggesting the existence of a form of affective "over-identification", which has reduced helping behaviors towards the complainant as a consequence. One potential explanation for this effect could be that very high levels of affective organizational identification might be associated with an over-confidence and pathological pride about the organizational membership. However, this finding has to be interpreted cautiously, given the marginal significance of the effect.

Finally, the study at hand employed a unique congruence perspective on cognitive and affective organizational identification and provided detailed insights into the interplay of both dimensions. This perspective is unique in research on organizational identification and has been explicitly called for by prior research (Wolter and Cronin 2016, p. 411). Specifically, a two-dimensional matrix of potential congruence and incongruence constellations of organizational identification was constructed and characterized based on the SIA (Tajfel and Turner 1986). The empirical testing of increasing congruence revealed that cognitive and affective organizational identification have the most positive impact on collaborative handling of the complaint, when they are equally high. This finding is in support of the theoretical classification of such an organizational identification constellation as a "confident equilibrium" (see section 5.2), as opposed to a constellation, where

both dimensions are low, which was referred to here as an “apathetic equilibrium”. However, the effect of an increasing congruence of organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant’s service was non-significant, although it had the expected negative direction. Therefore, the proposition that a “confident equilibrium” deters frontline employees from service sabotage, does not seem to hold in this study.

In contrast to organizational identification congruence, increases in incongruence between cognitive and affective organizational identification were shown to decrease collaborative handling of the complaint at an increasing rate, which was explained by frontline employees’ dissonance with regard to their organizational social identity. This was especially the case, when the incongruence was in such a way that cognitive organizational identification was higher than affective organizational identification. This direction of incongruence also led employees to be more willing to engage in service sabotage. With regard to the classification of organizational identification constellations, such an incongruence was referred to as a “neurotic dissonance”, because the high importance of the organizational membership is not equivalent to the few positive emotions derived from this membership. This study, thus, provides support for the assumption that the negative, devaluating complaint emphasizes this type of organizational identification dissonance more than it does in a constellation, where the positive membership-related emotions outweigh the personal relevance of the membership to the self-concept, which was referred to earlier (see section 5.2) as a “constructive dissonance”.

In summary, Study 1 provides some first evidence on the unique effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification and their interplay on relevant outcome variables in the complaint context, thereby, helping to answer research questions 1 and 2. Specifically, it provided support for the notion that cognitive organizational identification of frontline employees has detrimental consequences, while affective organizational identification has beneficial consequences and also illustrated that an incongruence of organizational identification has severe consequences, when it is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is higher than the affective dimension. Organizational identification congruence on the contrary was shown to help frontline employees to act in the organization’s best interest. However, since the study was conducted in the education sector,

which might have unique characteristics that are not representative for the service industry, in general and the sample also included employees that are not that frequently confronted with students (i.e. administration employees), it appears to be important to replicate the findings in a more typical service industry solely with frontline employees. Moreover, while pointing out the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification and organizational identification incongruence, the results of Study 1 provide no guidance on how managers should cope with these negative consequences, and which remedy strategies are of particular help.

## 6 Study 2a & 2b

### 6.1 Aim of the Studies

In Study 2a and Study 2b, it is aspired to replicate the findings of Study 1 and, thus, validate the results with regard to research question one and two in a different industry, namely the restaurant sector. Moreover, a limitation of Study 1 was that, while identifying detrimental effects of organizational identification on focal outcome variables in the complaint context, it did not provide strategies that help managers to reduce these undesirable effects. Thus, based on the analyses in Study 1, the main goal of Study 2a and Study 2b is to find answers to research question 3, i.e. find remedy strategies for managers to reduce the identified negative relationships and foster the identified positive relationships between organizational identification and the outcome variables, collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service.

Specifically, the first remedy strategy that will be tested in Study 2a is the application of a behavioral guideline, in the form of a service script. Obviously, a detailed script prescribing specific behaviors in complaint situations could be one strategy for managers to exert influence on otherwise detrimental behavior of frontline employees in a way that aligns it again with the organization's best interests (Homburg and Fürst 2005, p. 96), i.e. foster collaborative handling and prohibit sabotage behaviors.

The second remedy strategy that will be tested in Study 2b is to reframe the complainant as a member of the in-group. Since large parts of the reasoning behind the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification and organizational identification incongruence were based on the assumption that a complaining customer is likely perceived as an out-group member who tries to harm the organization, reframing the complainant as someone who contributes to the organization's success by providing valuable information, seems a promising leverage point.

## 6.2 Conceptual Frameworks and Hypotheses

### *Replicated Effects of Study 1*

As outlined in section 6.1, one aim of Study 2a is to replicate the findings of Study 1 and assess, whether the hypothesized effects are significant for frontline employees in the restaurant sector, as well. Therefore, the first part of Study 2a conforms with Study 1 and **H1 – H9** will be tested. Since the conceptual framework with regard to these hypotheses and the hypotheses development have already been presented in section 5.2, they will not be repeated in this chapter.

### *Effects of Perceived Availability of a Service Script (Study 2a)*

Providing detailed behavioral guidelines can help frontline employees to act in the organization's best interest, as it represents a medium through which the organization can clearly communicate its expectations to the frontline employee (e.g., March and Simon 1993; Simon 1997). In the hospitality industry, behavioral guidelines are often implemented with help of a service script that includes a prescription on how frontline employees are expected to behave, when a customer complains about the organization (e.g., Mohr and Bitner 1991; Schank and Abelson 1977; Solomon *et al.* 1985). Although the exact content and form of each service script may well differ among restaurants (some restaurants may have a detailed written script on how to behave in a specific complaint situation, while others may only verbally provide vague guidelines in trainings) (Bitner *et al.* 1994, p. 96), it can be assumed that the service script generally prescribes collaborative behavior of the frontline employee towards the complainant with the ultimate goal to find a mutually beneficial solution for both the organization and the complainant (Homburg and Fürst 2005, p. 97; Homburg *et al.* 2011, p. 57).

Accordingly, providing detailed guidelines to frontline employees has been shown to increase role clarity (e.g., Cummings *et al.* 1989; Michaels *et al.* 1987). Such an increase in role clarity should reduce the negative effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint, for the following reasons. It has been argued that frontline employees engage in social creativity to alter the complaint situation in their favor in the face of a perceived identity threat (Elsbach and Kramer 1996; Tajfel and Turner 1986) and that this

process leads to a reduced collaborative handling of the complaint. Although the availability of a service script is not likely to reduce the perception of an identity threat, it should well remind frontline employees on what the organization's and, by extension, their very own best interests are (cf. March and Simon 1993; Simon 1997) and, thereby, reduce the magnitude of the behavioral consequences of the alteration process. Specifically, a detailed service script suggesting "that a particular task shall be done in a particular way [...] relieves the individual who actually performs the task of the necessity of determining each time how it shall be done" (Simon 1997, p. 201) and should, therefore, lead to a more rational decision making (Homburg and Fürst 2005, p. 96). Consequently, deviating from the prescribed behavior should be more consciously recognized as a counterproductive behavior by frontline employees with a detailed service script and a high cognitive organizational identification and the social creativity process should, thus, translate less into an actual reduction of collaborative handling of the complaint, as compared to a less detailed service script.

In line with this argument, the SIA provides similar theoretical guidance on the expected interaction effect of perceived availability of a service script and cognitive organizational identification. The SIA suggests that an individual high in cognitive organizational identification generally engages in behaviors that he or she perceives to be prototypical or ideal for a representative of his or her social group (Hogg 2000, p. 224; Hogg 2001, pp. 187; Reid and Hogg 2005, p. 804). Since a service script provides guidelines, how a prototypical member of the organization should behave in a complaint situation, such a behavior should be more likely, when both cognitive organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script are high. Under the assumption that prototypical behavior is described by the organization as being collaborative towards the complainant, such frontline employees should be more willing to engage in collaborative handling behavior – even in the face of an identity threat – as compared to frontline employees with a less detailed service script.

With regard to sabotaging the complainant's service, it is naturally unlikely that an organization provides a service script that advises frontline employees to engage in such behaviors, as this would obviously be counterproductive to the organizational success (e.g., Harris and Ogbonna 2012). Following the reasoning outlined above, it can hence also be assumed that if frontline employees perceive



the service script to be detailed to a larger degree, they should recognize sabotage behaviors even more to be counterproductive to the organization's and, thus, their personal success (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989) and as being less prototypical for the in-group (Hogg and Reid 2006, pp. 10). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H10:** *As the level of perceived availability of a detailed service script increases, a) the negative relationship between cognitive organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint will be attenuated and b) the positive relationship between cognitive organizational identification and sabotage of the complainant's service will be attenuated.*

With regard to the relationships between affective organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint as well as sabotage of the complainant's service, the perceived availability of a service script is also hypothesized to be a moderator. It has been argued that affective organizational identification is a driver of collaborative handling of the complaint because it is associated with frontline employees' stronger personal interest in fostering the positivity of their social identity (Hogg 2001, p. 187) and the increased organization-related positivity helps them to interpret the customer complaint rather as an information source for organizational improvements that are beneficial to the personal self-concept, than an identity threat (cf. Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224). When those frontline employees are provided with a detailed service script, which illustrates the exact behaviors that help to contribute the most to the positivity of the organization in a complaint situation from an organizational perspective, they should be even more convicted to behave accordingly.

It has also been argued that frontline employees with a high affective organizational identification should engage less in sabotage of the complainant's service because such a behavior would harm the positivity of their social identity, i.e. the organization (e.g., Harris and Ogbonna 2012). Similar to the above reasoning, it can be assumed that a detailed service script including prescriptions of the desirable behavior from an organizational perspective, in combination with high levels of affective organizational identification should result in even lower intentions to sabotage the complainant's service because this prescription is likely to either implicitly or explicitly prohibit sabotage behaviors. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H11:** *As the level of perceived availability of a service script increases, a) the positive relationship between affective organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint will be reinforced and b) the negative relationship between affective organizational identification and sabotage of the complainant's service will be reinforced.*

Finally, the perceived availability of a service script is hypothesized to be a moderator in the relationship between organizational identification incongruence and collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service. It has been argued that organizational identification incongruence, especially a "neurotic dissonance", produces higher stress levels because of a mental imbalance with regard to the social identity, as compared to an organizational identification congruence (cf. Festinger 1957). These higher stress levels are, in turn, associated with decrements in interpersonal job performance because they require cognitive capacities (Motowidlo *et al.* 1986), especially in a situation that is per se stressful (Bateson 1985, p. 67; Bell *et al.* 2004, p. 121).

However, when a frontline employee is provided with an increased role clarity (Cummings *et al.* 1989; Michaels *et al.* 1987) through a detailed service script, which clearly tells him or her what to do in a complaint situation, this should enable him or her to behave more in line with the organization's best interests because it reduces role conflict and, thus, stress (Singh and Wilkes 1996). Accordingly, he or she should be willing to engage more strongly in collaborative behavior towards the complainant, when the perceived availability of a service script increases. Furthermore, sabotage of the complainant's service should be decreased, as such behaviors are likely prohibited in the service script and frontline employees should, thus, be more likely to search for alternative ways to relieve their stress. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

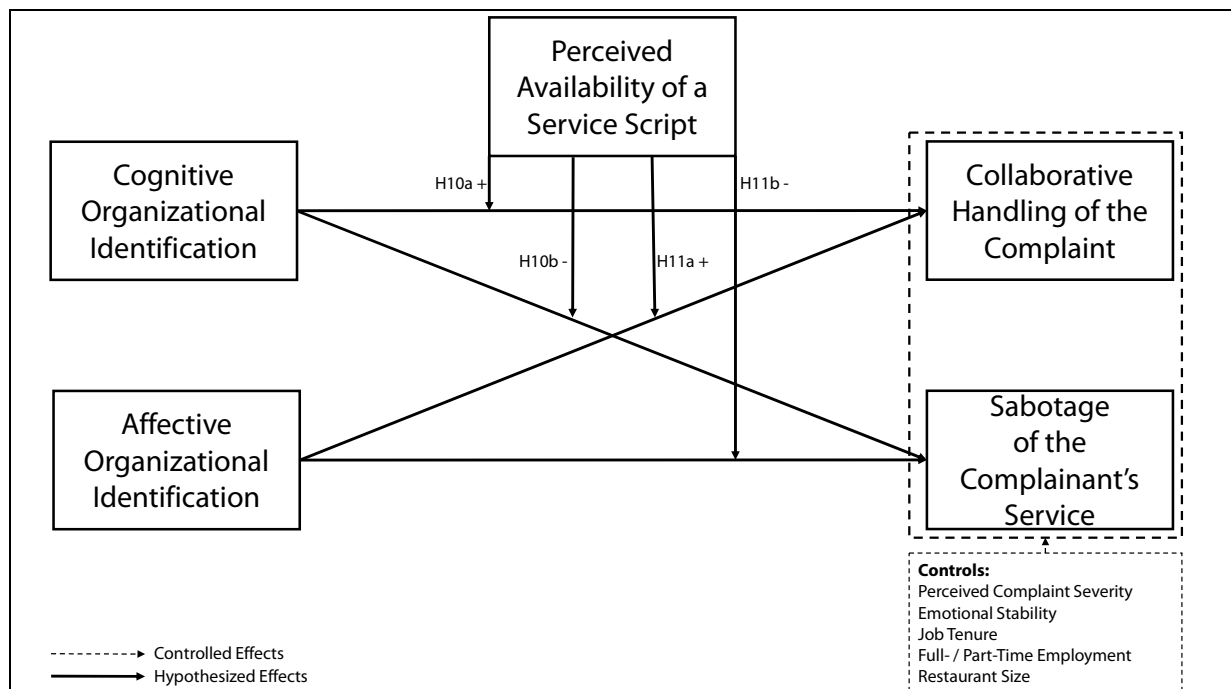
**H12:** *As the level of perceived availability of a service script increases, a) the negative relationship between organizational identification incongruence and collaborative handling of the complaint will be attenuated and b) the positive relationship between organizational identification incongruence and sabotage of the complainant's service will be attenuated.*

### *Control Variables*

In addition to the hypothesized effects above and the controlled effects already introduced in Study 1, two context-specific control variables were introduced to Study 2a. First, it was controlled for the frontline employee's type of employment, i.e. whether he or she works as a full-time or part-time employee, in order to rule out potential confounding effects with organizational identification. Second, it was controlled for the restaurant size. The scenario includes a complaint about the restaurant as a whole (see 6.3) and the fewer frontline employees work in the restaurant, the more likely it is that such a complaint is perceived as a personal attack. As this perception could again confound the effects of cognitive organizational identification, this effect is controlled for.

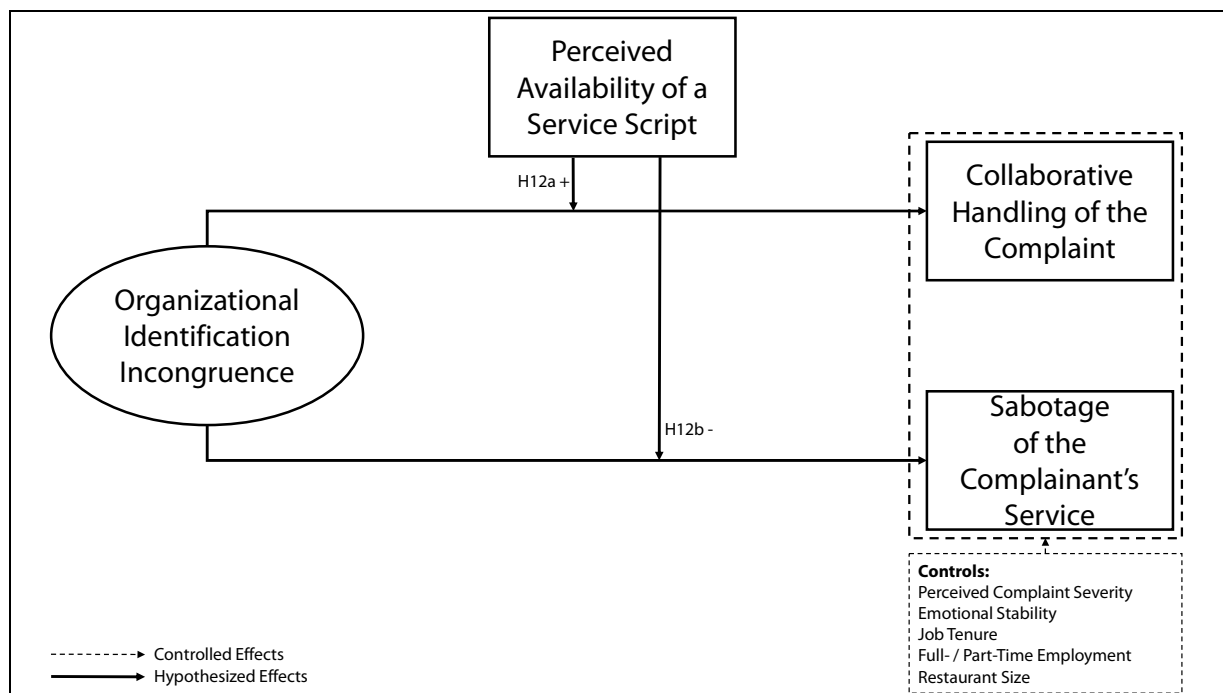
### *Overview of the Conceptual Framework*

Figure 18 and Figure 19 depict an overview of the conceptual framework of Study 2a.



**Figure 18: Conceptual Framework of Study 2a (H10 and H11)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 19: Conceptual Framework of Study 2a (H12)**

Source: Author's illustration.

### *Effects of Reframing the Complainant as an In-group Member (Study 2b)*

As noted earlier (see section 5.2), the central argument underlying the hypothesized effects of cognitive organizational identification is that a customer complaint is perceived to pose an identity threat to the frontline employee. This perception of an identity threat, in turn, is, however, contingent upon the perception that an out-group member, as opposed to a member of the in-group, voices criticism about the organization (Elsbach and Kramer 1996, p. 442). Research on cognitive organizational identification indicates that individuals have a strongly positive predisposition towards in-group fellows (e.g., Bell and Menguc 2002; Bergami and Bagozzi 2000; Dukerich *et al.* 2002; van Dick *et al.* 2006; van Knippenberg 2000), as opposed to a negative predisposition towards out-group members (e.g., Korschun 2015). The positive predisposition translates into task-related helping and assisting behaviors towards in-group fellows, as well as listening to other's problems (Bartel 2001, p. 386). The reasoning behind these effects is that frontline employees high in cognitive organizational identification have an increased sense of organizational trust and reciprocity, as well as an increased social attraction towards in-group fellows (Dutton *et al.* 1994, pp. 254).

In line with this research, it is argued that reframing the complainant as an in-group fellow should change the perception of the complaint by the frontline employee. A complaint voiced by an in-group fellow should be much more appreciated and has likely more credit than a complaint voiced by an outsider (cf. Dutton *et al.* 1994, pp. 254). Accordingly, it should not pose any threats to the individual's self-concept and the cause of the complaint is likely to be attributed to the organization rather than to the customer. This change of perception should increase the frontline employee's willingness to understand the cause of the problem and to find a mutually beneficial solution (cf. Homburg *et al.* 2011, p. 57; Tao *et al.* 2016, p. 267). Social creativity processes, such as attributing the service failure to the customer, become more unlikely because there is a reduced perception of an out-group and, accordingly, intergroup conflict should be less of an issue (cf. Turner 1975b, p. 9). Particularly, reframing the situation should help the frontline employee to understand the complaint as valuable feedback, which helps to sustain the social security associated with the social identity. Therefore, reframing the complainant as a member of the in-group should reduce the negative effect of cognitive organizational identification on frontline employees' collaborative handling of the complaint.

Moreover, the in-group favoritism associated with high cognitive organizational identification (e.g., Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 13) should reduce sabotage of the complainant's service, when the complainant is perceived as an in-group member. Again in line with the research stream referenced above, perceiving the complainant as part of the in-group should shift the locus of causality from the customer to the organization, decreasing intentions to sabotage the complainant's service. Specifically, perceptions of the complainant as an in-group member make intergroup discrimination in the form of sabotage behavior obsolete because the information exchange happens within the in-group and no perceived out-group is involved (cf. Turner 1975b, p. 9). In fact, sabotaging an in-group fellow would be self-defeating and it is, thus, argued that reframing the complainant as in-group fellow reduces the positive effect of cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H13:** *When the complainant is reframed as an in-group member, a) the negative relationship between cognitive organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint will be attenuated and b) the positive relationship between cognitive organizational identification and sabotage of the complainant's service will be attenuated.*

Reframing the complainant as an in-group member is also hypothesized to moderate the relationships between affective organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service. If the negative feedback is perceived to be provided by an in-group fellow, the central underlying arguments for the positive effect of affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint should hold even more. First, it was argued that frontline employees high in affective organizational identification aim at enhancing their self and treat the customer favorably, in order to secure the positivity of their self-concept (Hogg 2001, p. 187). Prior research on organizational identification has shown that there is an increased (expected) reciprocity between in-group members (Dutton *et al.* 1994, pp. 254). It follows that collaborative behavior towards the in-group complainant should be expected to increase the positivity of the social identity even more, because the complainant is expected to "reward" the favorable complaint handling behavior stronger, for example, by having a more positive image of the organization, spread positive word-of-mouth etc. Second, negative feedback voiced by an in-group member should have more credit and should, thus, be perceived even stronger to be a valuable source for organizational improvement, which, in turn, is beneficial to the self-concept and also serves the need for self-enhancement (cf. Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224).

As for the negative hypothesized effect of affective organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service, a similar reasoning applies. It can be assumed that the negative effect is stronger in the reframing scenario, because sabotaging an in-group fellow would not only result in increased expected dissatisfaction (as the in-group fellow would expect positive behavior) but would also directly harm the positivity of the self-concept, as it damages the relationship between an in-group member and the organization (cf. Harris and Ogbonna 2012, p. 2034) and, thus, contradicts the underlying motive of self-enhancement (Hogg 2001, p. 187). Furthermore, since a complaint voiced by an in-group member

should have more credibility, perceptions of being mistreated by him or her should be further reduced (cf. Bell and Luddington 2006, p. 224; Rupp and Spencer 2006, p. 971). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

**H14:** *When the complainant is reframed as an in-group member, a) the positive relationship between affective organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint will be reinforced and b) the negative relationship between affective organizational identification and sabotage of the complainant's service will be reinforced.*

With regard to the effects of organizational identification incongruence on collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service, reframing the complainant as a member of the in-group is also hypothesized to be a moderator. When the customer complaint is perceived to be feedback by an in-group fellow, the situation should be less confrontational and more civil because there is no intergroup conflict involved (cf. Dutton *et al.* 1994, p. 241; Turner 1975b, p. 9). Because the complaint is not perceived as a fundamental threat, it is unlikely to emphasize the dissonance as much (cf. Elsbach and Kramer 1996). Handling the complaint of someone who is perceived to care about the organization should be easier and less stressful for a frontline employee with a "neurotic dissonance", than handling a complaint of someone who is perceived to possibly devalue and attack the organization and, thus, the personal self-concept because it does not emphasize the dissonance as much. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

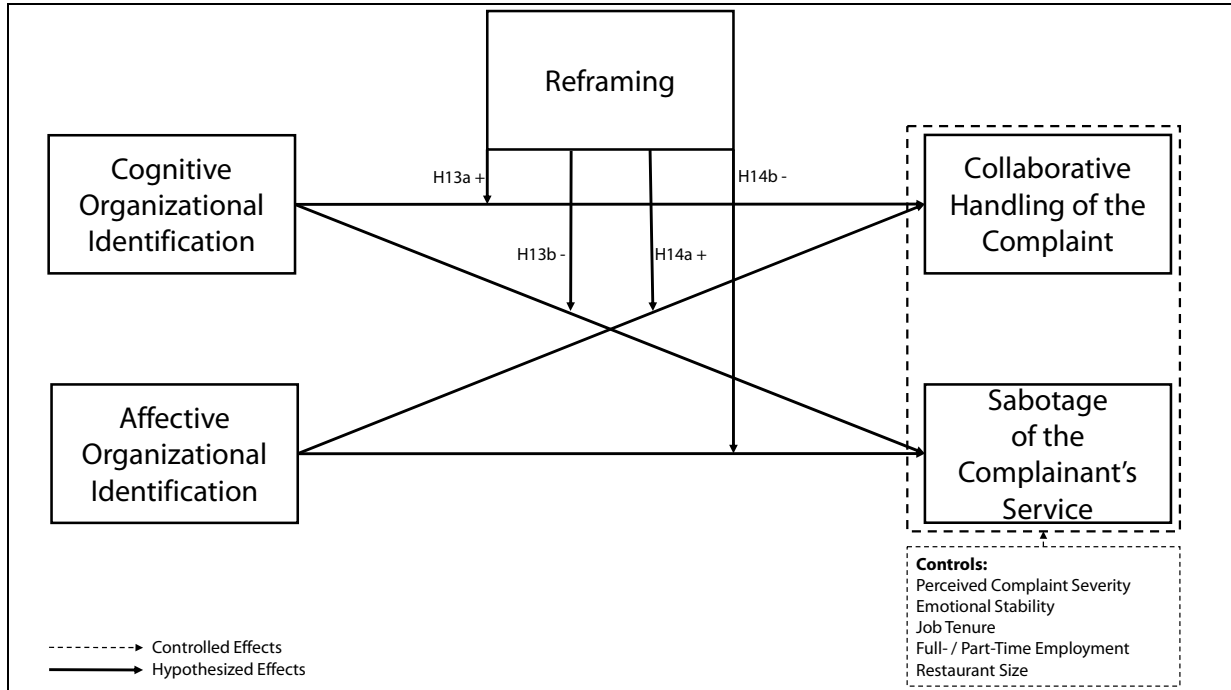
**H15:** *When the complainant is reframed as an in-group member, a) the negative relationship between organizational identification incongruence and collaborative handling of the complaint will be attenuated and b) the positive relationship between organizational identification incongruence and sabotage of the complainant's service will be attenuated.*

### *Control Variables*

In order to control for potential confounding effects, the same control variables were introduced to the model as in Study 2a.

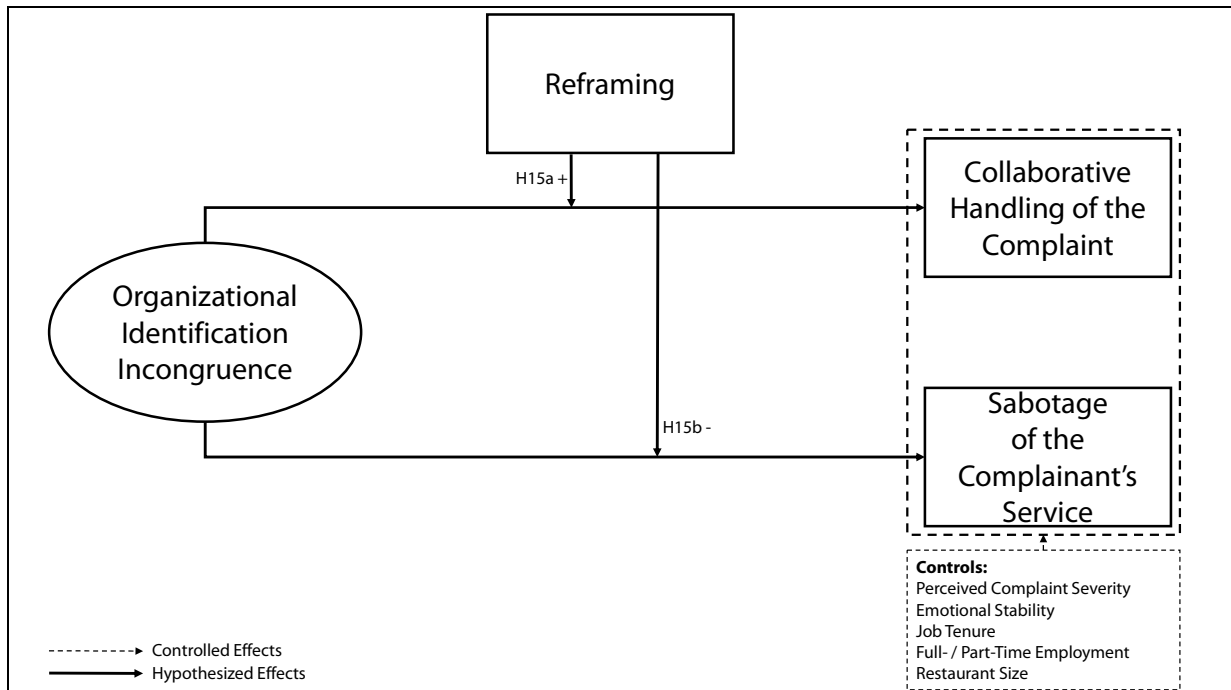
*Overview of the Conceptual Framework*

Figure 20 and Figure 21 provide an overview of the conceptual framework of Study 2b.



**Figure 20: Conceptual Framework of Study 2b (H13 and H14)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 21: Conceptual Framework of Study 2b (H15)**

Source: Author's illustration.



### 6.3 Data Collection and Sample Description

Data in Study 2a was collected from frontline employees in the restaurant industry with help of a paper-pencil survey over the period of two months, from January to February 2016. Frontline employees from the restaurant industry are eminently suitable to the research questions at hand, because they work in the number one complaint-generating category in the service sector, constituting 10.7% of all registered complaints (here and in the following, Estelami 2000, pp. 293). Moreover, complainants report only a mediocre complaint resolution index<sup>23</sup> of .48 for this industry, pointing to the relevance of identifying barriers and motivators for frontline employees particularly in the restaurant industry, to resolve complaints more successfully.

The survey questionnaire was subdivided into three parts. The first part contained general information about the survey. In the second part, frontline employees were asked to imagine a complaint scenario. In order to make the written scenario as realistic as possible, ten qualitative in-depth interviews with frontline employees from the restaurant industry have been conducted prior to designing the questionnaire.<sup>24</sup> Frontline employees were asked, first, if complaints are a common part of their professional everyday life and, second, which complaints are the most common.<sup>25</sup> All employees agreed that complaints are a consistent feature of their working life. Based on the reports with regard to specific complaint situations they would consider to be the most common, a variety of complaint scenarios was designed and presented to the employees. After receiving feedback from the frontline employees, a revisited final version was used for the data collection (cf. Gilly *et al.* 1991, p. 309). Specifically, respondents were asked in the survey to imagine a scenario, in which a customer complains that his or her food was served cold

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<sup>23</sup> The complaint resolution index is calculated as the ratio of complaints that customers reported as being resolved delightfully over all complaints in the sector.

<sup>24</sup> Interviews were conducted in two restaurants for German food, one restaurant for Italian food and one franchise restaurant in Münster with a total length of 16 to 30 minutes. In order to grasp a variety of insights, the interview sample covered full-time (6 employees) as well as part-time employees (4 employees) with a job tenure from six months to 30 years. With regard to gender, one half of the employees was male and the other half was female. Transcripts of the interviews are presented in the Electronic Appendix.

<sup>25</sup> See Electronic Appendix for the detailed interview guideline.

and that the service was irresponsive so far. This situation notably not only represents a complaint situation, frontline employees assess to be the most common but it is also reported by customers to be one of the most annoying situations during a restaurant visit (Statista 2014b). The scenario was written in such a way that the customer complaint was directed against the restaurant, in general, and did not blame any employee, in specific, leaving the cause of the complaint open for interpretation. Finally, the respondent was asked for help.

While the general information was held constant, the degree of the complaint severity was varied with one scenario containing a relatively friendly complaint and the other scenario containing a relatively unfriendly complaint. The scenarios were assigned randomly to the respondents (between-subject design) (Campbell 1957, pp. 303–305; Sarris 1990, p. 75; Shadish *et al.* 2002, p. 263). This procedure ensured variance in the degree of the complaint. A manipulation check, measuring the perceived complaint severity allowed to control for potential confounding effects of the complaint degree in the main analyses (see section 6.6.3) (Sarris 1992, pp. 180–186).<sup>26</sup>

While the target group and general procedure of Study 2b was identical to the survey conducted in Study 2a, the second part of the survey slightly differed. Specifically, respondents in Study 2b received a reframing text before they were exposed to the scenario text, and were only exposed to the unfriendly complaint scenario (no variation of scenarios). Data for Study 2b was collected in March 2016 over the period of one month. The reframing text added to the scenario that respondents should imagine that their manager called a team meeting prior to their shift. In this meeting, the manager provided the information that most complainants become more profitable and loyal than non-complainants, if their complaint is resolved and that complainants can, therefore, be regarded as valuable success factors for the restaurant, that do care about the restaurant more than customers that do not complain.<sup>27</sup>

In both Study 2a and Study 2b, the actual questionnaires, where data was collected for all model variables, were identical in content and structure. In order to reduce

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<sup>26</sup> See Table 49 in Appendix B for the scenario descriptions.

<sup>27</sup> See Table 50 in Appendix B for the reframing text.

common method bias, the dependent variables were measured relatively at the beginning of the questionnaire, whereas the independent variables were measured at the end of the questionnaire (see section 5.3 for the advantages of this procedure).

In order to acquire restaurants to participate in the surveys of Study 2a and Study 2b, restaurant managers were either contacted via telephone or in person, were introduced to the studies and asked for their participation. To incentivize participation, the research team presented the prospect of a donation of 5 € to a charity organization for each fully completed questionnaire. In total, 38 restaurant managers were contacted for Study 2a, of which 28 agreed to participate, corresponding to a response rate of 74%. For Study 2b, another 18 restaurant managers were contacted, of which 15 agreed to participate, yielding a response rate of 83%. Those restaurant managers who agreed to participate, were provided with equal numbers of questionnaires with both scenarios, arranged in an alternating order, to achieve a nearly equal and randomized distribution of the scenarios. Each questionnaire came in a closed envelope. Both restaurant managers and respondents were briefed that only completed questionnaires would be considered that were sent back in an again closed and sealed envelope to ensure the anonymity of the respondents data. Moreover, it was agreed upon that the restaurant name would not be part of the data set.

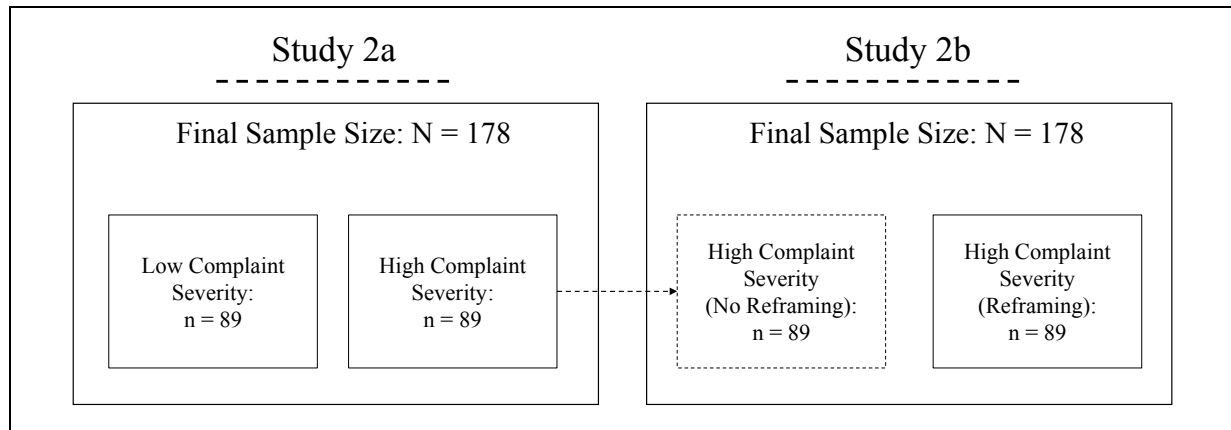
In total, 220 questionnaires were sent back by the restaurant managers in Study 2a. To ensure that only data from respondents who had thoroughly read and completed the survey were used for the analyses, 42 respondents were excluded from the sample because either their questionnaires contained a high degree of missing values on the relevant measures or they gave the wrong answer to a screening question, indicating that they did not read the scenario with enough attention.<sup>28</sup> This procedure yielded a final sample of 178 respondents for Study 2a.

In Study 2b, data was collected from 102 employees. The same cleaning procedure as outlined above yielded an effective sample size of 89 respondents. These 89 respondents who received a reframing text before the “unfriendly” scenario

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<sup>28</sup> Respondents were asked, whether in the scenario a customer asked for the time, when in fact he or she did not (see Table 49 in Appendix B).

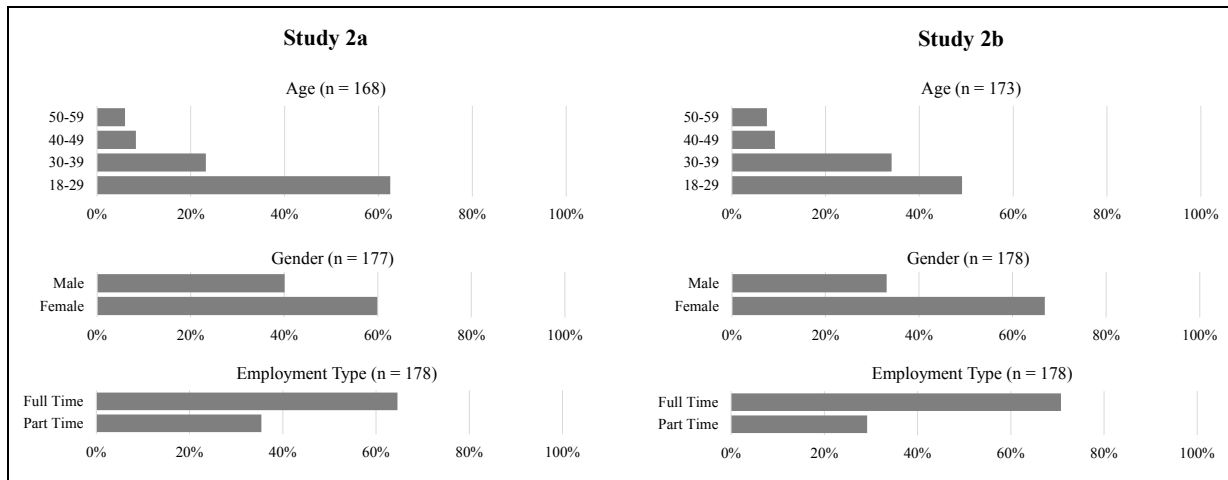
were subsequently matched with those 89 respondents from Study 2a who have received the “unfriendly” scenario but did not receive the reframing text, serving as the control group (see Figure 22). Thus, the final sample size of Study 2b is 178.



**Figure 22: Sample Composition (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author’s illustration.

Figure 23 provides an overview of selected descriptive statistics of Study 2a and Study 2b. A substantial share of the respondents (*Study 2a*: 62.5%; *Study 2b*: 49.1%) is between 18 and 29 years old, which is a good representation of employees in this sector in Germany (50%; Statista 2016, p. 23). With regard to gender, female frontline employees constitute a larger share than male employees (*Study 2a*: 59.9%; *Study 2b*: 66.9%), which is again a good representation of the overall distribution among restaurant employees in Germany (64.4%; Statista 2016, p. 24). Finally, the vast majority of the respondents worked as full-time employees (*Study 2a*: 64.6%; *Study 2b*: 70.8%).



**Figure 23: Sample Descriptives (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author’s illustration.

## 6.4 Measures

### 6.4.1 Independent Variables

In order to warrant comparability between the results of Study 1 and Study 2a and 2b, the same 7-point Likert scales from Johnson *et al.* (2012) were used to measure affective and cognitive organizational identification. These scales were only slightly adapted to fit the restaurant context. The respective items can be found in Table 21 for affective organizational identification and in Table 22 for cognitive organizational identification.

Affective Organizational Identification		
Variable	Items	Source
ID_aff1	I feel happy to be an employee of my restaurant.	adopted from Johnson et al. 2012
ID_aff2	I am proud to be an employee of my restaurant.	
ID_aff3	It feels good to be an employee of my restaurant.	
ID_aff4	I enjoy being an employee of my restaurant.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 21: Measurement of Affective Organizational Identification (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author’s illustration.

<b>Cognitive Organizational Identification</b>		
Variable	Item	Source
Label		
ID_cog1	Being associated with my restaurant helps me to express my identity.	
ID_cog2	My sense of self overlaps with the identity of my restaurant.	adapted from Johnson et al.
ID_cog3	My membership in the restaurant is very important to my sense of who I am.	2012
ID_cog4	It influences the way I think about myself, when my restaurant is criticized.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 22: Measurement of Cognitive Organizational Identification (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

#### 6.4.2 Moderator Variables

In Study 2a, perceived availability of a service script was introduced as a moderator. This variable was measured with a single item on a 7-point Likert scale, as presented in Table 23.

<b>Perceived Availability of a Service Script</b>		
Variable	Items	Source
Labels		
v_14	I am provided with a detailed service script, which specifies how I should behave in a complaint situation.	new measure

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 23: Measurement of Perceived Availability of a Service Script (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

In Study 2b, reframing the complainant as an in-group member was introduced as a moderator. This variable is a dummy coded measure, containing a value of 1, when the respondent received the reframing text before he or she was exposed to the complaint scenario and containing a value of 0, when he or she did not receive a reframing text.

### 6.4.3 Dependent Variables

For measuring collaborative handling of the complaint, the same 7-point Likert scale as in Study 1 from Homburg *et al.* (2011) was used and the wording was changed from “student” to “customer”, as illustrated in Table 24.

Collaborative Handling of the Complaint		
Variable	Items	Source
Labels		
v_84	I would be very attentive to the customer’s complaint.	
v_85	I would ask the customer for the exact reasons of his/her complaint.	
v_86	I would actively try to create a win/win situation for both the customer and my restaurant.	adapted from Homburg et al. 2011
v_87	I would be very committed to resolve the customer’s problems.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 24: Measurement of Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author’s illustration.

The measurement of frontline employees’ intentions to sabotage the complainant’s service was again based on Mackie *et al.* (2000) but was broadened with help of qualitative expert interviews. During the same ten qualitative in-depth interviews with restaurant employees that have been used to design a realistic complaint scenario (see section 6.3), employees were also asked to name typical sabotage behaviors they know from direct observations of their own or colleagues. After ten interviews, a saturation was reached and no new information could be identified. In total, five items that reflect sabotage of the complainant’s service could be extracted and the measurement was, accordingly, extended by these five new items on a 7-point Likert scale. Moreover, in contrast to Study 1, the wording of the items was changed from “student” to “customer” to fit the context. The items are presented in Table 25.

<b>Sabotage of the Complainant's Service</b>		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
	The customer's complaint leads me to ...	
v_62	... confront the customer.	adapted from Mackie et al. 2000, broadened by results of qualitative expert interviews (in italics)
v_63	... oppose the customer.	
v_64	... argue with the customer.	
v_65	... get verbally aggressive towards the customer.	
v_7	... <i>let the customer wait extra time on purpose.</i>	
v_8	... <i>tell the customer that I took care but I would in fact prefer other customers in the meantime.</i>	
v_9	... <i>be less complaisant towards the customer.</i>	
v_10	... <i>stop asking the customer for other wishes.</i>	
v_11	... <i>serve another cold meal on purpose.</i>	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 25: Measurement of Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

#### 6.4.4 Control Variables

Analogous to Study 1, the emotional stability of frontline employees was measured by three items developed by John and Srivastava (1999) on a 7-point Likert scale, as illustrated in Table 26.

<b>Emotional Stability</b>		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
v_141	I can easily handle stress.	adopted from John and Srivastava 1999
v_142	It is hard to annoy me.	
v_143	I stay calm in tense situations.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 26: Measurement of Emotional Stability (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

The 7-point Likert scale to measure perceived complaint severity was adapted from Study 1 to the restaurant context and all items are shown in Table 27.



Perceived Complaint Severity		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
v_272	The customer massively complains about my restaurant.	new scale
v_282	The customer attacks my restaurant.	
v_283	The customer devalues my restaurant.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 27: Measurement of Perceived Complaint Severity (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

## 6.5 Analytical Procedure

Since the conceptual frameworks of Study 2a and Study 2b are based on Study 1 and also include direct effects, linear interaction effects and effects of congruence and incongruence between cognitive and affective organizational identification, polynomial regression with response surface analysis again was assessed to be the most appropriate method. All the basic knowledge needed to understand the results of this methodological approach and their interpretation has already been outlined in section 5.5 and will not repeatedly be discussed here. Specifics on how to test and interpret moderational effects within the scope of (in-)congruence effects will be directly explained in the hypotheses testing sections, i.e. in section 6.6.3 and 6.6.4.

## 6.6 Empirical Results

### 6.6.1 Reliability and Validity of the Measures

Consistent with the procedure used in Study 1, an EFA and a CFA were conducted in order to ensure sufficient reliability and validity of the measures (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 133). Although some of the constructs used in Study 2a and 2b were already used in a similar form in Study 1, new reliability and validity tests were necessary, since the items were slightly adapted to the new context and sabotage of the complainant's service was broadened with help of the qualitative interviews.

### 6.6.1.1 Exploratory Factor Analyses

Analogously to Study 1, the recommendations of Weiber and Mühlhaus (2014, p. 133) were followed and the EFA was conducted by using principal axis analysis with the number of extracted factors being determined by the Kaiser-criterion (Kaiser 1974, pp. 31). Based on the assumption that there is a certain level of correlation between the factors, oblique-angled Promax-Rotation was again selected as the rotation method.

The results of the EFA regarding the overall adequacy of the sample for a factor analysis are shown in Table 28. For reasons of simplicity, the EFA results of Study 2a and 2b are presented together.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Criterion		Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Total Variance Explained	
Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b
.793	.789	.000	.000	70.74%	69.56%

**Table 28: Sample Adequacy for a Factor Analysis (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

First, the KMO values of .793 (Study 2a) and .789 (Study 2b) are only marginally below the recommended threshold of .8 (Kaiser 1970, p. 405) and exceed the less restrictive threshold of .6 (Kaiser 1974, pp. 111). These results indicate that a factor analysis is reasonable for the given data (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 342). Second, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is highly significant with a  $p$ -value of  $<.0005$  for both Study 2a and Study 2b, indicating that that the variables in the populations are indeed correlated and that applying a factor analysis is reasonable (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 341).

Finally, the EFA supports the theoretically sound six factor solution for both studies, respectively and the Total Variances Explained of 70.74% and 69.56% can be regarded as a very good result (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 144).

Table 29 shows the Cronbach's Alphas of each construct and the item-wise results of the EFA for Study 2a and Study 2b.

Variable Name	Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation		MSA Criterion		Cronbach's Alpha	
	Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b
<b>Independent Variables</b>						
Affective Organizational Identification					.951	.935
ID_aff1	.888	.835	.847	.837		
ID_aff2	.941	.881	.853	.789		
ID_aff3	.926	.875	.818	.873		
ID_aff4	.941	.794	.839	.825		
Cognitive Organizational Identification					.869	.879
ID_cog1	.793	.765	.798	.759		
ID_cog2	.711	.802	.746	.708		
ID_cog3	.805	.796	.788	.764		
ID_cog4	.583	.604	.755	.809		
<b>Dependent Variables</b>						
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint					.710	.835
v_84	.628	.748	.808	.888		
v_85	.397	.634	.516	.752		
v_86	.530	.659	.744	.850		
v_87	.491	.657	.850	.890		
Sabotage of the Complainant's					.876	.878
v_62	.610	.647	.841	.813		
v_63	.718	.726	.833	.792		
v_64	.754	.706	.895	.846		
v_65	.510	.611	.883	.807		
v_7	.651	.672	.843	.808		
v_8	.659	.679	.842	.845		
v_9	.566	.552	.876	.854		
v_10	.560	.585	.834	.834		
v_11	.610	.551	.805	.831		
<b>Control Variables</b>						
Emotional Stability					.696	.767
v_141	.378	.487	.618	.588		
v_142	.524	.587	.531	.533		
v_143	.659	.745	.611	.546		
Perceived Complaint Severity					.920	.837
v_272	.810	.616	.707	.627		
v_282	.859	.740	.724	.571		
v_283	.857	.749	.691	.577		

**Table 29: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

All constructs reach or exceed the recommended threshold of .7 for Cronbach's Alpha (Nunnally 1978, p. 245). With regard to the Corrected-Item-to-Total Correlations all values exceed the recommended threshold of .5 (Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 343; Shimp and Sharma 1987, p. 282), except for v\_85, v\_87 and v\_141 in Study 2a. As a deletion of these indicators did, however, not lead to an increase in the respective Cronbach's Alphas, these indicators were kept in the model. In line with this, all MSA values exceed the recommended threshold of .5 (Kaiser and Rice 1974, pp. 111), indicating as well that there is no need to exclude any indicator from the measurement model. Similar to Study 1, all results from the EFA suggest that the measures of the latent constructs are sufficiently reliable.

#### 6.6.1.2 Confirmatory Factor Analyses

As outlined in section 5.5.1.2, before empirically examining the constructs in the CFA, one has to ensure that *face validity* of each construct is given (Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014, p. 157). Except for the broadened scale of sabotage of the complainant's service, all constructs have already been inspected with regard to face validity in Study 1. Since the new measurement of sabotage of the complainant's service in Study 2a and Study 2b is based on interviews with experts in the field, it can, however, be assumed that this construct shows likewise *face validity* (Cronbach and Meehl 1955, p. 282; Nunnally 1978, pp. 79).

Table 30 provide the results of the CFA of Study 2a and Study 2b with regard to the local fit-indices.

Variable Name	Factor Loadings		Composite Reliability		AVE		Fornell-Larcker Criterion	
	Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b	Study 2a	Study 2b
<b>Independent Variables</b>								
Affective Organizational Identification			.951	.936	.831	.785	✓	✓
ID_aff1	.919	.886						
ID_aff2	.883	.919						
ID_aff3	.949	.908						
ID_aff4	.893	.829						
Cognitive Organizational Identification			.875	.885	.640	.662	✓	✓
ID_cog1	.886	.822						
ID_cog2	.792	.900						
ID_cog3	.865	.876						
ID_cog4	.632	.629						
<b>Dependent Variables</b>								
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint			.800	.842	.506	.574	✓	✓
v_84	.860	.878						
v_85	.428	.668						
v_86	.550	.697						
v_87	.671	.769						
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			.912	.933	.540	.613	✓	✓
v_62	.609	.835						
v_63	.695	.949						
v_64	.837	.882						
v_65	.624	.765						
v_7	.683	.797						
v_8	.680	.839						
v_9	.579	.502						
v_10	.561	.678						
v_11	.686	.712						
<b>Control Variables</b>								
Emotional Stability			.735	.799	.500	.585	✓	✓
v_141	.456	.548						
v_142	.657	.683						
v_143	.927	.994						
Perceived Complaint Severity			.924	.844	.802	.646	✓	✓
v_272	.845	.666						
v_282	.926	.851						
v_283	.913	.878						

$p < .01$  for all factor loadings

**Table 30: Local Fit-Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

First, for both studies all factor loadings are larger than the suggested threshold (*Study 2a*:  $\geq .428$ ; *Study 2b*:  $\geq .502$ ) and highly significant, strongly indicating that the factor loadings are statistically different from 0 in the population (e.g., see Homburg and Giering 1998, p. 124). Second, composite reliability is sufficiently high (*Study 2a*:  $\geq .735$ ; *Study 2b*:  $\geq .799$ ) for all constructs, showing that the indicators represent good measurements for the respective construct (Bagozzi and Baumgartner 1994, p. 402). Third, the AVE exceeds the recommended threshold (*Study 2a*:  $\geq .500$ ; *Study 2b*:  $\geq .574$ ) (Bagozzi and Yi 1988, p. 80). Based on these results, one can assume that *convergent validity* is given in the study.

In order to test for *discriminant validity*, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is applied (Fornell and Larcker 1981, p. 46) and is fulfilled for every factor in both Study 2a and Study 2b.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, *discriminant validity* can be assumed as well. Table 31 shows the values for all relevant global fit-indices for Study 2a and 2b.

Criterion	Value	
	<i>Study 2a</i>	<i>Study 2b</i>
Normed $\chi^2$	1.64	1.85
RMSEA	.060	.069
SRMR	.065	.063
CFI	.913	.918
TLI	.901	.896

**Table 31: Global Fit-Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

The descriptive normed  $\chi^2$  values of 1.64 for Study 2a and 1.85 for Study 2b indicate an excellent fit of the models to the data (Homburg and Baumgartner 1995, p. 172). These results are underlined by the absolute fit-indices, with small values for both RMSEA (*Study 2a*: .060; *Study 2b*: .069) (cf. Browne and Cudeck 1993, pp. 136) and SRMR (*Study 2a*: .065; *Study 2b*: .063) (cf. Homburg *et al.* 2008, p. 88). Lastly, the incremental fit-indices support these results, as well, with values for the CFI of .913 in Study 2a and .918 in Study 2b (cf. Bentler 1990, pp. 238) and values for the TLI of .901 in Study 2a and .896 in Study 2b (cf. Bollen 1989, p. 273). In conclusion, one can assume that the global model fit is very good in both studies.

<sup>29</sup> See Table 51 and Table 52 in Appendix B for details.

### 6.6.2 Assumptions Testing

Similar to Study 1, the applicability of polynomial regression with response surface analysis to the context of Study 2a and Study 2b is subject to three polynomial regression specific ((a) – (c)) and six general assumptions ((1) – (6)) (Edwards 2002, p. 360).

Since the focal independent variables, as in Study 1, are again affective and cognitive organizational identification and measured on a 7-point Likert scale, the assumption (a) that both variables share the same conceptual domain is as well fulfilled, as the assumption (b) that they are measured on the same scale.

According to assumption (c), it is reasonable to inspect, how many of the respondents in the data set indeed have a substantial discrepancy between affective and cognitive organizational identification in order to assess the practical relevance of the (in-)congruence perspective employed in Study 2a and Study 2b (Shanock *et al.* 2010, p. 547). The procedure recommended by Fleenor *et al.* (1996, p. 494) (see section 5.6.2) yields the following results.<sup>30</sup> Table 32 indicates that 28.7% (Study 2a) and 32% (Study 2b), respectively, of the overall sample have an incongruence in their organizational identification such that cognitive organizational identification is larger than affective organizational identification. 30.9% (Study 2a) and 29.2% (Study 2b), respectively, fall into the “Cognitive organizational identification < affective organizational identification” group and finally, 40.4% (Study 2a) and 38.8% (Study 2b) of the overall samples fall into the congruence group.

Identification Constellation	Percentages	
	Study 2a	Study 2b
Cognitive > Affective Organizational Identification	28.7	32.0
Cognitive = Affective Organizational Identification	40.4	38.8
Cognitive < Affective Organizational Identification	30.9	29.2

**Table 32: Proportions of (In-)Congruence Constellations of Organizational Identification (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<sup>30</sup> Consistent with Study 1, the standard deviation of cognitive organizational identification served again as a basis for this classification.

These results indicate that more than half of the overall samples (*Study 2a*: 59.6%; *Study 2b*: 61.2%) reveal substantial deviations in their organizational identification dimensions and that employing an (in-)congruence perspective is adequate to the given research question. In sum, all three specific assumptions of polynomial regression are fulfilled for Study 2a and Study 2b.

Finally, the six general assumptions of multiple regression analysis (e.g., see Hair 2010, pp. 181; Tabachnick and Fidell 2007, pp. 181) were tested (see section 5.6.2).

Assumption (1) requires that the model has been correctly specified (Leeftang *et al.* 2000, p. 331; Wooldridge 2009, pp. 24–27) and that all relevant variables are included into the model (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, pp. 84–86). While the second part of this assumption is satisfied through the theoretical framework (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 90), the first part is formally tested by the RESET (Ramsey 1969, pp. 361). For the relationship between affective and cognitive organizational identification and collaborative handling of the complaint, as well as for the relationship between the independent variables and sabotage of the complainant's service, the test statistics are significant in both Study 2a and Study 2b (*Study 2a*:  $F_{\text{Collaborative Handling}}(3, 161) = 5.15, p = .0020$ ;  $F_{\text{Sabotage}}(3, 161) = 4.14, p = .0154$ ; *Study 2b*:  $F_{\text{Collaborative Handling}}(3, 161) = 4.62, p = .0040$ ;  $F_{\text{Sabotage}}(3, 161) = 4.33, p = .0280$ ), supporting the view that a non-linear modeling is suitable to the given relationships and that it ensures consistency of the prediction.

To ensure that endogeneity is not a problem and assumption (2) is satisfied, all independent variables were examined with regard to a potential correlation with the residuals, i.e. predictors “inside” the models were correlated with any variable “outside” the models. Since all correlations are non-significant, endogeneity is not a problem and the estimates of the regression coefficients can be assumed to be consistent in Study 2a and Study 2b (e.g., Antonakis *et al.* 2014, p. 99; Petrin and Train 2010, p. 4).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Table 53 and Table 54 in Appendix B for details on Study 2a, and Table 55 and Table 56 in Appendix B for details on Study 2b.



In order to check assumption (3), the Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg Test was conducted for both regressions in both studies. In all cases, the  $\chi^2$ -distributed test statistic is significant (*Study 2a*:  $\chi^2_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}}(1) = 13.15, p < .0005$ ;  $\chi^2_{\text{Sabotage}}(1) = 55.67, p < .0005$ ; *Study 2b*:  $\chi^2_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}}(1) = 15.32, p < .0005$ ;  $\chi^2_{\text{Sabotage}}(1) = 42.97, p < .0005$ ), suggesting to reject the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity. However, using robust standard errors in the regression (Leeflang *et al.* 2000, p. 335) does not yield in different results for the (non-) significance of the regression coefficients in any of the regressions and it can, therefore, be assumed that the models are robust towards heteroscedasticity.

As for assumption (4), the DW-test statistics are close to 2 (*Study 2a*:  $DW_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = 1.863$ ;  $DW_{\text{Sabotage}} = 1.976$ ; *Study 2b*:  $DW_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = 1.880$ ;  $DW_{\text{Sabotage}} = 1.865$ ) and it can, therefore, be assumed that autocorrelation is not a problem in neither study.

Assumption (5) was tested with help of the KS-Test, as well as the SW-Test. Both test statistics are significant in the given studies (*Study 2a*:  $KS\text{-Test}_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = .096, p < .0005$ ;  $SW\text{-Test}_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = .941, p < .0005$ ;  $KS\text{-Test}_{\text{Sabotage}} = .145, p < .0005$ ;  $SW\text{-Test}_{\text{Sabotage}} = .869, p < .0005$ ; *Study 2b*:  $KS\text{-Test}_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = .115, p < .0005$ ;  $SW\text{-Test}_{\text{CollaborativeHandling}} = .937, p < .0005$ ;  $KS\text{-Test}_{\text{Sabotage}} = .197, p < .0005$ ;  $SW\text{-Test}_{\text{Sabotage}} = .833, p = .000$ ), suggesting that the hypotheses that the residuals are normally distributed have to be rejected in both studies. However, following the central limit theorem it can again be assumed that linear regressions with sample sizes  $N > 40$  are robust against any deviation from a normal distribution of the residuals and assumption (5) is, thus, violated to an uncritical extent (Backhaus *et al.* 2011, p. 96).

Assumption (6) of no multicollinearity was tested by studying the tolerance values and VIFs. Table 33 shows that the tolerance values are larger than .1 (*Study 2a*:  $\geq .121$ ; *Study 2b*:  $\geq .131$ ) and the VIFs are smaller than 10 (*Study 2a*:  $\leq 8.240$ ; *Study 2b*:  $\leq 7.609$ ), accordingly, for all independent variables. Therefore, it can be assumed that multicollinearity is neither a serious problem in Study 2a nor in Study 2b (Giere *et al.* 2006, p. 687; Kennedy 2003, p. 223).

	Tolerance		VIF	
	<i>Study 2a</i>	<i>Study 2b</i>	<i>Study 2a</i>	<i>Study 2b</i>
Affective Organizational Identification	.197	.360	5.083	2.781
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.212	.388	4.715	2.576
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	.355	.513	2.814	1.950
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	.242	.397	4.126	2.521
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	.526	.700	1.901	1.429
Perceived Complaint Severity	.813	.902	1.231	1.109
Emotional Stability	.838	.877	1.193	1.140
Job Tenure Dummy 1 (0 – 1 year)	.147	.239	6.792	4.180
Job Tenure Dummy 2 (2 – 5 years)	.121	.131	8.240	7.609
Job Tenure Dummy 3 (6 – 10 years)	.202	.154	4.953	6.478
Job Tenure Dummy 4 (11 – 15 years)	.305	.288	3.281	3.471
Job Tenure Dummy 5 (16 – 20 years)	.407	.622	2.456	1.607
Part Time / Full Time Employment	.720	.716	1.388	1.397
Restaurant Size Dummy 1 (< 5 employees)	.861	.874	1.161	1.144
Restaurant Size Dummy 2 (5 – 10 employees)	.832	.916	1.202	1.092

**Table 33: Tolerance Values and VIFs (Study 2a and Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Table 34 and Table 35 provide summaries of all assumptions, the criteria used to assess these assumptions, the respective results and their interpretations. In summary, all general assumptions of a multiple regression, as well as the specific assumptions of a polynomial regressions are fulfilled or uncritical in Study 2a and Study 2b and, accordingly, there are no formal reasons *not* to conduct multiple (polynomial) regressions.

Assumption	Criterion	Results	Interpretation
<b><i>Specific Assumptions of Polynomial Regression</i></b>			
(a) Same conceptual domain	Theory	Organizational Identification	IVs originate from the same concept ✓
(b) Same scale	Measurement	IVs are measured on a 7-point scale	Measurement is comparable ✓
(c) Substantial number of respondents with discrepant values	Standardized z-scores with a deviation larger than one-half SD	See Table 32	Approximately half the sample has substantially discrepant values ✓
<b><i>General Assumptions of Multiple Regression</i></b>			
(1) Correct Specification	Ramsey RESET Test	$F_{CH}(3, 161) = 5.15$ $p = .002$ $F_{SAB}(3, 161) = 4.14$ $p = .015$	non-linear relationship between IVs and DV ✓
(2) No Endogeneity	Correlation of IVs and residuals	No significant Correlations	Endogeneity is not a problem ✓
(3) Constant Variance of Residuals	Breusch-Pagan- / Cook-Weisberg Test	$\chi^2_{CH}(1) = 13.15$ $p < .0005$ $\chi^2_{SAB}(1) = 55.67$ $p < .0005$	Heteroskedasticity is present to an uncritical extent ✓
(4) Independence of Residuals	Durbin-Watson Test	$DW_{CH} = 1.863$ $DW_{SAB} = 1.976$	Autocorrelation is not a problem ✓
(5) Normality of Residuals	Kolmogorov-Smirnov- / Shapiro-Wilk Test; Sample Size	$KS\ Test_{CH} = .096$ $p < .0005$ $SW\ Test_{CH} = .941$ $p < .0005$ $KS\ Tests_{SAB} = .145$ $p < .0005$ $SW\ Tests_{SAB} = .869$ $p < .0005$	Sample size is sufficiently large to assume normality of residuals ✓
(6) Absence of Multicollinearity	Variance Inflation Factor / Tolerance	VIFs < 8.240 Tolerance > .121	No evidence for severe multicollinearity ✓
<i>Note:</i> CH = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint; SAB = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			

**Table 34: Results of the Assumption Testing (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Assumption	Criterion	Results	Interpretation
<b>Specific Assumptions of Polynomial Regression</b>			
(a) Same conceptual domain	Theory	Organizational Identification	IVs originate from the same concept ✓
(b) Same scale	Measurement	IVs are measured on a 7-point scale	Measurement is comparable ✓
(c) Substantial number of respondents with discrepant values	Standardized z-scores with a deviation larger than one-half SD	See Table 32	Approximately half the sample has substantially discrepant values ✓
<b>General Assumptions of Multiple Regression</b>			
(1) Correct Specification	Ramsey RESET Test	$F_{CH}(3, 161) = 4.62$ $p = .004$ $F_{SAB}(3, 161) = 4.33$ $p = .028$	non-linear relationship between IVs and DV ✓
(2) No Endogeneity	Correlation of IVs and residuals	No significant Correlations	Endogeneity is not a problem ✓
(3) Constant Variance of Residuals	Breusch-Pagan-/ Cook-Weisberg Test	$\chi^2_{CH}(1) = 15.32$ $p < .0005$ $\chi^2_{SAB}(1) = 42.97$ $p < .0005$	Heteroskedasticity is present to an uncritical extent ✓
(4) Independence of Residuals	Durbin-Watson Test	$DW_{CH} = 1.880$ $DW_{SAB} = 1.865$	Autocorrelation is not a problem ✓
(5) Normality of Residuals	Kolmogorov-Smirnov / Shapiro-Wilk Test; Sample Size	$KS\ Test_{CH} = .115$ $p = .000$ $SW\ Test_{CH} = .937$ $p < .0005$ $KS\ Tests_{SAB} = .197$ $p < .0005$ $SW\ Tests_{SAB} = .833$ $p = .000$	Sample size is sufficiently large to assume normality of residuals ✓
(6) Absence of Multicollinearity	Variance Inflation Factor / Tolerance	VIFs < 7.609 Tolerance > .131	No evidence for severe multicollinearity ✓
<i>Note:</i> CH = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint; SAB = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			

**Table 35: Results of the Assumption Testing (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

### 6.6.3 Hypotheses Testing of Study 2a

Preliminary to the hypotheses testing, correlations as well as means and standard deviations of the used variables were calculated (see Table 36). Cognitive and affective organizational identification correlate moderately high ( $\rho = .35$ ). Similar to Study 1, affective organizational identification is positively correlated with collaborative handling of the complaint ( $\rho = .28$ ), while cognitive organizational identification shows a non-significant correlation of  $\rho = .03$ . Vice versa, cognitive organizational identification is positively correlated with sabotage of the complainant's service ( $\rho = .29$ ), while the correlation of sabotage of the complainant's service with affective organizational identification is negative ( $\rho = -.13$ ), but non-significant. Collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service show an expected negative correlation ( $\rho = -.35$ ). A detailed analysis of the hypothesized effects follows in this section.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification										
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.35 **									
3. Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.28 **	.03								
4. Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	-.13	.29 **	-.35 **							
5. Perceived Availability of a Service Script	.13	.17 *	.08	-.11						
<i>Control Variables</i>										
6. Emotional Stability	.06	-.07	.14	-.07	-.09					
7. Perceived Complaint Severity	-.05	-.05	.00	.10	-.14	.04				
8. Job Tenure	-.12	.21 **	.06	.00	.03	-.05	.08			
9. Restaurant Size	-.07	-.08	-.08	.16 *	.13	-.09	.03	-.17 *		
10. Full-/Part-Time Employment (1 = Full   0 = Part)	-.01	-.32 **	-.09	.05	-.07	.14	.01	-.25 **	.22 **	
<i>Mean</i>	5.13	3.13	5.93	1.54	3.30	5.00	3.52	1.28	1.50	.35
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	1.53	1.58	1.03	.80	2.10	1.13	2.11	1.19	.65	.48

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 36: Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

*Results of the Replication of Study 1*

Analog to Study 1, two polynomial regressions were conducted with collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service as the respective outcome variable ( $Z$ ). Affective organizational identification ( $X$ ) and cognitive organizational identification ( $Y$ ) reflect the two components of the congruence measure. Equation (1) and Equation (2) present the two estimated models in general notation:

$$\begin{aligned} (1) Z_{\text{Collaborative Handling of the Complaint}} &= b_{0(1)} + b_{1(1)}X + b_{2(1)}Y + b_{3(1)}X^2 + b_{4(1)}XY \\ &\quad + b_{5(1)}Y^2 + \text{Control Variables} + \varepsilon. \\ (2) Z_{\text{Sabotage of the Complainant's Service}} &= b_{0(2)} + b_{1(2)}X + b_{2(2)}Y + b_{3(2)}X^2 + b_{4(2)}XY \\ &\quad + b_5Y^2 + \text{Control Variables} + \varepsilon. \end{aligned}$$

Table 37 shows that most of the hypotheses are supported in Study 2a. Specifically, cognitive organizational identification has a significant negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b_{2(1)} = -.350, p < .01$ ), as proposed in **H1** and a significant positive effect on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b_{2(2)} = .389, p < .01$ ), as proposed in **H2**. The effects of affective organizational identification are in the opposite direction, namely a positive effect is found on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b_{1(1)} = .480, p < .01$ ), in support of **H3**, and a negative effect is found on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b_{1(2)} = -.272, p < .01$ ), in support of **H4**. The positive interaction effect between cognitive and affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint is also significant ( $b_{4(1)} = .150, p < .01$ ), in support of **H5a**. A graphical inspection of the interaction effect shows that, in fact, high levels of affective organizational identification, in combination with high levels of cognitive organizational identification, increase collaborative handling of the complaint (see Figure 32 in Appendix B). The negative interaction effect between cognitive and affective organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service is significant ( $b_{4(2)} = -.099, p < .01$ ), as well, thus supporting **H5b**.<sup>32</sup> Although not hypothesized, the quadratic term of affective organizational identification shows a marginally significant negative effect ( $b_{3(1)} = -.066, p < .1$ ) on collaborative handling of the complaint.

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<sup>32</sup> A graphical illustration of the interaction effect on sabotage of the complainant's service is presented in Figure 33 in Appendix B.

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint				Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			
		b (SE)		Hypotheses	b (SE)		Hypotheses	
Affective Organizational Identification	b <sub>1</sub>	.480 (.107) ***		<b>H3 ✓</b>	-.272 (.078) ***		<b>H4 ✓</b>	
Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>2</sub>	-.350 (.100) ***		<b>H1 ✓</b>	.389 (.073) ***		<b>H2 ✓</b>	
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>3</sub>	-.066 (.036) *			.008 (.026)			
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>4</sub>	.150 (.046) ***		<b>H5a ✓</b>	-.099 (.034) ***		<b>H5b ✓</b>	
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>5</sub>	-.037 (.032)			.014 (.024)			
<i>Controls</i>								
Emotional Stability	b <sub>6</sub>	.096 (.070) *			-.010 (.051)			
Perceived Complaint Severity	b <sub>7</sub>	.002 (.038)			.023 (.028)			
Job Tenure Dummy 1 (0 – 1 year)	b <sub>8</sub>	.000 (.437)			.124 (.320)			
Job Tenure Dummy 2 (2 – 5 years)	b <sub>9</sub>	-.046 (.418)			.289 (.306)			
Job Tenure Dummy 3 (6 – 10 years)	b <sub>10</sub>	.236 (.442)			.206 (.324)			
Job Tenure Dummy 4 (11 – 15 years)	b <sub>11</sub>	.265 (.503)			.062 (.369)			
Job Tenure Dummy 5 (16 – 20 years)	b <sub>12</sub>	.465 (.547)			-.328 (.401)			
Part Time / Full Time Employment (1 = Full   0 = Part)	b <sub>13</sub>	-.239 (.178)			.191 (.131)			
Restaurant Size Dummy 1 (< 5 employees)	b <sub>14</sub>	-.171 (.280)			-.388 (.206) *			
Restaurant Size Dummy 2 (5 – 10 employees)	b <sub>15</sub>	.234 (.169)			-.140 (.124)			
Constant		5.337 (.435) ***			1.947 (.319) ***			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.120			.216			
<i>Surface Tests:</i>								
Slope symmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> +b <sub>2</sub> )	a <sub>1</sub>	.130 (.079)		<b>H8 ✗</b>	.117 (.057) **		<b>H9 ✓</b>	
Curvature symmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> + b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )	a <sub>2</sub>	.047 (.041)			-.077 (.030) **			
Slope asymmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> - b <sub>2</sub> )	a <sub>3</sub>	.830 (.191) ***		<b>H6 ✓</b>	-.661 (.140) ***		<b>H7 ✓</b>	
Curvature asymmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> - b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )	a <sub>4</sub>	-.253 (.068) ***			.121 (.050) **			

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 37: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.



While the results of the linear interaction analyses do provide some guidance to assess the potential effect of organizational identification congruence, in order to test **H6** through **H9**, response surface analysis will be used again and the calculated surface values ( $a_1 - a_4$ ) will be interpreted. The three-dimensional response surface plots are provided for collaborative handling of the complaint (see Figure 24) and sabotage of the complainant's service (see Figure 25) as the dependent variables to aid and enhance the interpretation.

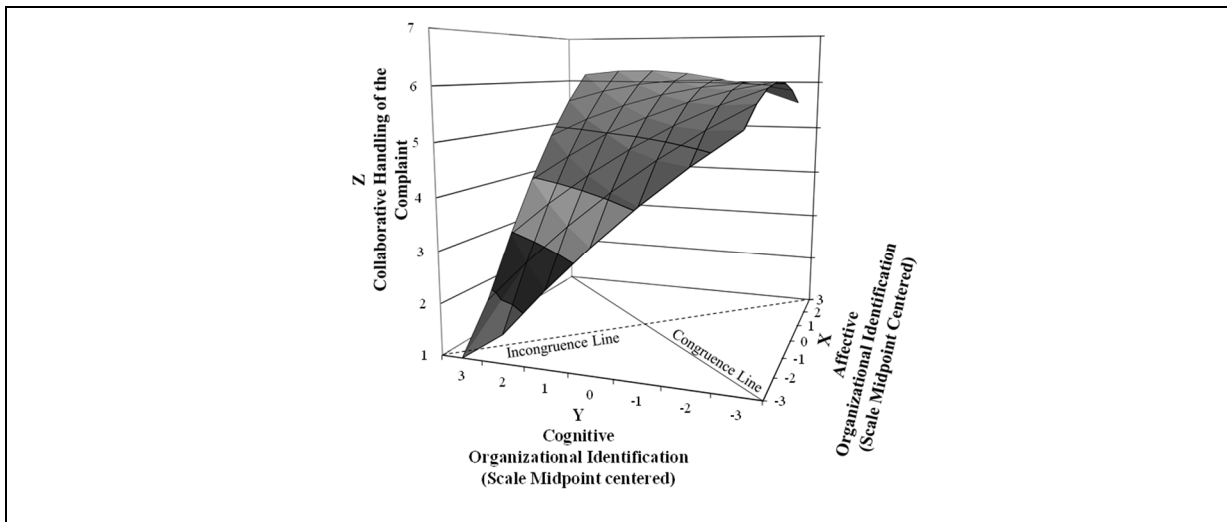
With regard to **H6**, the strongly significant negative effect represented by  $a_4$  ( $a_{4(1)} = -.253, p < .01$ ) indicates a concave surface of the relationship between organizational identification incongruence and collaborative handling of the complaint (curvature along the asymmetry line,  $X = -Y$ ). With increasing organizational identification incongruence in general, the level of collaborative handling of the complaint decreases more sharply. Moreover, the strongly significant positive coefficient  $a_3$  ( $a_{3(1)} = .830, p < .01$ ) shows that the level of collaborative handling of the complaint is even lower for an organizational identification incongruence, in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is higher than affective organizational identification than vice versa. These results lend support to **H6**.

Figure 24 underlines these results<sup>33</sup>, by showing that at the upper right corner of the graph, where affective organizational identification is high combined with low cognitive organizational identification, collaborative handling of the complaint is relatively high, whereas at the lower left corner of the graph, where cognitive organizational identification is high combined with low affective organizational identification, the slope sharply decreases, resulting in very low levels of collaborative handling of the complaint.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 31 (b) in Appendix B.

<sup>34</sup> *Note:* The graphical illustrations serve an enhanced understanding of the relationships, however, they have to be interpreted with caution, since the points to plot are partially derived from extrapolation and do not necessarily represent actual data (Harris *et al.* (2008)). However, prior analysis (see section 6.6.2) has already revealed that approximately 60% of the sample have significantly incongruent values (evenly distributed in both directions), as a significant proportion of discrepant values is an assumption of the method. Therefore, it can be assumed that the graphical illustrations depict a rather good representation of the data.



**Figure 24:** Three-dimensional Response Surface Plot of the Relationship between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 2a)

Source: Author's illustration.

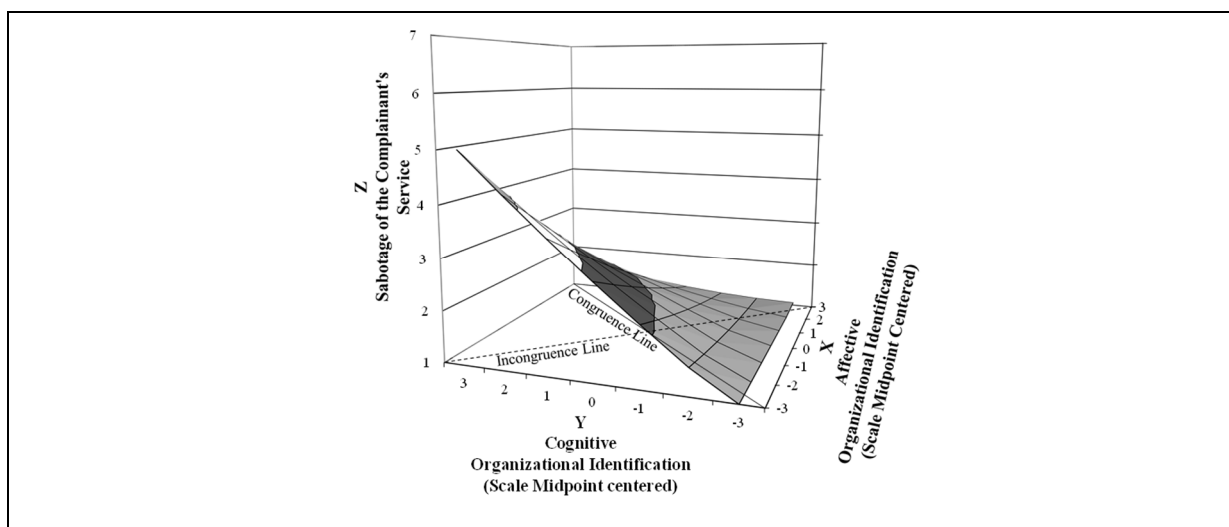
With regard to **H8**, the coefficients  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  have to be investigated and both coefficients,  $a_1$  and  $a_2$ , are non-significant ( $a_{1(1)} = .130, p = .102$ ;  $a_{2(1)} = .047, p = .254$ ). Neither follows the slope of the symmetry line ( $X = Y$ ) an additive relationship (non-significant  $a_1$ ) nor a non-linear relationship (non-significant  $a_2$ ). In contradiction to **H8**, where it is postulated that when cognitive and affective organizational identification increase simultaneously, collaborative handling of the complaint does not increase. These results are also illustrated in Figure 24, showing that from the right front of the graph, where cognitive and affective organizational identification are simultaneously low, to the left back of the graph, where cognitive and affective organizational identification are simultaneously high, the graph has no identifiable slope.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast, **H7** finds support in Study 2a. Specifically,  $a_4$  is positive and significant ( $a_{4(2)} = .121, p < .05$ ), indicating that an incongruence between cognitive and affective organizational identification per se does have a positive effect on sabotage of the complainant's service. In support of **H7**, the significant negative  $a_3$  coefficient ( $a_{3(2)} = -.661, p < .01$ ) implies, however, that when the incongruence is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification is significantly higher

<sup>35</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the flat response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 31 (a) in Appendix B.

than affective organizational identification, the level of sabotage of the complainant's service is substantially higher than in a vice versa incongruence.

Figure 25 depicts graphically that at the upper right corner of the graph, where affective organizational identification is high combined with low cognitive organizational identification, sabotage of the complainant's service is relatively low, whereas at the lower left corner of the graph, where cognitive organizational identification is high combined with low affective organizational identification, sabotage of the complainant's service is relatively high.<sup>36</sup>



**Figure 25:** Three-dimensional Response Surface Plot of the Relationship between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2a)

Source: Author's illustration.

With reference to the effects of organizational identification congruence,  $a_1$  is positive and significant ( $a_{1(2)} = .117, p < .05$ ), whereas  $a_2$  is negative and significant ( $a_{2(2)} = -.077, p < .05$ ). These results indicate that an organizational identification congruence does relate to sabotage of the complainant's service in a non-linear shape. Specifically, as underlined graphically by the slope and curvature along the line of congruence ( $X = Y$ ) from the right front to the left back of the graph in Figure 25, organizational identification congruence has a positive effect on sabotage of the complainant's service, initially, but beyond a specific point,

<sup>36</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the isolated response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 31 (d) in Appendix B.

the direction changes and the curvature follows a downward curving (concave surface) leading to a reduction of sabotage of the complainant's service. Therefore, the results show limited support of **H9**.<sup>37</sup>

### *Control Variables*

With regard to the control variables, emotional stability is positively related to collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b_6 = .096, p < .1$ ) and restaurant size dummy 1 (5 – 10 employees) shows a weakly significant negative relationship with sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b_{14(2)} = -.388, p < .1$ ). All other effects of the control variables are non-significant but were not excluded from the model because they were assessed to be important to avoid potential confounding results and to assure comparability between the results of Study 1 and the study at hand. However, a robustness check follows in section 6.6.4, where all control variables will be excluded from the model and results of the re-estimated model will be presented.

### *Mediation Analyses*

The hypotheses development of **H1** – **H4** partially relied on the notion that front-line employees high in cognitive organizational identification are more likely to blame the complainant for the service failure, while frontline employees high in affective organizational identification are more likely to attribute the service failure to the own organization. In order to validate this reasoning, external locus of causality<sup>38</sup> was tested as a mediator in the relationship between the independent variables cognitive and affective organizational identification and the dependent

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<sup>37</sup> A two-dimensional plot which shows the isolated response surface of the congruence line is presented in Figure 31 (c) in Appendix B.

<sup>38</sup> External locus of causality was measured with three items of the well-established 7-point semantic differential scale developed by McAuley *et al.* (1992) as presented in Table 57 in Appendix B and indicates, whether the employee perceives the complaint as being caused by either his/her organization or the complainant him-/herself. Information about reliability, validity, correlations, mean and standard deviation is presented in Table 58, Table 59 and Table 60 in Appendix B.

variables collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service (see Figure 29 in Appendix B). Thus, four mediation analyses were conducted, in total.<sup>39</sup>

In particular, the mediation analyses were tested with help of Preacher and Hayes' (2008) macro for SPSS. This macro tests the hypothesis of no difference between the total effect  $c$  of an independent variable  $X$  on a dependent variable  $Y$  and the direct effect  $c'$  of  $X$  on  $Y$ , when the mediator  $M$  is added to the model (see Figure 28 in Appendix B) (here and in the following, Preacher and Hayes 2004, p. 719; Preacher and Hayes 2008, p. 880). In a simple mediation analysis, the difference between  $c'$  and  $c$  is equivalent to the product of the  $X \rightarrow M$  path and the  $M \rightarrow Y$  path coefficients, and the significance test, therefore, directly assesses a mediation of  $M$  in the relationship between  $X$  and  $Y$ . The size and significance of the mediation effect is assessed with help of a non-parametric bootstrapping approach, which helps to overcome power problems caused by asymmetries or other forms of non-normality in the sampling distribution of the mediation effect  $ab$ . Based on 20,000 bootstrap samples of size  $n$  (where  $n$  is the original sample size), sampling with replacement, 95% confidence intervals are estimated for the mediation effect  $ab$ . The true mediating effect lies between the lower and the upper bound of the estimated confidence interval and is significant, if zero is not included in the confidence interval.

The results with regard to the mediating role of external locus of causality in the relationships between cognitive organizational identification and the outcome variables are presented in detail in Table 61 in Appendix B, whereas detailed results with reference to the mediating role of external locus of causality in the relationships between affective organizational identification and the outcome variables are presented in Table 62 in Appendix B.

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<sup>39</sup> 1.) Cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint through external locus of causality, 2.) Cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service through external locus of causality, 3.) Affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint through external locus of causality, 4.) Cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service through external locus of causality.

First, the Preacher and Hayes' (2008) test procedure for mediation shows bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals of  $-.1136$  to  $-.0035$  for the negative indirect effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint through external locus of causality ( $ab$  path). As the confidence interval does not cross zero, the mediation is significant (Preacher and Hayes 2004, p. 722). Moreover, since the direct effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint is less – yet still – significant ( $p < .05$ ), in presence of the mediator (external locus of causality) ( $c'$  path), as compared to the total effect, in absence of the mediator ( $c$  path) ( $p < .01$ ), the mediation is partial. Thus, in support of the reasoning behind **H1**, cognitive organizational identification increases external locus of causality ( $a$  path), i.e. blaming the customer for the service failure, which, in turn, has a negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b$  path). For the positive effect of cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service through external locus of causality ( $ab$  path), the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval reaches from  $.0071$  to  $.1006$ , thus, also indicating significance. External locus of causality, which is increased by cognitive organizational identification ( $a$  path), has a positive effect on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b$  path) ( $p < .01$ ). The  $c'$  path remains significant ( $p < .01$ ) and the mediation is, therefore, partial, as well, lending support to the reasoning behind **H2**.

Second, the results with regard to the indirect effects of affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service through external locus of causality lend also support to the reasoning behind **H3** and **H4**. In line with **H3**, affective organizational identification reduces external locus of causality ( $a$  path), i.e. rather the organization is blamed for the service failure, while external locus of causality has a negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $b$  path). The indirect effect represents a partial mediation, since the  $ab$  path is significant with a confidence interval from  $.0181$  to  $.1953$  and the  $c'$  path remains significant as compared to the  $c$  path ( $p < .01$ ). With regard to the reasoning behind **H4**, results show a significant positive effect of external locus of causality on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b$  path) ( $p < .01$ ) and a significant indirect effect ( $ab$  path) with a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval from  $-.1802$  to  $-.0317$ . In presence of the mediator, the significance of the direct effect of affective organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $c'$  path) is reduced ( $p = .0615$ ), as compared to

the significance of the  $c$  path ( $p < 0.01$ ) and, therefore, the indirect effect represents a partial mediation.

The hypotheses development of **H6** through **H9** relies on the notion that frontline employees with an organizational identification incongruence are likely to perceive higher stress levels in a complaint situation than frontline employees with an organizational identification congruence. In order to validate this reasoning, stress<sup>40</sup> was tested as a mediator in the relationships between organizational identification (in-)congruence as well as collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service (see Figure 30 in Appendix B).

For that purpose, two block variables had to be constructed in a first step (here and in the following, Edwards and Cable 2009, p. 660). A block variable is a weighted linear composite of the variables included in the polynomial regression, while the estimated regression coefficients represent the weights for the variables (block variable =  $b_1X + b_2Y + b_3X^2 + b_4XY + b_5Y^2$ ). It follows that the block variable has to be estimated for each outcome variable separately. One block variable reflects the effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint, whereas the other represents the effects on sabotage of the complainant's service. After the block variables have been constructed, the simple, quadratic and linear interaction terms in the polynomial regression equation ( $b_1X + b_2Y + b_3X^2 + b_4XY + b_5Y^2$ ) can be replaced with the respective block variable. Re-estimating the regressions with the block variables provides path coefficients for the joint effect of (in-)congruence, while all other effects and the explained variance remain unchanged. Since the block variables capture the joint effects of organizational identification (in-)congruence, they can be used to test mediators in the relationship between organizational identification (in-)congruence and the outcome variables.

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<sup>40</sup> Stress is measured by three items of the well-established 7-point Likert scale developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995), as presented in Table 57 in Appendix B. Information about reliability, validity, correlations, mean and standard deviation is presented in Table 58, Table 59 and Table 60 in Appendix B.

The results presented in detail in Table 63 in Appendix B show that stress indeed partially mediates the relationship between the respective block variable and sabotage of the complainant's service, supporting the reasoning of **H7** and **H9** that stress carries the joint effect of organizational identification congruence and incongruence on sabotage of the complainant's service. The indirect effect has a confidence interval from .0125 to .2629. The effect of the block variable on sabotage of the complainant's service (*a* path) is significant ( $p < .05$ ), as well as the effect of stress (*b* path) ( $p < .01$ ). The *c'* path is only slightly less significant as compared to the *c* path ( $p < .01$ ), which suggests that the mediation is partial. As for the reasoning behind **H6** and **H8**, the data does not support the reasoning that stress mediates the relationship between the respective block variable and collaborative handling of the complaint. The confidence interval for the indirect effect reaches from -.0158 to .1617, crosses zero and the indirect effect is, thus, not significant (Preacher and Hayes 2004, p. 722).

Alternatively, external locus of causality was tested as a mediator in this respective relationship. As presented in detail in Table 64 in Appendix B, the effect of the block variable on external locus of causality (*a* path) is significant ( $p < .01$ ), the effect of external locus of causality on collaborative handling of the complaint (*b* path) is significant ( $p < .01$ ) and the direct effect of the block variable on collaborative handling of the complaint (*c'* path), in presence of the mediator, is slightly less significant ( $p = .0006$ ), as compared to the total effect (*c* path) ( $p = .0000$ ). These results indicate that beyond the mediating role it plays in the direct relationships between cognitive and affective organizational identification and the outcome variables, external locus of causality also partially mediates the relationship between the joint effect of organizational identification (in-)congruence and collaborative handling of the complaint. The bias-corrected 95% confidence interval reaches from .0531 to .3974.



*Moderational Effects of Perceived Availability of a Service Script*

To analyze the moderational effects of frontline employees' perceived availability of a service script, two moderated polynomial regression analyses were conducted with collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service as the respective outcome variables. The analyses include the main effect of perceived availability of a service script and its interaction effects with the linear and quadratic terms of cognitive and affective organizational identification. Table 38 presents the results of these moderated polynomial regression analyses.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint</b>		<b>Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service</b>	
	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>Hypotheses</b>
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Affective Organizational Identification	.535 (.121) ***		-.212 (.089) **	
Cognitive Organizational Identification	-.298 (.102) ***		.307 (.075) ***	
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	-.087 (.040) **		-.017 (.030)	
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	-.015 (.033)		.013 (.024)	
Perceived Availability of a Service Script	.093 (.076)		-.119 (.056) **	
<i>Interactions</i>				
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	.142 (.047) ***		-.079 (.035) **	
Affective Organizational Identification x Perceived Service Script Availability	.057 (.038)	<b>H11a ✗</b>	.000 (.028)	<b>H11b ✗</b>
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup> x Perceived Service Script Availability	-.034 (.015) **		.008 (.011)	
Cognitive Organizational Identification x Perceived Availability of a Service Script	-.010 (.028)	<b>H10a ✗</b>	-.031 (.020)	<b>H10b ✗</b>
Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup> x Perceived Availability of a Service Script	.002 (.013)		.001 (.009)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.107		.197	

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 38: Results for the Moderational Effects of Perceived Availability of a Service Script (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

First, Table 38 shows again that the simple effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification are significant ( $p < .01$ ) and have the expected direction. Again the quadratic term of affective organizational identification has a negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $p < .05$ ). The direct effect of perceived availability of a service script on collaborative handling of the complaint is positive but non-significant ( $b = .093, p = .224$ ), while the direct effect on sabotage of the complainant's service is negative and significant ( $b = -.119, p < .05$ ).

Second, with regard to the hypothesized moderational effects of perceived availability of a service script, the results show virtually no support. The interaction effect of cognitive organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script hypothesized in **H10a** is non-significant ( $b = -.010, p = .725$ ). The interaction effect on sabotage of the complainant's service, proposed by **H10b** has the expected direction but is neither significant ( $b = -.031, p = .127$ ). The interaction effect between affective organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script on collaborative handling is non-significant ( $b = .057, p = .132$ ), as opposed to **H11a**, and the interaction effect on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b = .0001, p = .998$ ) is also non-significant, as opposed to **H11b**. The results show, however, that the interaction between the quadratic term of affective organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script has a significant negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $p < .05$ ), indicating that beyond a specific level of affective organizational identification, perceived availability of a service script has a negative impact.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to **H12a** and **H12b**, i.e. the hypothesized effects of organizational identification incongruence, the results of the moderated polynomial regressions, presented in Table 38, also offer insights. To understand the interpretation of these results, it is important to note that the measures for cognitive and affective organizational identification are centered at their scale midpoints (here and in the following, cf. Ahearne *et al.* 2013, pp. 640). This procedure implies that situations of “neurotic dissonance”, i.e. when cognitive organizational identification is higher than affective organizational identification, are associated with increasing

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<sup>41</sup> A graphical illustration of this interaction effect is presented in Figure 34 in Appendix B.

positive values for cognitive organizational identification and decreasing negative values for affective organizational identification ( $Y = -X$ ).

For the effect on collaborative handling of the complaint, the linear by linear interaction terms of cognitive as well as affective organizational identification with perceived availability of a service script are non-significant ( $b = -.010, p = .725$ ;  $b = .057, p = .132$ ), and the linear by quadratic interaction between affective organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script is negative and significant ( $b = -.034, p < .05$ ). Given that the “neurotic dissonance” is characterized by increasing positive values for cognitive organizational identification ( $Y$ ) and decreasing negative values for affective organizational identification ( $-X$ ), this implies that perceived availability of a service script, in fact, increases the negative effects of organizational identification incongruence, contradicting **H12a**. The negative coefficient of the interaction effect between the quadratic term of affective organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script results in decreases of collaborative handling of the complaint, as the coefficient remains negative, when multiplied with positive values.<sup>42</sup> The non-significant interaction effect between cognitive organizational identification and perceived availability of a service script cannot counterbalance this effect. Therefore, **H12a** has to be rejected, as well.

For the effect on sabotage of the complainant’s service, none of the interaction terms is significant. This implies that perceived availability of a service script does not have an impact on the relationship between organizational identification incongruence and sabotage of the complainant’s service. Thus, **H12b** has to be rejected.

#### 6.6.4 Additional Analyses Study 2a

In order to test for the robustness of the replication results in Study 2a, the polynomial regressions were conducted again for the models without control variables, except for perceived complaint severity, since this variable accounts for the

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<sup>42</sup> The quadratic term of affective organizational identification is positive by definition and the values for high perceived availability of a service script are positive, as well.

experimental conditions. All effects that were significant before remained significant, showing that the model is robust.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, in contrast to the results of the full model, the slope of the congruence line is positive and significant ( $p < .05$ ) for the polynomial regression on collaborative handling of the complaint, while the curvature of the congruence line is also positive and marginally significant ( $p < .1$ ). These findings indicate that without the control variables, organizational identification congruence does increase collaborative handling of the complaint at an increasing rate, showing partial support for **H8**, which has initially been rejected. Furthermore, a reduced model was estimated for each outcome variable without the quadratic effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification. The results again underscore the significance of the direct effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification and their interaction effect on both outcome variables.<sup>44</sup>

With regard to the results of the moderated polynomial regression of Study 2a, a few additional analyses were conducted, as well. **H12a** and **H12b** strictly pertained to the interaction effects between organizational identification incongruence and perceived availability of a service script on the outcome variables and both hypotheses had to be rejected. To shed further light on the potential interaction effect between the joint effect of organizational identification congruence *and* incongruence and perceived availability of a service script, again the block variable approach was employed. Specifically, the interaction between the block variable for the polynomial regression on collaborative handling and on perceived availability of a service script was tested and this procedure was repeated for sabotage of the complainant's service. The detailed results are presented in Table 67 in Appendix B and reveal mixed support. The interaction effect of the respective block variable and perceived availability of a service script has a non-significant effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $p = .106$ ) and, thus, indicates that perceived availability of a service script does not moderate the joint effect of organizational identification (in-)congruence on collaborative handling of the complaint. With regard to the second outcome variable, the significant negative interaction effect between the sabotage of the complainant's service block variable and perceived availability of a service script on sabotage of the complainant's

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<sup>43</sup> Detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 65 in Appendix B.

<sup>44</sup> Detailed results of these analyses are presented in Table 66 in Appendix B.

service ( $p < .05$ ) suggests that a high perceived availability of a service script in combination with a high organizational identification congruence does reduce intentions to sabotage the complainant's service.

#### 6.6.5 Hypotheses Testing of Study 2b

Preliminary to the hypotheses testing of Study 2b, correlations, means and standard deviations of the used variables were calculated and are presented in Table 39. Cognitive and affective organizational identification correlate moderately high ( $\rho = .23$ ). Affective organizational identification is positively correlated with collaborative handling of the complaint ( $\rho = .52$ ) and negatively correlated with sabotage of the complainant's service ( $\rho = -.26$ ). Cognitive organizational identification shows a non-significant correlation with collaborative handling of the complaint ( $\rho = .10$ ), but a positive correlation with sabotage of the complainant's service ( $\rho = .18$ ). Collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service show a negative correlation ( $\rho = -.51$ ) again. A detailed analysis of the hypothesized effects follows in this section.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.</b> Affective Organizational Identification										
<b>2.</b> Cognitive Organizational Identification	.23 **									
<b>3.</b> Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.52 **	.10								
<b>4.</b> Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	-.26 **	.18 *	-.51 **							
<b>5.</b> Reframing	-.24 **	.16 *	.02	-.09						
<i>Control Variables</i>										
<b>6.</b> Emotional Stability	.18 *	-.09	.11	-.01	-.19 *					
<b>7.</b> Perceived Complaint Severity	.04	.00	.11	-.06	-.04	.03				
<b>8.</b> Job Tenure	-.16 *	.12 **	-.06	.00	.11	-.03	.03			
<b>9.</b> Restaurant Size	-.11	.00	-.09	.11	.12	-.11	.05	-.07		
<b>10.</b> Full/Part Time Employment	.16 *	-.27 **	.03	.07	-.12	.08	.06	-.32 **	.14	
<i>Mean</i>	4.84	3.31	5.97	1.49	0.50	4.90	4.84	1.52	1.60	0.29
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	1.42	1.51	1.04	0.68	0.50	1.04	1.32	1.11	0.61	0.46

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 39: Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Analog to Study 2a, to analyze the moderational effects of reframing the complainant as an in-group member, two moderated polynomial regression analyses were conducted with collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service as the respective outcome variables. Reframing is measured by a dummy variable, which takes a value of 1 for frontline employees who have received the reframing text and a value of 0 for frontline employee who have not received the reframing text. The analyses included the main effect of reframing and the interaction effects between reframing and the linear and quadratic terms of cognitive and affective organizational identification. Table 40 presents the results of these moderated polynomial regression analyses. The simple effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification are significant ( $p < .01$ ) and have the expected direction. The direct effect of reframing on collaborative handling of the complaint is positive but non-significant ( $b = .240, p = .317$ ), while the direct effect on sabotage of the complainant's service is negative and significant ( $b = -.360, p < .05$ ).

Moreover, the results show that the interaction effect of cognitive organizational identification and reframing on collaborative handling of the complaint is positive and significant ( $b = .318, p < .01$ ), lending support to **H13a**. In support of **H13b**, the same interaction effect on sabotage of the complainant's service is negative and significant ( $b = -.222, p < .01$ ).<sup>45</sup> Contrastingly, both interaction effects between affective organizational identification and reframing on collaborative handling of the complaint and sabotage of the complainant's service are non-significant ( $b = .055, p = 0.635$ ;  $b = -.046, p = .586$ ). Accordingly, **H14a** and **H14b** have to be rejected.

For testing **H15a** and **H15b**, analog to Study 2a, the results of the moderated polynomial regressions were interpreted (here and in the following, see Ahearne *et al.* 2013, pp. 640). First, the interaction effect of cognitive organizational identification and reframing on collaborative handling of the complaint is positive and significant ( $b = .318, p < .01$ ), while the interaction effect of affective organizational identification with reframing is not significant ( $b = .055, p = .635$ ). This has the following implications for **H15a**.

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<sup>45</sup> Graphical illustrations of both interaction effects are presented in Figure 35 and Figure 36 in Appendix B.



As mentioned earlier in section 6.6.3.3, increasing organizational identification incongruence, in which cognitive organizational identification is higher than affective organizational identification, is characterized by increasingly positive values for cognitive organizational identification and increasing negative values for affective organizational identification ( $Y = -X$ ) because of the centering procedure. The positive coefficient of the interaction between cognitive organizational identification and reframing multiplied with increasing positive values of cognitive organizational identification ( $Y$ ) results in increasing positive values of collaborative handling of the complaint, while the multiplication of the increasing negative values of affective organizational identification ( $-X$ ) with the positive coefficient of the interaction between affective organizational identification and reframing can be neglected, as it is non-significant. It follows that in such situations reframing does help to reduce the negative effect of organizational identification incongruence on collaborative handling of the complaint, supporting **H15a**, and, in fact, changes the direction of the effect into a positive one.

Referring to the same scheme of interpretation, the negative coefficient of the interaction effect between cognitive organizational identification and reframing on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $b = -.222, p < .01$ ), combined with the non-significant coefficient of the interaction effect between affective organizational identification and reframing ( $b = -.046, p = .586$ ), yields support of **H15b**. Increasing positive values for cognitive organizational identification ( $Y$ ) multiplied with the negative coefficient result in decreasing values for sabotage of the complainant's service, while the negative coefficient of the interaction effect between affective organizational identification and reframing multiplied with decreasing negative values for affective organizational identification ( $-X$ ) result in more positive values for sabotage of the complainant's service, but this effect is non-significant and can, thus, be neglected. Therefore, reframing appears to be an effective moderator and reduces the positive effect of organizational identification incongruence on sabotage of the complainant's service. In fact, the effect changes its direction.

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint		Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	
	b (SE)	Hypotheses	b (SE)	Hypotheses
<i>Control Variables</i>				
Affective Organizational Identification	.574 (.101) ***		-.219 (.074) ***	
Cognitive Organizational Identification	-.363 (.092) ***		.301 (.067) ***	
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	-.078 (.041) *		-.006 (.030)	
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	-.056 (.032) *		.013 (.024)	
Reframing	.240 (.239)		-.360 (.176) **	
<i>Interactions</i>				
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	.178 (.044) ***		-.074 (.032) **	
Affective Organizational Identification x Reframing	.055 (.116)	<b>H14a ✗</b>	-.046 (.085)	<b>H14b ✗</b>
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup> x Reframing	.001 (.057)		.027 (.042)	
Cognitive Organizational Identification x Reframing	.318 (.108) ***	<b>H13a ✓</b>	-.222 (.079) ***	<b>H13b ✓</b>
Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup> x Reframing	.053 (.049)		.045 (.036)	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.360		.204	

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 40: Results for the Moderational Effects of Reframing (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

### 6.6.6 Additional Analyses Study 2b

Since **H15a** and **H15b** pertain to the effects of organizational identification incongruence, the block variable approach was also employed to test the interaction effects of the joint effect of organizational identification (in-)congruence with reframing. The detailed results are presented in Table 68 in Appendix B and reveal that neither the interaction effect of the block variable of collaborative handling of the complaint and reframing has a significant effect on collaborative handling of the complaint ( $p = .932$ ) nor does the interaction effect between the block variable of sabotage of the complainant's service and reframing have a significant effect on sabotage of the complainant's service ( $p = .170$ ). These results suggest that only the effects of organizational identification incongruence on the outcome variables are moderated by reframing but that this interaction effect does not apply for the joint effects of organizational identification congruence and incongruence.

### 6.6.7 Discussion

The first part of the hypotheses testing of Study 2a presented above pertained to replicate and potentially qualify Study 1 in a different, more service-focused industry, namely the restaurant sector, in order to substantiate the answers to research question one and two. It is evident that most of the hypotheses that were supported in Study 1, found even stronger support in Study 2a. It appears that the commonly applied recommendation "the more the better" concerning cognitive organizational identification of frontline employees does not hold true for handling complaints in the restaurant industry. Rather, evidence suggests that increasing cognitive organizational identification is accompanied by reduced intentions to help and increased intentions to take revenge. Following the SIA, it can be argued that these effects are direct consequences of frontline employees' perceptions of any complaint as a threat to the personal self-concept (cf. Elsbach and Kramer 1996, p. 442; Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 19). In this light, the complaint actuates coping mechanisms, namely social creativity and social competition (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 19), ultimately resulting in the observed decreases in intentions to provide collaborative handling and increases in revenge intentions. In fact, additional analyses provided empirical support that frontline employees with a high cognitive organizational identification tend to re-interpret the complaint in a way that serves to save the organization's face and rather blames the

complainant. This external locus of causality is sufficient cause for frontline employees to reduce helping behaviors because they doubt the credibility of the complaint (here and in the following, cf. Tao *et al.* 2016, p. 268). Moreover, the attribution of the complaint to the customer makes the complaint appear even more unjustified and offending to a frontline employee high in cognitive organizational identification. In response, those employees engage in social competition in the form of service sabotage to re-establish a sense of superiority of their in-group. It follows that similar to the behavior of subjects observed in the minimal group studies presented earlier (see section 2.1) (e.g., Haslam 2001, p. 27), frontline employees also engage in out-group directed discriminatory behavior even at the cost of sacrificing organizational advantages (Turner *et al.* 1979, p. 200) (e.g., by jeopardizing the organization-customer relationship, endangering future profits, risking negative word-of-mouth, etc.).

With regard to affective organizational identification, the same desirable effects were found as in Study 1, namely that increasing levels of this dimension of organizational identification lead frontline employees to be more willing to engage in collaborative handling behaviors towards the complainant, in order to find a win-win solution and to show decreased intentions to engage in behaviors that aim at sabotaging the complainant's service. Evidence, thus, suggests that it is rather this dimension of organizational identification that prompts frontline employees to resolve the complaint in the organization's best interest. Again, additional analyses showed empirical support for the notion that, in contrast to high cognitive organizational identification, frontline employees high in affective organizational identification attribute the cause of the complaint rather to the own organization. This finding is in line with the reasoning employed in this dissertation, namely that the underlying motive of this dimension of organizational identification is to contribute to the positivity of the organizational social identity, in this particular case by trying to learn from past failure and by doing anything possible to re-establish the damaged image (cf. Bell and Luddington 2006; Hogg 2001).

While these findings already highlight the beneficial character of affective organizational identification in a complaint context, the investigation of the interplay between cognitive and affective organizational identification provided further ev-

idence. Analog to Study 1, affective organizational identification positively moderated the negative effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint, suggesting that, in line with research on positive affectivity in general (Bell and Luddington 2006), this form of organization-related positive affectivity, indeed, serves as a buffer against the negative feedback from outside the organization and seems to overcompensate the detrimental effect of cognitive organizational identification. Moreover, Study 2a provided evidence that this also holds true for the relationship between cognitive organizational identification and sabotage of the complainant's service, where affective organizational identification reduced the detrimental effect. While the interaction effect was non-significant in Study 1, it was strongly significant in Study 2a. This differing finding from Study 1 might be caused by the different research setting and/or the adjusted measurement of sabotage of the complainant's service.

In line with Study 1, the quadratic term of affective organizational identification again showed a marginally significant negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint. This finding further substantiates the suspicion that very high levels of affective organizational identification might cause a form of "pathological" over-identification which, in turn, reduces levels of cooperativeness towards the complainant, yet does not seem to translate into service sabotage. Since the effect is only marginally significant, the magnitude of this effect appears to be rather low, however.

With regard to the effects of organizational identification incongruence, Study 2a provided strong support for the developed classification of the distinct incongruence states and their consequences (see section 5.2). The detrimental effects of an incongruence on both outcome variables were more severe for "neurotic dissonance" states, as compared to "constructive dissonance" states. These findings emphasize the danger of an organizational identification incongruence in such a way that frontline employees lack positive emotions about their organizational membership, while this membership concurrently matters a great deal to their personal self-concept and, therefore, their sense of their personal identity.

The central explanation mechanism behind these effects was that a "neurotic dissonance" produces higher stress levels, particularly in a complaint situation, where the dissonance is highlighted (cf. Festinger 1957). Additional mediation

analyses emphasized that stress is indeed higher for frontline employees with a “neurotic dissonance” in their organizational identification and that these increased stress levels translate into reduced helping behaviors. Moreover, sabotaging the complainant’s service appeared to be a welcome outlet to relieve the stress (cf. Kao *et al.* 2014, p. 760).

While the negative effects of organizational identification incongruence were as striking as in Study 1, the investigation of organizational identification congruence showed slightly different results. More specifically, it was shown that the relationship between sabotage of the complainant’s service and organizational identification congruence is non-linear and that service sabotage tendencies are only reduced at very high levels of organizational identification congruence.

Moreover, the effect of organizational identification congruence on collaborative handling of the complaint points into the expected positive direction but is non-significant. The non-significance of the effect is, however, close to an acceptable threshold and might be caused by the smaller sample size, as compared to Study 1. In line with this argument, additional analyses also revealed that the effect shows significance, when the model is reduced by the control variables. In general, the notion that an organizational identification equilibrium, particularly a “confident equilibrium”, results in lower stress levels for frontline employees gained empirical support and serves as an explanation.

This first replication part of Study 2a was important to support and further substantiate the findings of Study 1. However, a second focus of Study 2a and Study 2b lied on answering research question 3, i.e. which mechanisms managers could apply to reduce the dysfunctional effects discussed above and/or foster the functional effects. Therefore, focal effects of providing frontline employees with a service script were investigated in Study 2a and focal effects of a reframing approach were examined in Study 2b.

Results of Study 2a show that the most commonly applied approach to provide frontline employees with behavioral guidelines (e.g., Homburg and Fürst 2005), which provide them with guidance, how to specifically behave in complaint situations, is of limited help. Virtually none of the hypothesized interaction effects

between perceived availability of a service script and the organizational identification dimensions or their (in-)congruence were significant. One exception was the negative interaction effect between organizational identification congruence and service script availability, which indicated that frontline employees with a “confident equilibrium” are even less likely to engage in service sabotage, when they have a detailed service script.

Beyond that, perceived availability of a service script could only be shown to directly reduce service sabotage but did not directly affect collaborative behavior intentions of the frontline employees. Moreover, although not hypothesized, availability of a service script appeared to even amplify the negative effect of the quadratic term of affective organizational identification. This finding points to the potential danger that frontline employees, who are affectively “over-identified” and, therefore, already reduce their collaborative behavior towards the complainant, show these tendencies even more, when they have a strict guideline they are supposed to follow. An explanation for this interaction effect could be that “over-identified” frontline employees develop a reactance against rigorous rules of conduct and would rather enjoy a higher degree of autonomy. Notably, perceived availability of a service script also significantly interacted with organizational identification incongruence and fueled the negative effect on collaborative handling of the complaint.

Besides the conclusion that service scripts are impractical to reduce detrimental effects of organizational identification in the complaint context, the insignificance of most of the interaction effects could, however, partly be caused by the study design. In the study at hand, the availability of a service script was measured as perceived by the frontline employees. This approach was chosen because it ensures that it is tested what the employee actually perceives and not what the management intends the employee to perceive. However, this approach also has some limitations with regard to the interpretation of the effects. Specifically, it could be that a detailed service script in fact would have reduced the negative effects but that the central aspects of such a service script were not well communicated to the frontline employees. Moreover, the service scripts were not evaluated with regard to their content but assumed to prescribe favorable employee behavior. Although rather unrealistic, it could, thus, be that detailed service scripts do not encourage frontline employees to be collaborative and do not prohibit sabotage behaviors.

This would, in turn, lead to the conclusion that service scripts are not crafted well enough, and not that they are ineffective per se.

Despite this limitation, Study 2b provided evidence that compared to providing a service script, it seems to be more valuable for managers to emphasize the notion that both frontline employees and complainants are virtually on the same side and contribute greatly to the organization's success. This altered perception appears to reduce the negative effect of cognitive organizational identification on collaborative handling of the complaint, as well as the positive effect on sabotage of the complainant's service. With regard to organizational identification incongruence, reframing the complainant as an in-group member even changes the direction of the effects. Particularly, when the frontline employee perceives the complainant as an in-group fellow, a "neurotic dissonance" leads to increased levels of collaborative behavior and decreased levels of service sabotage in a complaint situation. These effects are particularly in line with the early work of Tajfel and Turner (1986), which laid the foundations for the SIA. Analog to these minimal group studies (discussed in section 2.1), in the service setting as well a minimal reframing, indicating that the complainant is part of the in-group, is sufficient cause for individuals high in cognitive organizational identification to induce more favorable behavioral tendencies towards this in-group member, compared to a situation without a reframing, where the complainant is perceived as an out-group member. Thus, the significance of these interaction effects also provide indirect support for the notion that the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification are quite likely driven by perceptions of the complainant as an out-group member. Finally, reframing also seems to be a valuable tool in directly reducing service sabotage intentions of frontline employees, as indicated by the significant negative direct effect.



## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of the Results

In the course of this dissertation, it was outlined that organizational identification represents an important concept in the frontline employee context. It was, however, also explained that despite the vast majority of research focusing on cognitive organizational identification and its positive outcomes, organizational identification, first, consists of a second, under-researched dimension, namely affective organizational identification and, second, that this concept has the potential to cause detrimental outcomes, as well. Moreover, the link between the organizational identification of frontline employees and their behavioral intentions in a customer complaint context has been identified as a research gap, which remained to be addressed, as it is a promising research avenue to understand the often dysfunctional behavior of frontline employees. In addition to the academic relevance, this investigation is, thus, likewise important from a management perspective because an enhanced understanding of the coping strategies of frontline employees and the resulting behavioral tendencies helps organizations to capitalize on this important financial leverage at the heart of their customer relationship management.

The dissertation at hand aimed at filling these research gaps, by disentangling the effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification of frontline employees. This differentiated perspective is important given that prior research has identified a seemingly paradox of organizational identification, which should lead frontline employees to act in the organization's best interests, on the one hand (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989), while it concurrently accentuates boundaries between the organization and complainants and, consequently, should lead to antagonistic behavioral tendencies, on the other hand (Korschun 2015).

Specifically, the three research questions formulated at the beginning of this dissertation were the following.

1. How are cognitive and affective organizational identification of frontline employees related to their complaint handling intentions, respectively?

2. Beyond that, does it matter if the cognitive organizational identification is in congruence or in incongruence with the affective organizational identification of frontline employees with regard to their complaint handling intentions?
3. What actions could the management design in order to manage the effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification and organizational identification (in-)congruence of frontline employees on their complaint handling intentions?

In order to adequately address these research questions, first, the theoretical and conceptual foundations were explained in chapter 2 and chapter 3. Subsequently, the literature on both organizational identification of frontline employees and their complaint handling was reviewed in chapter 4, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the state of the art in current empirical research. This literature review is valuable for both theorists and practitioners, as it provides a unique integrative overview of empirical evidence on the outcomes of organizational identification and the determinants of favorable complaint handling behavior and service sabotage. Based on the theoretical and conceptual foundations along with the empirical results from prior research, conceptual frameworks were developed and tested in Study 1 (chapter 5) and Study 2a and Study 2b (chapter 6). Notably, by developing these frameworks, this dissertation contributes to existing literature on organizational identification of frontline employees, as it is the first to disentangle and characterize the unique effects of cognitive and affective organizational identification of frontline employees.

With reference to the **first research question**, the most striking result of Study 1 is that organizational identification is a double-edged sword and its two dimensions must be understood separately, particularly in the complaint context. Specifically, high cognitive organizational identification has been shown to have severe detrimental consequences for the complaint handling of frontline employees, in that it decreases their intentions to be collaborative and increases their intentions to sabotage the complainant's service. Contrastingly, high affective organizational identification increases the intentions of frontline employees to engage in collaborative behavior and decreases tendencies to sabotage the complainant. Thus, what appeared to be a paradox in prior research (Korschun 2015, p. 615),

was resolved in this dissertation by showing that the *beneficial* and the *detrimental* consequences are caused by the distinct dimensions of organizational identification and occur simultaneously. In fact, the dissertation at hand is the first to find evidence that cognitive and affective organizational identification do not necessarily work into the same direction but that there are circumstances, in which both dimensions work against each other. In response to **research question 1**, it can be concluded that cognitive and affective organizational identification do relate differently to the complaint handling intentions of frontline employees. Specifically, management should be cautious to foster pronounced cognitive organizational identification of frontline employees that are frequently confronted with customer complaints because they tend to engage in discriminatory intergroup behavior. It seems more promising though for organizations to foster affective organizational identification, i.e. by assuring that frontline employees associate positive feelings with their membership of the organization (see section 7.2 for a detailed discussion).

Moreover, this dissertation contributes to the existing literature by introducing a unique *congruence* perspective on organizational identification. First, a comprehensive characterization of the nature of all four potential states of *congruence* and *incongruence* between cognitive and affective organizational identification was provided<sup>46</sup> and consequences of these states were formally derived, providing implications for related research questions. Second, the empirical testing of the hypotheses showed substantial evidence that, indeed, investigating cognitive and affective organizational identification must not be solely concerned with the direct effects of both dimensions but that it is a matter of congruence, whether the consequences are beneficial or detrimental from an organization's perspective.

Referring to **research question 2**, it was shown for the first time that a widening of a gap between cognitive and affective organizational identification (incongru-

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<sup>46</sup> High cognitive organizational identification – High affective organizational identification (“Confident Equilibrium”); High cognitive organizational identification – Low affective organizational identification (“Neurotic Dissonance”); Low cognitive organizational identification – Low affective organizational identification (“Apathetic Equilibrium”); Low cognitive organizational identification – High affective organizational identification (“Constructive Dissonance”).

ence) has detrimental consequences. Specifically, it was shown to decrease intentions of frontline employees to be collaborative and to increase intentions to sabotage the complainant's service, particularly, when the gap is in such a way that cognitive organizational identification substantially exceeds the affective dimension. Affective organizational identification, thus, plays an important role in the complaint context, as it appears to reduce the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification. In line with this, the investigation of effects of a congruence between both dimensions shows that outcomes of organizational identification are, in general, the most beneficial, when both dimensions are high. Thereby, the results indicate that the affective dimension not only reduces detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification but, in fact, helps to unfold the beneficial potential of the cognitive dimension. These findings also add to answering **research question 1**, as they emphasize that fostering cognitive organizational identification is particularly precarious, when affective organizational identification is low.

Study 1, thus, contributed to answering the first two research questions. Based on these findings, Study 2a and Study 2b (chapter 6) aimed at replicating these findings from the university context in a more typical service industry, namely the restaurant industry, in response to **research questions 1 and 2** and at finding remedy strategies that help the management to reduce the presented detrimental effects, in response to **research question 3**. In summary, the results of Study 1 with regard to research question 1 and 2 were confirmed. Additional analyses moreover provided insights into the coping strategies of frontline employees with a high cognitive organizational identification. Specifically, these analyses revealed that the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification on the complaint handling of frontline employees are mediated by an attribution of the service failure to the customer. These findings are particularly in line with the theoretical notion of the SIA that individuals cope with *external threats to their identity* by re-defining the situation in a way that saves their face and preserves superiority over the out-group. With regard to the effects of organizational identification (in-)congruence, it was shown that a widening of a gap leads to detrimental consequences through an increased stress level of the frontline employees. Thus, it appears that an increasing organizational identification incongruence makes frontline employees feel unbalanced and irritated, which makes it hard for them to

wind down in a confrontational customer interaction, ultimately resulting in reduced collaborative and increased retaliation tendencies.

In order to address **research question 3**, the perceived availability of a service script to the frontline employees (Study 2a) and a management-initiated reframing of the complainant as an in-group member (Study 2b) were tested as moderators of the relationships between the organizational identification dimensions, their (in-)congruence and the outcome variables. With regard to the availability of a service script, the analyses yielded rather mixed results. While having a detailed service script directly reduces service sabotage intentions, it is of little help with regard to reducing the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification and organizational identification incongruence. In fact, it does not have a significant impact in neither relationship and, thus, does not serve as an effective remedy strategy. The only exception is that frontline employees with a “confident equilibrium”, i.e. with high scores on both dimensions, have indeed decreased intentions to sabotage the complainant’s service as compared to those employees with a “confident equilibrium” and a less detailed service script. On the other side of the coin, high service script availability in combination with very high levels of affective organizational identification and an organizational identification incongruence was found to lead to decreases in collaborative handling of the complaint, thus, pointing to a potential danger of using detailed behavioral guidelines.

The second moderator, namely reframing the complainant as an in-group member, was shown to be more effective in reducing the detrimental effects, while the beneficial effects remained unaffected. Particularly, Study 2b yielded evidence that an altered awareness that the complainant is an in-group member reduces the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification on intentions to handle the complaint collaboratively and on intentions to sabotage the complainant’s service. With regard to the detrimental effects of organizational identification incongruence, reframing even helps to turn the direction of the effects, leading to increased intentions to provide favorable complaint handling, i.e. be more collaborative and engage less in service sabotage. In response to **research questions 3**, it can, thus, be concluded that management should especially invest in an organizational culture with the self-conception that complainants are important to a firm’s sustainable success because this understanding helps frontline employees

to see the value in complaints and reduces potential identity threat perceptions triggered by complaints.

In summary, major findings of this dissertation remained stable among two very different industries in the service sector, namely the education industry and the restaurant industry, and can, therefore, be assumed to be rather generalizable and not industry-specific. Based on these findings, four major contributions can be derived.

First, a case could be made for investigating the overarching concept of organizational identification as a two-dimensional construct in the frontline employee context, since both dimensions are characterized by unique features, leading to unique and sometimes diametrically opposed effects. Second, the importance of studying both dimensions in relation to each other was highlighted and polynomial regression with response surface analysis was introduced as a rather new and promising methodological approach to investigate the interplay of cognitive and affective organizational identification. Notably, these findings are a development of the SIA as it is currently understood by most scholars. Third, organizational identification of frontline employees was introduced to the complaint handling context for the first time and it was illustrated that this concept is an appropriate theoretical framework to understand both beneficial and harmful behavioral tendencies of frontline employees in this context. Comprising these features of the dissertation, a rather comprehensive view on the positive and negative effects of organizational identification of frontline employees in the customer complaint context was provided. Fourth and finally, by introducing reframing as a remedy strategy, management was provided with helpful insights, how to mitigate the identified detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification and organizational identification incongruence. This dissertation also points to the ineffectiveness of behavioral guidelines in these relationships.

## 7.2 Implications for Science and Practice

Based on the contributions listed above, some important implications for both *science* and *practice* in the marketing domain can be derived.

The **first academic implication** is that cognitive and affective organizational identification are so qualitatively distinct that they compete against each other under certain conditions. While it is well recognized conceptually that organizational identification is driven by two distinct self-motives, namely self-uncertainty and self-enhancement (Hogg 2001, p. 187), and recent empirical research has evidenced that self-uncertainty is uniquely related to the cognitive dimension and self-enhancement is uniquely related to the affective dimension (Johnson *et al.* 2012), research has not yet determined that the dimensions can countervail each other. It follows that the assumption that organizational identification is a clean and simple path that leads frontline employees to act in the organization's best interests does not hold. It is rather likely that depending on the organizational identification congruence or incongruence constellation, frontline employees will inevitably be faced with situations, where conflicting pressures will push them into opposite directions because a behavior that serves the self-enhancement motive does not necessarily serve the self-uncertainty motive and vice versa.

This dissertation is a starting point to understand, how both dimensions relate to each other conceptually and what consequences may arise from the specific organizational identification congruence and incongruence states. The developed characterization of these different states provided here (see section 5.2) may serve as a basis for related research questions. For example, it is quite possible that similar effects will be found in comparably confrontational contexts, such as negotiations between frontline employees and customers, while the effects may be diametrically opposed in more agreeable contexts, such as more civil, amicable service exchange situations or when the frontline employee receives positive feedback from the customer or his or her supervisor. This implication does, moreover, not limit to the domain of organizational identification but is rather a development of the SIA and its fields of application, in general. Previous research suggests that individuals hold multiple social identities and have a work team identification, a brand identification, a company identification etc. (e.g., Johnson *et al.* 2012,

p. 1158), for instance. Other research focuses on interpersonal identification between frontline employees and their managers (e.g., Kraus *et al.* 2015). Research on these phenomena can likewise benefit from this dissertation and should investigate, how cognitive and affective identification with these different foci relate to each other and if the effects differ, for example, when the social identity is psychologically closer to the self.

The **second academic implication** follows from specifying the two dimensions of organizational identification and their unique outcomes but pertains to the empirical investigation of the construct. Specifically, previous research has ignored that both dimensions may affect frontline employee behavior differently. Since cognitive and affective organizational identification can also work against each other, measuring organizational identification with a unidimensional scale is questionable and the results from these analyses can be misleading. For example, studies could have found insignificant effects of organizational identification because the single effects of both dimensions canceled each other out. In fact, there is direct evidence in this dissertation that the effect of cognitive organizational identification on sabotage of the complainant's service would have remained undetected, when the construct had been measured applying the common Mael scale as being unidimensional, for example. Moreover, even when both dimensions affect an outcome variable similarly, the dominant effect of one or the other dimension is obscured. Results from this dissertation, for instance, indicate that the beneficial effects of the organizational identification of frontline employees are rather driven by the affective dimension, when previous research largely relied on the notion that it is the goal congruence associated with the cognitive dimension, which drives beneficial outcomes (e.g., Ashforth and Mael 1989). In this context, it would be interesting to replicate the most seminal studies on organizational identification with separate measures for cognitive and affective organizational identification, instead of a unidimensional scale and determine, which effects are driven by which dimension. Concluding, in this dissertation clarity is provided that organizational identification of frontline employees should be operationalized with two separate dimensions to yield unambiguously interpretable results.

The **third academic implication** refers to how organizational identification should be investigated analytically. As evidenced in this dissertation, it is quite possible that some frontline employees find their organizational membership



strongly relevant to their sense of identity but attach few positive emotions to that membership (“neurotic dissonance”). Similarly, others may attach strong positive emotions to their organizational membership, while this membership does not play a self-defining role for the employee (“constructive dissonance”). Whether both dimensions are congruent or incongruent is, however, not categorical but continuous. This continuous divergence in both dimensions has consequences of its own, for instance, evidence indicated that a widening of the gap leads to increased stress levels and detrimental behavioral tendencies, in consequence. To be able to detect the consequences of a widening gap between cognitive and affective organizational identification, employing polynomial regression with response surface analysis as the methodological approach appears to be superior over more simplistic analytical procedures, such as traditional regression analysis. While traditional regression analysis only allows to assess the direct effects of both dimensions, an investigation of both the simple effects, as well as a differentiated analysis of the interaction effects between both dimensions, allowing for non-linear effects, is possible with this methodological approach. Thus, this dissertation is a plea for a more frequent application of polynomial regression in this research context, in order to provide a more complete picture of the nature and consequences of organizational identification.

Beyond the above noted implications for *science*, several implications for *practice* can be drawn from this research, as well.

The **first managerial implication** is that decision-makers need to understand that the organizational identification of their frontline employees has two dimensions, which are driven by unique needs and result in unique consequences. Against this background, it is necessary to manage both dimensions separately and it must not be assumed that a frontline employee with a high cognitive organizational identification naturally has an equally high affective organizational identification or vice versa. In other words, using the organizational membership to derive one’s sense of identity, is not necessarily accompanied by positive feelings about this membership, nor do positive feelings about the membership necessarily come along with a self-definitional importance of the membership. In the complaint context, for instance, it appears to be particularly rewarding for managers to invest in fostering the affective dimension of organizational identification, given the importance of this aspect, emphasized in this dissertation. Consequently, managers

have to identify ways, how they can increase the pride, happiness and joy their frontline employees associate with being a part of the organization. Potential strategies to foster the association of positive emotions could be charity events or corporate social responsibility projects that highlight the positivity of their organizations and by extension their self-concept. On the contrary, managers have to be cautious with nurturing cognitive organizational identification in the complaint context, since this dimension has been shown to foster perceptions that the customer is to blame for service failures, resulting in decreased collaborative behavioral tendencies and increased service sabotage tendencies, in absence of high affective organizational identification.

This leads to the **second managerial implication**, namely that cognitive and affective organizational identification not only have to be managed separately but that they have to be managed in relation to each other. It was indicated that organizational identification is most beneficial, when the magnitudes of both dimensions correspond to each other and is most detrimental, when the cognitive dimension substantially exceeds the affective dimension. Given the overwhelming evidence on positive outcomes of cognitive organizational identification provided by previous research (see section 4.2.1), it is, however, not argued here that managers should per se refrain from creating definitional ties between the organization and their frontline employees. On the contrary, evidence provided in this dissertation suggests that the cognitive dimension resides strongly positive potential that is, nevertheless, only unfolded, when this dimension is accompanied by equivalently strong positive emotions.

Thus, when managers want to foster the self-definitional link between the organization and their frontline employees, they should assure that this link is nurtured with positive emotions and gives employees a “good feeling” about it because this helps to reduce identity threat perceptions. This appears to be particularly relevant, when the organization faces a crisis and employees find it hard to satisfy their need for self-enhancement by their membership. In the presented studies, rather trivial customer complaints were sufficient cause for frontline employees with a high cognitive and a low affective organizational identification to have reduced helping intentions towards the customer and even increased intentions to engage in unethical sabotage behaviors. It is likely that in the face of more severe

threats to the organizational identity and by extension to their own sense of identity, employees with such an organizational identification constellation would be willing to engage in even more severe detrimental behaviors, emphasizing the need for a diligent orchestration of cognitive and affective organizational identification.

The **third** and **final managerial implication** pertains to potential remedy strategies for decision-makers in order to mitigate the negative effects of cognitive organizational identification and organizational identification incongruence on the behavioral tendencies of frontline employees. Particularly, in the dissertation at hand it is advocated for changing the general attitude of frontline employees towards complainants rather than providing them with strict guidelines how to behave. It was evidenced that reframing the complainant as someone who cares about the organization and provides information that helps improving the organization, is effective in reducing the detrimental effects. It follows for managers that reframing the complainant as in-group fellow who essentially works alongside with them, should be integrated in the culture of service-oriented organizations.

For instance, frontline employees should be more thoroughly trained on the benefits of an effective complaint handling and on the advantages of capitalizing on the feedback provided by complainants, instead of providing them with behavioral guidelines. Evidence suggests that once they understand the value of complaints and perceive complainants as valuable information sources rather than “outside attackers”, they reduce harmful coping strategies induced by their social identification with the organization, likely because they feel less threatened by complaint situations. On the contrary, while providing behavioral guidelines directly helps to reduce sabotage tendencies, this second potential remedy strategy does not help to overcome social identity driven antagonistic behavioral tendencies. Thus, from a SIA perspective, this potential remedy strategy appears to be ineffective in the given context and managers should not overestimate the effect of implementing such a guideline.

### 7.3 Limitations of the Dissertation and Future Directions

As with all research, the dissertation at hand is subject to some limitations that restrict its interpretation and generalizability but also inspire future research.

The **first limitation** is that in all presented studies, data was collected from front-line employees in relation to scenarios. As such, the studies did not contain real situations and behavior but rather self-reported intentions in a fictitious scenario. Consequently, the outcome measures could be subject to social desirability bias and/or defensiveness on the employee's behalf (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). However, this procedure should have yielded more conservative results by tendency, because if there is a divergence between real intentions/behavior and stated intentions of frontline employees, it should be rather in the direction that employees underestimate their tendencies to sabotage and reduce collaborative behavior because they tend to overrate their performance (cf. Maxham and Netemeyer 2003, p. 47).

Another study-design-related limitation is that the identified relationships between the organizational identification of the respondents and their behavioral intentions were dependent on their ability to imagine the scenarios and to reflect about the consequences of their responses in the survey.

Finally, one concern related to the study design is common method bias, since all data were obtained from one source, i.e. frontline employees. However, measurements of independent and dependent variables were separated in time and when possible it was controlled for a potential bias (see section 5.6.4). Moreover, the near-zero correlations between some of the variables and the complexity of the tested relationships argue against common method bias as an alternative explanation because interaction effects cannot easily be anticipated by respondents. In summary, future research might, nevertheless, want to address the limitations associated with the scenario-based study design by observing real customer-employee interactions in the complaint context and, thereby, rely on data sources other than the frontline employee his- or herself.

The **second limitation** is that data was collected from cross-sectional surveys and, despite strong theoretical support for the causal direction of the reported relationships, they cannot be considered causal. Future research could address this limitation by collecting longitudinal data. This procedure would also allow to investigate, whether cognitive and affective organizational identification differ in their long-term stability. The SIA suggests that organizational identification is rather stable over time but does not explicitly elaborate on potential differences between the two dimensions. Investigating the stability of both dimensions would, therefore, be an important theoretical contribution to the field.

The **third limitation** pertains to the fact that all data were collected in Germany and findings cannot necessarily be transferred to other countries and cultures. A recent meta-analysis on effects of organizational identification finds that the effects are stronger for collectivistic cultures than for individualistic cultures (Lee *et al.* 2015). Future research should, therefore, investigate the phenomena discussed here in a more collectivistic country (e.g., China, France or Italy). However, since Germany is considered an individualistic country, the effect sizes presented here can be assessed as being rather conservative estimations, as compared to potential effects sizes in more collectivistic cultures.

In addition to suggestions for future research that are directly related to the limitations of this dissertation, there are many avenues for future research, which were beyond the scope of this dissertation but are also worth pursuing.

For instance, this dissertation takes a frontline employee perspective and was concerned with the questions, how organizational identification affects their complaint handling intentions. Thereby, it does, however, not formally answer the question, whether the detrimental effects of cognitive organizational identification and organizational identification incongruence would be recognized by the customer, i.e. that he or she actually perceives the frontline employee to be less collaborative or to sabotage the service. Investigating the customer perspective would strengthen the results presented here and facilitate the estimation of actual consequences for the customer-organization relationship. Related to this, it would be interesting to match the cognitive and affective organizational identification of customers to that of frontline employees and investigate, whether a divergence in the identification of both parties affects their interacting. It is quite possible that a

congruence in the magnitude of identification leads to more satisfactorily service and complaint interactions than an incongruence because both parties have the same idea of how important the organization is to their personal identity and their personal world of feelings.

Moreover, it is quite possible that beyond management strategies, there are contextual factors that play a role in determining the magnitude of the effects of organizational identification. One potential research avenue could be to investigate the complaint handling of regular customers as compared to new customers, in light of the SIA. Particularly, it is possible that regular customers are naturally rather perceived as in-group members and treated with more favor, while new customers would be systematically discriminated against.

Finally, this dissertation was concerned with the *consequences* of cognitive and affective organizational identification and their (in-)congruence, while it did not examine what potential *antecedents* are. Future research should, hence, focus on identifying causes for an increasing divergence or agreement between both dimensions of organizational identification. One potential antecedent could be the occurrence of a significant organizational change. Organizational change often leads to a change in the definitional meaning and core values of the organization, likely negatively affecting the cognitive dimension of organizational identification, while this change can be positive with regard to the external image of the organization and by extension beneficial to the positivity of the self-concept, likely increasing affective organizational identification. Contrastingly, stagnation and inertia of an organization can be beneficial to cognitive organizational identification because social security is sustained, while it negatively affects the positivity of the organization, resulting in decreases of affective organizational identification. In order to test variables that predict organizational identification congruence and incongruence, researchers could use a “reversed” polynomial regression approach (see Edwards (1995) for a discussion of this technique and Gentry *et al.* (2007), Gentry *et al.* (2010) and Ostroff *et al.* (2004) for empirical examples).

## Appendix

### Appendix A. Study 1

General Description
<p>Stellen Sie sich vor, Ihre Universität hat einen "Tag der offenen Tür" organisiert, bei dem sich Studierende über das Master-Studium an Ihrer Universität informieren können. Diese Veranstaltung richtet sich speziell an Bachelor-Absolventen von externen Universitäten, die ausgezeichnete Noten und spannende Praktika vorweisen können.</p> <p>Sie und viele weitere Mitarbeiter der Universität wurden zufällig ausgewählt, um bei dieser Veranstaltung gemeinsam als Repräsentanten der Universität die Fragen der Studierenden zu beantworten. Ihre übergeordnete Aufgabe ist es, die Interessenten zu werben und somit exzellenten wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs an Ihre Universität zu holen.</p> <p>Sie nehmen einen Platz an einem der aufgebauten Informationsstände ein. Nach einigen Stunden haben Sie sich gut in Ihre Repräsentanten-Rolle eingefunden. Als Sie gerade alleine am Stand sind, kommt einer der Interessenten auf Sie zu und sagt:</p>
Scenario 1 (low complaint severity)
<p>"Entschuldigen Sie bitte die Störung. Mir wurde im Vorfeld versichert, dass ich heute bei dieser Veranstaltung meine Bewerbungsunterlagen einreichen kann. Nun habe ich meine Unterlagen dabei, aber kann keinen Ansprechpartner finden, obwohl die Uni ansonsten gut organisiert wirkt. Die Mitarbeiter dieser Uni, mit denen ich bisher gesprochen habe, waren offensichtlich nicht verantwortlich und schickten mich wieder weg. Dabei würde ich doch gerne an dieser Uni studieren. Vielleicht können Sie mir ja helfen?!"</p>
Scenario 2 (medium complaint severity)
<p>"Entschuldigen Sie, aber mir wurde im Vorfeld versichert, dass ich heute bei dieser Veranstaltung meine Bewerbungsunterlagen einreichen kann. Ich schleppe nun seit Stunden meine Unterlagen von A nach B und keiner der Mitarbeiter dieser nicht gerade gut organisierten Uni fühlte sich verantwortlich oder war in der Lage mir zu helfen. So wurde ich nun schon etliche Male einfach wieder weggeschickt. Da frage ich mich ja langsam wirklich, ob ich an dieser Uni studieren will. Vielleicht können Sie mir ja endlich helfen?!"</p>
Scenario 3 (high complaint severity)
<p>"Mir platzt gleich der Kragen. Mir wurde im Vorfeld versichert, dass ich heute bei dieser Veranstaltung meine Bewerbungsunterlagen einreichen kann. Ich schleppe nun seit Stunden meine Unterlagen sinnlos von A nach B und keiner der inkompetenten Trottel dieser katastrophal organisierten Uni fühlte sich auch nur ansatzweise verantwortlich oder war in der Lage mir zu helfen. Stattdessen werde ich von einem dieser unfähigen Uni-Mitarbeiter zum nächsten geschickt. Da frage ich mich ernsthaft, ob ich an dieser Uni überhaupt studieren will. Können Sie mir jetzt endlich helfen?!"</p>

**Table 41: Scenario Descriptions (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Test for Criterion by Fornell &amp; Larcker (1981)</b>				
<b>1st Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>2nd Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>r<sup>2</sup></b>
Affective Organizational Identification	.78	Cognitive Organizational Identification	.61	.22 ✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.78	Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	.05 ✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.78	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.56	.00 ✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.78	Emotional Stability	.60	.01 ✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.78	Perceived Complaint Severity	.81	.01 ✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.61	Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	.01 ✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.61	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.56	.04 ✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.61	Emotional Stability	.60	.00 ✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.61	Perceived Complaint Severity	.81	.00 ✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.56	.06 ✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	Emotional Stability	.60	.03 ✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	Perceived Complaint Severity	.81	.01 ✓
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.56	Emotional Stability	.60	.03 ✓
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.56	Perceived Complaint Severity	.81	.28 ✓
Emotional Stability	.60	Perceived Complaint Severity	.81	.01 ✓

r<sup>2</sup> = squared correlations

**Table 42: Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.



<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification						
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.47 **					
3. Emotional Stability	.10	.05				
4. Perceived Complaint Severity	.09	.03	-.09			
5. Job Tenure	-.17 **	-.11	.03	-.09		
6. Unstandardized Residuals	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 43: Correlations of the Independent Variables and the Residual Term of the Polynomial Regression Analysis with Collaborative Handling of the Complaint as the Dependent Variable (Study 1)**

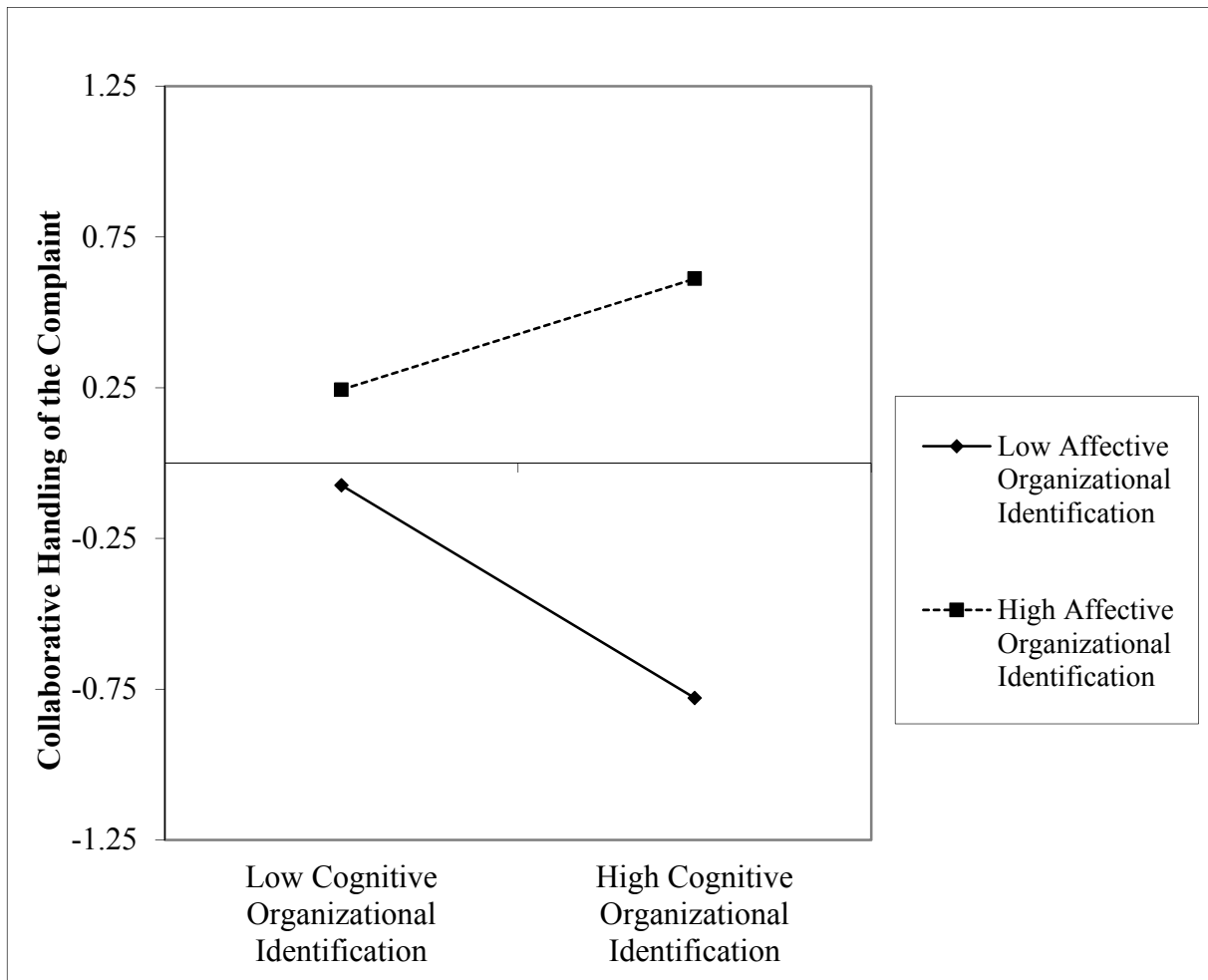
Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification						
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.47 **					
3. Emotional Stability	.10	.05				
4. Perceived Complaint Severity	.09	.03	-.09			
5. Job Tenure	-.17 **	-.11	.03	-.09		
6. Unstandardized Residuals	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

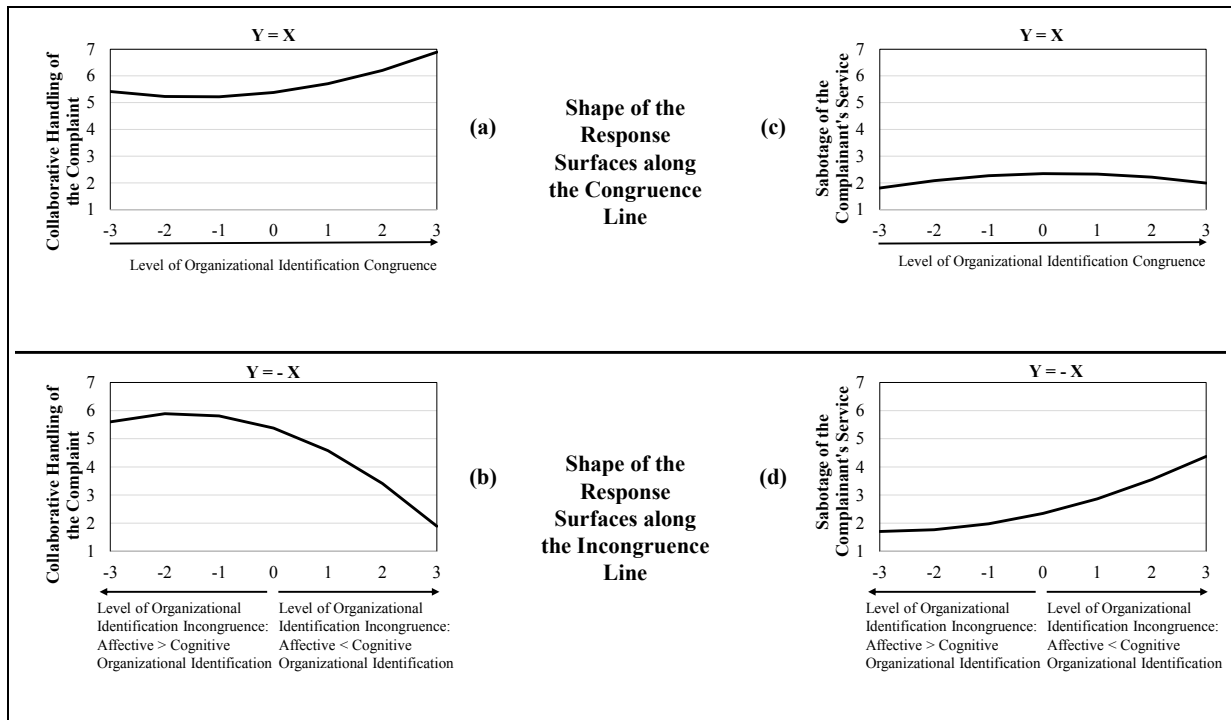
**Table 44: Correlations of the Independent Variables and the Residual Term of the Polynomial Regression Analysis with Sabotage of the Complainant's Service as the Dependent Variable (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 26: Interaction Effect of Cognitive and Affective Organizational Identification on Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 27: Shape of the Response Surfaces along the Congruence and Incongruence Lines (Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service
	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>b (SE)</b>
Affective Commitment	b <sub>1</sub> .158 (.067) **	.004 (.061)
Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>2</sub> -.033 (.077)	.093 (.071)
(Affective Commitment) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>3</sub> -.006 (.028)	-.007 (.026)
Affective Commitment x Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>4</sub> .038 (.039)	.013 (.036)
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>5</sub> .017 (.035)	-.039 (.033)
<b>Controls</b>		
Emotional Stability	.133 (.046) ***	-.127 (.043) ***
Perceived Complaint Severity	-.036 (.028)	.259 (.026) ***
Job Tenure Dummy 1 (< 1 year)	.027 (.192)	.175 (.177)
Job Tenure Dummy 2 (1 year)	-.023 (.204)	.234 (.188)
Job Tenure Dummy 3 (2 years)	.076 (.192)	.113 (.177)
Job Tenure Dummy 4 (3 years)	-.133 (.197)	.144 (.181)
Job Tenure Dummy 5 (4 years)	.252 (.205)	.030 (.189)
Job Tenure Dummy 6 (5 years)	-.118 (.322) ***	.086 (.297)
Constant	5.741 (.156) ***	2.170 (.144) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.081	.319
<b>Surface Tests:</b>		
Slope symmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> +b <sub>2</sub> )	.191 (.070) ***	.097 (.064)
Curvature symmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> + b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )	.049 (.032)	-.033 (.031)
Slope asymmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> - b <sub>2</sub> )	.125 (.126)	-.089 (.116)
Curvature asymmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> - b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )	-.027 (.055)	-.059 (.052)

\*  $p < .1$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 45: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses with Affective Commitment as a Proxy for Affective Organizational Identification (Robustness Check Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service
	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>b (SE)</b>
Organizational Identification (Mael-Scale)	.182 (.042) ***	.063 (.041)
<b>Controls</b>		
Emotional Stability	.133 (.045) ***	-.121 (.043) ***
Perceived Complaint Severity	-.041 (.027)	.259 (.026) ***
Job Tenure Dummy 1 (< 1 year)	-.085 (.184)	.219 (.176)
Job Tenure Dummy 2 (1 year)	-.131 (.192)	.367 (.184)
Job Tenure Dummy 3 (2 years)	-.013 (.182)	.226 (.174)
Job Tenure Dummy 4 (3 years)	-.180 (.188)	.254 (.180)
Job Tenure Dummy 5 (4 years)	.216 (.197)	.133 (.188)
Job Tenure Dummy 6 (5 years)	-.100 (.314) ***	.193 (.300)
Constant	5.823 (.114) ***	1.874 (.041) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.116	0.294

\*  $p < .1$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 46: Results of the Regression Analyses with the Mael-Scale (Robustness Check Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint			Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service			
		<b>b (SE)</b>			<b>b (SE)</b>		
Affective Organizational Identification	b <sub>1</sub>	.435	(.101)	***	-.213	(.093)	**
Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>2</sub>	-.193	(.109)	*	.241	(.100)	**
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>3</sub>	-.042	(.028)		.039	(.026)	
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>4</sub>	.132	(.047)	***	-.063	(.043)	
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>5</sub>	-.005	(.034)		-.024	(.031)	
<b>Controls</b>							
Perceived Complaint Severity		-.054	(.028)	*	.277	(.025)	***
Constant		5.390	(.135)	***	2.367	(.125)	***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.082			.323		
<b>Surface Tests:</b>							
Slope symmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> +b <sub>2</sub> )		.242	(.071)	***	.028	(.065)	
Curvature symmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> + b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )		.085	(.034)	**	-.048	(.031)	
Slope asymmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> - b <sub>2</sub> )		.628	(.198)	***	-.454	(.182)	**
Curvature asymmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> - b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )		-.179	(.062)	***	-.0078	(.057)	

\*  $p < .1$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 47: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses without Control Variables (Robustness Check Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint <b>b (SE)</b>	Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service <b>b (SE)</b>
Affective Organizational Identification	.340 (.072) ***	-.146 (.066) **
Cognitive Organizational Identification	-.130 (.062) **	.245 (.057) ***
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	.091 (.031) ***	-.040 (.029)
<b>Controls</b>		
Perceived Complaint Severity	-.051 (.027) *	.274 (.029) ***
Constant	5.400 (.135) ***	2.359 (.125) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.082	.320

\*  $p < .1$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 48: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses without Quadratic Effects (Robustness Check Study 1)**

Source: Author's illustration.

## Appendix B. Study 2a & 2b

General Description
Stellen Sie sich vor, während Ihrer Serviceschicht im Restaurant kommt ein Gast auf Sie zu und spricht Sie an:
Scenario 1 (low complaint severity)
„Entschuldigen Sie bitte, aber unsere Essen wurden kalt serviert. Leider war bis jetzt offensichtlich niemand von den Mitarbeitern, die wir angesprochen haben, für unseren Tisch verantwortlich oder konnte uns helfen. Dabei wirkt das Restaurant ansonsten gut organisiert. Wir warten nun schon etwas länger, dass etwas passiert und würden doch einfach gerne ein schönes Essen in Ihrem Restaurant erleben. Vielleicht können Sie uns ja helfen?“
Scenario 2 (high complaint severity)
„Entschuldigen Sie, mir reicht es langsam. Unsere Essen wurden kalt serviert, aber anscheinend fühlt sich keiner der Mitarbeiter, die wir angesprochen haben, für unseren Tisch verantwortlich oder konnte uns helfen. Dieses Restaurant ist einfach schlecht organisiert. Wir warten nun schon ewig, dass etwas passiert. Da frage ich mich langsam wirklich, ob wir überhaupt in Ihrem Restaurant essen gehen sollten. Können Sie uns jetzt endlich helfen?“

**Table 49: Scenario Descriptions (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's Illustration.

General Description
Stellen Sie sich vor, vor Ihrer Serviceschicht bittet der Schichtleiter das Team zu einer kurzen Besprechung zusammen. „Liebe Mitarbeiter, heute will ich kurz auf die besondere Bedeutung der Kunden eingehen, die uns Feedback in Form einer Beschwerde geben. Statistiken zeigen, dass 90% aller Kunden, deren Beschwerden ernst genommen und professionell bearbeitet werden, in der Zukunft öfter wiederkommen und im Durchschnitt sogar mehr Geld ausgeben, als Kunden, die sich nie beschwert haben. Diese Erkenntnisse zeigen, dass vor allem Kunden die sich aktiv beschweren, im Kern die gleichen Ziele verfolgen, wie wir Mitarbeiter: sie wollen zum Unternehmenserfolg beitragen. Somit sind sie nicht als Feindbilder anzusehen, sondern vielmehr als wichtiger Erfolgsfaktor unseres Unternehmens. Diese Erkenntnis sollten wir bei unserer täglichen Arbeit stets im Kopf haben.“ Nach dieser kurzen Ansprache wünscht Ihnen Ihr Schichtleiter viel Erfolg für Ihre Serviceschicht. Stellen Sie sich vor, während Ihrer Serviceschicht im Restaurant kommt ein Gast auf Sie zu und spricht Sie an:
Scenario (high complaint severity)
„Entschuldigen Sie, mir reicht es langsam. Unsere Essen wurden kalt serviert, aber anscheinend fühlt sich keiner der Mitarbeiter, die wir angesprochen haben, für unseren Tisch verantwortlich oder konnte uns helfen. Dieses Restaurant ist einfach schlecht organisiert. Wir warten nun schon ewig, dass etwas passiert. Da frage ich mich langsam wirklich, ob wir überhaupt in Ihrem Restaurant essen gehen sollten. Können Sie uns jetzt endlich helfen?“

**Table 50: Scenario Description (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.



<b>Test for Criterion by Fornell &amp; Larcker (1981)</b>					
<b>1st Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>2nd Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>r<sup>2</sup></b>	
Affective Organizational Identification	.83	Cognitive Organizational Identification	.64	.12	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.83	Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	.08	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.83	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.54	.02	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.83	Emotional Stability	.50	.00	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.83	Perceived Complaint Severity	.80	.00	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.64	Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	.00	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.64	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.54	.08	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.64	Emotional Stability	.50	.00	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.64	Perceived Complaint Severity	.80	.00	✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.54	.12	✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	Emotional Stability	.50	.02	✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.51	Perceived Complaint Severity	.80	.00	✓
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.54	Emotional Stability	.50	.00	✓
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.54	Perceived Complaint Severity	.80	.01	✓
Emotional Stability	.50	Perceived Complaint Severity	.80	.00	✓

r<sup>2</sup> = squared correlations

**Table 51: Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Test for Criterion by Fornell &amp; Larcker (1981)</b>					
<b>1st Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>2nd Construct</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>r<sup>2</sup></b>	
Affective Organizational Identification	.79	Cognitive Organizational Identification	.66	.05	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.79	Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.57	.27	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.79	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.61	.08	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.79	Emotional Stability	.59	.03	✓
Affective Organizational Identification	.79	Perceived Complaint Severity	.65	.00	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.66	Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.57	.01	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.66	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.61	.05	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.66	Emotional Stability	.59	.01	✓
Cognitive Organizational Identification	.66	Perceived Complaint Severity	.65	.00	✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.57	Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.61	.26	✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.57	Emotional Stability	.59	.01	✓
Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	.57	Perceived Complaint Severity	.65	.01	✓
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.61	Emotional Stability	.59	.00	✓
Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.61	Perceived Complaint Severity	.65	.01	✓
Emotional Stability	.59	Perceived Complaint Severity	.65	.00	✓

r<sup>2</sup> = squared correlations

**Table 52: Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification								
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.35 **							
3. Emotional Stability	.06	-.07						
4. Perceived Complaint Severity	-.05	-.05	.04					
5. Job Tenure	-.12	.21 **	-.05	.08				
6. Restaurant Size	-.07	-.08	-.09	.03	-.17 *			
7. Full/Part Time	-.01	-.32 **	.14	.01	-.25 **	.22 **		
8. Unstandardized Residuals	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 53: Correlations of the Independent Variables and the Residual Term of the Polynomial Regression Analysis with Collaborative Handling of the Complaint as the Dependent Variable (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification								
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.35 **							
3. Emotional Stability	.06	-.07						
4. Perceived Complaint Severity	-.05	-.05	.04					
5. Job Tenure	-.12	.21 **	-.05	.08				
6. Restaurant Size	-.07	-.08	-.09	.03	-.17 *			
7. Full/Part Time	-.01	-.32 **	.14	.01	-.25 **	.22 **		
8. Unstandardized Residuals	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 54: Correlations of the Independent Variables and the Residual Term of the Polynomial Regression Analysis with Sabotage of the Complainant's Service as the Dependent Variable (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification								
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.23 **							
3. Emotional Stability	.18 *	-.09						
4. Perceived Complaint Severity	.04	.00	.03					
5. Job Tenure	-.16 *	.12 **	-.03	.03				
6. Restaurant Size	-.11	.00	-.11	.05	-.07			
7. Full/Part Time	.16 *	-.27 **	.08	.06	-.32 **	.14		
8. Unstandardized Residuals	.00	.00	.00	.00	-.01	-.03	.00	

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 55: Correlations of the Independent Variables and the Residual Term of the Polynomial Regression Analysis with Collaborative Handling of the Complaint as the Dependent Variable (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Affective Organizational Identification								
2. Cognitive Organizational Identification	.23 **							
3. Emotional Stability	.18 *	-.09						
4. Perceived Complaint Severity	.04	.00	.03					
5. Job Tenure	-.16 *	.12 **	-.03	.03				
6. Restaurant Size	-.11	.00	-.11	.05	-.07			
7. Full/Part Time	.16 *	-.27 **	.08	.06	-.32 **	.14		
8. Unstandardized Residuals	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	-.01	.00	

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

**Table 56: Correlations of the Independent Variables and the Residual Term of the Polynomial Regression Analysis with Sabotage of the Complainant's Service as the Dependent Variable (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>External Locus of Causality</b>		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
v_116	The cause for this complaint was something... ...that reflects an aspect of myself - an aspect of the customer.	adopted from McAuley et al. 1992
v_117	...inside of me - inside of the customer.	
v_118	...about me - about the customer.	
<b>Semantic Differential</b>		
<b>Stress</b>		
Variable Labels	Items	Source
v_31	I would have found it hard to wind down in the interaction.	adopted from Lovibond and Lovibond 1995
v_33	I would have been in a state of nervous tension in the interaction.	
v_34	I would have been very irritable in the interaction.	

7-point Likert Scale (1: I strongly disagree; 7: I strongly agree)

**Table 57: Measurement of External Locus of Causality and Stress (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Variable Name	Corrected Item-to-Total Correlation	MSA Criterion	Cronbach's Alpha
External Locus of Causality			0.881
v_116	.837	.750	
v_117	.808	.745	
v_118	.672	.726	
Stress			0.779
v_31	.638	.783	
v_33	.600	.776	
v_34	.620	.813	

**Table 58: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis for External Locus of Causality and Stress (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Variable Name	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Fornell-Larcker-Criterion
External Locus of Causality		.956	.880	✓
v_116	.969***			
v_117	.919***			
v_118	.925***			
Stress		.778	.541	✓
v_31	.833***			
v_33	.659***			
v_34	.704***			

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

**Table 59: Local Fit-Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis for External Locus of Causality and Stress (Study 2a)**

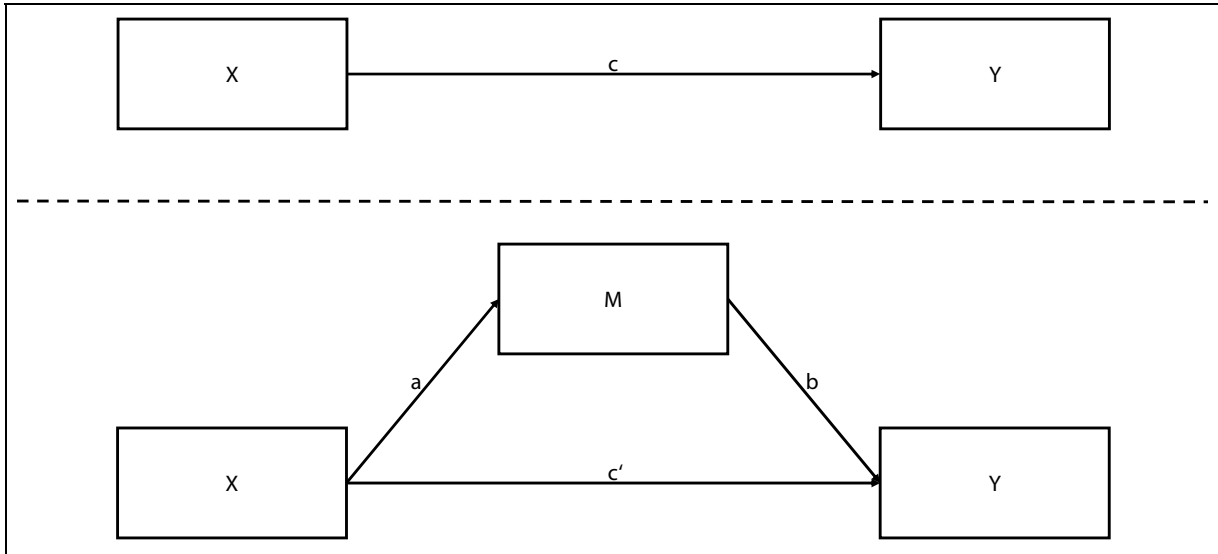
Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1. Affective Organizational Identification</b>												
<b>2. Cognitive Organizational Identification</b>	.35 **											
<b>3. Collaborative Handling of the Complaint</b>	.28 **	.03										
<b>4. Sabotage of the Complainant's Service</b>	-.13	.29 **	-.35 **									
<b>5. External Locus of Causality</b>	-.33 **	-.03	-.31 **	.35 **								
<b>6. Stress</b>	.01	.13	-.13	.41 **	.09							
<b>7. Perceived Availability of a Service Script</b>	.13	.17 *	.08	-.11	.07	-.19 *						
<i>Control Variables</i>												
<b>8. Emotional Stability</b>	.06	-.07	.14	-.07	-.05	-.30 **	-.09					
<b>9. Perceived Complaint Severity</b>	-.05	-.05	.00	.10	.12	.35 **	-.14	.04				
<b>10. Job Tenure</b>	-.12	.21 **	.06	.00	-.06	.08	.03	-.05	.08			
<b>11. Restaurant Size</b>	-.07	-.08	-.08	.16 *	.20 **	.12	.13	-.09	.03	-.17 *		
<b>12. Full/Part Time Employment</b>	-.01	-.32 **	-.09	.05	.17 *	.00	-.07	.14	.01	-.25 **	.22 **	
<i>Mean</i>	5.13	3.13	5.93	1.54	3.02	2.51	3.30	5.00	3.52	1.28	1.50	.35
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	1.53	1.58	1.03	.80	1.53	1.37	2.10	1.13	2.11	1.19	.65	.48

\*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

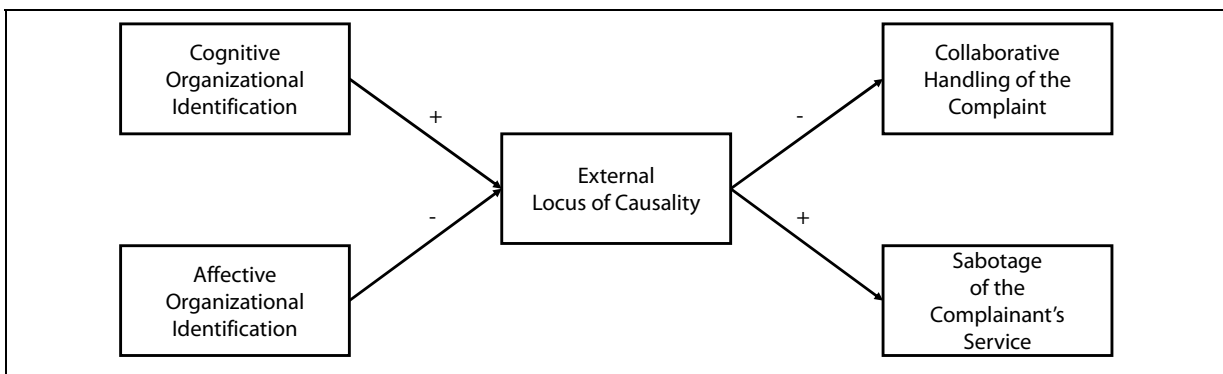
**Table 60: Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations of External Locus of Causality and Stress (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 28:** Illustration of the Mediating Effect of M in the Relationship between X and Y

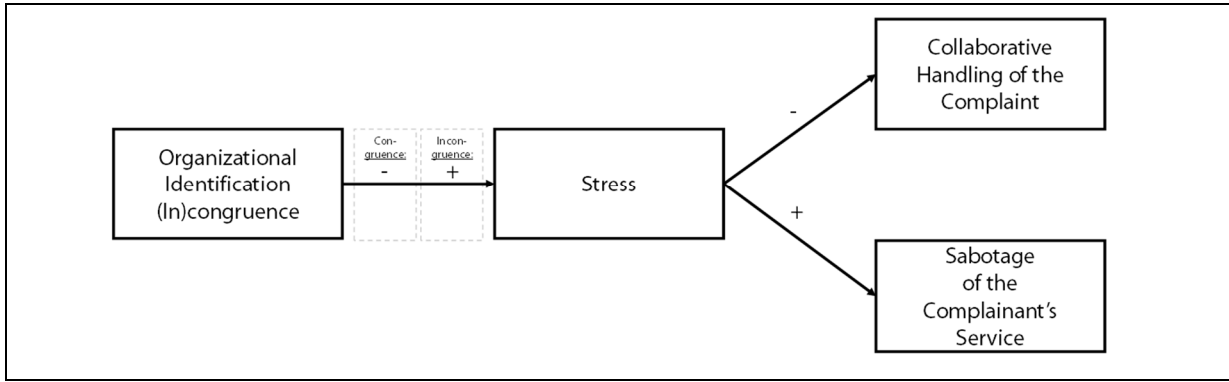
Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 29:** Proposed Partial Mediation of External Locus of Causality in the Relationships between Cognitive and Affective Organizational Identification and the Outcome Variables (Study 2a)

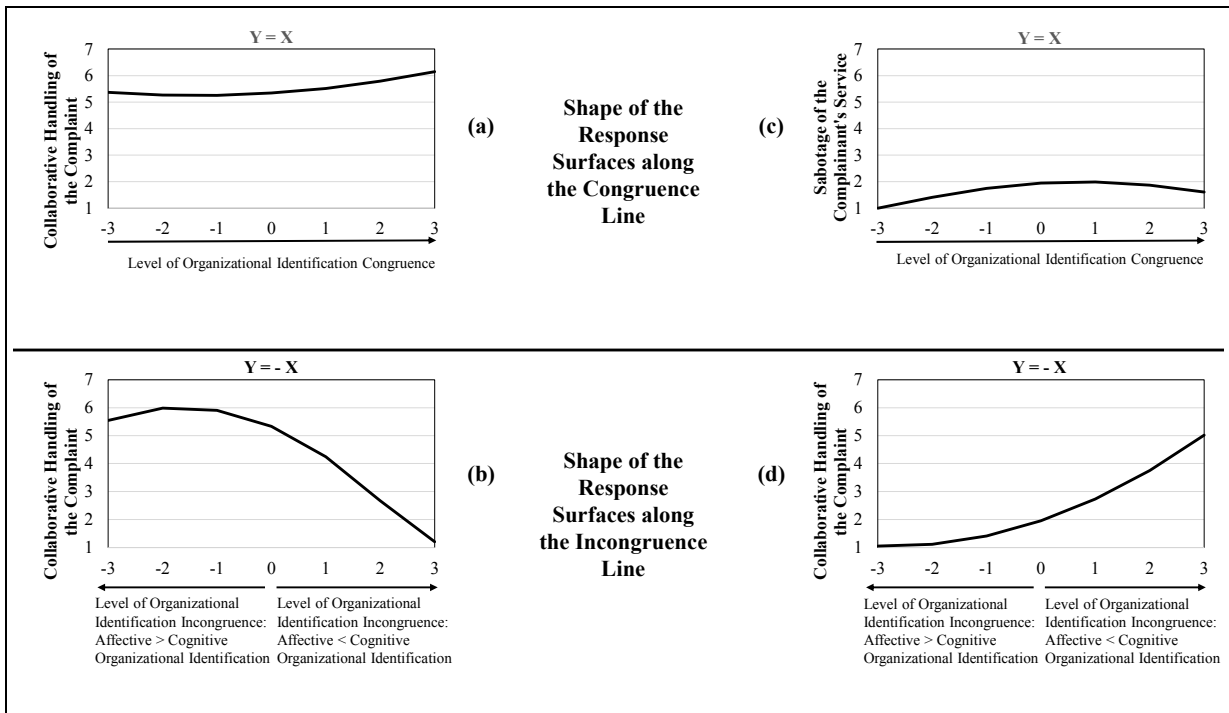
Source: Author's illustration.





**Figure 30: Proposed Mediating Effects of Stress in the Relationships between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and the Outcome Variables (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 31: Shape of the Response Surfaces along the Congruence and (In-)Congruence Lines (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

Tested Relationships	b (SE)
Cognitive Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality (a path)	.310 (.1352) **
External Locus of Causality → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (b path)	-.140 (.0524) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (total) (c path)	-.250 (.0943) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (direct) (c' path)	-.207 (.0941) **
Cognitive Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (indirect) (ab path)	Lower limit: -.1136 Upper limit: -.0035
Cognitive Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality (a path)	.310 (.1352) **
External Locus of Causality → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (b path)	.139 (.0379) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (total) (c path)	.327 (.0694) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (direct) (c' path)	.2844 (.0680) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (indirect) (ab path)	Lower limit: .0071 Upper limit: .1006

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 61:** Results of the Analyses of the Mediating Effect of External Locus of Causality in the Relationship between Cognitive Organizational Identification and Collaborative Handling of the Complaint and Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2a)

Source: Author's illustration.

Tested Relationships	b (SE)
Affective Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality (a path)	-.618 (.1398) ***
External Locus of Causality → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (b path)	-.140 (.0524) ***
Affective Organizational Identification → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (total) (c path)	.407 (.0976) ***
Affective Organizational Identification → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (direct) (c' path)	.320 (.1012) ***
Affective Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (indirect) (ab path)	Lower limit: .0181 Upper limit: .1953
Affective Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality (a path)	-.618 (.1398) ***
External Locus of Causality → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (b path)	.139 (.0379) ***
Affective Organizational Identification → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (total) (c path)	-.223 (.0718) ***
Affective Organizational Identification → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (direct) (c' path)	-.1377 (.0732) *
Affective Organizational Identification → External Locus of Causality → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (indirect) (ab path)	Lower limit: -.1802 Upper limit: -.0317
* $p < .1$ ; ** $p < .05$ ; *** $p < .01$	

**Table 62:** Results of the Analyses of the Mediating Effect of External Locus of Causality in the Relationship between Affective Organizational Identification and Collaborative Handling of the Complaint and Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2a)

Source: Author's illustration.

Tested Relationships	b (SE)
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → Stress (a path)	-0.240 (.2581)
Stress → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (b path)	-0.082 (.0530)
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (total) (c path)	.876 (.1820) ***
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (direct) (c' path)	.856 (.1817) ***
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → Stress	Lower limit: -.0158
→ Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (indirect) (ab path)	Upper limit: .1617
Block Variable Tendencies to Sabotage → Stress (a path)	.576 (.2501) **
Stress → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (b path)	.198 (.0371) ***
Block Variable Tendencies to Sabotage → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (total) (c path)	.869 (.1322) ***
Block Variable Tendencies to Sabotage → Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (direct) (c' path)	.755 (.1248) ***
Block Variable Tendencies to Sabotage → Stress	Lower limit: .0125
→ Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (indirect) (ab path)	Upper limit: .2629

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 63: Results of the Analyses of the Mediating Effect of Stress in the Relationship between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and Collaborative Handling of the Complaint and Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2a)**

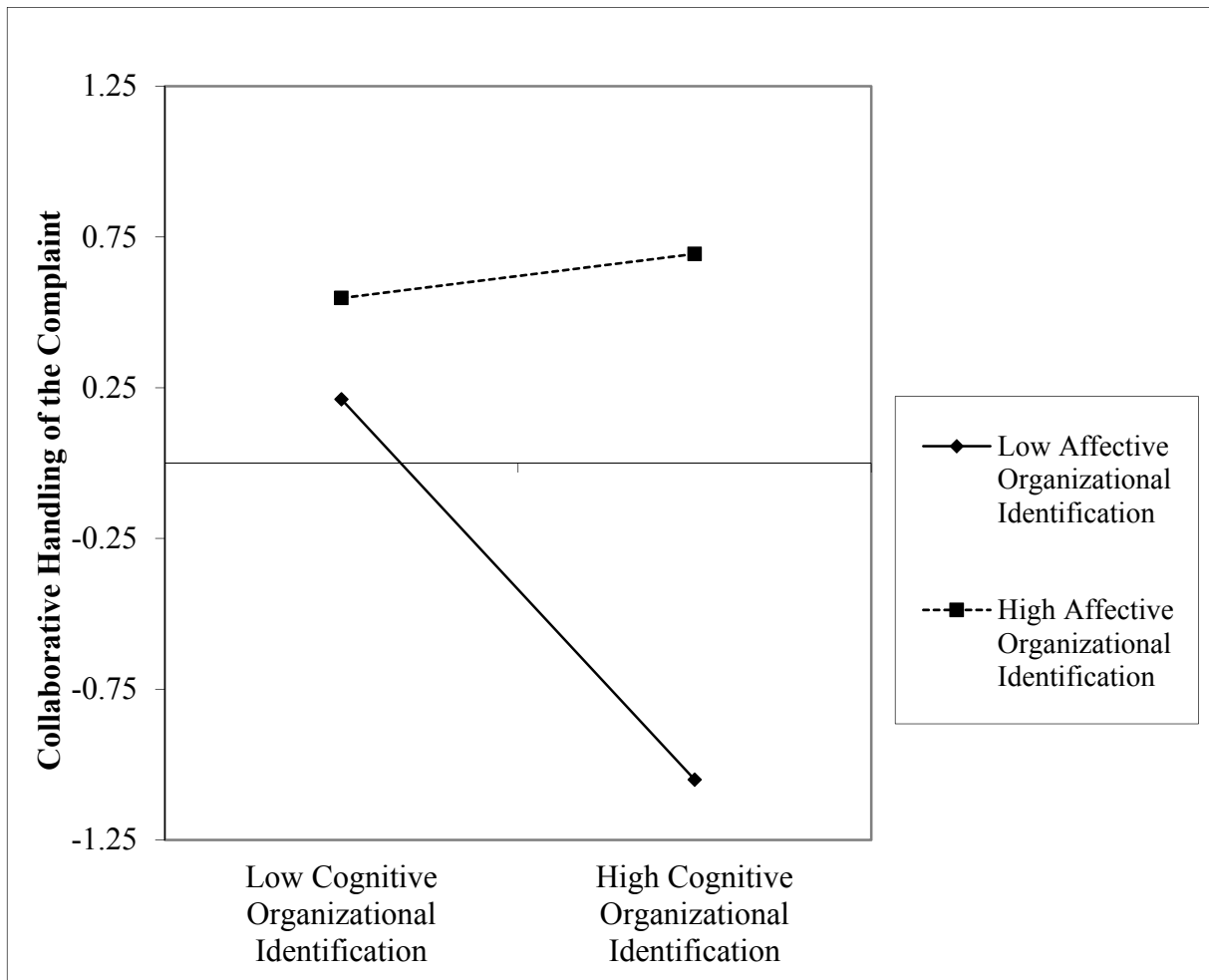
Source: Author's illustration.

Tested Relationships	b (SE)
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → External Locus of Causality (a path)	-1.426 (.2664) ***
External Locus of Causality → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (b path)	-.143 (.0505) ***
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (total) (c path)	.876 (.1820) ***
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (direct) (c' path)	.672 (.1925) ***
Block Variable Collaborative Handling → External Locus of Causality → Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (indirect) (ab path)	Lower limit: .0531 Upper limit: .3974

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

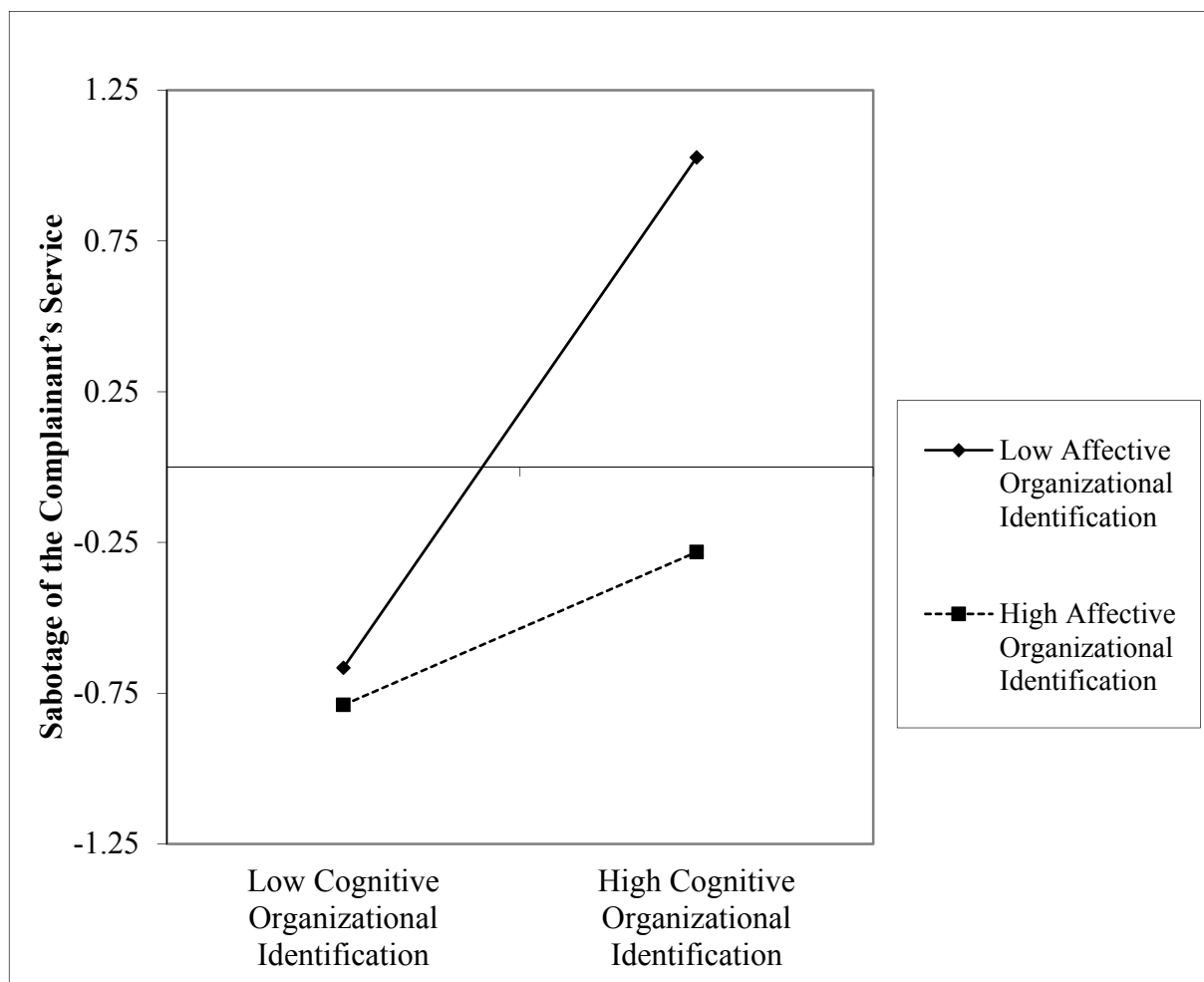
**Table 64: Results of the Analyses of the Mediating Effect of External Locus of Causality in the Relationship between Organizational Identification (In-)Congruence and Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.



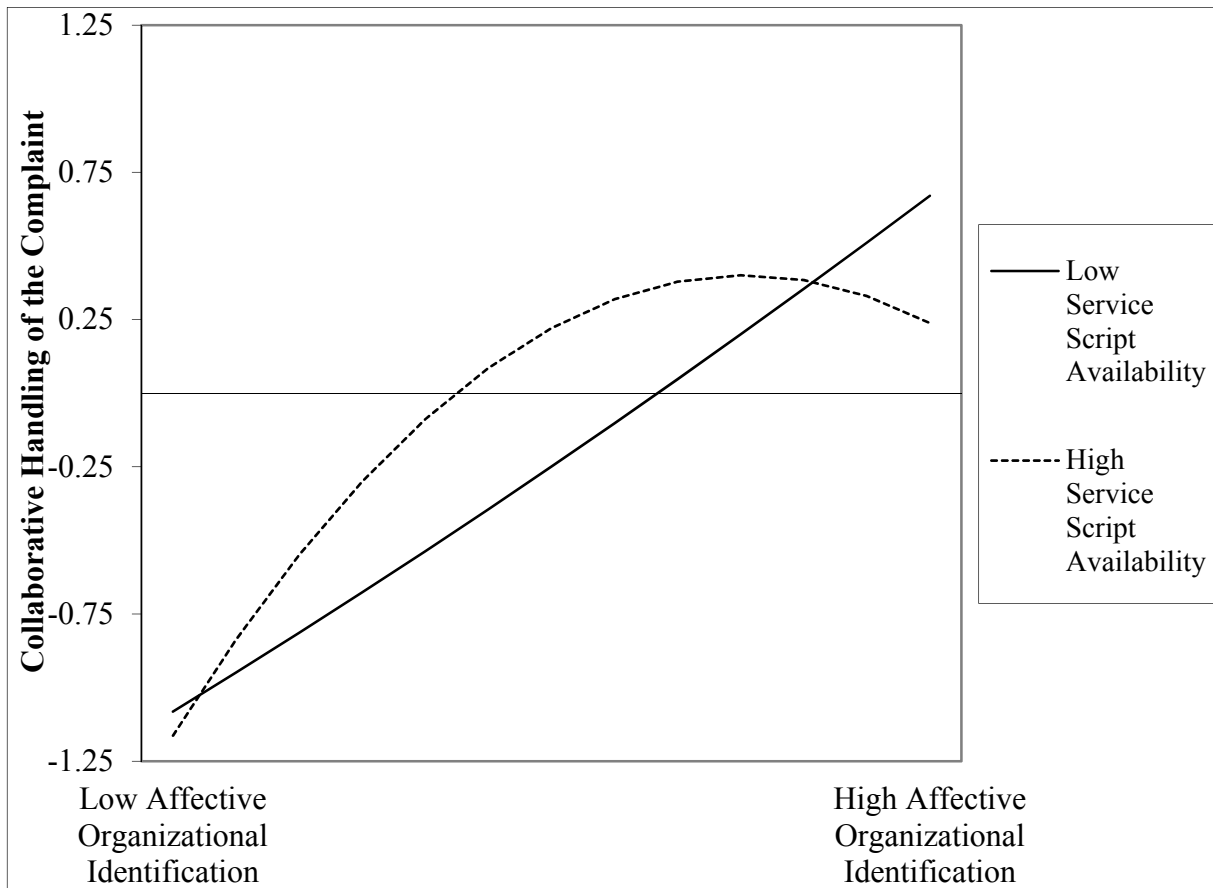
**Figure 32: Interaction Effect of Cognitive and Affective Organizational Identification on Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 33: Interaction Effect of Cognitive and Affective Organizational Identification on Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2a)**

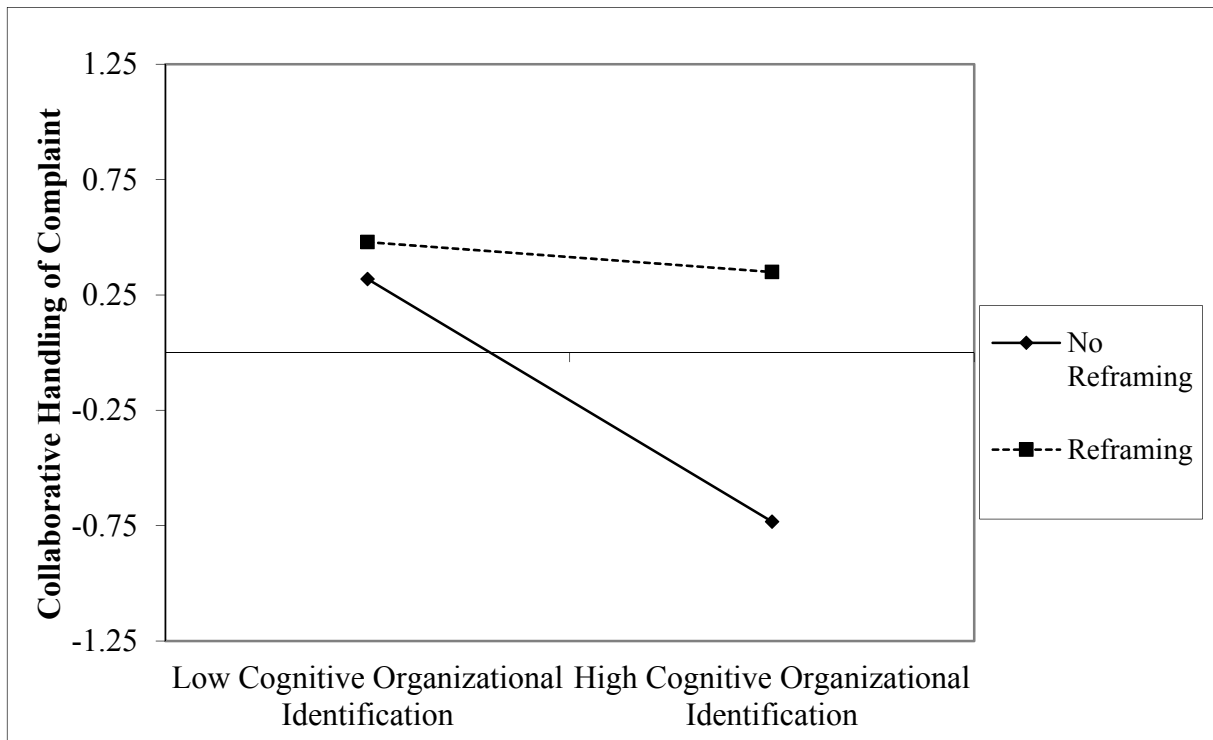
Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 34: Interaction Effect of (Affective Organizational Identification)<sup>2</sup> and Perceived Availability of a Service Script on Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 2a)**

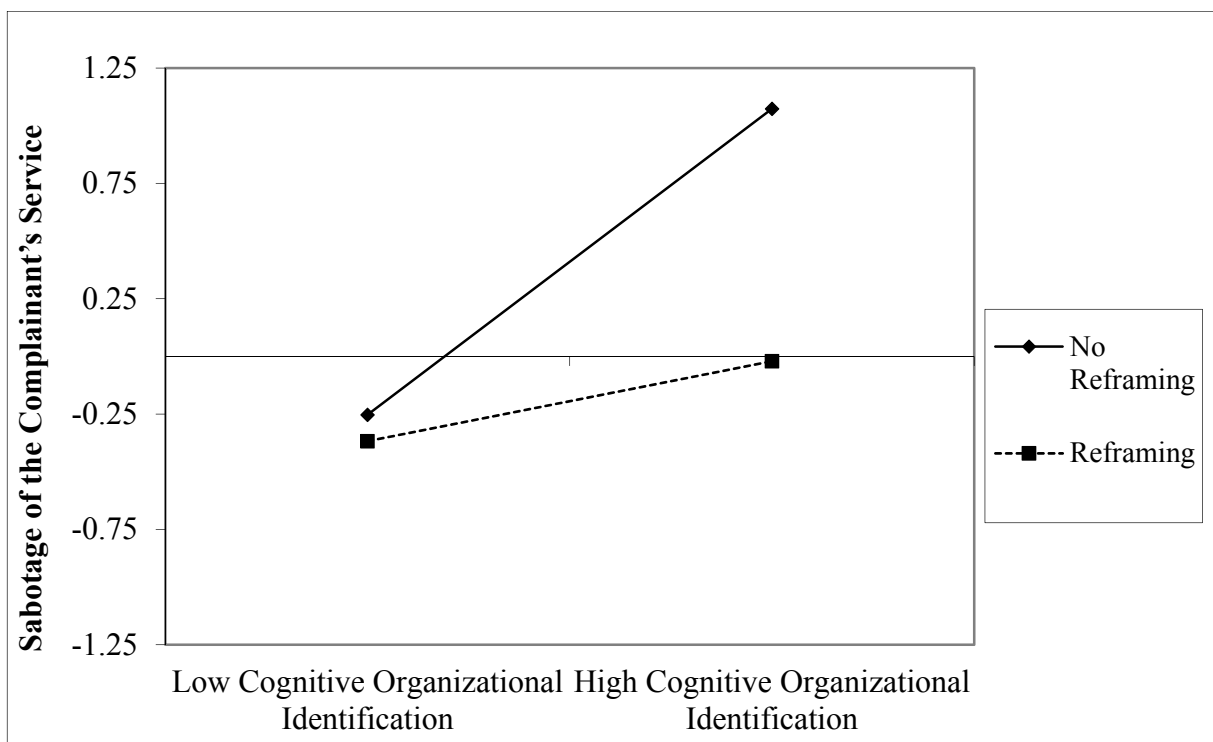
Source: Author's illustration.





**Figure 35: Interaction Effect of Cognitive Organizational Identification and Reframing on Collaborative Handling of the Complaint (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.



**Figure 36: Interaction Effect of Cognitive Organizational Identification and Reframing on Sabotage of the Complainant's Service (Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint		Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service
		<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>b (SE)</b>
Affective Organizational Identification	b <sub>1</sub>	.407 (.098) ***	-.223 (.072) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>2</sub>	-.250 (.094) ***	.327 (.069) ***
(Affective Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>3</sub>	-.037 (.032)	.015 (.024)
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	b <sub>4</sub>	.130 (.045) ***	-.087 (.033) ***
(Cognitive Organizational Identification) <sup>2</sup>	b <sub>5</sub>	-.024 (.031)	.013 (.023)
<b>Controls</b>			
Perceived Complaint Severity		.006 (.036)	.035 (.027)
Constant		5.486 (.149) ***	2.104 (.103) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		.095	.189
<b>Surface Tests:</b>			
Slope symmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> +b <sub>2</sub> )		.157 (.074) **	.104 (.054) *
Curvature symmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> + b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )		.069 (.039) *	-.089 (.029) ***
Slope asymmetry line (b <sub>1</sub> - b <sub>2</sub> )		.657 (.177) ***	-.550 (.130) ***
Curvature asymmetry line (b <sub>3</sub> - b <sub>4</sub> + b <sub>5</sub> )		-.191 (.064) ***	.085 (.047) *

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 65: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses without Control Variables (Robustness Check Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint	Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service
	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>b (SE)</b>
Affective Organizational Identification	.320 (.067) ***	-.248 (.049) ***
Cognitive Organizational Identification	-.178 (.069) **	.321 (.051) ***
Affective x Cognitive Organizational Identification	.093 (.034) ***	-.092 (.025) ***
<b>Controls</b>		
Perceived Complaint Severity	.008 (.035)	.041 (.026)
Constant	5.435 (.140) ***	2.104 (.103) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.098	.194

\*  $p < .1$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 66: Results of the Polynomial Regression Analyses without Quadratic Effects (Robustness Check Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint <b>b (SE)</b>	Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service <b>b (SE)</b>
<i>Controls</i>		
Block Variable Collaborative Handling of the Complaint / Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.699 (.212) ***	0.769 (.143) ***
Perceived Availability of a Service Script	.126 (.062) **	-.151 (.049) ***
<i>Interactions</i>		
Block Variable Collaborative Handling of the Complaint / Sabotage of the Complainant's Service x Perceived Availability of a Service Script	-.160 (.098)	-.152 (.070) **
Constant	5.642 (.126) ***	1.935 (.094) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.122	.227

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 67: Results for the Moderational Effects of Perceived Availability of a Service Script (Block Variable Approach Study 2a)**

Source: Author's illustration.

<b>Independent Variables</b>	Dependent Variable = Collaborative Handling of the Complaint <b>b (SE)</b>	Dependent Variable = Sabotage of the Complainant's Service <b>b (SE)</b>
<i>Controls</i>		
Block Variable Collaborative Handling of the Complaint / Sabotage of the Complainant's Service	.990 (.160) ***	1.175 (.213) ***
Reframing	.203 (.141)	-.404 (.124) ***
<i>Interactions</i>		
Block Variable Collaborative Handling of the Complaint / Sabotage of the Complainant's Service x Reframing	.018 (.210)	-.417 (.303)
Constant	5.594 ***	1.957 (.099) ***
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.338	.190

\* $p < .1$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

**Table 68: Results for the Moderational Effects of Reframing (Block Variable Approach Study 2b)**

Source: Author's illustration.

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## **Affidavit**

Hiermit versichere ich an Eides Statt, dass ich meine Dissertation

„Cognitive and Affective Organizational Identification of Frontline Employees –  
An Investigation in a Customer Complaint Context“

selbständig und ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt habe und dass ich alle wörtlich oder dem Sinn nach anderen Veröffentlichungen entnommenen Stellen nach den bekannten Regeln wissenschaftlicher Zitierweise besonders gekennzeichnet und die Quellen aufgeführt habe.

Münster, den 14. März 2017

Fabian Kubik, M.Sc.



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## **Curriculum Vitae**