



# “Who We Are Is What We Brew”

## Organizational Identity (OI), Coordination & Communication

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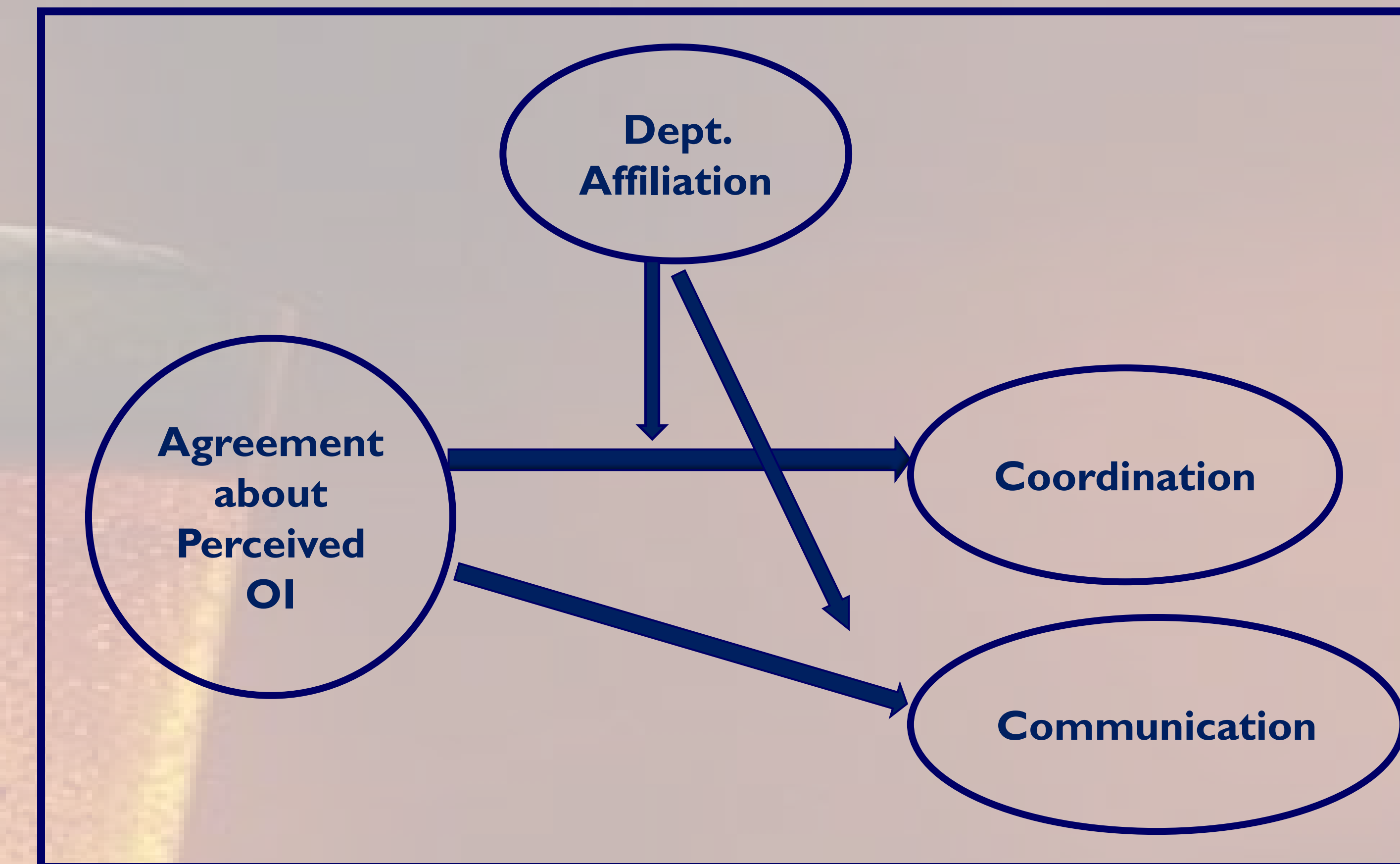
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### Abstract

This case study offers an in-depth investigation of the organizational identity construct from a shared mental model perspective. The notion of organizational identity refers to the way people feel and think about ‘who they are as an organization’. It consists of those attributes that are central, enduring, and distinctive in defining the character of a firm (Albert and Whetten, 1985). Specifically, the study explored the links between shared organizational identity and members’ perceptions of coordination and communication in a Canadian microbrewery. It was hypothesized that the more members see and understand organizational identity in a similar way the more they are likely to have similar perceptions of favorable task coordination and organizational communication.

Six semi-structured interviews with members of the management team in different departments were used to define the identity of the microbrewery. Five identity dimensions were elicited: **Quality producer**, **Influence of the founder**, **Involvement in the local community and social events**, **Geographic attachment**, and **Family/team**. Building upon those findings, quantitative survey data were gathered from 35 organizational members located in different departments to test the relationships between shared perceived organizational identity and perceptions of coordination and communication behaviors. Departmental affiliation was also tested for moderating effects. The data were analyzed at the dyadic level with the social network analysis software UCINET VI (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman, 2002). The findings suggest some evidence of associations between members’ agreement in dyads about organizational identity and their perceptions of group processes thus providing partial support to the hypothesized relationships. The moderating role of departmental membership was not supported.

### Conceptual framework



### Research Intent

1. Explore members’ collective understandings about OI in one specific organization.
2. Investigate the associations between shared OI beliefs and perceptions of coordination and communication.

### Context

- ✓ Canadian microbrewery
- ✓ 86 employees (during data collection)
- ✓ 4 departments:
  1. Brewing
  2. Bottling & Packaging
  3. Sales
  4. Administration

### Qualitative methods

- ✓ 6 semi-structured interviews with top management
- ✓ Text analysis of the transcripts (158 identity statements)
- ✓ 5 ID dimensions:
  1. Quality producer
  2. Family/team
  3. Influence of the founder
  4. Made in Montréal
  5. Involvement in local community & social events

### Quantitative methods

- ✓ 35 returned questionnaires (response: 41%)
  - 14 by mail + 21 on-site
- ✓ Scales:
  - Organization identity (12 items; Whetten & Foreman, 2002)
  - Coordination (10 items; Lewis, 2003)
  - Communication (11 items; Downs & Hazen, 1977)
  - Demographic information

### Results

IDENTITY AGREEMENT	H1	H2	H3	H4
	Coordination (agreement)	Communication (agreement)	Coordination (strength)	Communication (strength)
1. Quality producer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Made in Montréal	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. Involvement in local community	Yes	No	Yes	No
4. Influence of the founder	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Family/team	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

### Practical Contributions

- ✓ Training programs (transmit OI to new employees)
- ✓ Organizational messages that reinforce collective ID
- ✓ Strategic Implications: “Who are we?” & “What are we doing?”