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The study on the antecedents and results of college Chinese students' school identity-a constructed theoretical framwork

Xie Fenghua

Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, School of Business Administration,
Zhejiang Hangzhou, 310018

ABSTRACT

School identity reflects sense of belonging of a student perceived to the school. Based on organizational identity theory, the paper studies on the college students' school identity and discusses the effect which campus environment factors has on the College Students' school identity and the effect of college students' school identity on the personal development and school development. The study constructs a ed theoretical framwork which research on the antecedents and results of college Chinese students' school identity.

KEYWORDS

College students; School identity; Influencing factors; Individual development; School development.



INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the stage of popularization of higher education, all aspects of the higher education fields have changed sharply. The continuous expansion of colleges' scale, moved target of university education, college students' school adjustment and the development of colleges and universities are facing crisis. Some of the college management becomes market-oriented and utilitarian, and the traditional functions of colleges like solidarity and culture transmission become weak. The university traditional identity has been challenged^[1]. At the same time, negative news such as deepening contradiction between students and schools has been increasing and many college students use "down", "depressed", "no feeling" when talking about their Alma mater. Some college students even skip classes; indulge in excessive drinking and network games, theft and many other negative performances. By the end of 2006, a survey about emotion to universities on the Jinan university students BBS showed that only 18.8% of the students said they would attached to his Alma mater, while many college students said there is not too much impression to their Alma mater, and some even think the relationship between them and their Alma mater "is only a trade"¹. Therefore, cultivating college students' school adjustment and forming their school belonging become the problems university management should pay attention to. College students' school identity is a tool that can reflect college student affairs management, education quality and students' individual psychological relationship. The cultivation of school identity, on the one hand, will help students better adapt to college life, so as to promote the development of themselves, on the other hand, the college students' school identity is a kind of important social capital that has an irreplaceable role to improve the university's cohesive force, strive for more resources and development opportunities and realize the teaching goal of university^[2-7]. However, from the perspective of existing researches, the studies about college students' school identity still stay in the simple experience summary and quantitative analysis, and the studies were not systematic and in-depth, especially researches on antecedents and results of the college students' school identity were still in the theory analysis and exploration stage. This paper summarizes the research achievements of school identity, explores antecedents and results of college students' school identity and strategy and methods to improve college students' school identity, based on research results of organizational identity.

THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Organization identification

Organizational identification belongs to the category of social identity, academic circles to the definition of organizational identity has not yet reached an agreement. Ashforth and Mael think that organizational identification is that staff defines himself as a member of the organization, and organizational consensus or a vest in groups of perception^[8-9]. Van Dick thinks that organizational identification includes emotion, cognition, evaluation, behavior four component contents^[10]. Xu WeiLing and Zheng BoXun think that organizational identification is a kind of process and results of individual self-definition. The individual make self-concept and organization recognition connected and thus have a classification effect by the process of belonging to the organization^[11]. Individuals' social identity in the organization is mainly from the unique, core, and lasting characteristics in his organization. The more individuals identify with the organization, the more he/she will standing by the point of view of the organization position to think and take action, with perception of fate with organizations psychologically.

Overseas have more discussion for relevant variables of organizational identification. In recent years, our country has paid more and more attention to on organizational identity. Whether in abroad or at home, antecedent variables of organizational identification mainly include organizational factors and individual factors two categories, and the results variables are also the divided into organizational level and individual level. Details see TABLE 1:

TABLE 1 : Summary of antecedents and results of organizational identification

Antecedents Variables	Organizational Factor	Organization characteristics (organizational culture, organizational socialization, organization competition, the size of the organization and brand, etc.); Organization reputation; The organization's significant (values, norms); The organization forms related traditional factors (similarity, a common history, positive interpersonal relations and the common goal threat, etc.); Other factors (leaders' and colleagues' support, transformational leadership, organizational justice, person-organization fit and motivating behavior, etc.).
	Individual Factor	Gender, education background, character, tenure, the nature of the work, identity tendency, the individual ability, affiliation needs, sentimental feelings, economic interests, and positive emotions.
Results Variables	Organizational Level	Job satisfaction, absence rate, cooperative behavior, organizational commitment, turnover intention, turnover behavior, retain intention, competitive power, the regard highly perception, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational performance.
	Individual Level	Job performance, job involvement, job motivation, health complaints, self-efficacy, three dimensions of job burnout, and work and family conflict.

Source: Further summarizing from the latest research on the basis of summary by Han Xue Song^[12], Jin Gao Qiang and Gong Li Jun^[13]

School identity

School identity research in our country is still in its initial stage, and there has been no uniform and authoritative definition about the connotation of school identity. Professor Shi ZhongYing from Beijing normal university elaborates the meaning of school identity based on culture and identity relationship, that school identity is a kind of acceptance, approval and appreciation of teachers, students and school staff to school culture psychologically and it contains a wide range of content including school motto, behavior rules and regulations school environment construction and utilization and so, which reflect school concept and value orientation^[2]; After that, many scholars used his definition^[3,7]. Shen Peng thinks that students' school identity is a sense of belonging generated by recognition of students to school cultural tradition, values and school spirit and he regards that alumni demonstration method is an efficient way to cultivate college students' school identity and puts forward the construction strategy of alumni demonstration^[14]. Zhou HaiTao pointed out that university identity belongs to organizational identification. Zhou defined university identity is the cognition of identity ownership that he/she is one of the members of the university by college student; Also it is university loyalty and pride formed on the basis of personal university expectation; And it is the process corresponding words and deed formed on the basis of students' cognition on the university values; School identity and satisfaction have identity; And college's attributes, college students' individual characteristics and the characteristics of the environment are three causes to promote college students' school identity; College students' positive school identification will help students do their best to contribute to the development of the school, while negative identity status will eventually lead to self-rejection, illegal discipline rebellious behavior^[15]. From the psychology Angle, Ding Li defined the college students' school identity defined as the awareness of college students to their identity as students in their school, emotional acceptance and evaluation of their school, and then produce interactions with others on the basis of cognition and affection, and at the same time after the infections and shaping of school environment and school system, causing a sense of belonging and a positive and active evaluation of the university. Ding's paper analyzes the college students' school identity production conditions including positive college culture paradigm and effective institutions support system two aspects^[5]. Yang Wei, Fu ShaoHui believe that a student's school identity is refers to the student's rational sense of responsibility and sense of contract and irrational dependency and sense of belonging to his/her school organization in the behavior and concept and many other aspects, and behavior results shown in colleges and universities with hard-working in various activities in such a psychological basis, and they analyzed agricultural colleges students' school identity combined with their agricultural colleges own features of analysis^[6]. Mou YanJuan and Gu ZhengJie pointed out that Alma mater identity is the sense of belonging and sense of honor of a student to his school, the understanding of school history origin, value system and school spirit, the natural acceptance and internalization of school spirit system and cultural tradition and natural love and support to school. Besides, Mou and Gu pointed out that the more and more situation that college students do not agree with their Alma mater and they regards that the main reasons of the phenomenon are the great psychological gap of students before and after entering university, the influence by informal group, the discontent to the teacher authority, personality revealing and personal center socialist several factors, and that should be dealt with from individual, school, family and society's efforts^[16].

School identity is an important variable to describe students and college psychological connection, and it reflects the symbol significance and social value of the school to students, and its connotation has changed from spiritual school culture, system, the traditional understanding to the emotional attachment, commitment and responsibility behavior tendency. Compare with the narrow definition of organizational identification, the author believes that school identity is a special kind of organizational identification and its process also contains self-identity in the individual level and group identity in the organizational level of students. Therefore, this paper defines college students' school identity as: In university study life, college students, participate in school in various academic and social activities, interact with the people, influenced by the school environment and system, and form a sense of belonging to the school the special organization and generate pride of school history, tradition and culture, and then consciously safeguard the interests of the school in action, and after graduation, they still can keep the faith to the school.

The influence of individual characteristics on college students' school identity

Antonio^[17] pointed out that anything about the research of university results can't ignore the influence of students' personal information and background on themselves. Pascarella and Kuh^[15-17] think student background and school organization characteristics influence each other, and these two factors have direct impact to the school environment, social interaction and learning and cognitive development; In Ding Li's^[4] study, there are significant differences in majors and genders among school identities of respondents, that boys' school identities are higher than girls', science & engineering students' school identities are higher than liberal art classes and concession class students; Gan QingYing^[20] made an investigation of different grade students' school identities and found that the school time length of students has a significant influence on identities. Therefore, the paper puts forward Hypothesis1:

H1: College students' school identities present differences because of individual characteristics.

The influence of campus environment factors on college students' school identity

Shi ZhongYing^[2] believed that campus culture including school motto and landmark building is the special spiritual environment and culture atmosphere in universities. Good campus culture has great significance to improve gathered force of staff and students and cultivate good school spirit. And she thought the school culture can promote the school identity among

school staff and students; Yang Wei and Fu ShaoHui^[6] believed that cultural factors have great effect on students' identity and campus culture will affect students from individual attitude and individual behavior two aspects.

Compared to material level, spiritual level such as academic tradition, academic responsibility, teaching style, academic freedom and learning environment in a university is the most essential index to reflect a university's spirit. Yang Wei and Fu ShaoHui^[5] also think that school internal learning academic atmosphere can affect students' school identity formation.

Perceived organizational support within the organization refers to a kind of general perception and faith of the employees to how the organization treat their own contribution and care about their own interests, employee perception of organizational support and employee organizational identification level positive correlation (Eisenberger^[21], Bell and Menguc^[22], Sluss^[23]). So, school support feeling is a general perception and faith that the college students to how colleges and universities treat their own contribution and concerned about their future development. The research of Gu JiBao, Peng LiJun^[21] concluded that graduate school support feeling and their school identity are related and Su YongJian^[4] also pointed out that colleges and universities support play a positive role in the school identity formation, so it can be inferred that the higher college students feel school to his support degree, the higher his school identities will be.

Katrinli^[24] points out that the quality of leaders - employee relations have a positive impact on staff organizational identification degree; Hunt and Michael^[25] put forward that if the employee established intimate relationship with other members in the organization, he/she will have higher organizational commitment; Brown^[26] also pointed out that positive relationships help staff find similarity of value and faith, so as to enhance the attraction of the organization and the relationship with the groups. Scholars think that quality of relations between employees has important relations to employee's organizational commitment and that an employee agrees with other members in the organization can improve the identification degree of the staff to the whole organization. Although the relations among college students, colleges and universities and college teachers are different from the relation between staff and organization, the college students are members of this organization college, the quality of relationship between college students and college will have an important impact on school identities; And during college study life period, teachers and students are the most main contact objects, the quality of closeness of relationship between students and teachers and between students will affect the school identity.

From the above analysis we can see that the school culture, school internal learning academic atmosphere, school support feeling and campus interpersonal relationship all have effect on college students' school identity, and these factors can be sum up as the school soft environment factors. This article puts forward a hypothesis 2:

H2: Soft environment factors have a direct positive influence on the college students' school identity.

Herzberg's double factors incentive theory pointed out that factors that affect employee job satisfaction can be divided into hygiene factors such as company policies, management measures, working conditions and wages material benefits and incentive factors such as achievement, admiration, growth and development opportunities. Hygiene factors mainly refer to demand of people to outside conditions and lack of hygiene factors will cause employees strong dissatisfaction. From the point of view of universities, in addition to providing good teaching facilities such as classroom, library, experimental facility equipment and so on for students' career development, universities also need to provide students with good living facilities, such as catering, accommodation environment conditions, all of which will impact on college students' school identity; Yang Wei and Fu ShaoHui^[6] also pointed out that the influencing factors of school identity include internal material resources in the colleges and universities, such as school's geographical environment, learning and life hardware facilities. Therefore, the hard environment will have an important impact on college students' school identities and it puts forward the hypothesis 3:

H3: Hard environment factors have a direct positive influence on college students' school identity.

The influence of college students' school identity on individual development

In the book by Pascarella and Terenzizi^[18] about the influence of university on students, they paid attention to sustainability of the students' education harvest, and pointed out that the students' harvest includes moral development, cognitive and non-cognitive ability development, life quality, speech quality and the development after graduation of main body and the influence on the professional economic status; Su YongJian^[5] thought that the dynamic mechanism that students have school identity includes intrinsic needs of individual self-development and outside requirements of functions of colleges and universities; Gan QingYing^[20] thought that the development of students and school identity has close relation and the university is the place to improve students' own social value; Shen Peng^[14] pointed out that school identity has positive influence on students' adaptation to the school environment, their self-control, self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of responsibility and so on various aspects; Zhai XiaoLei^[27] believed that students school identity is a kind of requirement for the students' self-development and strengthen college students' school identity helps to improve college students' self-management ability; Wang JiangTao^[28] thought that the stronger school identities of college students, the better they can adapt to the environment, and it will be in a positive way to influence the formation of college students' self-esteem, self-confidence, sense of responsibility and self-control. Therefore, hypothesis 4 has been put forward:

H4: College students' school identity and individual development including personal self-esteem, personal confidence and self-management have positive correlation.

The influence of college students' school identity on school development

Shi ZhongYing^[2] thought the school identity has become a relatively independent factor that influencing school development. Strong school identity, on the one hand, can make the school staff and students produce a kind of common

sense of belonging, sense of honor and pride to the school, which can produce a kind of sense of responsibility for consciousness, positivity and altitude, forming a powerful driving force of hard working and learning, creating a good ideological basis and cultural atmosphere for the school development; on the other hand, the trust degree between the teachers and students will increase and the psychological cost and time cost of communication between each other will reduce, which will arouse people to participate in the school activities and plan for the school development. Liu LiJia^[29] also thought that school identity and school development has a relationship, college students with high school identity level can form sense of belonging, honor and happiness and will be proud of they are a part of the school, and will take more efforts to study and participate in activities, which will be conducive to the improvement of the teaching activities.

The social capital in colleges contains internal social capital and external social capital two aspects. Shen Peng^[14] thought that alumni especially outstanding alumni are the important force to develop the school spirit and maintain the basic values of the school, and they can represent the school image externally and provide role models internally. Luo AnNa and Li YanPing^[30] also pointed out that with the change of college development mode, network of alumni gradually becomes one of the most important social capitals and a large number of social resources are included in the alumni network. Alumni can offer a variety of social resources directly to the university, such as bring more external information, capital and cooperation opportunities to colleges and universities, or become the image spokesperson of school, improving the school social reputation directly or indirectly. Alumni resources are one kind of the school social capital and high school identity helps to cultivate more alumni resources. The influence of college students' school identity on the universities and colleges social capital has two aspects, on the one hand, during studying in the college, students should increase trust on the school and can actively cooperate with all kinds of school affairs, so as to promote the improvement of the education teaching activities; On the other hand, college students' school identities has a positive meaning for maintenance of alumni relationship after graduation and construction of alumni network. Therefore, hypothesis 5 has been put forward:

H5: college students' school identity and school development including education and teaching, social capital and reputation capital has positive correlation.

Based on the above assumptions, combined with organizational identification theory, the conceptual model has been put forward as follows:

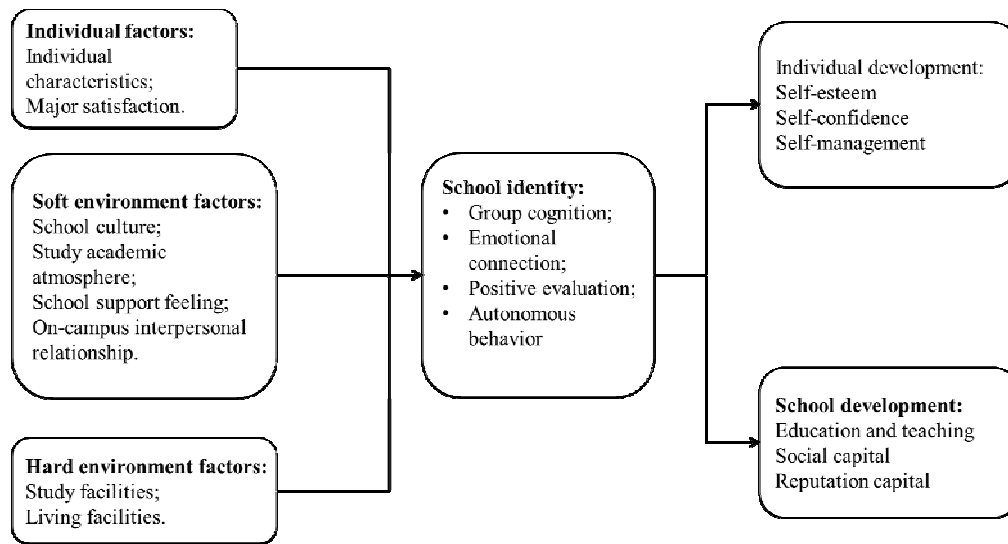


Figure 1 : Research model of college students' school identity antecedents and results

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The models constructed in this research have referred to organizational identification theory and theories and research results in other areas, although the most factors have been considered in the college students' school identity antecedents research, but in the view of the purpose and normative of this study, there are still quite a few of factors not take into consideration. For example, characteristics, family, social environment and students' extracurricular participation level¹ and other factors of the student individual will influence on school identity. In addition, the school identification results also contains more extensive content in addition to the mental health (such as academic performance, etc.), this paper did not consider them. Therefore, the content remains further research later.

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