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Identity Work Support Perceptions (IWSP): Development of a Construct and Measure

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Every day, people perform internal (e.g., thoughts) and external (e.g., behaviors) activities to repair, strengthen, or revise their identities at work. Despite organizations being the main stage on which this identity work (IW) occurs and a major contextual element invoking identity work, scholars still lack an understanding of employees' beliefs about their organizations' support for identity work. In this research, we conceptualize and operationalize identity work support perceptions (IWSP)—defined as the degree to which employees perceive that their organization encourages, allows, or provides opportunities to think about, talk about, or display aspects of work and nonwork identities, or engage in activities that foster understanding and sharing of identities. We develop a scale to measure four dimensions (i.e., cognitive, discursive, behavioral, and physical) of IWSP using seven empirical samples (two samples of subject matter experts and five samples of employed adults). We provide evidence of reliability, as well as content, convergent, and discriminant validity with constructs in IWSP's nomological network and IWSP's incremental predictive ability of attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Implications of our findings for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: identity, identity work, organizational support, scale development

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Who am I? Who do I want to be? What does that mean for me—here? These are some of life's most essential defining questions at and away from work. As such, identity research, primarily informed by social identity theory (H. E. Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987, 1989), has been a focal area for applied psychology research for decades (Korman, 1970; Riordan & Shore, 1997). We live and work in a world where identities abound—parent, Latina, teacher, husband, runner, leader, and infinitely more—and we have learned that identities are

dynamic, multidimensional, and fluid (Brown, 2022). Accordingly, researchers have expanded the study of identity to explore how identities may be altered as people engage in identity work (IW) and called for investigation of contextual factors that shape the identity work process (e.g., Caza et al., 2018).

Identity work is defined as “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising” one's self-meaning (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 626). It is a process that involves various activities, such as affirming or strengthening an established identity,


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Wayne S. Crawford is now at Amazon (Amazon, Inc., Dallas, Texas, United States). His employment with Amazon at time of publishing is unrelated to this research, and this research is not related to his position at Amazon. Data collection using Amazon Mechanical Turk was completed prior to his joining Amazon.

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making sense of an emerging identity, or reconstructing an existing identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). For example, priests may perform identity work by tapping into their spiritual resources (e.g., prayer, worship) to help them balance and *strengthen* their societal, professional, and individual identities (Kreiner et al., 2006); police officers may engage in identity work by prioritizing physical fitness and toughness as they *form meanings* about their physical selves in relation to their professional selves (e.g., Courpasson & Monties, 2017); and pregnant women may engage in identity work as they reflect and *revise* their professional selves in light of their impending new mother identities (Ladge et al., 2012). Indeed, the activities of identity work may assume myriad forms, and nearly any person may be engaging in identity work at any time. Unsurprisingly, scholars suggest that identity work is a meaningful process that employees enact across all professions and workplaces (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

Given the prevalence of identity work in the workplace, it is pertinent that scholars examine how contextual factors may influence the process and outcomes of identity work. We argue that one important contextual factor is the role of organizations in supporting identity work in the workplace. Organizations have long sought to regulate identity work, compelling employees to prioritize identities that serve the organizations' interests (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). For example, Disney promotes values of optimism and creativity where employees are expected to maintain the "magic" by staying in character as a cast member, despite criticism for fostering a culture of burnout and high stress (Tetrault, 2023). Such an approach may have been more well-suited for an era when most workers (i.e., 51%–55% of people asked by Gallup between 1990 and 2014) derived a sense of their identities from their jobs (Riffkin, 2014). However, more recent data by the Pew Research Center showed that fewer than four in 10 non-self-employed workers reported their job or career being "extremely/very" important to their overall identity (Horowitz & Parker, 2023). Nearly a third of the workers surveyed indicated that professional life was "not too important/not important at all" to their overall sense of self, suggesting that organizations that compel only work-related identity work may not reap the full benefits of fostering identity work among their employees.

Accordingly, the "leave your personal life at the door" mantra and emphasis on identity assimilation and segmentation in the workplace (e.g., Graen et al., 1973; Johnson & Graen, 1973; Ziller, 1964) have slowly transitioned toward organizational messages encouraging employees to "bring your whole self to work." As a result, modern workplaces have likely become "identity work-spaces" (G. Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010) and "meaning arenas" (Westenholz, 2006) where people prefer and expect to meaningfully engage with identities that support their nonwork interests as well. As such, we argue that employees may be attuned to organizational cues that signal how supportive their employers are as they seek to work on their work and nonwork identities. Further, employees' beliefs that their employers have adopted a more generalized approach to supporting identity work related to a wider array of work and nonwork identities may be associated with more positive attitudes and behaviors.

To explore this possibility, we conceptualize identity work support perceptions (IWSP)—defined as *the degree to which employees perceive that their organization encourages, allows, or provides the opportunity to think about, talk about, or display aspects of*

their work- and nonwork-related identities, or to engage in activities that foster understanding and sharing of their identities. Additionally, we create a measure of IWSP, provide evidence of our scale's content and discriminant validity, and demonstrate its incremental predictive validity of employee attitudes and behaviors above and beyond other organizational constructs (perceived diversity climate, perceived psychological safety climate (PSC), perceived authenticity climate (AC), and perceived organizational support [POS]). In doing so, we make several contributions to the literature.

First, by recognizing that organizations may be integral to employees' identity work (Anteby, 2008; Brown, 2015; Kreiner & Sheep, 2009; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003), we address a few significant limitations of the identity work literature by examining how context (e.g., one's workplace) shapes identity work processes (Brown, 2015). To date, most identity work research has been siloed in nature, with scholars typically adopting one specific theoretical lens to explore one identity at one point in time, often in one specific organization or profession (Bataille & Vough, 2022; Caza et al., 2018). Doing so has limited our understanding of the contextual cues that employees consider as they enact identity work across their various, dynamic, and fluid identities at work. It has also limited our knowledge of the implications of employees perceiving these contextual cues as more or less supportive of their efforts to establish or refine their identities at work. Accordingly, leading identity work scholars have urged researchers to develop a construct supporting research across contexts to examine variables that more precisely shape the identity work process (Caza et al., 2018). As such, we develop a construct that encompasses how employees perceive organizational cues signaling support for employees enacting various types of identity work.

Additionally, we develop and validate a scale to measure IWSP. Insights from the identity work literature have been informed almost exclusively by qualitative studies (see summary in Caza et al., 2018), which have enabled us to understand the depth of the identity work experience for small, uniquely situated samples of workers who do novel types of work (e.g., police officers: Courpasson & Monties, 2017; priests: Kreiner et al., 2006) or who are at specific career or life transitions (e.g., pregnant employees; Ladge et al., 2012). However, with limited quantitative research on identity work (notable exception: Hansen et al., 2003) and no quantitative studies examining workplace variables, we have yet to understand how identity work-relevant processes may shape employees' experiences across professional contexts or the implications thereof. Our scale will enable quantitative inquiries of identity work across large, diverse samples and workplaces, increasing the generalizability of studies on identity work. Further, we establish quantitative links between IWSP and other constructs central to applied psychological research to demonstrate the utility of our measure.

From Identity Work to IWSP

To explain how organizations can support the process of shaping, restoring, reinforcing, and revising employees' identities, we first define identity work and offer examples of its types. Then, we conceptualize IWSP, clarifying its dimensions and identifying its boundaries (Hinkin, 1998; Podsakoff et al., 2016). We also illustrate how organizational cues may correspond to distinct dimensions of IWSP (see Table 1).

Table 1

Illustrations of Organizational Actions and Relevant Identity Work Support Perceptions

Action taken by organization	Corresponding dimension of IWSP	Relevant identity impacted
Employees are told to think about their performance in their work role throughout the previous year and set goals for the upcoming year	Cognitive IWSP	Work role
Employees are encouraged to think back and journal about an ethical dilemma they faced and how they handled it	Cognitive IWSP	Moral
Employees are given the opportunity to share in monthly departmental meetings what they are most proud of in their personal life	Discursive IWSP	Family/friend/any nonwork role
Employees are encouraged to join a marathon runner club	Discursive IWSP	Athlete
Employees are encouraged to organize a volunteer activity at a local nonprofit to participate in as a team during the workday	Behavioral IWSP	Volunteer
Employees are encouraged to take the day off to work at a voting center on election day	Behavioral IWSP	Political
Casual Fridays allow employees to wear T-shirts depicting a band, Black Lives Matter, or any slogan that is respectful to all workers	Physical IWSP	Any personal/work
Employees can modify their workspace to display pictures of their family	Physical IWSP	Family

Note. IWSP = identity work support perceptions.

Identity work is the forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising of identities, which occurs through cognitive, discursive, behavioral, or physical means (Caza et al., 2018). Cognitive identity work is defined as “*mental efforts* to construe, interpret, understand, and evaluate an identity” (Caza et al., 2018, p. 891). It may be self-reflective (Beech et al., 2008; Fletcher & Watson, 2007) or imaginative (MacIntosh & Beech, 2011). Imagine a fledgling social media company whose founders envision themselves as the next Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin—but better. These fantastical thoughts are their effort to form an aspirational identity as members of an elite group of stellar performers in their industry.

Discursive identity work occurs *verbally* through narratives, stories, dialogue, and conversation (L. Allen, 2005; Caza et al., 2018). For example, a manager may use stories of their past experiences and successes to help establish their leader identity (Carroll & Levy, 2010). In doing so, they use dialogue to affirm a leader identity and experience greater confidence and effectiveness.

Behavioral identity work involves *actions* that strengthen or revise an identity (Caza et al., 2018). Though research on religious identities in secular workplaces is scant (Gebert et al., 2014), many employees engage in prayer at work, enacting behavioral identity work. Envision coworker discussion at the onset of a company lunch-and-learn. As one employee pauses, bows, and blesses her food before taking a bite and rejoining the discussion, she maintains her religious identity via prayer, exemplifying behavioral identity work.

Finally, physical identity work occurs when people use *objects and space* to align or strengthen the impressions of others with their desired self-meaning. For example, employees may decorate their offices with photos, posters, or desk accessories to depict nonwork interests or values. Décor choices could include sports memorabilia, cartoons or memes, cards, and color schemes. Observers may interpret such physical identity markers as symbols of status, abilities, and ideals (e.g., Elsbach, 2004). When a dad puts family photos on his desk, he displays his father identity, and peers may view him as more leaderlike (e.g., Morgenroth et al., 2021).

In summary, employees engage in various types of identity work in the workplace, focusing on both work and nonwork identities. Yet, the only literature that explicitly considers the organization’s role in identity work examines identity regulation, whereby

organizations constrain employees’ identities to foster homogeneity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). In these contexts, the organization seeks to foster a shared organizational identity. However, recent work suggests multiple ways that organizations can support their employees in ways more aligned with modern workers’ expectations and preferences.

Organizational identity regulation is a process in which organizations control the identity process and identity expression of their employees. In other words, organizations seek to regulate specific employees’ identities to tailor how employees respond to problems to make them more “effective” (Bardon et al., 2017). For example, rather than having middle managers influenced by workplace relationships that may sway their decisions and judgments at work, organizations may instill notions of what it means to be an “effective” manager, essentially programming managers to respond in a way the organization deems acceptable. The purpose of identity regulation is to assert control over employee identity at work. In contrast, we argue that employees may also attend to cues that their organization supports identity work by encouraging them to examine, enact, express, or explore their true or desired selves as relevant or irrelevant to their specific job duties. At present, our understanding of the consequences of such perceptions remains inadequate. Thus, our work explores employee perceptions of identity work support provided by organizations and develops its nomological network.

Dimensions of IWSP

Most constructs are complex and multidimensional (Yaniv, 2011), and IWSP is no exception. We argue that organizations can foster IWSP by encouraging identity work in four ways: cognitive, discursive, behavioral, and physical. We define cognitive IWSP as *the perception that the organization encourages, allows, or provides the opportunity for one to think about and contemplate their identities*. Employees may experience cognitive IWSP when organizations encourage employees to conduct self-assessments to help them understand who they are and what they value. For example, some career planning activities prompt reflection on aspirational identities (e.g., asking, “Who do you want to be five years from now?”). We define discursive IWSP as *the perception that the organization encourages, allows, or provides the*

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opportunity for one to talk about their identities. Social events that include families may encourage discursive identity work by making employees feel comfortable talking about their familial identities at work. We define behavioral IWSP as *the perception that the organization encourages, allows, or provides the opportunity for one to perform actions that foster understanding and/or expression of their identities.* Employees, with an athlete identity, who join a company team to play a sport they love should report more behavioral IWSP, as should employees with a volunteer role identity who volunteer at a valued nonprofit with coworkers. We define physical IWSP as *the perception that the organization encourages, allows, or provides the opportunity for one to display their identity in the workspace.* When organizations encourage employees to display objects indicative of their identities (e.g., posters, family pictures, school banners) in workspaces (Caza et al., 2018), employees should report higher physical IWSP. In short, people with higher IWSP view their organization as providing more opportunities to engage in various types of identity work. Table 1 includes more examples of how organizations may foster the four types of IWSP.

Characteristics of IWSP

Many organizations offer support for specific identities via programs, policies, or culture. For example, companies increasingly offer employee resource groups (ERGs) for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, others employees and allies (Agugliario, 2021). These policies or procedures may lead employees to perceive support for their specific identity (e.g., gay man). IWSP, however, is the perception of support for identity work in general, not necessarily tied to a specific identity. IWSP may develop due to general support for various identities (e.g., hosting multiple ERGs and encouraging the formation of new ones), intersecting identities (e.g., a leadership workshop with modules on nonwork identities and work–life balance), or norms of free identity expression (e.g., a practice of personal office decor). That is, IWSP is a perception of support across many identities. Further, while identity support entails a static recognition of who employees are, IWSP entail employees' observations of organizations offering ongoing support for going through the process of developing, reconsidering, asserting, or establishing who they are. For instance, providing space for ERG meetings may signal identity support, however, creating workshops that help ERG members understand and express their identities at work might foster higher IWSP.

When organizations support identity work more generally, they encourage understanding and sharing of identities without signaling any specific identity as more or less valuable. This may be particularly suitable in diverse workplaces. Organizations can provide space, time, opportunity, or encouragement for employees to think about, talk about, display, or engage in actions that promote various identities while employees are at work or away from work, supporting employees with a multitude of identities that may or may not be marginalized.

IWSP is not restricted to perceived support for identity work within an organizationally determined time or space. Policies may increase IWSP even when the identity work they encourage occurs off the clock or away from the office. The critical factor is that the organization is the perceived source of the identity work support. For example, during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, some employers added a discretionary floating holiday to support identity

work related to any employee identity. Black employees and their allies might have engaged in identity work via Juneteenth celebrations, Mexican American employees by celebrating Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead), and Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish employees by celebrating a religious holiday. Notably, support for identity work does not infer that identity work is inevitable. Some employees may simply take a day to rest. What is essential is that the organization provides the opportunity for an activity that can reinforce an identity that the employee (not the organization) chooses. Still, employees may differ in the degree to which they take advantage of this opportunity.

Though many organizations support strengthening work-related identities, there may be more variance in support for nonwork identities. Employees may have lower IWSP if organizational norms suppress personal identity exploration or expression at work. For example, if employees notice no one displays family pictures or personal décor at work, they may perceive less support for physical identity work, though this may not be due to a formal policy.

It is also essential to note that IWSP is an individualized experience. Two people at the same workplace may perceive different levels of IWSP based on their unique experiences, and there may be significant variance in IWSP within a work unit. Given its individualized nature, self-reports are appropriate to assess IWSP. Yet, there may sometimes be high agreement about IWSP when organizations are inclusive in supporting identity work. For example, they may ask workers to share what they care about (relevant to any identity) rather than only offering identity-specific support (e.g., ERG for a single racioethnic identity).

Nomological Network

Given concerns about construct proliferation (Shaffer et al., 2016), we differentiate IWSP from conceptually similar constructs, including perceived diversity climate, perceived PSC, perceived AC, and POS.

Perceived Diversity Climate

Perceived diversity climate refers to perceptions of the balance of power in intergroup relations in the organization (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998; Mor-Barak et al., 1998). Like IWSP, perceived diversity climate involves beliefs related to identity-relevant experiences at work, but diversity climate typically considers perceptions of how favorable the organization is for women, minorities, and other marginalized groups. Organizations with more positive diversity climate perceptions may also support some forms of identity work. However, IWSP and perceived diversity climate are distinct perceptions emerging from unique employer choices. IWSP should extend beyond marginalized identities to foster identity work among many identities, whereas a perceived diversity climate typically reflects beliefs about the environment for employees in marginalized groups (McKay et al., 2007, 2008). Notably, IWSP is an individual-level construct, but could be defined as a unit-level construct when there is homogeneity in individual-level perceptions, similar to how unit-level diversity climate is assessed via an aggregate of individual-level diversity climate perceptions (Holmes et al., 2021).

Perceived PSC

PSC “describes a ... climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves” and is a shared perception (Edmondson, 1999, 354; Grandey et al., 2012). Perceived PSC is an individual’s perception of that climate. Both perceived PSC and IWSP may foster identity exploration and expression. Still, organizations supporting identity work encourage this behavior more directly, while those enabling a climate of psychological safety create a general atmosphere of trust.

Perceived AC

A perceived AC generally refers to perceptions of the acceptability of honest emotional expression (Grandey et al., 2012). Perceived AC and IWSP should both encourage authentic expression at work but in different ways. Employee perceptions of AC foster the freedom to express what they feel, whereas IWSP encourages the freedom to explore and express who they are. Further, a perceived AC is a shared phenomenon and individual perceptions of it are often aggregated within-group, whereas IWSP is defined as an individual-level perception.

POS

POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986) reflects employees’ belief that their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. POS is theorized to create social exchange between an organization and an employee, invoking the norm of reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 2001), and employees with greater POS are more committed to the organization and more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Although POS and IWSP both involve a perception of support from the organization, their referents are different. IWSP reflects support for identity work, encouraging employees to become more fully realized versions of themselves, whereas POS refers to support for employee well-being and appreciation of employee contributions. POS’ focus on supporting employee well-being may include activities such as providing flexible work hours so employees can attend to personal matters (e.g., medical appointment) or developing stress-management seminars to support employee mental health. IWSP, on the other hand, focuses on supporting identity work. This may include activities such as adding thought-provoking questions to annual performance reviews or encouraging employees to discuss their identities as they pertain to their work role. Another key differentiation between POS and IWSP is how these constructs are experienced by employees. When employees perceive organizational support for well-being, they feel as if their contribution to the organization is valued. Consider an employee who is recognized for their creative ideas. After such recognition, employees may feel a bolstered commitment to an organization that values their creativity. IWSP, on the other hand, is experienced when one believes they can engage in identity work at work and potentially shares their multiple selves with others in the workplace. In sum, while IWSP and POS may be positively related, supporting well-being and identity work are distinct, and IWSP and POS are unique.

Antecedents

Employees with higher quality work relationships should experience work as a safer place for identity exploration, so constructs that assess relationships at work may relate to IWSP. Transformational leaders, who stimulate, encourage, and motivate employees to engage in work intellectually (Mahmood et al., 2019) and achieve organizational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Suifan et al., 2018) may foster IWSP. Team-member exchange (TMX), or employee perceptions of reciprocal support between team members (Seers, 1989; Seers et al., 1995), should foster feelings of safety in displaying identities to coworkers, which may foster IWSP.

Employee Outcomes

There are many employee outcomes that may be associated with IWSP. For the purpose of this investigation, we focus on outcomes that have been conceptualized to be outcomes of identity work (Caza et al., 2018), and potential variables that may be impacted by POS for identity work. Interpersonal deviance refers to maladaptive behavior that is counter to an organization’s interests (Hershcovis et al., 2012). Employees engage in deviance when they are exhausted and underappreciated (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018) or when they perceive a psychological contract breach (Bordia et al., 2008). In contrast, employees engage in OCBs when they feel supported by their organization (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Organ, 1990). Thus, we expect employees to engage in less deviant behavior and more OCBs when they perceive higher levels of IWSP.

Employees with higher IWSP may identify more with the organization. Organizational identification refers to a sense of oneness with the organization such that the identity as an organization member is a key part of the self (Albert et al., 2000). When employees perceive that their employer supports identity work, they should feel more accepted as their true selves, increasing their organizational identification (Caesens et al., 2014; Zagenczyk et al., 2021).

Aside from the previously mentioned outcomes, we expect IWSP to relate positively to job satisfaction and affective commitment, and negatively to turnover intentions. In short, when employees perceive that their organization allows, encourages, or provides the opportunity to engage in identity work, they may feel more positively about their job and organization and want to remain with the organization.

Development and Validation of the IWSP Scale

Next, we describe our process, following Cortina et al.’s (2020) and Hinkin’s (1998) and recent scale development studies (e.g., Djurdjevic et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019). Unless noted otherwise, all analyses were conducted in R (Version 4.0.3). We used the lavaan package (Version 0.6-7) to conduct confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) and the psych package (Version 2.0.9) to conduct exploratory factor analyses (EFAs). We estimated all regression equations using the lm function in the base stats package in R using ordinary least squares estimation.

Transparency and Openness

In accordance with Transparency and Openness Promotion Guidelines, we detail all data excluded, study measures, and analysis

strategy in the sections below. We further followed the *Journal of Applied Psychology* methodological checklist, and all data, analysis code, and research materials are available upon reasonable request. Additionally, our study design and subsequent analysis were not preregistered as this was not common practice at the time. The study was approved by the University of Texas at Arlington Institutional Review Board (Protocol Number 2019-0413; Study Title: Identity Work Scale Development).

Phase 1: Content Validation Method and Results

Item Generation

We followed what Hinkin (1995) describes as logical partitioning (i.e., a deductive approach) to generate items based on the literature on identity work. For this step, we developed items according to the types of identity work identified by Caza et al. (2018): cognitive, discursive, behavioral, and physical. We generated 31 items that emphasized the organization's role in supporting or allowing employees to engage in four types of identity work (seven items for cognitive and physical, nine items for discursive, and eight items for behavioral). Two authors independently verified that each dimension was adequately represented in the 31 items, which are available in Appendix A. The final items are presented in Appendix B.

Item Refinement

To reduce items, we relied on subject matter experts (SMEs) to ensure content validity (Colquitt et al., 2019). Since we revised our

construct definition during the review process, to maintain continuity, we sought feedback from our SMEs twice (i.e., before and after refining our construct definition). Initially, 10 independent faculty SMEs employed in the United States (Sample 1a in Table 2) were presented with definitions of overall IWSP and one dimension and asked to rate the extent to which each of the 31 items reflected the IWSP dimension on a 1 (*poor fit with definition*) to 5 (*strong fit with definition*) scale. Items were retained if the average rating was 4.0/5.0 or greater, suggesting that faculty SMEs agreed that the items reflected their corresponding definitions. This process resulted in retaining 19 items.

After our construct definition was slightly altered, eight of the original 10 faculty SMEs (Sample 1b in Table 2) participated in a second rating activity using the same rating scale, 31 items, and a refined IWSP dimension definition. In this second task, 22 items had means at or above 4.0/5.0. Two items that were originally retained had means below 4.0, and SMEs rated five new items above 4.0. The 17 items rated 4.0 or above in both SME-ranking tasks were used for further analyses (see Table 3).

Following recent calls for greater focus on content validation (Colquitt et al., 2019), we collected additional data to ensure definitional correspondence and distinctiveness of our items. Nine doctoral students (Sample 2 in Table 2) who were 89% female, 44% White, 33% Black, and 22% Hispanic engaged in an Item-ranking task. They were presented with the definition of IWSP overall and the dimensions, along with definitions of theoretically similar constructs (i.e., orbital constructs; Colquitt et al., 2019), including perceived PSC (Edmondson, 1999), perceived AC

Table 2

Overview of Study Phases and Samples

Phase description	Methods used	Samples used
Phase 1: Content validation: Item generation and refinement	SME feedback, htc/htd	1a, 1b, and 2
Phase 2: Exploratory factor analyses	EFA	3
Phase 3a: Construct validation: Factor structure and measurement invariance	CFA	4, 5, and 6
Phase 3b: Construct validation: Convergent and discriminant validity	Correlation, CFA	7
Phase 4: Nomological network and incremental validity	Hierarchical regression, RWA	7
Sample description		N
Sample 1a: Faculty SMEs		10
70% female, 50% assistant professors, 50% associate or full professors		
Sample 1b: Faculty SMEs (subset of Sample 1a)		8
63% female, 25% assistant professors, 75% associate or full professors		
Sample 2: Doctoral students		9
89% female, 44% White, 33% Black, and 22% Hispanic		
Sample 3: Amazon Mechanical Turk (full-time employees)		231
44% female, 39 average age, 82% White, 4% Black, 7% Hispanic, 6% Asian		
Sample 4: Undergraduate students		184
48% female, 24 average age, 12% White, 13% Black, 41% Hispanic, 7% American Indian/Alaska Native, 26% Asian, 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		
Sample 5: University staff		122
84% female, 41 average age, 59% White, 17% Black, 11% Hispanic, 5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 6% Asian, 2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		
Sample 6: Working adults (full-time employees recruited via snowball sampling)		150
46% female, 36 average age, 42% White, 9% Black, 28% Hispanic, 20% Asian		
Sample 7: Prolific 1 (full-time employees)		220
53% female, 46 average age, 68% White, 15% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 11% Asian		

Note. htc = Hinkin Tracey correspondence; htd = Hinkin Tracey distinctiveness; SME = subject matter expert; EFA = exploratory factor analysis; CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; RWA = relative weight analysis.

Table 3
Item Correspondence With IWSP Definition Rated by Faculty Subject Matter Experts (Samples 1a and 1b)

Item	T1	T2
Cognitive IWSP		
1. I can make sense of who I am in my workplace ^a	4.50	4.25
2. I am able to spend time reflecting on who I am at my workplace.	3.50	4.75
3. I often reflect on who I am due to my workplace. (IWSP 1) ^b	4.40	4.13
4. My identity in my workplace allows me to understand who I am in relation to others.	3.80	3.13
5. My experiences at work force me to think about who I am in relation to others. (IWSP 2) ^b	4.50	4.50
6. My workplace helps me define my identity in relation to others. (IWSP 3) ^b	4.00	4.75
7. Being in my organization helps me make sense of who I am.	3.90	4.50
Discursive IWSP		
8. At work, I am able to talk to others about who I am. (IWSP 4) ^b	4.60	4.50
9. I am able to show pride in who I am through self-expression in my workplace.	3.60	3.88
10. I can freely talk about my identity in my workplace. (IWSP 5) ^b	4.00	4.50
11. My workplace allows me to discuss who I am with my colleagues. (IWSP 6) ^b	4.40	4.63
12. Talking with my colleagues at work helps me understand my self-meaning. ^a	4.80	4.00
13. Group discussions at work help me learn more about myself. ^a	4.50	4.00
14. My work team can spend time talking about our identity as a group.	3.80	4.13
15. I personally connect with the jargon used in my organization.	2.70	2.13
16. The words and jargon used by members of my organization help me understand who I am.	4.00	3.38
Physical IWSP		
17. In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am. (IWSP 7) ^b	4.50	5.00
18. I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am. (IWSP 8) ^b	4.50	5.00
19. I can convey who I am through my work attire. ^a	4.50	4.88
20. I can display items that show my pride in my work role.	3.30	3.88
21. My team can display items in our workspace that say something about who we are.	3.90	4.75
22. It is important that my team and I are able to present a workspace that reflects who we are.	3.90	2.25
23. At work, I can use my physical appearance to influence others' perceptions of me.	3.60	3.75
Behavioral IWSP		
24. There are activities at work that let me showcase who I am to my colleagues. (IWSP 9) ^b	4.10	4.75
25. My organization allows me to participate in activities that teach me about who I am. (IWSP 10) ^b	4.00	4.50
26. I can read or listen to things at work that express who I am.	3.50	4.13
27. The tasks I take on at work reflect who I am as an individual. ^a	4.60	4.50
28. My actions at work help people in my field understand who I am. ^a	4.70	4.38
29. My performance at work is a reflection of who I am.	4.60	3.38
30. I can engage in specific behaviors at work to help others understand who I am. (IWSP 11) ^b	4.70	4.63
31. My organization promotes work activities that teach me about other cultures.	2.50	2.38

Note. IWSP = identity work support perceptions; T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2.

^aExploratory factor analysis. ^bFinal items indicated in parentheses.

(Grandey et al., 2012), and POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Participants rated how well the 17 items fit the definitions on a scale of 1 (*poor fit with definition*) to 5 (*strong fit with definition*). The items' mean ratings for each definition are presented in Table 4. In general, the means were higher for IWSP compared to the orbital constructs. Two items, however, had equal or higher means on another orbital construct. For instance, Item 10 (*In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am*) had a higher mean rating on perceived AC ($M = 4.22$) than IWSP ($M = 4.00$). Similarly, for Item 11 (*I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am*), the mean ratings for IWSP and perceived AC were equal ($M = 4.11$). Ultimately, we determined that retaining these items for further analysis was appropriate for two reasons. First, these items were conceptually unique and were informative of the physical dimension of IWSP. Second, the high means of the two items on perceived AC was most likely due to the phrase "who I am," which might have invoked the perception that the items corresponded with AC.

To provide support for our decision, we calculated Hinkin Tracey Correspondence (htc) and Hinkin Tracey Distinctiveness (htd; Hinkin & Tracey, 1999) values for each of the 17 IWSP items. The htc ranges from 0 to 1, and higher values indicated higher

definitional correspondence of the item with the IWSP definition. The htd ranges from -1.00 to 1.00 , with positive values indicating greater association of an item with the IWSP definition than the orbital constructs. The results (Table 4) suggested that for all 17 items, htc values ranged from .711 to .933, indicating that the correspondence of each item to the IWSP definition was acceptable (Colquitt et al., 2019). Similarly, the htd values ranged from .17 to .64, suggesting distinctiveness from POS, PSC, and AC orbital constructs. Although the htd values for the two items mentioned above (i.e., Items 10 and 11 in Table 4) were at the lower bounds, they were still considered to have strong distinctiveness given the considerable similarity among the constructs (Colquitt et al., 2019). Thus, we retained all 17 items for additional analyses.

Phase 2: EFA Method and Results

Participants

Full-time employees were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (Sample 3 in Table 2). Following Aguinis et al. (2021), participants who missed any of four attention checks were removed. The 284 participants were each paid \$2 for completing the survey;

Table 4
Item Correspondence With IWSP and Orbital Construct Rated by Doctoral Students (Sample 2)

Item	Mean ratings of item correspondence with each definition				htc	htd
	IWSP	PSC	AUTH	POS		
1. I can make sense of who I am in my workplace.	4.22	2.78	2.22	1.38	.84	.52
2. I often reflect on who I am due to my workplace. (IWSP 1) ^a	4.11	1.56	1.78	1.38	.82	.64
3. My experiences at work force me to think about who I am in relation to others. (IWSP 2) ^a	3.56	2.22	2.11	1.38	.71	.41
4. My workplace helps me define my identity in relation to others. (IWSP 3) ^a	4.33	2.33	2.56	1.38	.87	.56
5. At work, I am able to talk to others about who I am. (IWSP 4) ^a	4.33	4.22	3.78	2.13	.87	.24
6. I can freely talk about my identity in the workplace. (IWSP 5) ^a	4.56	3.67	3.78	2.00	.91	.35
7. My workplace allows me to discuss who I am with my colleagues. (IWSP 6) ^a	4.33	3.89	4.00	2.13	.87	.25
8. Talking with my colleagues at work helps me understand my self-meaning.	3.78	2.44	2.33	1.63	.76	.41
9. Group discussions at work help me learn more about myself.	4.11	2.33	2.00	1.38	.82	.55
10. In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am. (IWSP 7) ^a	4.00	3.67	4.22	2.13	.80	.17
11. I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am. (IWSP 8) ^a	4.11	4.00	4.11	2.13	.82	.17
12. I can convey who I am through my work attire.	4.00	3.78	3.78	1.88	.80	.21
13. There are activities at work that let me showcase who I am to my colleagues. (IWSP 9) ^a	4.67	3.33	3.44	1.88	.93	.45
14. My organization allows me to participate in activities that teach me about who I am. (IWSP 10) ^a	4.56	2.33	3.33	2.63	.91	.45
15. The tasks I take on at work reflect who I am as an individual.	4.33	2.56	2.33	1.88	.87	.52
16. My actions at work help people in my field understand who I am.	4.00	2.78	2.67	1.63	.80	.41
17. I can engage in specific behaviors at work to help others understand who I am. (IWSP 11) ^a	4.44	3.33	4.00	1.38	.89	.39

Note. htc = Hinkin Tracey correspondence; htd = Hinkin Tracey distinctiveness; IWSP = identity work support perceptions; PSC = perceived psychological safety climate; AUTH = perceived authenticity climate; POS = perceived organizational support.

^aFinal items indicated in parentheses.

53 were removed for failed attention checks, resulting in a final sample of 231. Participants were, on average, 39 years old, 44% female, 82% White, 4% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 6% Asian.

Measures

The participants rated the extent to which they agreed with each of the 17 IWSP items on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Results

We used the factor analysis function with the minimum residual factoring method and oblimin rotation, since the dimensions of IWSP were expected to correlate (Yong & Pearce, 2013). Results revealed four factors based on parallel analysis and scree plots (Djurdjevic et al., 2017; Hayton et al., 2004; Velicer et al., 2000; Yong & Pearce, 2013). The proportion of variance explained by the four factors was large in magnitude (74%), exceeding the 60% recommended value (Hinkin, 1998). Based on the rotated pattern matrix, we omitted items with a cross-loading of more than .30 on multiple factors (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Hinkin, 1998), items with loadings lower than .50 on the intended factor (e.g., Hair et al., 2006), and items with communalities below .60 (e.g., MacCallum et al., 1999, 2001). Table 5 presents the EFA results with the 11 final items that were retained after applying these criteria.

The solution was consistent with our proposed four-factor structure of cognitive (Factor 1; 18%), discursive (Factor 2; 20%), behavioral (Factor 3; 19%), and physical (Factor 4; 17%) IWSP. Intercorrelations (see Table 5) among the four-factor scores indicated the lowest correlations between the cognitive dimension

and the discursive and physical dimensions ($r = .27$ for both). The highest correlation was between behavioral and discursive dimensions ($r = .65$). Overall, the results suggest that the dimensions of IWSP are moderately related to one another.

Phase 3: Construct Validation Method and Results

Phase 3a: Factor Structure and Measurement Invariance

Next, we aimed to confirm the four-factor structure of the IWSP measure by conducting CFAs with maximum likelihood estimation. We also examined the measurement invariance of the scale across gender and race using *Mplus* 8.5.

Participants. We used three independent samples to cross-validate our findings.

Sample 4. A total of 285 undergraduate business students, employed at least part-time, from a large U.S. university completed an online survey for extra credit. After removing those who missed any of the 10 attention checks, the final sample included 184 students. Participants were, on average, 24 years old, 48% female, 12% White, 13% Black, 41% Hispanic, 7% American Indian/Alaska Native, 26% Asian, and 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Sample 5. University staff from a large U.S. university completed an online survey to enter a drawing for a \$20 gift card. We had 183 participants complete the survey. After removing those who missed any of 10 attention checks, the final sample was 122. Participants were, on average, 41 years old, 84% female, 59% White, 17% Black, 11% Hispanic, 5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 6% Asian, and 2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Sample 6. Undergraduate business students were offered extra credit to provide the name and business email address of working

Table 5
Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis for the Final 11 Items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Communality
1. I often reflect on who I am due to my workplace.	.77	-.07	.16	-.05	.67
2. My experiences at work force me to think about who I am in relation to others.	.94	.00	-.09	.05	.83
3. My workplace helps me define my identity in relation to others.	.64	.18	.11	-.01	.62
4. At work, I am able to talk to others about who I am.	.10	.70	.11	.01	.67
5. I can freely talk about my identity in the workplace.	-.01	.97	-.03	-.03	.86
6. My workplace allows me to discuss who I am with my colleagues.	-.02	.72	.04	.16	.73
7. There are activities at work that let me showcase who I am to my colleagues.	-.05	-.01	.77	.13	.67
8. My organization allows me to participate in activities that teach me about who I am.	.12	-.03	.79	.01	.70
9. I can engage in specific behaviors at work to help others understand who I am.	-.02	.12	.78	-.04	.68
10. In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am.	.03	.05	.05	.81	.76
11. I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am.	.00	-.01	.00	1.00	.99
Sum of squared loadings	2.03	2.2	2.12	1.84	
Proportion variance	.18	.20	.19	.17	
Proportion explained	.25	.27	.26	.22	

Factor intercorrelation				
Factor 1 (cognitive IWSP)	—			
Factor 2 (discursive IWSP)	.27	—		
Factor 3 (behavioral IWSP)	.50	.65	—	
Factor 4 (physical IWSP)	.27	.59	.54	—

Note. IWSP = identity work support perceptions. Loadings above .50 are presented in bold.

adults. A total of 328 working adults were invited to complete a survey, and 265 participated (81% response rate). After removing those who missed any of 10 attention checks, the final sample consisted of 150 working adults. Participants were, on average, 36 years old, 46% female, 42% White, 9% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 20% Asian.

Measures. In all three samples, participants responded to the 11-item measure of IWSP. α s were .77, .84, and .80 in Samples 4–6, respectively. Participants also responded to other measures as a part of a larger data collection effort. Latent intercorrelations are reported in Tables 6–8. Interitem, item-total, and factor correlations are reported in Supplemental Materials (Tables S1–S4).

Results. We estimated the hypothesized four-factor measurement model and compared it to three alternative models: (1) a three-factor model in which our behavioral and physical dimensions loaded onto one factor, based on the conceptual overlap between the two dimensions; (2) a two-factor model in which our cognitive dimension loaded onto one factor, and the other dimensions loaded onto one factor, based on the cognitive dimension being the most distinct conceptually; and (3) a one-factor model in which all dimensions loaded onto one factor.

Table 6
Latent Intercorrelations Among IWSP Dimensions (Sample 4)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Cognitive IWSP	—			
2. Discursive IWSP	.17*	—		
3. Behavioral IWSP	.03	.29***	—	
4. Physical IWSP	.08	.21**	.61***	—

Note. $N = 184$. IWSP = identity work support perceptions.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Following Hu and Bentler (1999), we used a two-index assessment strategy to evaluate the overall fit of our model. Specifically, we used two incremental fit indices, the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and two absolutely fit indices, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root-mean-squared residual (SRMR). As suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999) and Lance et al. (2006), we used the following cutoffs to denote good fit: $CFI \geq .90$, $TLI \geq .90$, $RMSEA \leq 0.08$, and $SRMR \leq 0.08$. As shown in Table 9, the four-factor model demonstrated excellent fit in all three samples (Sample 4: $\chi^2 = 55.41$, $df = 38$, $CFI = .98$, $TLI = .97$, $RMSEA = .05$, $SRMR = .04$; Sample 5: $\chi^2 = 45.90$, $df = 38$, $CFI = .99$, $TLI = .99$, $RMSEA = .04$, $SRMR = .05$; Sample 6: $\chi^2 = 64.20$, $df = 39$, $CFI = .97$, $TLI = .95$, $RMSEA = .07$, $SRMR = .07$). All standardized factor loadings (see Table 10) were significant and large. While the factor loadings of two items were lower than the recommended value of 0.6 (Kline, 2015) in Sample 4, in general, results support the four-factor structure. The alternative one-factor, two-factor, and three-factor models were poor fits to the data in all samples and fit significantly worse than the hypothesized four-factor structure (i.e., all chi-square difference tests were significant), suggesting the four-factor structure best fit the data (Table 9). Latent factor intercorrelations based on the four-factor model is represented in Tables 6–8.

Following Vandenberg and Lance (2000) and Muthen and Asparouhov (2013), we also examined measurement invariance (i.e., configural invariance, scalar invariance, and metric invariance) for three samples to see if different groups had similar conceptions of the construct and perceived items and rating scales similarly. Since identity is intertwined with gender and race, we examined measurement invariance due to gender (male and female) and race (White, Black, and Hispanic). Given our moderately small sample sizes, we combined Samples 4, 5, and 6 to ensure an adequate sample size. Table 11 summarizes the results. The configural models for both gender and race achieved great fit to the data, suggesting

Table 7
Latent Intercorrelations Among IWSP Dimensions (Sample 5)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Cognitive IWSP	—			
2. Discursive IWSP	.04	—		
3. Behavioral IWSP	.08	.72***	—	
4. Physical IWSP	-.03	.49***	.48***	—

Note. $N = 122$. IWSP = identity work support perceptions.
*** $p < .001$.

configural variance across groups. To establish metric invariance, we compared the metric model to the configural model. We used ΔCFI to compare models rather than χ^2 difference tests, due to chi-square being sensitive to sample size (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002; Wayne et al., 2021). The model is deemed acceptable if the decrease in CFI is less than .01 (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000; Yoshikawa et al., 2020). Our results suggest the metric invariance models had acceptable fit, with the change in CFI less than .01. Similarly, the scalar models had acceptable fit with change in CFI less than .01 compared to the metric model. Thus, we conclude that the scale demonstrates configural, metric, and scalar invariance for gender and race.

Phase 3b: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

We used three techniques to demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity. First, we examined correlations between IWSP and perceived diversity climate, perceived PSC, perceived AC, and POS. Second, we conducted multiple CFAs to establish that IWSP is related to but distinct from these four constructs. Finally, we followed the guidelines proposed by Rönkkö and Cho (2020).

Participants (Sample 7). Employed adults from Prolific completed two online surveys for \$2 each (i.e., total of \$4). Participants who completed the first survey were invited to complete the second part 3 weeks later (82% response rate). After removing those who missed the attention checks (17 participants), the final sample consisted of 220 U.S.-based working adults. Participants were, on average, 46 years old, 53% female, 68% White, 15% Black, 11% Asian, 4% Hispanic, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. See Tables 12 for means, standard deviation, and correlations among study variables.

Table 8
Latent Intercorrelations Among IWSP Dimensions (Sample 6)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Cognitive IWSP	—			
2. Discursive IWSP	.10	—		
3. Behavioral IWSP	.36***	.56***	—	
4. Physical IWSP	-.01	.43***	.36***	—

Note. $N = 150$. We set a negative variance value for one item to a small, positive value (.01) for physical IWSP to ensure model identification. IWSP = identity work support perceptions.
*** $p < .001$.

Measures. We used a 5-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) where higher values represent higher levels of each construct.

IWSP (Times 1 and 2). Participants responded to the final 11-item measure of IWSP.¹ Alphas were .87 (Time 1) and .84 (Time 2). Given that Sample 7 included a 3-week time-lag assessment of IWSP, we assessed temporal reliability. We found adequate test-retest reliability, as the bivariate correlation between the two assessments was significant, positive, and large ($r = .71$; $p < .001$). Following DeSimone (2015), we also calculated item-level correlations for each item across the two time points, which were positive and significant, ranging from .42 to .61 ($p < .001$). Collectively, results suggest that IWSP exhibits acceptable temporal consistency.

Perceived Diversity Climate (Time 1). We measured perceived diversity climate with Mor Barak et al.'s (1998) 10-item scale. An example item is "I feel I have been treated differently in my organization because of my race, sex, religion, or age." α was .81.

Perceived PSC (Time 1). We measured perceived PSC using seven items adapted from Edmondson (1999). We modified items to reflect an organizational rather than a team referent. An example item is "It is completely safe to take a risk in this organization." α was .85.

Perceived AC (Time 1). We measured perceived AC using seven items adapted from Grandey et al. (2012). As Grandey et al. (2012) assessed team climate, we modified items to reflect the organizational referent. An example item is "It is safe to show how you really feel with this organization." α was .84.

POS (Time 1). We measured POS using Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) eight-item scale. An example item is "The organization really cares about my well-being." α was .91.

Additional Variables. We collected additional variables in this sample that will be used in Phase 4. We will discuss these variables later in the article.

Results. Convergent validity is evidenced by a construct being related to, but unique from, theoretically similar constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Thus, we should find that IWSP is correlated with constructs related to workplace characteristics including perceived diversity climate, perceived PSC, perceived AC, and POS. We found evidence of convergent validity, as IWSP was positively correlated with each of these constructs but not correlated so strongly that the uniqueness of IWSP is called into question. Specifically, we found the correlations ranged from .37 to .56 ($r_{\text{perceived diversity climate}} = .37$; $r_{\text{perceived psychological safety climate}} = .51$; $r_{\text{perceived authenticity climate}} = .48$; $r_{\text{POS}} = .56$). These correlations suggest that IWSP relates to, but is distinct from, theoretically similar constructs.

Next, we conducted CFA² to demonstrate discriminant validity from perceived diversity climate, perceived PSC, perceived AC, and POS. We estimated a hypothesized five-factor model and four alternative four-factor models in which one of the constructs was set equal to IWSP. In the five-factor model, IWSP was modeled as a

¹ We took the average of ratings across the final 11 items to construct overall IWSP. Interitem, item-total, and factor correlations for Sample 7 are reported in Supplemental Materials (Table S4).

² Latent intercorrelations among IWSP and theoretically relevant constructs for Sample 7 are reported in Supplemental Materials (Tables S5–S6).

Table 9
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Fit Comparisons Across Samples

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)
Sample 4 (N = 184)							
Four-factor model	55.41*	38	.981	.972	.05	.04	
Three-factor model	143.93*	41	.886	.848	.12	.08	88.52 (3)*
Two-factor model	489.37*	43	.508	.370	.24	.16	433.96 (5)*
One-factor model	542.85*	44	.450	.312	.25	.18	487.44 (6)*
Sample 5 (N = 122)							
Four-factor model	45.90	38	.990	.985	.04	.05	
Three-factor model	171.85*	41	.830	.772	.16	.08	125.95 (3)*
Two-factor model	245.40*	43	.737	.663	.20	.10	199.5 (5)*
One-factor model	364.15*	44	.583	.479	.24	.14	319.05 (6)*
Sample 6 (N = 150)							
Four-factor model	64.20*	39	.966	.952	.07	.07	
Three-factor model	173.12*	42	.824	.770	.14	.15	108.92 (3)*
Two-factor model	389.79*	44	.537	.421	.23	.20	325.59 (5)*
One-factor model	386.77*	44	.541	.426	.23	.15	322.57 (5)*

Note. The four-factor model (in bold) is the hypothesized four-factor structure; the three-factor model has three factors such that behavioral and physical items load onto one factor; the two-factor model has two factors such that the behavioral, physical, and discursive factors all load onto one factor; the one-factor model is where all factors load onto one factor. To ensure model identification, we set a negative variance value to a small, positive value (.01) for one of the items for physical IWSP in the two-, three-, and four-factor models for Sample 6. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-squared residual; IWSP = identity work support perceptions.
* $p < .05$.

four-factor multidimensional construct, alongside a fifth factor to represent the additional variable. For each four-factor model, we combined the orbital variable and the IWSP dimension the variable was most strongly correlated with. This provides a more conservative test of discriminant validity, given the discriminating variable often had weaker correlations with other dimensions, which could bias the assessment of discriminant validity if the orbital variable correlated highly with one dimension but had weak correlations with others. We found evidence (Table 13) that the five-factor models; perceived diversity climate: $\chi^2(180) = 412.08, p < .05, RMSEA = .08, CFI = .898, TLI = .881$; perceived PSC: $\chi^2(126) = 323.97, p < .05, RMSEA = .09, CFI = .917, TLI = .899$; perceived AC: $\chi^2(126) = 343.27, p < .05, RMSEA = .09,$

CFI = .907, TLI = .887; POS: $\chi^2(143) = 370.22, p < .05, RMSEA = .09, CFI = .916, TLI = .899$; fit the data significantly ($p < .001$) better in each case than the alternative, four-factor models; perceived diversity climate $\chi^2(184) = 739.01, p < .05, RMSEA = .12, CFI = .756, TLI = .722, \Delta\chi^2(4) = 326.93, p < .05$; perceived PSC: $\chi^2(130) = 568.47, p < .05, RMSEA = .12, CFI = .815, TLI = .783, \Delta\chi^2(4) = 244.50, p < .05$; perceived AC: $\chi^2(130) = 577.77, p < .05, RMSEA = .13, CFI = .807, TLI = .773, \Delta\chi^2(4) = 234.50, p < .05$; POS: $\chi^2(147) = 1243.50, p < .05, RMSEA = .18, CFI = .593, TLI = .527, \Delta\chi^2(4) = 873.28, p < .05$.

We further examined discriminant validity following Rönkkö and Cho (2020). We examined the upper limits (ULs) of the 95% CIs for latent correlations between IWSP dimensions and the orbital

Table 10
Unstandardized and Standardized Factor Loadings of the Final 11 Items for the Hypothesized Four-Factor Structure Across Samples

Item	Sample 4	Sample 5	Sample 6
Cognitive IWSP			
1. I often reflect on who I am due to my workplace.	.63	.71	.89
2. My experiences at work force me to think about who I am in relation to others.	.72	.80	.70
3. My workplace helps me define my identity in relation to others.	.61	.61	.61
Discursive IWSP			
4. At work, I am able to talk to others about who I am.	.59	.67	.83
5. I can freely talk about my identity in my workplace.	.92	.94	1.02
6. My workplace allows me to discuss who I am with my colleagues.	.75	.85	.92
Behavioral IWSP			
7. There are activities at work that let me showcase who I am to my colleagues.	.81	.73	.86
8. My organization allows me to participate in activities that teach me about who I am.	.82	.78	.94
9. I can engage in specific behaviors at work to help others understand who I am.	.61	.68	.76
Physical IWSP			
10. In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am.	.63	.90	.89
11. I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am.	.72	.98	.70

Note. All loadings significant at $p < .001$. Italics indicate standardized loadings. IWSP = identity work support perceptions.

Table 11*Tests of Measurement Invariance (Combined Samples 4, 5, and 6)*

Tests of measurement invariance	Model fit						Comparison			
	χ^2	<i>df</i>	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Model	$\Delta\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	Δ CFI
Gender (male and female; <i>N</i> = 580)										
1. Configural invariance	177.388*	76	.968	.954	.068	.047				
2. Metric invariance	182.613*	83	.969	.959	.064	.051	1 vs. 2	5.225	7	.001
3. Scalar invariance	196.605*	90	.967	.959	.064	.053	2 vs. 3	13.992	7	-.002
Race (White, Black, and Hispanic; <i>N</i> = 449)										
1. Configural invariance	151.305*	114	.986	.980	.047	.045				
2. Metric invariance	168.113*	128	.985	.981	.046	.058	1 vs. 2	16.808	14	-.001
3. Scalar invariance	192.179*	142	.981	.978	.049	.062	2 vs. 3	24.066*	14	-.004

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-squared residual.

* $p < .05$.

construct (Table 13). Based on the cutoff score guidelines from Rönkkö and Cho ($UL < 0.8$), we did not find any concerns regarding discriminant validity. Thus, IWSP is correlated, but distinct from these theoretically relevant constructs, demonstrating discriminant validity.

Phase 4: Nomological Network and Incremental Validity

In this phase, we examined the incremental validity and established the nomological network of IWSP. First, we investigated transformational leadership and TMX as theoretically relevant

antecedents of IWSP. We then assessed the incremental validity of IWSP as a predictor of work outcomes above and beyond commonly used organizational predictors. Finally, we conducted relative weights analyses (RWAs) using the recommendations and resources (e.g., RWA-Web) provided by Tonidandel and LeBreton (2015).

Participants

We used data from Sample 7 for Phase 4. Additional variables were collected in this phase that were not discussed earlier in Phase 3b. We detail the additional variables below.

Table 12*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Sample 7)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. IWSP (T1)	3.25	0.72	.87										
2. Cognitive IWSP (T1)	3.14	0.99	.71*	.86									
3. Discursive IWSP (T1)	3.37	0.90	.77*	.29*	.87								
4. Behavioral IWSP (T1)	3.49	1.13	.63*	.27*	.35*	.82							
5. Physical IWSP (T1)	3.07	0.93	.84*	.47*	.65*	.35*	.95						
6. IWSP (T2)	3.26	0.65	.71*	.51*	.56*	.36*	.65*	.84					
7. Cognitive IWSP (T2)	3.28	0.90	.47*	.58*	.20*	.18*	.38*	.68*	.82				
8. Discursive IWSP (T2)	3.38	0.92	.52*	.18*	.62*	.29*	.46*	.72*	.12	.91			
9. Behavioral IWSP (T2)	3.65	1.07	.46*	.21*	.27*	.63*	.32*	.37*	.15*	.36*	.82		
10. Physical IWSP (T2)	3.13	0.83	.58*	.37*	.41*	.33*	.60*	.81*	.37*	.44*	.31*	.96	
11. Perceived diversity climate (T1)	3.36	0.67	.37*	.13	.38*	.27*	.35*	.25*	.03	.21*	.23*	.31*	.81
Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
12. Perceived psychological safety (T1)	3.37	0.80	.85										
13. Perceived authenticity climate (T1)	3.4	0.83	.80*	.84									
14. POS (T1)	3.42	1.07	.75*	.68*	.91								
15. Transformational leadership (T1)	3.15	1.00	.61*	.50*	.62*	.93							
16. Team-member exchange (T1)	3.52	0.76	.58*	.52*	.60*	.58*	.91						
17. Deviance (T2)	1.31	0.49	-.15*	-.11	-.15*	-.09	-.12	.87					
18. OCB-I (T2)	3.91	0.66	.17*	.21*	.21*	.17*	.36*	-.04	.85				
19. Organizational identification (T2)	2.95	1.00	.41*	.32*	.49*	.34*	.26*	.05	.30*	.92			
20. Job satisfaction (T2)	3.67	0.96	.47*	.43*	.53*	.35*	.44*	-.13*	.21*	.46*	.90		
21. Commitment (T2)	3.14	1.09	.53*	.48*	.58*	.37*	.43*	-.02	.36*	.74*	.64*	.93	
22. Turnover intentions (T2)	2.73	1.34	-.41*	-.31*	-.42*	-.34*	-.30*	.06	-.11	-.41*	-.71*	-.50*	.92

Note. *N* = 220. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2; IWSP = identity work support perceptions; POS = perceived organizational support; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behaviors–individual. α reliability estimates are presented on the diagonal in italics.

* $p < .05$.

Table 13
Results Discriminant Validity of IWSP and Related Constructs (Sample 7)

Model	Five-factor model						Four-factor model					Comparison
	χ^2	df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	Latent <i>r</i> (95% CI)	χ^2	df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)
IWSP (discursive) and perceived diversity climate	412.08*	180	.08	.898	.881	.44 [.32, .57]	739.01*	184	.12	.756	.722	326.93 (4)*
IWSP (discursive) and perceived psychological safety climate	323.97*	126	.09	.917	.899	.61 [.51, .71]	568.47*	130	.12	.815	.783	244.50 (4)*
IWSP (discursive) and perceived authenticity climate	343.27*	126	.09	.907	.887	.61 [.51, .71]	577.77*	130	.13	.807	.773	234.50 (4)*
IWSP (physical) and perceived organizational support	370.22*	143	.09	.916	.899	.33 [.20, .45]	1243.50*	147	.18	.593	.527	873.28 (4)*

Note. The five-factor model includes the hypothesized four-factor IWSP model plus the discriminant construct; the four-factor models for perceived diversity climate, perceived psychological safety climate, and perceived authenticity climate is a model where the discursive dimension and respective discriminant construct were combined. The four-factor model for POS is a model where the physical dimension and POS are combined. The “Latent *r*” column represents the standardized latent correlation between the IWSP dimension and the discriminating variable from the corresponding five-factor model that was constrained to 1.0 in the four-factor model. RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; IWSP = identity work support perceptions; CI = confidence interval; POS = perceived organizational support.

* $p < .05$.

Measures.

Transformational Leadership (Time 1). We measured transformational leadership using Wang and Howell’s (2010) five-item scale. An example item is, “My supervisor helps me develop my strengths.” α was .93.

TMX (Time 1). We measured TMX using six items from Ford et al. (2014). An example item is, “Other members of my division communicate openly with me about what they expect from me.” α was .91.

Interpersonal Deviance (Time 2). We measured deviance with Bennett and Robinson’s (2000) seven-item scale. An example item is “Please indicate the extent to which you have engaged in the following behaviors during the past 6 months: Made fun of someone at work.” α was .87.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors–Individual (Time 2). We measured OCBs towards individuals using Williams and Anderson’s (1991) six-item scale. An example item is “I go out of my way to help new employees.” α was .85.

Organizational Identification (Time 2). We measured organizational identification using Mael and Ashforth’s (1992) six-item scale. An example item is, “When I talk about this organization, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they.’” α was .90.

Job Satisfaction (Time 2). We measured job satisfaction using Cammann et al.’s (1979) three-item scale. An example item is, “In general, I like working at my job.” α was .90.

Affective Commitment (Time 2). We measured affective commitment using four items from N. J. Allen and Meyer (1990). An example item is, “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.” α was .93.

Turnover Intention (Time 2). We measured turnover intentions using Seashore et al.’s (1982) three-item scale. An example item is, “I often think about quitting.” α was .92.

Control Variables (Time 1). We also measured demographic variables at Time 1 including age, gender, and salary. Age was assessed by asking “What is your age in years?” For gender, participants were asked “What is your gender?” with a choice of male (1) and female (2). Finally, individual salary was measured by “What is your current salary?” with response options of less than

\$24,999 (1), \$25,000–\$34,999 (2), \$35,000–\$49,999 (3), \$50,000–\$74,999 (4), \$75,000–\$99,999 (5), \$100,000–\$149,999 (6), and \$150,000 or more (7).

Results.

Antecedents of IWSP. After controlling for age, gender, and salary,³ both transformational leadership and TMX significantly predicted IWSP (Table 14). Individually, transformational leadership ($b = .37, p < .001$) and TMX ($b = .52, p < .001$) explained 27% and 29% additional variance in IWSP, respectively (Models 2 and 3 in Table 15). Together, they explained 35% additional variance in IWSP (Model 4 in Table 14). Collectively, results suggest that transformational leadership and quality relationship with coworkers are positively associated with IWSP.

Outcomes of IWSP and Incremental Validity. We examined the incremental validity of IWSP to predict interpersonal deviance, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors–Individual (OCBI), organizational identification, job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions, above demographics (i.e., age, gender, salary) and theoretically similar variables (i.e., perceived diversity climate, perceived PSC, perceived AC, and POS). As shown in Table 15, IWSP was positively and significantly related to three of the six work outcomes. IWSP predicted 4%, 5%, and 5% additional variance in OCBI ($b = .21, p < .01$), organizational identification ($b = .39, p < .001$), and affective commitment ($b = .46, p < .001$), respectively. IWSP did not predict a significant increment in the variance of interpersonal deviance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions.

We conducted RWA to examine the importance of IWSP in predicting outcomes relative to theoretically similar variables. We report rescaled relative weights, which represent the weights as a percentage of explained variance (i.e., how much of the explained variance in the outcome is due to a predictor). We also examined

³ We controlled for demographic characteristics because they can be a source of self-meaning and can prompt identity work (Caza et al., 2018). Results remained consistent both with and without control variables. We present results with control variables included in the model but report results without control variables in Supplemental Tables S7–S8.

Table 14
Regression Results for Antecedents of IWSP (Sample 7)

Variable	Identity work support perception			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Constant	2.50*** (.22)	1.31*** (.23)	.90*** (.25)	.73** (.24)
Age	.002 (.003)	.004 (.003)	.002 (.003)	.003 (.002)
Gender	.33*** (.10)	.28*** (.08)	.25** (.08)	.25** (.08)
Salary	.04 (.03)	.04 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Transformational leadership		.37*** (.04)		.22*** (.05)
Team-member exchange			.52*** (.05)	.34*** (.06)
R ²	.06	.33	.35	0.41
Adjusted R ²	.05	.31	.34	0.40
F statistic	4.88** (df = 3; 216)	26.12*** (df = 4; 215)	28.74*** (df = 4; 215)	29.73*** (df = 5; 214)
F-test model comparison		84.21***	94.04***	62.83***
ΔR ²		.27	.29	.35

Note. $N = 220$. Values represent unstandardized estimates, standard errors in parentheses. Gender = male (1) and female (2). Salary = less than \$24,999 (1), \$25,000–\$34,999 (2), \$35,000–\$49,999 (3), \$50,000–\$74,999 (4), \$75,000–\$99,999 (5), \$100,000–\$149,999 (6), and \$150,000 or more (7). IWSP = identity work support perceptions.
** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

whether IWSP's rescaled relative weights was significantly different from other predictors using Tonidandel et al.'s (2009) approach based on bootstrapping with 10,000 replications. Results of RWA (see Table 16) suggested that IWSP plays an important role in predicting OCBI (39%), organizational identification (31%), and affective commitment (30%). Also, as shown in Table 16,⁴ IWSP predicted significantly more variance in OCBI compared to perceived diversity climate (2%) and perceived PSC (5%). It also predicted significantly more variance in organizational commitment than perceived AC (6%). Finally, IWSP predicted significantly more variance in affective commitment than perceived diversity climate (12%) and perceived AC (11%).

Discussion

The present research introduces the construct of IWSP, develops and validates a scale to measure it, and examines its relationship with other key constructs. IWSP represents employees' beliefs about their organizations' support for cognitive, discursive, behavioral, and physical identity work. Consistent with this conceptualization, EFA demonstrated that IWSP is a four-dimensional construct, and CFA confirmed this. We also demonstrated the incremental predictive validity of IWSP for OCBI, organizational identification, and affective commitment. To further develop its nomological network, we found transformational leadership and TMX predicted IWSP above the effects of age, gender, and salary. Our measure also had high internal consistency and test-retest reliability using a 3-week time lag. We also established configural, metric, and scalar invariance of our measure across gender and race. Collectively, our work reveals the usefulness of IWSP as a predictor of employee attitudes and behaviors and the value of our measure to operationalize it.

Theoretical Implications

Introducing the IWSP construct extends our theoretical understanding of identity-relevant organizational support in meaningful ways. As the concept of identity work has garnered increasing interest (Brown, 2015), it has been theorized that identity work may

involve thoughts, speech, symbolic displays, or actions (Caza et al., 2018) that occur across career stages (Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Ebaugh, 1988; Ibarra, 1999), workplace experiences (Collinson, 2003; Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; J. L. Petriglieri, 2011), and organizational contexts (Anteby, 2008; Brown, 2015; Kreiner & Sheep, 2009; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Organizations may purposefully seek to regulate employees' identity work (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Brown & Lewis, 2011), aiming to confine their identity work to benefit the organization at the expense of the employee (e.g., Thornborrow & Brown, 2009). In such cases, employees may feel work impinges on their autonomy to be their authentic selves (Collinson, 2003). Unsurprisingly, prior research suggests that institutional efforts to control employees' identity work are negatively related to employee well-being (e.g., Collinson, 2003; Gagnon, 2008). Identity regulation may also have negative implications if employees actively resist organizational efforts to limit their agency and/or withdraw from the organization (e.g., Doolin, 2002). Such findings suggest that organizations play a role in the identity work of their employees. Yet, the existing literature does not explore the organization's role in employee identity work beyond regulation, perhaps due to a lack of instruments to measure this phenomenon.

In this study, we offer evidence that people develop beliefs about whether their organizations encourage, allow, and provide opportunities to engage in self-determined exploration and expression of their identities at work. We demonstrate that IWSP is associated with self-reported OCBI, affective commitment, and organizational identification, and that IWSP is a better predictor of these outcomes than is POS. These findings have two important implications for the identity work literature.

First, rather than being spaces where people are only encouraged to work on identities that primarily serve the organization (e.g., Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Boussebaa & Brown, 2017; DeRue & Ashford, 2010), we show that people form perceptions of their workplaces as contexts where they are more or less free to engage in

⁴ We present the results including controls but also report results without control variables in the Supplemental Materials (Table S9).

Table 15
Regression Results for Outcomes of IWSP (Sample 7)

Variable	Interpersonal deviance (T2)			OCB-I (T2)			Organizational identification (T2)			Job satisfaction (T2)			Affective commitment (T2)			Turnover intention (T2)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)						
Constant	2.09*** (.23)	2.06*** (.24)	3.03*** (.30)	2.79*** (.31)	0.45 (.41)	-0.01 (.41)	0.77 (.38)	0.68 (.39)	-0.45 (.41)	-0.99 (.41)	6.61*** (.54)	6.57*** (.57)						
Age	-0.002 (.002)	-0.002 (.002)	0.001 (.003)	0.001 (.003)	0.01 (.004)	0.01 (.004)	0.01** (.004)	0.01** (.004)	0.004 (.004)	0.005 (.004)	-0.03*** (.01)	-0.03*** (.01)						
Gender	-0.15** (.07)	-0.16* (.07)	0.11 (.09)	0.06 (.09)	0.12 (.12)	0.02 (.12)	0.25 (.11)	0.23* (.11)	0.35*** (.12)	0.23 (.12)	-0.02 (.16)	-0.03 (.16)						
Salary	0.01 (.02)	0.01 (.02)	0.07 (.03)	0.06 (.03)	0.06 (.03)	0.05 (.03)	0.02 (.03)	0.02 (.03)	0.04 (.04)	0.03 (.03)	-0.04 (.05)	-0.04 (.05)						
Perceived diversity climate	-0.18*** (.07)	-0.18*** (.07)	-0.03 (.09)	-0.04 (.09)	0.16 (.12)	0.14 (.12)	0.13 (.11)	0.12 (.11)	0.23 (.12)	0.21 (.12)	-0.34* (.16)	-0.34* (.16)						
Perceived psychological safety climate	-0.01 (.08)	-0.01 (.08)	-0.07 (.11)	-0.10 (.11)	0.13 (.15)	0.08 (.14)	0.08 (.14)	0.07 (.14)	0.13 (.15)	0.07 (.14)	-0.20 (.19)	-0.20 (.20)						
Perceived authenticity climate	0.06 (.07)	0.06 (.07)	0.13 (.09)	0.12 (.09)	-0.14 (.12)	-0.16 (.12)	0.09 (.11)	0.09 (.11)	0.05 (.12)	0.03 (.12)	0.05 (.16)	0.05 (.16)						
POS	-0.02 (.05)	-0.03 (.05)	0.10 (.06)	0.05 (.07)	0.37*** (.09)	0.28** (.09)	0.30*** (.08)	0.28*** (.08)	0.38*** (.09)	0.27** (.09)	-0.25* (.11)	-0.26* (.12)						
IWSP	0.03 (.06)	0.03 (.06)	0.09	0.21*** (.07)	0.28	0.39*** (.10)	0.33	0.07 (.09)	0.40	0.46*** (.10)	0.30	0.30						
R ²	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.28	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.40	0.45	0.30	0.30						
Adjusted R ²	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.09	0.26	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.38	0.43	0.28	0.28						
F Statistic	2.46*	2.19*	3.11**	3.78***	11.93***	13.10***	15.06***	13.23***	19.84***	21.94***	13.13***	11.44***						
F-test model comparison	(df = 7; 212)	(df = 8; 211)	(df = 7; 212)	(df = 8; 211)	(df = 7; 212)	(df = 8; 211)	(df = 7; 212)	(df = 8; 211)	(df = 7; 212)	(df = 8; 211)	(df = 7; 212)	(df = 8; 211)						
ΔR ²	0.34	0.00	7.80**	0.04	0.62	15.56***	0.62	22.55***	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05						

Note. N = 220. Values represent unstandardized estimates, standard errors in parentheses, gender = male (1) and female (2), salary = less than \$24,999 (1), \$25,000–\$34,999 (2), \$35,000–\$49,999 (3), \$50,000–\$74,999 (4), \$75,000–\$99,999 (5), \$100,000–\$149,999 (6), and \$150,000 or more (7). IWSP = identity work support perceptions; POS = perceived organizational support; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behaviors–individual; T2 = Time 2.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Table 16
Results of Relative Weight Analysis (Sample 7)

Outcome	Interpersonal deviance (T2)	OCB-I (T2)	Organizational identification (T2)	Job satisfaction (T2)	Affective commitment (T2)	Turnover intention (T2)
Age	5.16%	1.56%*	6.93%*	10.06%	2.30%*	34.87%*
Gender	24.40%	5.27%	0.90%*	5.40%	4.78%*	0.13%
Salary	0.94%	22.24%	4.44%*	1.07%*	1.12%*	3.26%
Perceived diversity climate	42.80%*	2.28%*	10.49%	11.93%	12.44%*	15.67%
Perceived psychological safety climate	9.49%	5.30%*	12.61%	16.22%	14.02%	14.73%
Perceived authenticity climate	4.74%	12.91%	6.52%*	14.55%	11.49%*	7.89%
Perceived organizational support	10.46%	11.31%	26.77%	29.57%*	23.52%	19.25%*
IWSP	2%	39.12%	31.34%	11.20%	30.33%	4.21%

Note. $N = 220$. Rescaled relative weight reflected. Gender = male (1) and female (2). Salary = less than \$24,999 (1), \$25,000–\$34,999 (2), \$35,000–\$49,999 (3), \$50,000–\$74,999 (4), \$75,000–\$99,999 (5), \$100,000–\$149,999 (6), and \$150,000 or more (7). IWSP = identity work support perceptions; OCB-I = organizational citizenship behaviors–individual; T2 = Time 2; POS = perceived organizational support.

* Indicates weight is significantly different from that of IWSP at $p < .05$.

identity work related to identities of their choosing. We also empirically linked these perceptions to outcomes that matter to organizations, situating IWSP within a nomological network that denotes its relevance to applied psychological scholarship. Practically, these results suggest that organizations may benefit when they afford employees' autonomy to work on identities that matter to them.

Further, our research suggests employees' beliefs about their organizations' support for their identity work relate to their interpersonal work experiences. Though past research suggests identity work can occur in response to environmental change (e.g., working in another culture; Berger et al., 2017) and identity threat (e.g., Collinson, 2003; Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; J. L. Petriglieri, 2011), our findings imply that subtle and enduring social cues gleaned from relationships with transformational leaders and team members (i.e., TMX) are also associated with higher perceived support for identity work.

Directions for Future Research

We offer multiple-pointed research questions for future researchers to explore. First, we define IWSP as an individual-level perceptual construct. However, employees in the same team or organization may share perceptions of their work environment. Climate researchers have demonstrated that team members' aggregate perceptions of organizations predict individual, team, and organizational outcomes (Schneider et al., 2017). A strong climate where employees hold similarly high IWSP might be associated with positive outcomes at the superordinate (e.g., team, organization) level, such as higher team cohesion or a collective, team-level OCB. While IWSP uses the organization as the referent, future studies examining IWSP in work teams might consider whether shifting the referent to the work team is more appropriate for investigations at the team level of analysis (Chan, 1998). Similarly, as TMX and transformational leadership were linked to IWSP at the individual level, future research could examine whether teams with more cohesion and greater levels of felt supervisor support are associated with higher IWSP at the team level. In summary, future research should be guided by the following research questions: To what extent is IWSP shared among team members? What factors contribute to shared IWSP?

Second, we would expect IWSP to fluctuate as employees navigate changes in the salience and centrality of their identities. For example, a new parent might experience changes in IWSP as their parent identity becomes more salient than their work identities. We expect identity work-supportive cues to which an employee attends as a new parent may differ from the cues they attended to preparenthood. Work–family researchers might explore how IWSP changes as the work–nonwork interface shifts. Other identity-triggering events might include one's home country entering a conflict with another country (patriotic identity trigger), being promoted to management (leader identity trigger), loss of a loved one (family identity trigger), marriage (spouse identity trigger), pregnancy loss (parental identity trigger), or entering a same-sex relationship (sexual-orientation identity trigger). Such events may prompt changes in employees' perceptions of the extent to which their organization supports identity exploration and expression at work. Similarly, although IWSP should be influenced by actions organizations take to support (or oppose) identity work, individual differences may also impact how an employee views the organization and, thus, self-reported IWSP. For example, employees high on self-monitoring may be less likely than low self-monitors to engage in identity work in the workplace. As such, researchers may explore the role of self-monitoring and other individual differences in IWSP and subsequent identity work processes.

Additionally, as most identity work scholarship is disconnected from the research on diversity and marginalization in organizations, our work may forge a critical and timely bridge between these literatures. As noted previously, the literature suggests that identity work often occurs in response to situations of compulsion, change, and threat (e.g., Beyer & Hannah, 2002; Collinson, 2003; Ebaugh, 1988; Ibarra, 1999; Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; J. L. Petriglieri, 2011). Similarly, scholars who study racial identity management argue that employees with stigmatized racial identities frequently engage in discursive, physical, and behavioral forms of identity work to mitigate negative outcomes associated with these identities (e.g., Dickens et al., 2019) and establish credible and competent professional images to disconfirm racial stereotypes (e.g., McCluney et al., 2021; Roberts, 2005). Racial identity management may reflect perceived pressure to conform to an organizational standard that is not entirely authentic to employees. However, research on stigmatized identity management

suggests that, for many employees, identity work is not solely a punctuated response to organizational change or transition, but an enduring feature of organizational life. When employees are preoccupied with countering workplace identity threats, they may have doubts about their belongingness (e.g., Cheryan et al., 2009), be more anxious (e.g., Bosson et al., 2004), and withdraw (e.g., Avery et al., 2007). In contrast, everyday signals of safety to engage in identity work could foster reassuring environments for employees with marginalized identities (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Walton et al., 2015). As IWSP characterizes the extent to which employees believe their organizations afford them the autonomy to explore, express, and share the identities they personally value, future researchers may want to explore the following research question: How might employees with stigmatized identities be uniquely attuned to IWSP?

Also, it is important to note that we do not conceptualize the four dimensions of IWSP as reflective indicators of a superordinate IWSP construct. Instead, we conceptualize and empirically show that there are four related, but distinct, dimensions of IWSP. As such, the dimensions of IWSP may be qualitatively different from one another. For example, organizations may have little input in how much their employees engage in cognitive identity work which is not directly observable. Organizations may also support certain types of identity work more than others. For example, if a company wants to bolster a climate where people engage in effective and beneficial identity work, they may place more importance on supporting observable (behavioral, physical, or discursive) identity work rather than cognitive identity work. Accordingly, these dimensions may or may not be highly correlated, as evidenced by latent correlations among these dimensions ranging from $-.03$ to $.72$. Thus, while the items developed here represent reflective indicators of each dimension of IWSP, the dimensions may be considered formative indicators (i.e., aggregated to create a formative measure of IWSP as a whole). The choice of whether to use individual dimensions or the overall formative measure of IWSP may depend on several factors (e.g., research question, context). For instance, when investigating outcomes of IWSP, researchers and practitioners may consider if and how to prioritize the dimensions based on which types of support for identity work are most related to the relevant employee outcomes. In the absence of a theoretical argument for differentiating among the dimensions of IWSP, however, adopting an aggregate approach may be more appropriate. That said, using and modeling formative constructs has received a great deal of debate and discussion in the literature (see Bollen & Diamantopoulos, 2017; Edwards, 2011; Hardin, 2017; MacKenzie et al., 2005), and there are still disagreements about the most appropriate way to model such constructs. While the detailed discussion of these methods is outside the scope of the present article, we do suggest the use of the second order composite latent construct approach proposed by MacKenzie et al. (2005). For this study, given that we were using multiple regression to examine the antecedents and outcomes of IWSP, we simply took the average of ratings across the 11 items to construct overall IWSP instead of a latent composite.

Finally, though our research yielded no relationship between IWSP and interpersonal deviance, it is still worth considering the potentially harmful implications of IWSP. We note two specific concerns to which future research should attend. First, intentional efforts by the organization to support identity work that affirms a specific identity (e.g., parent identity on “bring your child to work” day) might inadvertently marginalize other identities (e.g., pet

parent identity; did not offer a “bring your pet to work” day, Casper et al., 2016) prompting fault lines and divisive reactions within the organization. Second, all identities are not equally benign and what is considered moral and appropriate identity work likely reflects individual preferences that vary substantially across employees (e.g., Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011). So, though our research suggests IWSP may serve as a pathway for positive identity construction at work (Dutton et al., 2010), it could also be a pathway for working on more divisive and destructive identities. If employees are allowed to develop or showcase polarizing identities at work, the potential for adverse ramifications is immense. For example, an employee who values their identification with racist, xenophobic, or anti-Semitic groups (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazi groups; Blee, 1996) could foster a hostile work environment if afforded the space to reflect on, converse about, display, or enact these identities, resulting in conflict that is detrimental to the organization. Thus, while we demonstrated some benefits of IWSP, future research should also consider its dark side. Relatedly, future research could extend the examined employee outcomes. In this investigation, we focused on a handful of employee outcomes guided by past research. However, IWSP may also relate to other outcomes, such as well-being, which could be more distal since employees would have to engage in some sort of behavior (e.g., identifying and leveraging job-specific resources that support positive work engagement and, eventually, well-being; Bickerton et al., 2015) between their identity work perceptions and their increased well-being. However, behavior prompted by IWSP may or may not benefit the employee, given that identity work can also be tumultuous and foster negative consequences (Caza et al., 2018; Croft et al., 2015).

Practical Implications

Our results have practical implications for leaders. When employees hold higher IWSP, they reported more positive attitudes about their organization and were more willing to help others at work. As such, leaders should consider ways to foster higher IWSP among employees. Leaders might consider how policies, practices, standards, and norms signal support (or lack of it) for identity work. Of course, organizations should also consider the identities for which it is inappropriate to encourage employee identity work. For example, organizational leaders may want to increase perceptions of support for identity work related to some identities (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, others, veterans) while ensuring continued suppression of support for identity work related to other identities (e.g., extremist groups whose actions are damaging to other employees).

Further, as supervisors are often seen as agents of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2014), they should be aware of and aligned with organizational efforts to support identity work. Managers should seek to understand how employees perceive their intended support for identity work. Practitioners could use our scale to examine whether employer efforts to support identity work are viewed as such by employees. While our measure is purposefully not identity-specific, organizations could examine whether there are between-group (e.g., demographically based) differences in IWSP. As more companies ask employees to “bring their whole selves to work,” our measure can offer insight into which employees feel more and less supported in doing identity work in their organizations. If IWSP is

systematically lower for some identity groups, leaders might conduct focus groups to understand which practices, policies, or norms are viewed as unsupportive and take action to establish support.

We have proposed many considerations for practitioners as they adopt our measure of IWSP. One concrete suggestion is to use this scale to benchmark success in achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion goals or ideal goals for workplaces. For example, a company may have lots of employees from various stigmatized identity groups that typically feel more isolated or ostracized in society and organizations due to their identity group memberships. If this company wants to foster belonging and encourage everyone to be authentic, they may use the entire IWSP scale to track how current policies and practices are shaping the thinking, actions, and conversations of employees. If they find, for example, that employees from some traditionally stigmatized groups perceive that the organization limits identity-related discussions with coworkers, the organization could then consider if this perception is consistent or inconsistent with its belongingness goals. If inconsistent, leaders may redress this sentiment by intentionally reinforcing key organizational missions and values that underscore the benefits of sharing identity-related attributes at work. Then, they could create new ERGs or implement new workplace traditions (e.g., critical conversations workshops) that signal that the workplace supports identity-relevant dialogue among coworkers. Finally, they could administer the discursive IWSP survey to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts.

Limitations

Our research is subject to several limitations that are worth noting. As an initial investigation of IWSP, our inclusion of constructs in the nomological network was not exhaustive. As with all studies, we weighed a trade-off between comprehensiveness and survey length. However, we included what the literature suggests are the most relevant constructs, and our analyses supported the idea that IWSP is a unique and valuable construct.

A substantive assumption implied by our work is that employees with higher IWSP may engage in more identity work. As there is no scale to measure identity work, one path for future research is to develop and validate a scale to assess it. Such a measure would allow testing the relationship between IWSP and engaging in various types of identity work as well as testing the assumption that identity work is the inferred mechanism through which IWSP relates to positive outcomes. Yet, even without directly assessing identity work, our measure of IWSP predicted many theorized work-related outcomes of identity work and accounted for significant variance in self-reported OCBI, affective commitment, and organizational identification after controlling for generalized POS. Although we grounded our conceptualization and operationalization of IWSP in the identity work literature, we did not explicitly measure identity work or elaborate on its prominence in the IWSP nomological network.

Further, although we relied on the literature and used multiple SME panels in the item verification process, our scale development approach was purely deductive. As noted by Morgado et al. (2018), while deductive item generation by way of a literature review is the necessary step to building a new scale, there is a potential benefit in combining a deductive item-generation process with an inductive one. However, Cortina et al. (2020) noted that the inductive

approach may be less vital when there is clarity around the construct definition and its distinctiveness from other constructs. Accordingly, our measure is strengthened by our extensive literature review, clear construct definition, identification of similar, but distinct, constructs, and the use of two groups of SMEs in the item-retention process.

We also relied only on self-reported data, but since IWSP is a perceptual construct, self-report is the most appropriate way to measure it. Self-report data, however, is susceptible to common method bias (CMB). We attempted to minimize the possibility of CMB in Sample 7 by collecting data at two times. We also conducted additional analysis to ensure model identification for each of our models used to assess CMB, and we set any negative variance values to a small, positive value (.01)—for Samples 4, 5, and 6, we set one, one, and two variance values, respectively,⁵ to examine the presence of CMB, using the single unmeasured latent method factor technique (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicated that across Samples 4–6, the average percent of variance accounted for by proposed traits (46%–70%) was higher than the average percent of variance accounted for by method (4%–22%), suggesting low levels of variance. Still, future research could integrate alternative data sources (e.g., peers) when assessing the implications of IWSP. Future research using our scale as an antecedent to identity work and employee outcomes (e.g., affective commitment, OCB) might include alternative data sources (e.g., peers) in addition to self-report.

All data were collected in the United States. Although the relationships of IWSP with its correlates, antecedents, and outcomes were similar across independent, unique samples (full-time employees, employed students, panel participants), and measurement invariance tests suggest our scale reflects the same construct across race and gender, we did not examine measurement invariance across countries and cultures. As workers from Eastern Europe and Asia have also been found to engage in identity work (Down & Reveley, 2009; Essers et al., 2013; Leung et al., 2014), future research should examine whether our findings hold in other cultures. Limitations withstanding, the robustness of our findings across distinct and diverse samples (e.g., working professionals from various organizations, different employee populations) highlights the strength of support for our measure and its usefulness.

Conclusion

In this study, we advance the concept of IWSP and develop and validate a scale to measure it. We examine the nomological network of IWSP and demonstrate its incremental predictive validity for work outcomes. Providing a measurement tool for IWSP will enable an expanded body of research on this unique construct, which stands to enhance our understanding of how organizations can support their employees in “bringing their whole selves to work.”

⁵ To ensure model identification for each of our models used to assess CMB, we set any negative variance values to a small, positive value (.01)—for Samples 4, 5, and 6, we set one, one, and two variance values, respectively.

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(Appendices follow)

Appendix A

31 Identity Work Support Perceptions Items

1. I can make sense of who I am in my workplace.
2. I am able to spend time reflecting on who I am at my workplace.
3. I often reflect on who I am due to my workplace.
4. My identity in my workplace allows me to understand who I am in relation to others.
5. My experiences at work force me to think about who I am in relation to others.
6. My workplace helps me define my identity in relation to others.
7. Being in my organization helps me make sense of who I am.
8. At work, I am able to talk to others about who I am.
9. I am able to show pride in who I am through self-expression in my workplace.
10. I can freely talk about my identity in my workplace.
11. My workplace allows me to discuss who I am with my colleagues.
12. Talking with my colleagues at work helps me understand my self-meaning.
13. Group discussions at work help me learn more about myself.
14. My work team can spend time talking about our identity as a group.
15. I personally connect with the jargon used in my organization.
16. The words and jargon used by members of my organization help me understand who I am.
17. In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am.
18. I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am.
19. I can convey who I am through my work attire.
20. I can display items that show my pride in my work role.
21. My team can display items in our work space that say something about who we are.
22. It is important that my team and I are able to present a workspace that reflects who we are.
23. At work, I can use my physical appearance to influence others perceptions of me.
24. There are activities at work that let me showcase who I am to my colleagues.
25. My organization allows me to participate in activities that teach me about who I am.
26. I can read or listen to things at work that express who I am.
27. The tasks I take on at work reflect who I am as an individual.
28. My actions at work help people in my field understand who I am.
29. My performance at work is a reflection of who I am.
30. I can engage in specific behaviors at work to help others understand who I am.
31. My organization promotes work activities that teach me about other cultures.

Appendix B

Final Items

Cognitive Identity Work Support Perceptions

1. I often reflect on who I am due to my workplace.
2. My experiences at work force me to think about who I am in relation to others.
3. My workplace helps me define my identity in relation to others.

Discursive Identity Work Support Perceptions

4. At work, I am able to talk to others about who I am.
5. I can freely talk about my identity in my workplace.
6. My workplace allows me to discuss who I am with my colleagues.

(Appendices continue)

Behavioral Identity Work Support Perceptions

7. There are activities at work that let me showcase who I am to my colleagues.
8. My organization allows me to participate in activities that teach me about who I am.
9. I can engage in specific behaviors at work to help others understand who I am.

Physical Identity Work Support Perceptions

10. In my workplace, I can display pictures or items that show who I am.
11. I can display materials in my workspace that say something about who I am.

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