Teaching Beyond the Stacks: Examining the Organizational Identification of Academic Librarians

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the Scripps College of Communication of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Jessica C. Hagman
May 2015
© 2015 Jessica C. Hagman. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
Teaching Beyond the Stacks: Examining the Organizational Identification of Academic Librarians

by
JESSICA C. HAGMAN

has been approved for
the School of Communication Studies
and the Scripps College of Communication by

Claudia L. Hale
Professor of Communication Studies

Scott Titsworth
Dean, Scripps College of Communication
Abstract

HAGMAN, JESSICA C., M.A., May 2015, Organizational Communication

Teaching Beyond the Stacks: Examining the Organizational Identification of Academic Librarians

Director of Thesis: Claudia L. Hale

The recent technological advances that have transformed access to information have also radically altered the work of academic librarians. While many academic librarians now focus on conducting information literacy instruction for college or university students, many questions remain about the identity of the librarians as they and their libraries move into an increasingly digital future.

This study uses a structurational understanding of organizational identification (Scott, Corman & Cheney, 1998) to examine how academic librarians think about their work-related identities and identify with organizational targets. Using a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis, I interviewed 18 academic librarians who are currently engaged in information literacy instruction. Analysis of the interview data indicated that the participants identified with their instructional role, considered their work to be a part of the overall student learning process on their campuses, and spent time explaining their teaching role to colleagues, friends, and family.
Evidence of identification included: the librarians’ self-presentation as teachers, the prioritization of instruction over other work, a dedication to the instructional component of the library’s missions, participation in campus outreach to improve information literacy instruction opportunities and participation in professional development related to teaching and information literacy. Participants indicated that they used communication with both their colleagues and supervisors to help set priorities and make decisions about their day-to-day work.

Given the results of this study, I conclude that the librarians’ identity as an information literacy instructor serves as an internal structure (Stones, 2005) that guides their daily lives. The perceived misunderstandings of library work also serve as an internal structure against which many of the participants actively fought. Finally, the information literacy infrastructures at the participants’ campuses and libraries have the potential to serve as either an internal or external structure depending on the librarians’ perceived ability to affect change in those structures.
Dedication

To my jch’s for understanding.
Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank the members of my thesis committee—Dr. Claudia Hale, Dr. Brittany Peterson, and Dr. Yea-Wen Chen—for patiently sharing their time and knowledge with me as I completed this project. I’m not sure that I knew what I was getting into when I decided to undertake the thesis process, but I do know that I would have struggled so much more without the understanding and support afforded by these scholars.

I have been fortunate to spend the first six years of my professional career working the Reference Department at Alden Library. My colleagues there have proven to be a valuable source of support and much needed levity. In particular, I thank Hilary Bussell and Chris Guder. The proximity of their offices to my own work space and their collaboration on numerous projects resulted in their listening to many proposed (and ultimately abandoned) research topic ideas, methods and interpretations throughout the lengthy process of researching and writing this thesis.

My thanks go to the members of the writing group organized by the Ohio University Graduate Writing and Research Center’s Craig Meyer: Mary Gathogo and Nancy Katu. I enjoyed reading your work and learned a lot about research writing and methodologies by reviewing your drafts. I appreciate the gentle feedback you provided
on the early drafts of these chapters as I was struggling to even define the topic I could
explore and doubted my ability to complete a project of this scale.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to express my appreciation to my
husband, Jacob Hagman, who understood my need to take the longest possible route to
the completion of this project and who graciously supported my work in this graduate
program with endless encouragement and time away from our shared parenting
responsibilities.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian Identities and the Turn Towards Information Literacy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining and Critiquing Information Literacy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Identities in the Academic Library</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Identification</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale and Purpose</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Organizational Identification</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Outcomes Associated with Organizational Identification</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Development of Organizational Identification</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational inducements to identification</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational characteristics and identification</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The active role of the individual in identification</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Expanded Model of Organizational Identification</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disidentification and split identification</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple identifications</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Organizational Identification</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity theory</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

viii
List of Tables

Table 1: Key Terms, Defined ................................................................. 14

Table 2: Participants ........................................................................ 80
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Screenshot of the Adobe Connect meeting room</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1989 and 1990, software engineer Tim Berners-Lee invented the technology that would eventually be known as the World Wide Web. He sought to help scientists at the CERN\(^1\) particle physics laboratory to better share their data and communicate their research results (World Wide Web Foundation, 2014). The wide adoption of this technology in North America led to incredible developments in communication, business, politics, and many other aspects of daily life. While Berners-Lee invented the technology for physicists, students and scholars of all disciplines now have access to a wealth of data and information sources via the Web. Twenty-five years after his invention, much, although certainly not all, of the information that was once available only in library buildings is now available online.

While most academic libraries still have stacks of books, they now also offer the students and faculty members of their colleges and universities access to information in digital formats. Digital materials include electronic books, bibliographic databases, full text journal articles, primary source documents and discovery services (Budd, 2012). These materials bring with them new online systems of management that are needed to ensure that the students and faculty of the college or university have access to needed materials in the library, on campus, or wherever they can connect to the web via a computer or mobile device (Forsman, 2012). Academic librarians often still staff physical reference desks, but their work can now include answering questions via text-based online chat (Nicol & Crook, 2013; Thompson, 2009) or video messaging systems (Booth, 2012).

\(^1\) Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire or European Council for Nuclear Research.
Some librarians are even embedded in learning management systems to help the growing number of online students find information resources (Tumbleson & Burke, 2010). This new information environment and change in roles have dramatically altered both the content and the context of librarian work (Watson-Boone, 1998), leading many to question the future role of the librarian in the 21st century university.

**Librarian Identities and the Turn Towards Information Literacy**

Questions about future roles for librarians have resulted in calls for librarians to develop and express a stronger sense of professional identity. Ross and Sennyey (2008) encouraged librarians to reconsider their roles in the digital information world, arguing that libraries are now in a competitive information environment that "brings the very identity of the librarian under question" (p. 147). Sare, Bales and Neville (2012) described the academic librarian’s future as “thick with uncertainty.” They claimed that academic librarians must “come to grips” with their identities in order to navigate this foggy figure (p. 179). Belzowski, Ladwig and Miller (2013) suggested that frequent changes in roles have left librarians without a clear sense of identity or professional boundaries. Alternate titles, such as “cybrarian” or “information specialist,” have been proposed as better descriptors (Ensor, 1997; Watson-Boone, 1998). For some, the word "librarian" is too bogged down in a poor image among the public and paraprofessional, non-librarian members of library staffs (Gray, 2013).
Despite a sense of identity crisis among some members of the profession, academic libraries have adapted to changing technologies. Many have turned their focus toward serving as a facilitator of learning. In particular, they have adopted the banner of information literacy as their standard. In a 2013 survey of academic library directors at four-year schools, nearly all of the respondents indicated that information literacy instruction for undergraduates was a core part of their library's work. Furthermore, the participants indicated that the library staff bore at least partial responsibility for information literacy instruction on their campus (Schonfeld & Long, 2014). In support of information literacy instruction, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the major professional organization for academic librarians, has offered a standardized definition of information literacy since 1989. The ACRL has also developed standards and performance indicators to help librarians promote and assess student learning in this area (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2014b).

**Defining and Critiquing Information Literacy**

The most recent set of standards (approved in 2000) were based upon the 1989 definition of information literacy. By this definition, an information literate person needs to be able to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information" (American Library Association Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, 1989, para. 3). Beginning in 2014,
however, the definition and standards began the process of a major transformation. A
draft of the new definition of information literacy indicates that it will be much more
expansive and address a broader range of skills and abilities. The new document
describes information literacy as a

... repertoire of abilities, practices, and dispositions focused on expanding one's
understanding of the information ecosystem, with the proficiencies of finding,
using and analyzing information, scholarship, and data to answer questions,
develop new ones, and create new knowledge, through ethical participation in
communities of learning and scholarship. (Gibson & Jacobson, 2014a, p. 4)

The new framework for information literacy will be based on a collection of threshold
concepts rather than an extensive and detailed list of standards as in the 2000 standards
document. Threshold concepts are the complex and challenging ideas that students must
grasp in order to develop understanding in a skill area or knowledge domain (Townsend,
Brunetti & Hofer, 2011). Other disciplines have used threshold concepts in their teaching,
but the idea has not been well adopted among information literacy practitioners (Gibson
& Jacobson, 2014a). The draft of the new framework has already generated discussion
and critique (see, for example, Jastram, 2014; Pagowski, 2014) from practicing librarians
and will no doubt engage many more once a full draft is released, and there are moves
toward full approval by the ACRL and adoption by practicing librarians.
While widely embraced among academic librarians, information literacy has earned a variety of criticisms. Wilder (2005) contended that information literacy is the “wrong solution to the wrong problem” for librarians (para. 2). Fletcher (2007) questioned whether the focus on teaching students to navigate complex, library-based research tools has discouraged librarians from demanding better information tools from vendors or building their own tools that require less intensive instruction. Seale (2013) criticized the ACRL standards as simplistic, librarian-focused tools for identifying "authoritative" information on the Internet. She argued that the standards served to support the "neoliberal university.” In this environment, Seale contents, information is mistakenly considered neutral, and job skills training is emphasized over learning. Cowan (2014) even proposed that academic librarians let go of the phrase “information literacy” entirely. Instead, she argued librarians should discuss information literacy concepts in the terms preferred on their own campus, whether that be critical thinking, metaliteracy or some other term that likely incorporates many of the same elements as information literacy.

Multiple Identities in the Academic Library

The ongoing conversation about and diverse critiques of information literacy practices in academic libraries demonstrate the importance of this concept to academic librarians. But for many who teach information literacy in the academic library,
instruction is only part of their work. Interviews with academic librarians indicate that there can be a sense of conflict between a librarian’s role as a teacher and his or her other responsibilities in his/her library (Sare et al., 2012; Walter, 2008). Walter (2008) interviewed six academic librarians who described the ways in which their information literacy instruction informed their work outside the classroom. While the participants valued their role as information literacy instructors, they also reported struggling to find sufficient time to develop effective instruction. Sare et al. (2012) interviewed new academic librarians in Texas and found that they were frustrated with some of the more mundane tasks expected of them in the library. The participants preferred instead to focus on what they considered to be the more serious tasks, like teaching students information literacy skills and consulting with researchers.

Despite its clear importance to academic libraries and librarians, information literacy instruction appears to cause some librarians to experience a sense of competing interests. Even those who highly value information literacy instruction can find themselves struggling to make their work fit their values. Given the perceived importance of information literacy instruction to academic library directors and academic librarians, it is likely that being a teacher of information literacy has become part of the identity for those engaged in the practice. But their other work might also mean that they have additional identities tied to their work. This study employs the concept of organizational
identification to understand how academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction think about and navigate their work-related identities.

**Organizational Identification**

Organizational identification serves as a method for understanding how an individual comes to consider membership in a group as part of his/her personal identity (Bullis & Bach, 1989a; Cheney, 1983a). An individual who identifies with an organization has not only come to consider the organization’s values as his/her own (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989), but is also likely to act in ways that are beneficial to the organization of his/her own accord and without external inducements (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Organizations can encourage identification among their employees through both informal and formal communication (Cheney & Tompkins, 1983). However, the individual is an active participant in the process and uses communication to develop and express identification with the organization (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Larson & Pepper, 2003).

Organizations encourage identification among their employees because such identification is believed to be tied to positive outcomes for the organization and to influence how employees make decisions (Cheney & Tompkins, 1983). Individuals who identify with their organization generally express more cooperative behavior (Dukerich, Golden & Shortell, 2002) and might be less likely to retire (Gümüş, Hamarat, Colak &
Duran, 2012). For some, the behavioral changes ascribed to organizational identification offer the organization a less visible means of control over the individual (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). In cases where individuals work in teams, for example, the team might impose its own discipline over the group, despite the democratic and worker-controlled conception of teamwork (Barker, 1993; Barker & Cheney, 1994). While identification is often described in terms of the relationship between the individual and his/her employing organization, each person is likely to have multiple identities that shape his/her work life, including identities tied to a particular role or work team.

This study uses Scott et al.’s (1998) theoretical approach to understanding organizational identity and identification. Their approach is based on Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory. Scott et al. (1998) used structuration theory’s duality of structure and system as a method for explaining the relationship between identities and identification. In this model, identity is a structure that serves as “set of rules and resources that function as an anchor for who we are” (p. 303). Identification (a system) refers to an “interaction or behaviors that illustrate one’s attachment” (p. 303) to a particular identity, or as the “process of emerging identity” (p. 304). An individual draws on the structure of his/her identity in his/her daily life. These activities illustrate a person’s identity and build a system of identification. The duality of this model acknowledges the existence of social structures that influence individual identities, but also provides space for individual
agency in developing a sense of identity and influencing the system of which a person is a part (Stones, 2005).

Using the example of academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction, an individual could have an identity as a reference librarian at his or her library as well as an identity as a teacher of information literacy. Identification would occur when the librarian engages in activities that illustrate his/her attachment to that identity and through which he/she constructs that identity. A librarian who identifies as a teacher of information literacy might participate in professional development activities that help him/her become a better teacher of information literacy or discuss instruction improvement techniques with fellow teachers, for example. These activities are based on the individual’s identity but also help to construct the identification system in which that person takes part.

The research of Walter (2008) and Sare et al. (2012), however, indicates that there could be a sense of conflict between an academic librarian’s identity as a teacher and his/her identity as a librarian at his/her library. Scott et al.’s (1998) model of identity and identification, based as it is on structuration theory, provides a way of examining multiple—and perhaps conflicting—identities using Giddens’ (1984) concept of the regionalization of time and space. Regionalization refers to the organization of time and
space into “routinized social practices” with which an individual interacts throughout his/her daily life (p. 119).

In a structurational model of organizational identification, regionalization offers a method for understanding the interrelated identities of an individual (Scott et al., 1998). For each person, there will be multiple identities that exist in the same time and space, and that can overlap. For each identity, we can examine shape and boundaries (form), positive or negative character, size (span/space), and duration over time as well as the ways in which the identities cause tension or work in tandem. An individual must then navigate among these varied identities in his/her work life and as he/she makes sense of the experiences in his/her daily work experiences and communicates with his/her colleagues and supervisors. The daily activities in which an individual engages provide the context used when identifying with various organizational targets. Depending on the situation or context, one identity might become more or less salient over the course of an individual’s workday or week, or even his/her career, making it important to understand the interactions that occur in these varying social contexts.

**Rationale and Purpose**

Previous research on multiple and conflicting identities in the workplace has shown that individuals use communicative strategies to manage competing identities in the case of organizational change (Larson & Pepper, 2003) and have the power to choose
how they will identify with the organization or targets within the organization (Williams & Connaughton, 2012). Kuhn and Nelson (2002) proposed the use of discursive resources to understand the ways in which an individual’s identity influences his/her interpretation of a situation. A discursive resource is a “socially constructed frame” that results in a particular method of discussing an experience (p. 12). In Kuhn and Nelsons’ research, group identity was tied to how individuals used discursive resources to describe a conflict in the workplace.

Given the value of communicative strategies for navigating competing identities in the workplace, the purpose of this study is to examine how academic librarians communicate about their identity as a teacher of information literacy and their alternate work-related identities. Current research indicates that academic librarians value information literacy, but that the variety of roles they play in their libraries means they have to decide how to divide their time and other organizational resources so as to attend to their different job responsibilities. The ways in which they navigate these identities will likely influence their day-to-day workplace decisions and how they will enact organizational priorities.

Overview

This chapter has introduced the concept of information literacy and demonstrated the value academic libraries and librarians place on teaching this skill.
information literacy is a strong part of many academic librarians’ work-related identity, but that identity must be balanced with other work-related identities. This chapter has also introduced the concept of organizational identification, which is used to understand the process through which an individual comes to identify with a target organization. Research shows that communication plays an essential role in this process, making communication a valuable means for understanding how academic librarians navigate their work-related identities.

In the next chapter, I review the literature on the process of organizational identification, theoretical approaches to studying identification and research on the process through which an individual comes to identify with an organizational target. The second chapter also includes a review of the debates among academic librarians about the profession’s identity moving forward into the 21st century. These debates have included some critique of the concept of information literacy as it is commonly practiced.

In the third chapter, I introduce the methodology for this study and provide a rationale for the methodological choices that were made. This study uses in-depth online interviews with academic librarians and is informed by a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis.
In the fourth chapter, I provide a description of the study’s research participants and outline the aspects of identification with their library and the instruction role that derive from an analysis of the participants’ interview data.

In the fifth and final chapter, I use the results of the study to propose a model of structures influencing organizational identification among academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction. In this chapter, I address the study’s limitations and offer suggestions for future research in this area.

What follows in Table 1 is a list of the key terms used throughout the thesis and how those terms are defined and used in this research.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic library</td>
<td>A library serving a college or university (in this study, in the United States or Canada). While often viewed as a storehouse of information resources, many academic libraries seek to become active participants in campus conversations about student learning, assessment, and issues related to scholarly publishing such as data curation and advocacy of open access publication and information sharing (American Library Association, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Librarian</td>
<td>An individual working in a professional position in an academic library. Most positions require the individual to hold a Master’s degree in Library or Information Science. In recent years, academic libraries have seen a decrease in the total number of staff despite calls to take on new roles. Of the total staff in academic libraries (88,934 in 2010 per the American Library Association’s 2012 State of American Libraries Report), 30% are considered librarians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>The core attitudes or beliefs that define an individual in terms of his/her membership in a particular social group. Identities serve as a resource for making sense of the social world and determine our own behavior in response to that world (Scott et al., 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>The process through which an individual enacts or demonstrates his/her attachment to a particular identity target (Scott et al., 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Literacy</td>
<td>The ACRL’s current definition of information literacy is based on the final report of the 1989 ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy’s. The report defines information literacy as the ability to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (para. 3). As of 2014, however, the definition and ACRL standards of information literacy are under major revision to incorporate changes in the information landscape and in higher education. Most extant research on academic libraries, academic librarians and information literacy will have been based on the 1989 definition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Identification</td>
<td>Identification with an organizational target including, but not limited to, one’s employing organization, a sub-unit within the employing organization, a particular job role or a profession.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review begins with an introduction to the concept of organizational identification and examination of behavioral outcomes tied to organizational identification. From there, I turn to the process of identification to explore current understanding of how individuals come to identify with an organizational target. In the next section, I review the literature on an expanded model of organization, which incorporates experiences of disidentification and multiple identifications. The discussion then moves to a look at the major theoretical approaches that have been deployed in the study of organizational identification. In this section, I explain the choice of structuration theory as the theoretical approach for this study. Finally, current literature concerning the professional identity of academic librarians is explored along with available evidence indicating potentially conflicting identities and identification among members of this population. The review ends with the research questions that guided the present study.

Defining Organizational Identification

Identification occurs when an individual comes to consider himself/herself as belonging to some aspect of society, such as a group of people or a formal organization (Bullis & Bach, 1989a; Cheney, 1983a). Once identified with a group or an organization, a person’s self-description includes membership in the group (Cheney, 1983b). When asked who he/she is, a person might describe him/herself as working for a particular
company or as a member of a particular profession. In this case, the target of identification has become a part of the individual’s own identity as that individual considers himself/herself to be one with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt, 1998). While individuals who identify with an organization come to see the values of the organization as their own (Bullis & Tompkins, 1989), identification should be considered more than just the internalization of those values (Pratt, 1998).

Identification should be considered distinct from a sense of commitment to an organization, although the two concepts are related. Ashforth and Mael (1989) pointed out that individuals who are committed to an organization are committed to its goals, which are not necessarily unique as other organizations might share those same goals. Therefore, a committed individual might leave an organization if that individual were to find that he/she could join another organization with the same values. In contrast, an individual who identifies with an organization could be subject to “psychic loss” (p. 23) if he/she were to leave the organization, even if he/she joined another organization with similar values.

Cheney and Tompkins (1987) differentiated between commitment and identification but argued that the two concepts are intertwined, with identification serving as the “‘substance’ of an action and commitment serving as its ‘form’” (p. 9). That is, identification represents the relationship between the individual and the organization,
while commitment can be seen in the actions that arise out of that relationship. Cheney and Tompkins noted, however, that the two concepts do not always occur together. In some cases, an individual might act out commitment to an organization without necessarily having a high level of identification.

In their discussion of the relationship between identification and commitment, Cheney and Tompkins (1987) emphasized an understanding of identification as a process that develops and changes over time rather than a state of being. This theme is echoed in other literature on identification (such as Ashforth, 1998; Cheney, 1983a; Dukerich et al., 2002; Scott et al., 1998). In Pratt’s (2000) research focusing on Amway distributors, for example, individual distributors showed a wide variety of identifications and often changed from a positive form of identification to one that was more ambivalent if/when their relationship with the company soured. Dukerich et al. (2002) described the process of identification as dynamic and noted that situational factors, such as job mobility, can affect how an individual assesses his/her relationship with his/her employing organization. When job opportunities are more plentiful, for example, identification will probably be lower since individuals have a greater opportunity to change their employment situation. Conversely, when jobs are scarce, individuals might seek a stronger identification with their employing organization, knowing that their options for leaving their place of employment are few (Dukerich et al., 2002).
Behavioral Outcomes Associated with Organizational Identification

Identification is believed to be of value for an organization because it is an indicator that the individual will make decisions about his/her work life that serve the interests of the organization and serve as a means of control for the organization over the individual. Cheney and Tompkins (1983), citing Simon, pointed to the value of identification in encouraging the individual to make decisions with the organization in mind, regardless of other inducements like pay or the threat of losing one’s job. In support of this notion, DiSanza and Bullis (1999) pointed to cases where individuals within an organization must make decisions that pit two competing alternatives against one another and argued that the organization will typically prefer that individuals make decisions based on the premises of the organization. Identification appears to influence behavior and to encourage the type of decision-making that organizations value.

Dukerich et al. (2002) provide evidence of the behavior-influencing power of identification in their research on cooperative behavior among physicians. Dukerich et al. found a positive relationship between identification and cooperation that could not be exclusively accounted for by extrinsic motivators, such as bonuses or salary increases. Identification also appears to be tied to whether an individual intends to leave the organization. Gümüş et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between identification and intent to retire among teachers in Turkey. They found that those teachers who had higher
levels of identification with their organization or their profession where less likely to have an intent to retire.

Tompkins and Cheney (1985) described this behavioral influence over the individual as concertive control. In contrast to bureaucratic control, which provides a behavior framework in organizations through the use of rules and regulations, concertive control often occurs when there is a relatively flat hierarchy and a focus on flexibility and innovation. In these situations, there is a “common understanding of values, objectives and means of achievement, along with a deep appreciation for the organization’s ‘mission’” (pp. 183-184). Instead of managers developing strong rules to explain to employees that they need to come to work on time, the members of one’s team will enforce these rules, even if the rules remain unwritten.

Barker and Cheney (1994) liken this form of group rule enforcement to Foucault’s notion of discipline, in which the means of control have become less obvious and yet more prevalent. The means of control might not be visible to the individual because the behavior is considered rational and appropriate by group standards. When a group of individuals strongly identifies with the system by which their behavior is governed and assessed by their peers, there is less need for an organization to institute top down surveillance or discipline. Employees will submit to the expected rules of behavior that they observe and have internalized.
Barker (1993) provided a striking example of this sort of environment in a case study of a manufacturing organization that moved to a team-based system. Each team made its own rules about expected behavior. Team members began to pressure each other with respect to, for example, being at work on time, even though these rules were not codified in the organization’s policies. This peer-focused control is potent in that it makes it more difficult to see the rule systems that govern behavior within an organization and obscures paths that might be available to address concerns. When the source of power in an organization comes from its system, there is little recourse to address a problem with the structure or to create change (Barker & Cheney, 1994).

In Barker’s (1993) study, there was strong agreement about the values of the organization or sub-unit of the larger organization, which led members of that group to self-manage the situation. Papa, Auwal and Singhal (1997) provided another illustrative example of the powerful organizational outcomes tied to identification in their study of workers at the Grameen Bank, a micro-lending institution in Bangladesh. The Bank’s work to support the poor became such a strong part of the individual identity of many employees that those employees ended up working extreme hours at the expense of their personal lives. The Bank did not require that workers keep long hours or give up their vacation time in service of the Bank. However, the workers became so strongly identified with the mission of the Bank that they were dedicated to maintaining a 99% repayment
rate, whatever the personal cost. Field workers pressured each other into maintaining this repayment rate through their ongoing conversations about the importance of loan repayment to help the Bank reach its long-term goal of improving the lives of the poor.

While an organization might benefit from dedicated employees who follow team-based rules, there are some behavioral outcomes of identification that are less beneficial for the organization and that could harm the organization in the long run. Pratt (1998) cited IBM and Apple as companies that had difficulties making changes in response to external demands in the 1980s and 1990s. He attributed this difficulty to excess identification as to what it meant to be a member of those companies. The identification, in this case, discouraged change and adaptation. Moreover, strong identification with one’s team or sub-unit of the organization could mean lower levels of identification with the organization as a whole and encourage intraorganizational competition. Highly identified individuals are also less likely to report ethical lapses in the organization and more likely to believe that improper behavior has been organizationally sanctioned (Dukerich, Kramer & Parks, 1998).

The Development of Organizational Identification

Because identification can be a powerful force for the organization, spurring preferable employee behavior or limiting necessary change, it is worth understanding how identification develops. In order to become identified with an organization, an
individual must be open to a change in his/her identity. While this openness and resultant change in identification can occur at the beginning of the relationship between an individual and the organization, openness and change in identification can also occur at a time of change or crisis for the organization. Once an individual identifies with an organization, activities such as company celebrations and professional conferences serve to develop and affirm the sense of identification with a target and prevent that sense of identification from decaying (Ashforth, 1998).

**Organizational inducements to identification.** Organizations promote identification with the organization through both informal and formal communicative acts that share information about the company, its values, and its goals (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Such strategies encourage employees to feel like they are “similar to the organization” (Pratt, 1998, p. 196). Ferraris et al. (1993) analyzed communication and identification among employees at Interface Precision Benchworks (IPB), a manufacturing organization that changed status from that of a non-profit corporation to a for-profit corporation owned by the employees. The company also implemented a new quality management plan over the course of five years. During the change, clear and consistent communication about the values of the organization—and how those values might change—was tied to a continued strong sense of organizational identification.
Ferraris et al. maintained that the formality of communication is less important than is the consistency of communication.

In contrast with organizations like IPB that rely on informal communication to develop and maintain identification, other organizations deploy more formal methods of communication intended to explicitly induce identification among members. New members of an organization can receive motivational training sessions meant to inspire them to identify with the organization or its goals, as is the case with workers associated with the micro-lending Grameen Bank (Papa et al., 1997). Identification promotion can also show up in internal organizational communication, such as organizational newsletters. Cheney (1983b) demonstrated the use of three inducement strategies that organizations use to encourage identification within their intra-organizational newsletters, including establishing a common ground, targeting a perceived enemy, and use of the assumed “we” to talk about the organization.

DiSanza and Bullis (1999) analyzed *Intermountain Reporter*, an employee newsletter of the United States Forest Service in search of these same inducement strategies. A single issue of the newsletter used all three strategies in addition to four other strategies for encouraging identification. The Forest Service highlighted the work of a group within the overarching organization and also described the work of Forest Service employees outside the organization. In addition to these recognition strategies,
the newsletter included invitations to become involved in organizational activities beyond
the employee’s regular work and bragged about the expenditure of effort or funds for a
particular Forest Service activity.

DiSanza and Bullis (1999) expanded on this analysis and identification of
inducement strategies by interviewing individual Forest Service employees to understand
how each of those employees responded to the newsletter’s content. Responses varied,
with some individuals indicating that the newsletter did not have any effect on their sense
of identification with the organization. Others described a sense of identification with the
content of the newsletter or with the way that the newsletter content made them think
about their experiences with the Forest Service. Interestingly, some of the interviewees
recounted a negative reaction to the newsletter and its inducement strategies. The
negative reactions of these employees supported and/or encouraged feelings of dis-
identification with the organization. Employees with a negative reaction described feeling
that their experience did not match with the descriptions of the Forest Service found in
the newsletter, that they did not like the newsletter overall, or that the newsletter did not
recognize local work.

**Organizational characteristics and identification.** The variety of individual
responses to the Forest Service’s newsletter indicates that identification is complex and
subject to organizational and individual factors internal to the relationship between the
organization and the individual member. Some evidence indicates that organizational characteristics, such as organizational mission and image influence how the individual identifies with the organization. For example, organizations that have a strong sense of the world or that are tied to a social cause might have a leg up in encouraging identification because they provide a greater sense of completion for those individuals who come to identify with the organization’s worldview or cause (Ashforth, 1998), as seen in the case of the Grameen Bank (Papa et al., 1997).

The external image of the organization can also influence organizational identification, as Dukerich et al. (2002) demonstrated in a study of physicians working in different healthcare systems. Dukerich et al. found that organizational identification was strongly correlated with the physicians’ “assessment of the attractiveness of the perceived organizational identity and the construed external image” (p. 527). In a survey of university information technology professionals, Lammers, Atouba, and Carlson (2013) reported that identification with the organization was negatively influenced by the perception of the organization as having “disappointing shortfalls” (p. 527). In this case, the individual employees identified more strongly with their profession and/or their work group. The organization served primarily as a means to work in the employee’s preferred field. In both cases, the perception of the organization by the individual influenced how he or she identified with the organization.
While many organizations encourage identification among their employees, it is not necessarily standard practice, with some organizations seeming to prefer that their employees not develop such identification. Gossett (2002) demonstrated that, in the case of temporary employees, an organization might actually discourage those workers from identifying with the organization by not giving temporary workers access to the kinds of materials (such as email accounts, access codes, or name tags) that would encourage them to feel they are part of the organization. Temporary employees were also discouraged from engaging in communication with both permanent and fellow short-term employees. They were less likely to be sought out for feedback or to be involved in making decisions related to the organization, both considered practices that encourage identification. This distancing by the organization can allow the organization’s leaders to feel less responsible for the well-being of temporary workers. A lack of communication with fellow temporary employees also discouraged these workers from identifying with the agency that arranged their employment. While Gossett noted that not all of the individual temporary employees sought to identify with either their workplace organization or their temporary agency, those who did seek identification were largely thwarted.

**The active role of the individual in identification.** While organization-level factors can influence whether the individual comes to identify with a particular
organization, the process should not be considered one in which the identity is applied to
the individual by the organization. The individual interacts with the organization and can
develop identification with the organization based on his/her personal values and
experiences. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) explained that members of organizations produce
the identities they take on as their own. Kuhn and Nelson cited Wenger who described
this process as the “mutual constitution” of identity (p. 31). Similarly, Pratt’s (1998)
argument that there are two possible ways for an individual to identify with an
organization emphasizes the active role of the individual. He/she might recognize that a
particular organization is like him/herself or change him/herself to be more like the target
of his/her identification. In the case of affinity identification, the individual comes to
understand that there is a “kinship between [him/herself and the organization] or a unity
of self and the organization” (p. 174). When an individual begins to emulate the
organization, he/she does so because the values of the organization have become his/her
own.

Pratt (2000) illustrated this complex relationship between individual and
organization during the process of identification in a case study of Amway distributors.
New distributors are encouraged to share their needs and wants, most of which are tied to
personal consumption, a process that Pratt described as creating a sense of “seekership.”
Once the individual distributor has gone through the process, Amway is presented as a
way to end his/her frustrations at not having these items or this way of life. While creating seekership is effective in developing identification for some individual distributors, the response is not universal. In some cases, encouraging seekership has led to ambivalent identification or even disidentification because the distributor never fully accepted the proposed identity or no longer felt compelled to pursue the same kind of materialistic dreams.

An individual’s interpretation of the support he/she receives from the organization and his/her work experience can also influence whether he/she identifies with that organization. Gibney, Zagenczyk, Fuller, Hester and Caner (2011) surveyed individuals about their perceptions of the support they receive from their organization as well as their perceptions of the barriers that the organization puts in the way of individuals meeting personal goals. Perceived organizational support was tied to higher levels of organizational identification, as found in previous studies. Russo (1998) surveyed journalists to assess their identification with both their profession and the newspaper that employed them. Among the participants, perceived autonomy in the workplace was positively correlated with identification.

The progression of identification over time was/is also subject to individual factors and interpretations of the organization-individual relationship. While it would seem that identification would increase naturally over time with the organization, this
should not be assumed. Cheney (1983a) found that age was related to organizational identification. However, the length of time that an individual had worked for an organization was not related to identification. Ferraris et al.’s (1993) research at IPB indicated that consistent communication about organizational goals was tied to identification more so than length of time with the organization, demonstrating that tenure alone cannot serve as a sole indicator of identification. Scott et al. (1998) described, however, a sense of “sunk costs” (p. 317) among longer-term members of an organization, which might protect their sense of identification from negative experiences that would otherwise decrease that identification.

**An Expanded Model of Organizational Identification**

Up to this point in the review, identification has largely been treated as a single entity for an individual, or a description of an individual’s relationship with an organization. Identification has also been treated as a singularly positive relationship indicator. Pratt’s (2000) research on Amway distributors, however, serves as an example of a case in which identification disintegrated over time or took on a negative pall based on the distributor’s experiences. Gossett’s (2002) research also pointed toward a case where identification was not necessarily desired either by the employing organization or by the individual temporary employees.
Disidentification and split identification. The concept of identification has been expanded to reflect the complex relationships that individuals can have with organizations and to include the variety of targets with which an individual can identify, even within a single organization. Elsbach (1999) argued for an expanded definition of identification that includes disidentification, split-identification,² and neutral identification. Disidentification occurs when an individual’s identity is tied to not being a member of a particular group. Split-identification indicates that an individual both identifies and disidentifies with an organization as he/she considers different aspects of the organization. Individuals who have neutral identification have consciously sought to not identify with an organization.

In their research on identification and disidentification with the National Rifle Association, Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) used Elsbach’s (1999) definition of disidentification as a sense of identity that explicitly ties one to not being a member of a particular group. Elsbach and Bhattacharya (2001) proposed that disidentification occurs

² Elsbach (1999) and Dukerich et al. (1998) used the phrase schizo-identification for cases in which an individual both identifies and disidentifies with a target. However, the use of schizo or schizophrenic as a descriptive metaphor has received due scrutiny in recent years for being a misnomer that extends the stigma and misunderstanding of individuals with schizophrenia (Duckworth, Halpern, Schutt, & Gillespie, 2003; Kelly & Winterman, 2011). Elsbach (1999) also used the term “split” in describing this sort of identification. Therefore, the term split-identification has been used in place of schizo-identification throughout this paper.
in cases where individuals interpret their personal values as being in conflict with the
groups and values of the target organization, fear that the reputation of the target organization will
hurt their own reputation, and believe that all members of the target organization are
homogenous. These perceptions are generally not based on first-hand experience with the
organization or its members.

Dukerich et al. (1998) provided an alternate expanded model of identification that
incorporates the relative strength of identification with the organization. The model has
two axes: identification and disidentification. There are low/high levels for each axis,
creating multiple possible configurations. Individuals with low identification and low
disidentification would be considered to have apathetic- or under-identification. Those
with high identification and low disidentification have focused identification or possibly
over-identification. Those with high disidentification and low identification have a
focused disidentification that could be over-(dis)identification. Finally, those with both
high identification and high disidentification for a single target would be considered to
have conflicting or split-identification. These alternate models of identification and
disidentification demonstrate the complexity of the relationship an individual can have
with an organization. While most research focuses on the positive face of identification, it
is possible for a negative relationship to also influence identification beyond just
Discouraging identification. Research on identification should be conducted with this complexity in mind.

**Multiple identifications.** These expanded models of identification are based on the relationship between an individual and one target of identification. However, an individual is likely to have many identities and patterns of identification, even within a single organization. An individual might identify with his/her profession, work group or other target in addition to his/her employing organization (Larson & Pepper, 2003; Russo, 1998; Vough, 2012). The existence of multiple targets of identification and the understanding of identification as a process rather than a static state makes the relationship between identification targets an area of research for some scholars. In particular, interest has been expressed in the relationship between identification with one’s profession and with one’s organization. Russo (1998), for example, found that journalists identified more strongly with their profession than with the newspaper for which they worked.

Some research on these competing identifications indicates that the process and factors influencing the development of each identity is unique. Vough (2012) concluded that architects who identified more strongly with their profession and work group than with their organization used different methods of sense making when identifying with different targets. For Vough, this indicated that multiple identifications can coexist rather
than strictly compete with each other. Lammers et al. (2013) argued that identification was tied to different experiences for the information technology workers in their case study. Identification with the profession was tied more strongly to the activity of their work, whereas their identification with their work group came from a sense of belonging.

Having multiple identities tied to the workplace means that individuals must navigate among these identities throughout their work life. Larson and Pepper (2003) investigated the communication strategies that individuals use to navigate multiple identification targets during a time of change at an aerospace company. The company—JAR Industries—sought to change its focus from technical excellence to products that would have greater commercial and market value in the wake of a federal spending decrease. This change in values caused conflict for many employees who still valued the “old JAR” and its focus on technical excellence. Via participant observation, interviews, and analysis of company documents, Larson and Pepper discovered three different communicative strategies that were used to navigate identities at JAR. These included comparison, logic, and support. Comparison strategies were demonstrated when individuals directly contrasted their experiences under the old and new JAR. Individuals used logical strategies when they presented a rationale for making their identification choices. Participants using support strategies sought the “backing of others to justify [their] identifications” (p. 547).
After identifying the use of these strategies, Larson and Pepper (2003) concluded that talk served as a way of helping employees manage multiple and conflicting identities tied to their work at JAR. While JAR did attempt to inculcate new values among their employees, employees continued to construct their own identities via communicative strategies. Kuhn and Nelson (2002) also examined the ways in which individuals construct differing identities in the workplace. In a case study set in a municipal government organization, Kuhn and Nelson sought to identify discursive resources that employees used to understand and discuss conflict in their workplace. A discursive resource is a “socially constructed frame” (p. 12) that guides how an individual discusses an experience and influences not only his/her own behavior but also the behavior of others. Kuhn and Nelson argued that the use of discursive resources demonstrates how an individual is identified with a target, or in their case, a sub-unit within the government organization.

Both Larson and Pepper’s (2003) and Kuhn and Nelson’s (2002) research demonstrate ways that an individual navigates complex identities in the workplace. By interviewing members of the organization, they were able to better understand the ways in which communication about their work experiences indicates identity and identification. The present study continues this line of work by examining how academic
librarians engaged in teaching information literacy navigate complex identities tied to their work.

**Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Organizational Identification**

The discussion of organizational identification in this chapter has drawn from two major approaches to understanding the identification process. Much of the recent research on identification has been based on Tajfel and Turner’s Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Edwards, 2005). This model emphasizes the ways in which organizational membership serves as a method for developing social categories that are central to SIT. Through the process of identifying with an organization, the individual comes to believe that his or her fate is linked with that of the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

**Social identity theory.** This approach emphasizes the cognitive aspects of identification. Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail (1994), for example, described the impact of organizational images on identification, finding that images have the power to strengthen or weaken the connection with the organization. Dutton et al. argued that the influence of organizational images on identification show that the ways in which individuals think about their organization affect their behavior. It is this altered behavior that Rousseau (1998) sought to explain in an essay on identification. She questioned the continued existence of identification given the major changes to the corporate landscape that would be expected to sever worker-organization links. Rousseau proposed that
workers experience both situated and deep structure identification. Situated identification occurs when an employee perceives a sense of shared interests with the organization. Deep structure identification refers to “cognitive schema formed in work settings across roles, over time, and across situations” (Rousseau, 1998, p. 218). It is these schema that influence employee behavior and self-concept in relation to the organization. van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher and Christ (2004) proposed an expanded model of identification using SIT when they argued for four sub-components of identification: affective, cognitive, evaluative, and behavioral. SIT-based research serves as a valuable tool for understanding how identification affects individuals and influences their behavior. However, the SIT approach leaves less room for understanding the essential role of communication in the identification process.

**Identification as a communication-based process.** Through communication, individuals develop and express their identities (Larson & Pepper, 2003). Research on the relationship between communication and identification bears this out and demonstrates the daily communicative practices that, for better or worse, influence how individuals identify within an organization. Bullis and Bach (1991), for example, found that communication graduate students who engaged in multiplex communication relationships (those in which more than one type of content passes between individuals) with members of their academic department showed higher levels of identification with their
department. Even the much–derided work meeting can serve as a site for identification building, as the organization and employees communicate about values and intentions (Scott & Fontenot, 1999).

The role of communication in identification can be seen in employees who spend at least part of their time working away from the official physical office. Fay and Kline (2012) looked at the effect of informal communication with co-workers on those who are considered high-intensity teleworkers (spending more than two days a week away from their office). They found that messages that communicate inclusion with co-workers, social support, and collegial talk were associated with higher levels of organizational identification. In contrast, messages indicating exclusion were tied to lower levels of organizational identification.

**Structuration theory.** Given the importance of communication in the process of identification, this study uses structuration theory as a method for understanding identification within organizations. Structuration theory emphasizes the construction of social entities, like organizations, and examines how those social entities are sustained instead of assuming that they are static (Poole & McPhee, 2005). Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory emerged as a response to the debate over the role of individual action and social structures on behaviors. Rather than emphasizing social structures or
individual action to explain social behavior, structuration theory deconstructs both through a focus on the reproduction of social practices.

Within structuration theory, societal structures are not considered external entities that constrain human behavior. Instead, societal structures serve as the basis of human behavior and as making social action possible. Societal structures are made up of both rules and resources, terms that come with their own definitions in structuration theory (Giddens, 1984).

**Rules.** While the term “rules” is often associated with written rules or regulations of a society or an organization, according to structuration theory, rules are social entities that sanction behavior. Individual members of society are expected to know the rules and interpret social situations in light of these rules. According to Giddens, written or codified rules should be considered interpretations of these social rules. An individual who describes the rules of a situation is offering his/her own explanation of societal rules. When providing an explanation for their own behavior, individuals are both providing their own rationalizations as well as the societal rules that justify that behavior (Giddens, 1984).

**Resources.** Resources are the “structured properties of social systems” that individuals draw upon in their daily action (Giddens, 1984, p. 15). Resources can include physical entities like wealth or land (allocative resources) as well as authoritative
resources that give some members of society power over others. Even individuals lacking allocative resources still have some measure of power, according to Giddens. Workers, for example, while often possessing less wealth and fewer resources and power than their employers, do still have power to influence social situations. Workers who refuse to work until demands are met, for example, are exercising a measure of power. Such a situation is emblematic of Giddens’ notion of the dialectic of control. Even in situations where power is unequally distributed, dependent relationships give all social actors some measure of power.

**The duality of structure.** Together, rules and resources make up the structures of social life. These structures can be seen in the systems that occur in human society, which Poole and McPhee (2005) described as “system[s] of human practices” (p. 174, emphasis original), rather than systems of objects. At the core of structuration theory is Giddens’ (1984) notion of the duality structure, or the conception of structures as serving as both the “medium and outcome of practices” (p. 25). With each act or interaction, an individual both enacts and reproduces the social structures and systems with which he/she is engaged.

Poole and McPhee (2005), appropriately enough, use a library-based example to describe the nature of reproduction. A library patron who uses the library catalog to locate a book in the stacks reproduces the catalog as a resource that enables members of
the community to locate resources. The very act of using the catalog, rather than another system for finding a book, helps to keep that resource in use.

While some practices might enact change within the structure and social system, most often very little or no change occurs because individuals and even groups of people are usually limited in how much they can affect change to structure and systems through their own actions (Poole & McPhee, 2005). To return to the library catalog example, an individual who uses the catalog might point out a problem in the way in which the catalog works. But a single complaint is unlikely to force the library to develop an entirely new system. Instead, it would take many complaints or a declaration of a fundamental systematic failure of the catalog to induce total change. To study the structuration of social systems requires examining the ways in which individuals reproduce those social systems through their daily activity, which, in turn, draws upon the rules and resources of societal structures (Giddens, 1984).

Building upon Giddens’ (1984) outline of structuration theory and responding to Giddens’ critics, Stones (2005) developed a “strong structuration” approach to understanding social action. In strong structuration, there are two different types of structures: internal and external. Internal structures hew closely to Giddens’ conception of the virtual structures. To describe an internal structure is to sketch an individual’s understanding of the social context in which he/she navigates the world. Stones further
broke internal structures down into two categories: dispositions/habitus and conjuncturally specific/positional. Dispositional structures are generally not noticed by individuals as they engage in action; instead, dispositional structures are largely taken for granted. By contrast, conjuncturally specific/positional structures involve the individual’s knowledge of his/her specific social setting. As the individual engages in social action, he/she draws upon this knowledge. Such knowledge, Stones argued, is often related to external structures.

External structures are independent of the individual and “limit the freedom of agents to do otherwise” (Stones, 2005, p. 109). While Giddens (1984) conceived of individuals as always having the power to resist social demands (the “dialectic of control,” p. 16), Stones (2005) considered external structures to be those structures against which the individual has no clear means of control. Even if the individual could theoretically resist the constraints imposed by an external structure, the individual will often determine that, in reality, he/she has little power or few choices. External structures range from macro-level social forces (war, globalization) to “context-specific constraints” like local laws or organizational structures (O’Reilly, 2012, p. 8).

**Structuration theory and organizational identification.** Scott et al. (1998) applied the systems and structures duality to organizational identification. They proposed that we can consider identity to be a “set of rules and resources that function as an anchor
for who we are” (a structure) and identification as “interaction or other behaviors illustrating one’s attachment” (a system) (p. 303). As an individual acts in a way that indicates his/her identification with the organization, he/she both uses that identity as a resource and maintains that same identification structure (Poole & McPhee, 2005).

Beyond his/her organization, an individual might also identify with his/her work group, profession or other targets within an organization, meaning that he/she identifies with a range of identities. Structuration theory’s concept of regionalization offers a method for understanding how these various identities are developed and are related. Giddens proposed that individuals move through time and space, engaging with other people, the physical world, and various domains. These domains are created by the “regionalization of time-space” (p. 116), or the zoning of space and time into regions “in relation to routinized social practices” (p. 119). Scott et al. (1998) applied the concept of regionalization to identities. In this model of identification, each identity that an individual develops, and with which he/she identifies, is created through the regionalization or grouping of the many rules and resources that the individual draws upon in his/her daily action. Scott et al. cautioned against considering the regionalization model to be a literal description of an individual’s identities, but noted that the model is particularly useful in understanding the spatial relationships between identities if we consider each identity to occupy a unique region with defined boundaries.
The regionalization model includes four components describing each identity: form, character, scale/span, and duration. These properties help us understand the nature of the region and its relation to other, related regions. The boundaries of each region define its form. Character refers to the “front” or “back” nature of the region. The front region generally refers to sanctioned or accepted behaviors, while the back regions are more negatively perceived behaviors tied to that region. The span or scale of a region indicates its relative size. The duration of a region indicates its persistence over time (Giddens, 1984; Scott et al., 1998).

If we think of each identity that an individual develops as a region, we can begin to consider the ways in which the identities relate to one another. These identities might be completely isolated or have some areas of overlap that indicate a tie between two or more identities. Citing previous research that identified both conflict and compatibility among overlapping identities, Scott et al. (1998) argued that both conflict and compatibility are potential outcomes of multiple identities. The outcome depends on the individual and that individual’s circumstances, with some identities becoming more salient in specific situations as individuals engage in different types of activity. Understanding these situations, and the interactions that occur in each setting, can help us to understand the process by which individuals come to identity with an organizational target.
Professional Identity Among Academic Librarians

The rapid pace of technological change surrounding access to information has led to rapid change in the work of many academic libraries and librarians (Watson-Boone, 1998). This momentous change also raises questions about the role of the academic librarian in a world in which information is readily available via Internet connected devices rather than being restricted to the walls of a library building.

While there is clear consensus that direction and sense of mission are needed, which path to choose is a matter for debate (Austin & Bhandol, 2013). The work of academic librarians is varied. In a single academic library, librarians can be focused on reference work, cataloging and maintaining access to information resources and special collections, or on building a robust digital presence for the library on the Internet and via mobile devices. Some librarians, particularly those working in smaller libraries, occupy many of these roles. A cataloger, for example, might be called upon to serve as a subject specialist for an academic discipline, and be expected to engage in collection development and information literacy instruction for students in that major (Budd, 2012).

A focus on information literacy. One of the main areas of focus for many academic librarians in public-facing roles has been on information literacy instruction. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a professional organization of academic librarians, has been a proponent of information literacy and the teaching of
information literacy by academic librarians. The ACRL promotes information literacy as a skill needed to deal with the ever more complex and constantly evolving information environment faced by the modern student and information consumer. In 2000, the ACRL released extensive competency standards for information literacy in the higher education environment. The standards received endorsement from the American Association for Higher Education and the Council of Independent Colleges in 1999 and 2004 respectively (ACRL, 2014b). As of 2014, a group of academic librarians was engaged in updating the definition of information literacy to incorporate a better understanding of the complex nature of research and scholarship in the digital world.

Many college and university librarians have taken up information literacy instruction as their charge and have written extensively about teaching and assessing information literacy skills among their students. Of primary concern is effective teaching of information literacy skills during the “one-shot” or the single session devoted to information search skills in courses requiring a research assignment (see, for example, Coulter, Clarke & Scamman, 2007; Kenney, 2008). In addition to the traditional one-shot library instruction session, some libraries have sought to integrate information literacy instruction more deeply into the curricula of their schools through credit-bearing courses (Beilin & Leonard, 2013; Clapp, Johnson, Schwieder & Craig, 2013) and even general
In recent years, teachers of information literacy skills, like many other academic practitioners, have responded to calls to engage in extensive assessment of teaching and student learning (Ivanitskaya, Du Ford, Craig & Casey, 2008; O’Connor, Sheret & Steele, 2013). On its face, assessment is simply a tool for gauging student learning, but for librarians, assessment efforts have also been described as part of an effort to articulate and communicate the value of academic libraries to their college and university administrators (Oakleaf, 2010).

**Debating the librarian as teacher role.** While it has enjoyed strong support among academic librarians, the concept of information literacy, and the idea that librarians should teach information literacy skills, has not been without critique. Kemp (2006) outlined the long history of the debate over “teaching librarians.” In a 1954 speech to the Conference of Eastern College Librarians, Shera (1955), a renowned library leader and scholar of information science (Wright, 1988), decried the notion of teaching librarians as a “silly pretense” (p. 13). Instead, he argued that librarians should focus on
their unique skills and contributions to the academy through the acquisition and organization of information.

Wilson (1979) offered an even stronger critique. She derided the description of librarians as teachers as an organizational fiction promoted by libraries in order to “disguise the truth” (p. 148). Wilson attributed the embrace of the organizational fiction to librarians’ perception of their low status, excessive focus on negative stereotypes of their profession, and failure to adequately analyze their own place in the college/university systems. Librarians, Wilson, claimed should better understand that they are only a part of the larger college or university and not a separate entity with its own goals and mission.

Information literacy, and by extension the librarians who champion it as a needed skill, has also come under scrutiny. Wilder (2005) critiqued the academic librarians’ focus on information literacy, claiming that attempting to teach students to navigate the complex information environment draws attention away from work that would actually make finding information easier. Instead of building better systems of information access, Wilder claimed, librarians who advocate for information literacy instruction end up teaching students to be more like librarians than their professors. While Wilder critiqued information literacy as it currently stands, he also encouraged librarians to become more engaged in helping students learn to read and write in their disciplines.
Fletcher (2007) extended the critique of information literacy. In a provocatively titled speech asking whether “information literacy is dead,” Fletcher echoed Wilder’s concerns about information literacy, claiming that the focus on information literacy encourages librarians to teach navigation skills rather than improving systems of information discovery. Efforts to improve information literacy skills, Fletcher argued, come from a misplaced desire to teach students in the classroom and even at the reference desk where students might just want answers to their questions.

**Information literacy and the academic librarian identity.** Despite these critiques, the promotion and teaching of information literacy is central to the identity of many academic librarians. Given the diverse nature of their work, however, the focus on information literacy instruction also appears to create conflict and anxiety for some librarians who engage in teaching.

Walter (2008) noted that, while there has been extensive research about ways in which librarians are perceived from outside the profession, less has been written about how librarians think about their work experiences. In extensive interviews with six academic librarians of diverse professional backgrounds, Walter identified themes in the participants’ personal narratives of their occupational life. All of the participants identified teaching as a central component of their work that influenced how they conducted themselves in other aspects of their professional lives. One participant, for
example, described considering her teaching experience when she engaged in collection
development work or answered students’ questions at the library’s reference desk.

Many of the participants, however, recounted a sense of competing responsibilities when it came to teaching. They did not feel as though they had enough time to teach in the way they would like for fear of compromising their other responsibilities. Several respondents also said that their Library and Information Science programs had not prepared them to conduct instruction. Finally, they tended to believe that colleagues outside the library believed negative stereotypes of librarians, resulting in the librarians’ work being poorly understood by other members of their college/university.

Walter (2008) acknowledged that the small study could serve only as a basis for future research on the professional identity of academic librarians. However, this small-scale qualitative study largely conformed to what Julien and Genuis (2011) found in a large-scale survey of academic librarians in Canada. The majority of respondents described information literacy as central to their identity as a librarian, but like Walter’s interviewees, identified several challenges that they confronted as they tried to serve effectively in this role. Participants reported feeling underprepared for their work as an instruction librarian and believed that frequent changes in technology made teaching difficult. The results of this survey are consistent with a previous survey (Julien, 2000) in
which librarians described similar challenges that impeded their work in information literacy instruction.

The participants in Walter’s (2008) research spoke of frustrations in balancing their instruction work with the rest of their responsibilities. Sare et al. (2012) echoed this concern. Sare et al. interviewed twelve new academic librarians in Texas who had worked for 6 to 24 months in their first professional position. Participants recounted their route to their work as librarians and said they enjoyed the serious nature of the work and research conducted in the library. However, the participants also identified daily tasks not requiring their professional skills and labeled those as frustrations that got in the way of their real work as academic librarians. While they did not focus solely on instruction, the participants appeared to see research support and education as the real, professional work of librarians. Other responsibilities, including work required to earn tenure as a librarian, were considered burdensome.

In addition to the challenge of balancing job roles, teaching for academic librarians seems to bring with it a sense of anxiety. For some librarians, this is tied to their perceived status as librarian teachers. Davis (2007) surveyed members of the Information Literacy Instruction (ILI) listserv and found that most (74%) looked forward to their opportunities to engage in teaching. However, many experienced physical symptoms of anxiety when teaching. The occurrence of anxiety was more prevalent
among those who described themselves as bothered by perceived stereotypes of the profession. It should be noted, however, that Davis did not attempt to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference in the rate of anxiety symptoms between the two groups.

Austin and Bhandol (2013) explicitly turned to the question of librarian identity in their case study analysis of two experienced librarians who had taken on a greater teaching role over the course of their careers. Throughout an academic year, the librarians were interviewed about their history and experience with teaching information literacy. The narrative descriptions revealed participants’ “librarian identity” or “the way in which [their] work as and sense of being a librarian” (p. 22) influenced their approach to new teaching responsibilities. Both participants mentioned that they had not thought of themselves as teachers. And yet, they thought that their teaching work was a natural extension of their work as librarians, just on a larger scale. While they had previously taught students at a reference desk, they engaged in the same sort of work in the classroom.

**Multiple identities for academic librarians engaged in instruction.** The research described here indicates that there is not a clear consensus among academic librarians about their role as teachers of information literacy even as many indicate that it is an important part of their work. Furthermore, continued changes in higher education
and the information environment will likely mean continued debate over the appropriate role of the academic librarian in the future. Individual librarians report feeling a sense of conflict between their job duties related to instruction and their other professional obligations. Such internal conflict is unlikely to be abated as each library and university moves forward and seeks to meet the diverse needs of students and attend to external demands. These factors indicate that, for librarians, there might be a sense of conflict among the multiple identities.

Put in terms of Scott et al.’s (1998) structuration model of identification, academic librarians who identify as teachers of information literacy use that identity as a structure to actively identify with that role. The structure brings with it a sense of rules and resources that allow librarians to engage, develop, and maintain an identification system. However, with the multiplicity of roles in which an academic librarian can be engaged, and the continued debate about the best way to proceed in a turbulent environment, it appears that there might be a challenge for librarians who must navigate multiple identities.

Given that communication is the way through which an individual expresses and constructs identity (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002; Larson & Pepper, 2003), it is likely that academic librarians engage in communicative practices to help them navigate this terrain.
This study is an attempt to build on previous literature surrounding communication and multiple identifications by examining this phenomenon among librarians.

Research Questions

This study is addressing the following research questions:

1. Do academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction identify with organizational targets?

2. How do academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction navigate their potentially complex work-related identity or identities?
Chapter 3: Methods

In the previous chapter, the literature review led to posing two research questions related to the identity of and identification of academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction. This chapter describes the methods employed for investigating those questions and provides the rationale for the research design choices.

In this chapter, I introduce the constructivist, grounded theory-based approach that informed sampling, data collection, and the development of the interview protocol and data analysis. I also discuss my own role in the research process via a standpoint statement. From there, I describe the specific procedures for identifying and selecting participants using Lindlof and Taylor’s (2011) “maximum variation” (p. 113) technique for a small initial sample and the use of theoretical sampling once data analysis began. I then outline the online interview process, and provide a justification of the specific decisions made regarding procedures for the interviews and protection of participant privacy. The chapter concludes with a description of the data analysis process, which deployed a constant comparison methodology, and the ways in which the analysis was used to develop proposed explanations for the phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2014; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).
A Qualitative Approach to Studying Identification

Some research on organizational identification has sought to quantitatively measure the phenomenon via scales such as Cheney’s (1982) Organizational Identification Questionnaire or the six-question measure of Mael and Ashforth (1992). Such measures are useful for developing a better understanding of how identification is related to organizational or individual factors through statistical analysis of the identification score with measures of additional variables. It is important to remember, however, that identification is a process rather than solely an outcome (Scott et al., 1998). Therefore, qualitative research that examines the ways in which individuals understand and construct their identifications within an organization are valued for their ability to illuminate these processes in ways that standardized scales cannot.

Examples of previous research using this approach include Kuhn and Nelson (2002), who analyzed interviews to discover the discursive resources that employees used to make sense of a controversial event in their workplace through the lens of their identity. Larson and Pepper (2002) also used interviews to find out how employees identified with an organization during and after a major change in orientation. In both cases, extensive interviews and qualitative analyses were employed to explore identification processes among the participants.
Grounded Theory and Constant Comparison Methods

Glaser and Strauss introduced grounded theory in 1967 as a description of the methods they adopted in their study of dying in hospitals. Since then, grounded theory has been widely adopted as a method of study in qualitative research, although Glaser (1998) maintained that grounded theory can be used with other types of data as well. Grounded theory methods appeal to researchers because these methods provide “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing” data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Researchers using a grounded theory approach often generate mid-range theories grounded in data, rather than more formal, grand theories that offer explanations across social situations but are not grounded in data. This study does not seek to offer a mid-range theory of organizational identification given the small sample size and focus on a single profession. This study does, however, seek to use the grounded theory approach and constant comparison method of data analysis to develop a proposed understanding of how study participants identify with organizational targets and navigate work-related identities.

The wide adoption of grounded theory methods has led to some variations. Most research falls into one of three approaches: objectivist, post-positivist, or constructivist (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Objectivist and post-positivist approaches often assume that there is an identifiable reality that can be located through the adoption of
standardized research methods. The present study takes a constructivist approach, which Charmaz and Belgrave described as emphasizing ways in which “participants construct meaning and actions” (p. 349), while also recognizing that the data is influenced by the setting in which the data is collected and the researcher’s own understanding of the research process and concept being studied. The constructivist approach also guides a researcher who engages in interviews to collect data. Interviewers using this approach seek to help the participant explain how he/she understands a situation and shed light on the rules that govern the situation about which he/she has been interviewed (Charmaz, 2006).

Charmaz (2014) described grounded theory as a “constellation of methods” (p. 14) that can be applied flexibly to a wide variety of studies. That said, Charmaz also emphasized the following as the essential components of grounded theory:

1. Concurrent collection and analysis of data;
2. Analysis that focuses on “actions and processes rather than themes and structure” (p. 14);
3. Constant comparison of data;
4. Development of conceptual categories out of the data;
5. The development of “inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis” (p. 14).
**Researcher Standpoint**

All researchers come to their work from a personal standpoint that influences the research process. In particular, their background and assumptions inform their choice of research questions (Olson, 2011). This is certainly the case for me. I am a Reference & Instruction Librarian at Ohio University and a subject liaison for several schools in the University’s Scripps College of Communication, a position I have held since 2008. As I read more about organizational identification, I began to think of my workplace and work experiences through the lens of identification and identity.

Like many libraries, my own has been through major changes in the last decade, including a growing emphasis on information literacy instruction by librarians who serve as subject liaisons. Subject liaisons (also known as bibliographers or subject librarians) are librarians who focus on a particular department at their college or university and develop the library’s collection of books and other resources. In addition to developing managing the collection, subject liaisons provide information literacy instruction for students in that discipline and consult with students and faculty members who have individual research questions (Jaguszewski & Williams, 2013). Many subject librarians, however, occupy other roles within their libraries. They are catalogers, for example, or manage the library’s electronic resources. This presents a challenge for some subject librarians who end up navigating two or more different areas of responsibility in their
work. In addition to serving as a liaison, for example, I provide general reference assistance via desk and online reference hours and manage the library’s social media presence. At times, it can be difficult to balance these roles and decide how much time and personal resources to devote to each. Throughout my career I have felt varying levels of personal commitment to each of these roles, and I began to wonder whether other librarians felt this same conflict.

No doubt this experience influenced my decision to examine the instruction roles of librarians and find out how other librarians navigate their own work-related identities, especially given the increasing emphasis on information literacy instruction within academic libraries. As I have conducted research for this project, however, I have recognized that I should be wary of letting my own experiences turn into assumptions about other librarians. While I have personally struggled with managing multiple roles within my library, for example, not all of the participants in this study reported the same problem. While we can never truly escape the experiences that shape our thought processes, I have tried to be cognizant of these assumptions and how they might influence my decisions about methodology and interpretations of the data I have collected.
Participants

Participants for the study are academic librarians in the United States or Canada who were, at the time of the research, engaged in teaching information literacy. Volunteers were solicited via the Information Literacy Instruction (ILI) email list maintained by the American Library Association and sponsored by the Instruction Section of the ACRL. The list is an active site of daily discussion about the theory and practice of information literacy instruction. Academic librarians frequently pose questions to the list about best practices, new ideas for teaching, and the best ways to address work-related problems. I sent a recruitment email (see Appendix A) to the list on Monday, September 30, 2014. Volunteers filled out an online form (created using Qualtrics survey software, see Appendix B) with their contact information and background information. I used this information to build a diverse initial sample.

Sampling. Users of grounded theory are encouraged to use theoretical sampling rather than attempting to gather a representative sample of the population under study for the purposes of generalization (Charmaz 2006, 2014). When using theoretical sampling, the researcher engages in an ongoing process of data collection and analysis, selecting
participants who will allow him or her to further develop and refine theoretical categories as those categories emerge from the data (Oktay, 2012).

To that end, this study used a two-stage data collection process, beginning with a “maximum variation” initial sample and then continuing to build the sample using theoretical sampling and initial data analysis. Volunteers from the ILI listserv completed a form indicating their type of college or university, years of experience in information literacy instruction and how much time per week they spent on information literacy instruction or related tasks. This background information was used to build a diverse sample of librarians with a variety of backgrounds and experiences working in information literacy instruction.

**Type of college or university.** In a discussion of the communities served by academic libraries, Budd (2012) noted that different types of schools have different priorities and that these priorities will determine the type of support the library provides for the campus community. Information literacy instruction is one of the areas in which this is the case. Some libraries, for example emphasize undergraduate instruction by generalist librarians. Others focus on upper level instruction conducted by subject specific librarians who specialize in a particular discipline. Developing a sample with participants from different types of schools ensured that the responses came from a wider range of lived experiences with information literacy instruction in a greater range of
institutional settings. Volunteers were asked to indicate the highest level of degree offered at their institution (less than a four year degree, bachelor’s degree or a doctoral degree).

As discussed in chapter two, individuals are active participants in the process of identification. Nonetheless, there are organizational factors that can influence their identification with their work related roles or the organization. The type of information literacy instruction program might play a role in the way that an individual instruction librarian thinks about his/her instruction work and identifies with that role. The highest degree offered at a university does not provide a direct indication of the type of information literacy instruction program, but seeking librarians from different types of schools should increase the likelihood of finding participants with different types of institutional experiences.

**Previous experience.** In the previous chapters, we saw that the definition of information literacy has evolved over the last two decades and is currently in the process of revision. Given this ongoing evolution, those who have worked longer as instruction librarians would have had more direct experience with the evolution of the concept and
its application to their work. As previously discussed, tenure with an organizational target (including profession) is not automatically tied to identification (Scott et al., 1998).

There is evidence that tenure can influence identification in some cases and can influence how employees think about their relationship with their organization. For example, employees who have worked for a long time in a particular organization might reflect on their experience and consider their tenure as indicative of their tie to the organization (Cheney, 1983b). Scott (1997) also found that tenure was related—along with other variables—to identification with organizational targets in a geographically dispersed organization. Volunteers were asked to indicate how long they have worked as an instruction librarian, including both their current library and any previous employers. The volunteer form used the following categories: less than 2 years, 2-5 years, more than 5 but less than 10 years, and more than 10 years. Initial sampling included librarians with a wide variety of tenure as instruction librarians.

**Instruction and other work.** Academic librarians—particularly those at smaller schools and libraries—often serve in a wide variety of roles in their organization (Budd, 2012). The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction manage their work-related identities. Therefore, it was useful to begin the research among participants with varying degrees of instruction as part of their regular work. Participants with a lower level of time spent on
instruction were likely to have other roles in the library that demanded their time and influenced their identification with instruction work. Volunteers were asked to indicate how much (as a percentage) of their work each week is devoted to information literacy instruction. This percentage includes not just direct instruction time, but time spent preparing for instruction or working on organizational tasks related to instruction. The initial sample included librarians who spend varying levels of time engaged in instruction work.

**Limitations.** Unfortunately, real-world constraints arose when working with study participants. While several members of the initial group of volunteers were librarians at colleges offering two-year degrees, this group was the smallest of the volunteers in terms of type of school. I contacted all of the librarians at two-year schools, but unfortunately, none of them responded to my first request to meet for an interview; as a result, my initial sample of 13 participants did not include any librarians from this demographic. Librarians from doctoral granting institutions dominated the initial sample (9 of 13) while the remaining four participants were librarians from four-year schools.

**Theoretical sampling.** I began analyzing the data as soon as the interviews were completed and transcribed, moving between interviews, transcription, and analysis throughout the analysis stage of the project. I had hypothesized that librarians with different levels of experience teaching information literacy, at different types of schools
and who spent different amounts of time per week engaged in information literacy instruction might show different expressions of their work-related identities and different strategies for navigating their work-related identities. Had this been the case, I planned to use the initial analysis to return to the list of volunteers and seek out additional participants in the relevant categories to develop further understanding of the differences among these different groups of librarians.

However, initial analysis did not show major differences in the experiences of those librarians at different types of schools, with different levels of experience in information literacy instruction, or with varying levels of time spent on information literacy instruction each week. I came to this conclusion through using the qualitative analysis software Dedoose (described below) to compare responses to similar questions and on similar themes that arose across interviews. Dedoose allowed me to examine the codes that had been applied in initial analysis and see whether there were differences based on the different demographic variables. Again, there was no evidence of variation based on background variables.

After making this determination, I continued to schedule interviews with the remaining volunteers and did not specifically seek out participants with any particular background experience, with one exception. As previously mentioned, librarians at two-year schools proved more difficult to schedule interview times with compared to their
peers at four-year or doctoral degree granting schools. I contacted the volunteers from two-year schools a second time before contacting other volunteers. This resulted in adding two librarians from two-year schools ending up in the final pool of volunteers.

**Interview Protocol**

The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews conducted in an online Adobe Connect meeting room. Interviews are a valuable tool for understanding how an individual understands and experiences the world around him/her and how he/she perceives his/her own actions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

**Interviews using grounded theory.** Charmaz (2014) advocated using intensive interviewing practices. In an intensive interview, the researcher focuses on the phenomena being studied but also leaves room for further discussion based on the participant’s description of his/her experiences. This provides the participant space in which to construct his/her own understanding of the events or experiences that he/she describes. Interviewers should not expect to follow a rigid schedule of interview questions for each participant nor will each of the interviews take the same amount of time. A semi-structured approach was taken with the interviews, with a pre-determined list of potential questions (see Appendix D) and follow up probes serving as a guide but not a dictator of the interview process (Cassell, 2009). The questions were open-ended so
as to allow each participant to describe his or her own experiences in as much detail as possible (Charmaz, 2006).

**Online interviews.** I conducted interviews with librarians from across the United States and Canada using the Adobe Connect software for online meetings (see Figure 1). In recent decades, researchers have begun to use online communication technologies to study both the communication that takes place online as well as offline phenomena among participants who are geographically dispersed (Salmons, 2012). Online interviews can be conducted in both synchronous and asynchronous communication patterns using a variety of communication technologies, such as text-based chat rooms, videoconference tools or “immersive 3-D environments” (Salmons, 2012, p. 3). Researchers using such methods, however, must address additional concerns related to participation and privacy.
Figure 1. Screenshot of the Adobe Connect meeting room with the researcher’s video feed displayed.

Technology access considerations. No research setting should be considered neutral, but for online methods, researchers must consider the unique role that technology skill and access play in the collection of data (Seymour, 2001). While many people in the United States now have access to the Internet, access and use are not universal nor are they even. The most recent data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2013) showed that 87% of Americans use the Internet. However, 97% of those aged 18-29 reported that they use the Internet, compared with only 57% of adults over 65. Access to Broadband Internet connections is still only at 70% of US-based adults. In this case, there
are differences in access based on location, with 74% of those in suburban locations having a Broadband connection at home, compared to only 60% of those in rural locations (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2013). In addition to concerns about access to an Internet connection, researchers must also consider the role of equipment access and technical ability. For a synchronous interview, the participant must either have equipment for audio/visual connection or be able to type quickly enough to answer questions in a timely manner and engage in conversation with the interviewer (James & Busher, 2012).

While online interviews offer the ability to connect with participants regardless of location, these statistics indicate some sobering limitations that should be considered in designing the research process. Adobe Connect offers the ability to “meet” with other users via audio and video in a way that closely approximates a face-to-face interview (Hanna, 2012), as well as a text-based chat room for discussion. However, a participant’s ability to join an online conversation can be limited by his/her computer and typing skills or access to high-speed Internet or audio and video equipment. In order to avoid unduly influencing the participant pool based on these limitations, participants were asked to choose their preferred method of communication, with audio or video communication serving as the chosen method when participants did not have a preference (following Hanna). Most participants ultimately chose to communicate via an audio or video
connection \((n = 12)\), although some did opt \((n = 6)\) for a text-only interview. I used the Captivate screen capture program to record the audio or audio and video feed of the interview. I downloaded the audio files for transcription and used the Express Scribe software to playback the audio for transcription. Text-based interviews generated their own transcripts for analysis. Interview time for audio or video-based interviews ranged from a minimum of 15 minutes and 38 seconds to 36 minutes and 31 seconds. Text-based interviews did not have time stamps that provided an exact time measure, but tended to take approximately an hour from start to finish.

**Protecting participant privacy.** Conducting research in an online environment also brings additional concerns about privacy and the confidentiality of participants. Such concerns can be even greater than is true for offline interviews (Seymour, 2001). In the years since Seymour wrote about these privacy concerns, we have seen increasing coverage of privacy issues related to online communication and no end of embarrassing incidents for celebrities and everyday citizens alike who unwisely or unwillingly shared information on the Internet. While the research topic in this study is not inherently sensitive in nature, participants might have disclosed information about their work experiences or employer that they would rather not see shared with others, at least not with a personal identifier attached.
Following James and Busher (2012), I conducted the interviews and stored the files on my own laptop rather than a university-issued device. Keeping the files on my own computer prevented unintended access by others, including IT administrators who might have rights to use or inspect the researcher’s University issued computer. The following measures were also implemented for protection of participants’ privacy:

- Only the participants and I had access to the Adobe Connect meeting room.
- I used a screencasting program (Camtasia) to record the interviews on my computer. Adobe Connect can record sessions in the meeting room, but files are then stored on the University’s Adobe Connect server. This made them potentially accessible to IT administrators who run the service.
- I cleared the Adobe Connect chat history after each interview, removing any text based discussion or the interview transcript of those participants who opted for the text-only option.
- Pseudonyms are used to describe the individual participants throughout this thesis. The participant list linking pseudonyms with participant contact information was stored only on my personal computer.
- Because email addresses, particularly those issued by employers, often contain identifying information, emails from participants were copied to a
separate file (using the pseudonym) on my own computer and deleted from my Ohio.edu email account (from both the Inbox and Trash folders) within 48 hours.

**Data Analysis**

While described as a separate section here, the use of a constant comparison methodology dictates that data analysis should not be considered a separate process from data collection. I began analyzing the interview data as soon as I had finished transcribing the first interview and continued moving between transcription and coding throughout the process, comparing new interview data to the codes and categories that had already begun to emerge.

**Member checking.** Charmaz (2006, 2014) noted that theoretical sampling also includes the possibility of returning to previous participants to collect further data based on analysis of the initial data and the development of theoretical categories. Member checking can be used to give participants the opportunity to confirm whether the analysis fits with their experiences. Member checking can also generate additional data, as participants are encouraged to think about why their experiences do not fit with the categories that have come out of the initial analysis. Charmaz (2014) shared the practice of two researchers who would gauge the enthusiasm for the theoretical categories during member checking and use “bland agreement” as an indication that “their categories have
not penetrated the core of the participant’s experience” (p. 210). At the end of their interview, I asked participants whether they would be willing to respond to additional questions or requests for confirmation via email, and all agreed that they would be willing to receive follow up contact for member checking.

After analyzing the initial interviews, I returned to the first 13 participants and posed the questions outlined in Appendix C. I asked the participants to reply with their answers to two questions about my initial observations. These replies became additional data for use in further analysis.

**Software used.** Computer software can be used to facilitate the analysis of qualitative data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I used the Dedoose web-based software for analyzing the data collected in this study. Dedoose offered the ability to code the transcripts and write memos that were linked both to the codes and to specific excerpts from the transcripts. Once data was coded, I pulled up each excerpt that was associated with a particular code. This allowed for comparison of the results across transcripts and comparison of the text associated with related codes as I decided whether or not to collapse codes into a larger category.

**Initial coding.** Initial coding refers to the process of closely analyzing the text, line-by-line, providing a shorthand description of “what [the] data are about” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 111). This close reading ties the researcher to the participants’ words rather than
the researcher’s interpretation of those words (Glaser, 1998). Charmaz (2006, 2014) recommended keeping codes concise and using gerunds to describe the action taking place in the data. By closely examining the participants’ words, the researcher can better delve into the participants’ understandings of their experiences. Researchers can also choose to note “in vivo” codes, or those that come directly from the participant. These codes can sometimes prove to illustrate those terms that have an assumed definition within the population or capture the participant’s experience in a way that proves useful for developing theoretical codes.

During the initial analysis of each interview, I closely reviewed all aspects of the text and coded the participants’ entire responses regardless of obvious implications for the questions under study. This close analysis provided me with a wide range of analytic areas to explore as I returned to the data. The qualitative data analysis software Dedoose allowed me to return to each code and examine the excerpts associated with each code as I began to refine my categories and narrow in on those analytic categories that were most relevant to the topic at hand.

Glaser (1998) argued that the rigor of the grounded theory method comes from the constant comparison of data. Comparison goes on throughout the data analysis process, first between individual pieces of data during initial coding and then between the grounded categories and new data that are added to the sample (Charmaz, 2014). Beyond
the initial coding stage, the researcher zeroes in on the categories that appear most frequently or that appear to be most significant to the research questions. Charmaz cautioned against simply choosing the most frequently used codes and moving on. Instead, comparison should continue with the researcher determining how well his/her initial codes fit the data and further refining them as appropriate.

**Analytic process.** Once I had completed the initial analysis of the interviews, I began to look at which analytic codes occurred most frequently and which were most salient to the research questions. The initial analysis left me with 368 codes. I exported the list of codes to a separate document from Dedoose so that I could go through the entire list of codes and determine which merited further examination.

In some cases, I found that I had used multiple codes to explain a very similar process and decided to collapse these answers into a single analytic code. For most of the other codes, however, I had to decide whether to include the code in my secondary analysis or put the code aside as not relevant to the research area. Codes that remained were organized into a hierarchy that demonstrated their relationship to other codes. This hierarchy became the basis of my theoretical categories.

I imported the new list of 94 codes into a new Dedoose project. In this project, I re-coded all of the interview transcripts with the new code list. This second round of
analysis began to demonstrate how the participant data fit into the developing theoretical categories and facilitated even further analysis in some areas.

After completing the secondary analysis, I looked at all of the excerpts associated with each code and compared the answers. In some cases, further refinement was necessary based on the range of experiences within that category. For example, 12 of the participants described communicating with their supervisor to help them navigate among their various job duties and responsibilities. Comparison of these answers, however, revealed several different types of communication experiences with the participants’ supervisors (further explained in chapter 4).

**Memo-writing.** A core task of the grounded theory researcher is to write analytical memos as he or she analyzes data. Memos serve as the link between the collection of data and the production of the final research product (Chamaz, 2006, 2014). Charmaz advocated frequent free memo writing to help the researcher understand his/her analysis of the data and begin to define the categories that emerge from his/her data. Memos can serve as the basis for further analysis as well as the beginning of formal writing related to the research project, especially as the memo becomes more in-depth through the continued analysis of data.

I wrote memos about the data and the trends that I saw in the data throughout the analytic process, both in the computer software that enabled the bulk of analysis as well
as in a log of activity where I noted my own interpretations of the data. These notes ultimately helped to describe the identification processes described by participants and became the basis of chapter four.

**Summary**

This chapter has provided the research plan and rationale used to address the study’s research questions. Because the research questions center around the process of identification, the study employed a qualitative approach to examine how individual academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction make sense of their work-related identities and the communicative processes they use to negotiate potentially conflicting identities. Grounded theory underpins the study, informing choices related to sampling and data analysis, including the use of the constant comparison methodology. This chapter has focused particular attention on the specific issues that come from the use of online interview techniques, including addressing the additional steps that must be taken to protect the privacy of participants. In the next chapter, I describe the research participants and present the results of the qualitative data analysis.
Chapter 4: Participants and Identification Experiences

[Information literacy instruction is] the centerpiece of my identity. It's the most important thing. Um, because that's what connects me to student learning and that's really what I'm most passionate about and most excited about. –Fiona

In the quote above, Fiona, one of the participants in this study, responded to my question about the importance of instruction work to her identity as a librarian. Fiona’s experience mirrors that of most of the participants in this study: she considered information literacy instruction to be a central component of her work-related identity and saw her instruction role as her connection to the student learning process. In this chapter, I examine, in detail, the identification experiences of academic librarians engaged information literacy instruction and the strategies that the study participants used to manage their complex work-related identities.

In the previous chapter, I detailed the process for recruiting participants, conducting in-depth online interviews and analyzing the data stemming from those interviews. In this chapter, I describe the characteristics of the study participants in terms of experiences in information literacy instruction and the types of schools at which they work. I also review the career paths that brought the participants to academic librarianship and information literacy instruction, as these experiences prove useful in understanding the motives that underpin the participants’ own experiences. I then turn to
the first research question posed at the end of chapter three and present the results of the
data analysis that answer that question and indicate that academic librarians engaged in
information literacy instruction identify with their roles as instructors and that this
identification is tied to their identification with their library. From there, I examine the
results in terms of the second research question and examine the processes used by
academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction to navigate their work-
related identities.

Study Participants

There were 18 participants in this study, all drawn from the volunteers solicited
via the ILI listserv. Participants are listed in Table 2.

Participant demographics.

On their volunteer form, participants indicated the number of years that they had
worked in information literacy instruction and the highest degree offered at the college or
university at which they worked. Of the 18 participants, three had worked in information
literacy instruction for less than two years, while eight had two to five years of
information literacy instruction experience; two had more than five but less than 10 years
of experience, and five had worked in information literacy instruction for more than 10
years.
Table 2

Participant Demographics and Interview Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>IL Experience</th>
<th>Highest Degree Offered</th>
<th>Interview Method</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>36m 13s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernadette</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>36m 31s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>25m 49s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>35m 01s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>19m 12s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>34m 27s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>19m 30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>22m 50s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Less than 2</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>15m 38s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>Less than 2</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>22m 57s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Less than 2</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>25m 09s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>20m 38s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Less than 4</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ursula</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>Less than 4</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While I sought to develop a sample of participants with broad variation in terms of the highest degree offered at the participants’ college or university, ultimately half of the participants (n = 9) were from schools offering doctoral degrees. It proved harder to find participants from community colleges or schools offering a less than a four-year (n = 2). There were few librarians from colleges offering less than a four-year degrees in the initial group of volunteers. Ultimately, two librarians working at two-year institutions
agreed to participate. Seven of the participants hailed from a school offering the Bachelor’s as their highest degree.

**Job roles.** While all of the participants held positions that involve information literacy instruction, their job titles and the descriptions of the work they do placed them into four different categories within their organizational hierarchy: individual contributors, middle managers, solo librarians, and library directors. The largest group of participants fell into the individual contributors category ($n = 11$). All of these librarians described public service roles without supervisory or coordinator responsibilities. Five of the participants in this category mentioned subject-specific responsibilities or liaison roles. The other six librarians in this group held public service or instruction-focused roles that did not require them to liaise with a particular department or discipline.

Five participants’ job titles and descriptions of their responsibilities qualified them as middle managers. They supervised or coordinated the work of other librarians as part of their regular job responsibilities. One participant was responsible for coordinating the work of the reference department at her library, while the other four participants in this group oversaw instruction departments or instructional activities within their library.

Two participants described themselves as library directors. Both engaged in a wide range of activities within their library as well as providing leadership and supervision for an entire library staff. Their accounts of the libraries they directed
indicated that both libraries were small with a small staff size. The limited staff size meant that both directors were still directly involved in the instruction work conducted at their libraries in addition to their administrative responsibilities.

Finally, one participant was a solo librarian at a virtual library. This librarian worked at a branch campus of a four-year college in which the library was a space with computers. The library offered students access to electronic resources, and the participant helped students retrieve physical materials via an Inter Library Loan system. While she conducted reference and instruction work, she also had to manage the more administrative aspects of the virtual library, including “doing the library cards, [and] tracking down people who have overdue books and fines.”

**Career paths.** I asked the participants to describe the path they took to becoming an academic librarian. The participants’ stories provided insights into the personal interests and motivations that ultimately drove their actions at work. The participants’ paths to librarianship varied, with some coming from previous careers in unrelated fields.
and others coming from graduate programs outside of library studies or directly from undergraduate programs.³

**Previous careers.** More than half \((n = 10)\) of the participants worked in an unrelated profession before moving into librarianship. The most vivid description of this situation came from Catherine, who spent many years working as a waitress in high-end restaurants. After purchasing a home, Catherine became involved in the local community and was asked to be a trustee of its public library. She doubted her ability to handle that role, telling the librarian “I can’t be a trustee; I’m a waitress.”

In the end, however, she did become a trustee and even began seeking grants for the local public library to rebuild its reference collection after a fire. After several years of this volunteer work, she decided, “this is really cool; I could be a librarian.” Catherine then pursued an Associate’s degree and transferred to a university that offered a dual Bachelor’s and Master’s degree program in library studies. During her degree program, she found an internship at the university library at which she still works, many years later.

³ Two of the participants who chose to use the text-only interview format are not included in these categories. I discovered after saving their transcripts that Adobe Connect could only save 250 lines of text at a time. Once going over the allotted number of lines, the earlier lines were deleted. The question about the path to librarianship came early in the interviews and their answers were lost when I deleted the chat history from the room.
Catherine was not alone in leaving a career outside of libraries in order to become a librarian. When asked to describe their route to librarianship, participants recalled previous work in a wide range of industries and organizations. Eric, for example, worked at an environmental non-profit before researching librarianship as a second career. Bernadette had been a tenured professor of communication before a move with her family brought her to a new line of work in academic libraries. Renee recounted a series of unsatisfactory jobs she held before a career aptitude test pointed her in the direction of librarianship.

**Previous graduate programs.** Several participants came to librarianship from a graduate program in a field outside of library science. While this experience does not necessarily preclude a previous career, none of the participants in this category described work that preceded their academic pursuits. Two participants left their previous graduate programs after earning Master’s degrees. Viola recalled taking a paraprofessional job in an academic library after finishing a Master’s level program, where she “met people enrolled in library school. After hearing about their coursework and the field, [she] was excited about the MS program and the career/field in general.”

Nina also left a graduate program after the Master’s degree, knowing that she did not want to continue to the PhD program. Instead, she recalled:
… it was suggested that I look into academic librarianship, and I did. And I was like “oh, this is great, I’ll get to publish and still be in, you know, an academic environment and also get to do some teaching and work with intellectual materials.”

Olivia came to the field while completing a PhD program. During the course of the program, she decided not to pursue becoming a “career academic.” She worked in the library during her PhD studies and ultimately decided to pursue a library degree after finishing the PhD, having “figured it couldn’t hurt if I wanted to be an academic librarian anyway.”

For all three of these participants, becoming an academic librarian allowed them to continue working in an academic environment outside of the more traditional career path from a PhD program to pursuit of a tenure-track faculty position. In this case, their career paths might be seen as an example of the “alt-ac” (alternative academic) movement in action. The alt-ac movement encourages graduate students to seek non-traditional positions after their graduate work and to consider career paths beyond the tenure-track. Many on the alt-ac path still want to be involved in research and to teach, but do not find the tenure-track lifestyle to be a good fit or feasible given the limits of tenure-track position availability in many fields and geographic locations (Howard, 2013).
From undergraduate programs. Four of the participants decided to pursue a Master’s degree in library science directly from their undergraduate program or without an intervening career path or graduate program. Gina completed studies without knowing what she wanted to do for a career and ran into a tough job market. She eventually landed part-time work at her alma mater. This work intrigued her enough that she decided to pursue an online graduate program and become a full-time academic librarian. Ursula also began working in a library during her undergraduate years and worked in an Inter Library Loan position after graduation. A mentor at this library encouraged her to enroll in a library science graduate program. Fiona and Dorothy both decided to pursue the graduate degree directly from undergraduate graduation. Dorothy’s undergraduate advisor recommended the career choice, whereas Fiona saw library school as a chance to “stay here longer and figure out what [she] wanted to do.”

Identification with Organizational Targets

The first research question for this study asked how academic librarians, engaged in information literacy instruction, identify organizational targets. Overall, the participants in this study identified with their role as information literacy instructors as well as with their library. Evidence of identification included the participants’ self-presentation as teachers, their choices about how prioritize instruction-related work, their commitment to instruction-related organizational priorities, their active outreach to
promote information literacy instruction and their pursuit of professional development opportunities to further develop their teaching skills.

**Self-presentation.** An individual who identifies with an organizational target is more likely to describe himself/herself as a member of that group (Cheney, 1983b). The participants demonstrated frequent self-description as teachers in both their personal and professional lives when I asked how they describe themselves and their work to someone they have just met. Furthermore, the participants also said that they deliberately sought to distance themselves from images of librarians that did not incorporate the teaching role.

Eric, for example, said that he usually describes himself as “…librarian at ah, at a small university,” and if asked what this work entails, he explains that “…my job is to help teach college students how to use information and use the library’s resources. I very much put it in a teaching perspective.” Similarly, Dorothy said “I usually, when people who are not librarians ask me what I do, I usually say that I do, I teach students and I answer their questions about research.”

Self-descriptions of participants’ work was often coupled with an attempt to distance themselves from perceived stereotypes of librarian work that left out the teaching role that they valued. Viola, for example, said that she puts “an emphasis on the teaching if I’m trying to relate to a group of teachers.” She later explained that she thinks that she meets “a lot of professors who are surprised about the teaching aspect of library
work.” Sandra also used such situations to show the teaching role of librarians, citing a particular stereotype:

Well, the stereotype is that librarians sit around and read books, of course, all day.

So, um, I guess I do tell people a lot that I do mainly a lot of teaching and working one on one with people individual teaching, that that’s kind of the bulk of my job.

Nina also sought to address the stereotype of the librarian who spends their day reading books. She said that her first response to a question about her work from a non-librarian is to say: “I don’t sit all day reading the *New York Times* bestsellers, ’cause I don’t think I’ve read fiction in like ten years.” In the same vein, Jane explained she often encounters non-librarians with beliefs like “you must love to read; you shelve books.” To such statements, Jane said she replies with “well, I’m not that kind of librarian” and then explains her focus on her teaching work. “What I do is that I’m a teacher. And that what I teach are library skills, information literacy.” Catherine even recounted a case where she used her information seeking skills to help her brother locate regulations related to his work in nuclear pharmacy. After that, she said, “in my brother’s eyes, I changed from somebody who reads books all the time, to someone who really knows how to access information.”
It might come as a surprise that the participants chronicled spending so much time describing their work in terms of what they do not do. However, as Pagowsky and Rigby (2014) noted in their introductory essay to their edited volume on *The Librarian Stereotype*, librarians have spent a great deal of time examining the stereotypes of their work in popular culture and what those stereotypes mean for library users. Salinero and Grogg documented the history of this concern with stereotypes in their 2005 annotated bibliography of research on the librarian image and stereotypes of librarians. Some research has focused on the depiction of librarians in popular culture, such as Radford and Radford’s (2003) examination of the stereotypical portrayal of librarians in the film *Party Girl*. Other research in this arena has focused on the ways in which librarians can confront these stereotypes, such as Stout’s (2004) exhortation that librarians “be smart, not pretty” (p. 50) to confront the limiting stereotypes that threaten the existence of librarian work.

As they described their work in contrast to the perceived stereotypes of their profession, the participants in this study disidentified with what they consider to be the public image of the academic librarian, perhaps due to a long history of perceived misconceptions of library work. As discussed in chapter two, disidentification occurs when an individual defines himself or herself as not being a part of a particular group (Elsbach, 1999). In this case, participants who described addressing librarian stereotypes
seek to distance themselves from the stereotypical librarian. It was not clear from the
interviews whether the participants believed that any group of librarians exhibited these
stereotypical behaviors or even had exhibited the behaviors in the past. Regardless of its
place in reality, however, resisting this stereotypical identity mattered to many of the
participants in the study.

**Priorities.** A structurational understanding of organizational identification tells us
that individuals use their identities as resources in their daily lives. Identities serve as a
resource that helps an individual make sense of their lives and in turn, reconstruct that
same identity as a structure (Scott et al., 1998). For the participants in this study,
identification with their role as instructors and as instructors at their particular library can
be seen in how they chose to make decisions about their daily work life that prioritized
this work. The participants in the study frequently described making the decision to
prioritize their instruction work with and without the direction of their supervisor,
indicating that they had come to identify with this aspect of their work lives.

Several participants recounted situations in which other work took a back seat to
their instruction-related responsibilities, sometimes in drastic ways. According to Eric:

One thing I need to learn is to never set deadlines for non-instruction related
projects in September, because then I end up doing so much instruction through
the month of September that I have no time to do anything else.
Renee, a director of a small library, listed each of the “hats” that she wears in her role as director and concluded that she balances a stack of 14 such hats. Despite the multitude of responsibilities, she considered “instruction and other services to the community” her top priority. She continued: “if ProQuest has to wait for their money another week because a student needs help or a faculty member needs an instruction session where my reference librarian is unavailable, so be it.” Dorothy explained that she ends up focusing on preparing for instruction sessions and spending less time on other tasks “because I feel like that’s kind of the face of the library.” Olivia noted that instruction work seemed to expand to fill her schedule and that she “definitely had to get more aggressive about time management and prioritizing.”

Interestingly, one participant (Heather) indicated she did not particularly like or identify with the teaching role of academic librarians. However, even she said that she placed instruction-related tasks at the top of her to-do list, stating: “I think I probably prioritize the instruction the most. Like if an instructor wants me in their class, I kind of do whatever I can to kind of move other things around or move other meetings or whatever.”

Organizational prioritization of information literacy instruction. As they discussed their instruction work, several of the respondents indicated that they consider their instruction work to be important not just to them, but to the library. Such statements
demonstrate that the personal prioritization of instruction work comes from identification with both the role and the organization and that their understanding of what it means to be an instruction librarians in influenced by their place of work.

For example, Megan, a solo librarian at a branch campus library, explained that her instruction work was important to her identity because “most of the students know me best as an instructional librarian.” Lucy, who occupied a middle-management position at her library, valued her library because “there's a real emphasis here throughout the library on educational initiatives. Everybody, it feels like, really sees themselves as really a vital part of the educational enterprise of the university. And it's a very student-friendly environment, very student-focused.” Dorothy mentioned that she would have liked to prioritize other work that she considered her “own projects,” but did not because I understand that some things that are kind of a larger library goal need everybody's help to be accomplished. So, I understand that and I like to, I like to contribute to the library as a whole, so I guess, really, I can’t complain too much. Heather, who preferred reference and marketing work to conducting information literacy instruction also acknowledged that she prioritized instruction work because it was important to her library. She did not consider instruction work to be very important to her personal identity, but noted that information literacy instruction was part of how students understand the library:
I think that it’s a very important part of my identity as recognized, like as students recognize me as having come to their class. And kind of, connect me with “oh, there’s that librarian that was in our class; she’s sitting at the reference desk.” Whatever, in that sense. I think that it’s key. Because that’s one of the ways students kind of get introduced to the library and feel more comfortable about the library.

Megan, Lucy, Dorothy and Heather are not alone among academic librarians in considering information literacy instruction to be an important library priority. In the most recent Ithaka Library Survey of academic library deans and directors, a majority of respondents indicated that “providing reference instruction to undergraduate classes” was a high priority (Schonfeld & Long, 2013, p. 33). Among the behavioral outcomes expected to coincide with organizational identification was that an individual will make decisions about his/her work life based on the values and premises preferred by the organization (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). It would seem, based on their prioritization of instruction work over their other, sometimes preferred, responsibilities that the participants in this study expressed identification with their organization as well as with their teaching role, though the relationship between these two identification targets is not clear.
Outreach. One of the challenges of information literacy instruction is that, in most cases, the instruction does not occur in a traditional for-credit classroom setting. Instead, librarians establish relationships with faculty members and instructors who do teach classes involving research assignments and work with the classroom instructor to develop relevant information literacy instruction in the most appropriate form. Ultimately, the librarian is often at least partially responsible for creating his or her own instruction work either as an individual instruction librarian or as part of a campus-wide push to promote information literacy skill development for students.

Bernadette’s job required her to conduct outreach among faculty members to help students better meet the university’s stated information literacy general education outcome. Lucy’s library had spent time in recent years developing targeted faculty outreach programs focused on developing research-based assignments and courses that she thought helped them to develop a more sustainable model of information literacy instruction at her school. Fiona’s library had even sought to stop offering the one-shot instruction sessions for introductory level classes. Instead, she worked with the school’s Center for Innovative Teaching to develop a consultation program in which instructors could meet with a librarian to discuss integrating information literacy instruction into their classes or assignments.
Much like their prioritization of information literacy instruction work over their other work-related tasks, these outward-facing experiences support the notion that the participants see their work as part of the overall student learning process at their college or university. The ways in which they organize their own work to conduct outreach outside the library in pursuit of information literacy instruction opportunities serve as an example of identification with their role as instructors. As the participants described their experiences in navigating different job-related responsibilities (the strategies for which are described below), it was clear that, while they worked with colleagues and supervisors to set priorities and manage goals, their own day-to-day work was largely their own responsibility.

Bernadette, for example, speaking with me via a video feed in the Adobe Connect room showed me the white board on which she managed the range of projects on which she was working. Other participants described the daily triaging of their work, keeping in mind their organizational and personal goals. Ursula described this situation as deciding “whatever is critical to the next, hour, minute, day” while Jane referred to this strategy as determining “what is the stuff that needs to happen today for all the balls to remain in the air?” Overall, I saw participants who strongly prioritized library instruction and were engaged in major outreach beyond the library to better integrate information literacy
instruction, indicating that they were organizing their daily lives around this role, in
cooperation with their supervisor and of their own accord.

**Professional development.** Several participants sought out opportunities for
professional development and communication with the larger library instruction
community in order to gain additional knowledge about the learning process and improve
their own teaching abilities. Two participants described attending Immersion, a series of
teaching improvement programs offered by the ACRL. Selection for an Immersion
program is competitive, and those who earn a spot win a week-long information literacy
and teaching-focused professional development opportunity (Association of College and
Research Libraries, 2014a). Fiona attended one of the ACRL Immersion programs. This
program introduced her to the theories of learning that she now uses in her own
instruction initiatives and in training other librarians.

For other participants, professional reading has been a way to develop their own
knowledge of teaching and learning. Viola, for example, named several blogs that she
follows that encourage her to “think about educational theory.” Renee had become
interested in learning theory and used her limited free time to read materials on those
theories “for fun.” Another participant indicated that she had taken formal coursework in
education during their library science program, and that the coursework had improved her
grasp of pedagogical approaches.
Participants who recounted professional development in the area of teaching improvement generally indicated that these were self-directed learning opportunities and not training plans offered or enforced by their employers. Viola noted that she “loved” a particular blog about instructional design. Tammy “chose to do that on my own” when she described reading more about theories of adult learning in her free time because her library did not require much in the way of teaching experience or knowledge from its employees.

As with the prioritization of instruction work, these efforts at personal professional development should be considered evidence of identification with the instruction role and a method by which organizationally desired behavior can be accomplished without compulsion. The participants’ libraries did not require that they seek out these opportunities, and yet the participants spent their free time and, in some cases, a week during the summer learning how to improve their teaching. Certainly, the organization would benefit from this professional development, and might have provided support for the participants to attend. But the actions appeared to be largely self-directed by the study participants.

---

4 According to the Immersion website, attendance at the Assessment track Immersion program, registration costs $1375 for ACRL members and $1475 for non-ACRL members. This price does not include travel or lodging.
**Extra hours.** Over the course of their interviews, several of the initial participants indicated that they worked more hours than their contracts required. Once I noticed this trend, I began to ask the rest of the participants about this behavior during the interview process. I also included a question about working beyond the participants’ designated hours in the member checking email (Appendix C) to find out more from the participants for whom the topic did not come up in our initial conversations. Many of the participants stated that they did indeed work outside of their regular hours, but for a variety of reasons and with different personal rules. I did not ask the participants whether they were considered salaried employees, a situation that might complicate the definition of extra hours. But the participants who did discuss working extra hours clearly considered their work hours to be more than was necessarily expected by their job contracts.

For some participants, working extra hours was largely a practical matter necessitated by a lack of uninterrupted time in which to do their assigned work. Renee lamented that she did not want to take her work home with her, but did “sometimes . . . out of guilt.” Bernadette considered working at home to be a part of life in the academic environment, as she recalled her previous work as a tenure-track faculty member:

But I don't know, as an academic librarian, I feel like that's part of academia. I remember when I was teaching in communication, I mean your work is never
done, you know. And I always had to laugh when people said, "oh, you get your summers off." Well, when you're a professor, not really.

For other participants, however, working in the library or on the weekends was at least partly out of enjoyment of their work or commitment to students. Viola, who said that she had largely cut back on working at home after her twins were born, did recall happily bringing work home “because I wanted to…I like my work and I liked working on it.” Tammy and Sandra both said that they would sometimes respond to student emails after their regular work hours. Sandra empathized with students who emailed her outside of formal work hours, saying that she tried “to think about it from the student perspective. How quickly would I want a response if I were that student.”

Feelings about working extra hours could be complex, especially when participants saw working beyond 40 hours as part of the library culture and expected by colleagues and supervisors. Nina clearly appreciated that her work as a tenure-track librarian required her to engage in research and scholarly writing. But she found that this work was largely pushed “to the back burner” during her daily work life and that her evenings and weekends often became devoted to fulfilling this much desired responsibility.

Olivia believed that her library’s culture encouraged her colleagues to work late or on weekends. She often did so herself, even if she felt as though, overall, the library
staff was “encouraged to balance out our time and not overwork ourselves.” In managing her own time, she “tried not to let it get too out of hand” but did work extra hours on projects that were “really important and time-sensitive.” Olivia also described conflicting emotions about working extra hours.

I do feel sort of like it's expected, and I probably wouldn't choose it if it weren't. At my previous position, time was much more flexible and most everyone just kept regular hours, and I did too when I worked there. There's definitely a peer pressure element. But sometimes it really is just that I'm focused on a project, and I'd probably be doing the same thing one way or another.

The participants’ experiences with and feelings about working extra hours show how complicated the notion of identification can be when there are multiple targets of identification.

There is no clear explanation for why these participants decided to do more work than was strictly required. For Tammy and Sandra, responding to emails was a way to support students. Their responses could be considered additional evidence of identification with their student-focused instruction role. For Bernadette and Renee, however, working extra hours was the only way in which they could finish all of their work. Olivia and Nina clearly liked their work, but found that the work experiences at their libraries meant that they worked at home or after hours more than they would like.
In situations like these, it is difficult to tell what identification target may have motivated the participants to engage in this off the clock work, in the way that the employees of the Grameen Bank worked more than their required hours to ensure a high return rate on the bank’s loans in pursuit of organizational goals (Papa et al., 1997).

**Negotiating Complex Identities**

The second research question of this study asked how academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction navigate their potentially complex work-related identity or identities. Most—although not all—of the participants demonstrated a sense of competing demands for their time and/or showed a variety of communication strategies for navigating these conflicts. Participants recounted communication with their supervisors or library administration to help them decide how to prioritize their time given their diverse roles and responsibilities. In addition to their supervisors, however, participants recounted communicating informally with colleagues to set priorities or observing the practices of those around them to decide how to make decisions about their work responsibilities. Some participants found it necessary to set clear boundaries on their work in order to successfully navigate their constellation of responsibilities. Regardless of the specific strategies deployed, the results indicate that the participants used communication to construct their understanding of what it means to be an instruction librarian and to work in information literacy instruction at their library.
Communication with supervisors. As they described the ways in which they navigate among their work-related responsibilities, some participants said that they communicate directly with their supervisor about individual and organizational priorities in order to manage their day-to-day working lives and decide how to organize their time in a way that fits with organization priorities and personal goals. Participants recounted three different strategies that they used in communication with their supervisors.

Setting priorities. As described above, most of the participants in this study tended to prioritize their instruction work over their other responsibilities both out of personal identification with that role and due to identification with the organizational prioritization of instruction work. In some cases, communication with supervisors became the basis for this decision-making, indicating that contact with supervisory staff helped to communicate an organizational commitment to instruction work and the participants’ understanding of what it means to be an instruction librarian at that particular library. Bernadette described her communication with her supervisor as follows:

Let's see, at work, um yeah I have a very supportive boss, you know who works with me on a lot of projects so when I, after I talk to him it's oftentimes like, he will say "just don't worry about this right now" or give me ideas for how to maybe simplify some things that I overcomplicated in my head.
Jane also found that her supervisor “has been very helpful in terms of figuring out what needs to happen and how that sort of fits in with the overall library strategic direction and things like that.” Her supervisor helped her to think about short and long-term goals and how those goals relate to her daily tasks. For Gina, both a supervisor and mentor helped her to figure out how to “balance scholarship with instruction.”

The participants who reported working with their colleagues to establish priorities did not usually express disagreement with the outcome of the communication with their colleagues. But at least one found that her supervisor put the kibosh on activities that the participant had enjoyed at work. Renee said that her boss “told me to stop doing things like working on professional writing while on the clock,” and to not work on her (librarianship-related) blog at work, a demand that Renee found “ridiculous.”

Communication with a supervisor was not solely the transferring of priorities from the supervisor to the individual participant. Ursula communicated with her supervisor about her work priorities by refusing to do work at home, noting that: “if I’m doing it at home, there is not acknowledgement that the job is too big for one position [person].” She discussed her decision with the library Dean (as well as her colleagues) in hopes of making job expectations more manageable.

**Solving problems.** In addition to helping participants establish priorities, supervisors served as a resource persons for problem solving. Megan, the solo librarian
working on a branch campus and in a virtual library, reported that she would ask her supervisor (who worked on another campus) for advice when “the campus wants me to do more than I think is appropriate.” Megan kept the supervisor “informed and aware of what is going on” presumably so that Megan could solve the problem of mismatched expectations with the campus bureaucracy. Fiona observed that, while her own supervisor has been rewarded for her competency with an increasing level of responsibility, that situation made communication with Fiona difficult. Fiona was still able to speak with her supervisor when problems arose:

Well, my supervisor is incredibly, incredibly talented and so she is also sort of like the reward of being good at your job is like, "here's more stuff for you to do" so she's also really overwhelmed. I do ask her for advice. Um, when I have a problem or a challenge that I'm facing. Because she's incredibly savvy, like organizationally and like she just knows a lot about campus culture and things like that, so um, so I do ask her for advice when I'm in a jam.

Lucy’s supervisor also helped her to navigate library expectations for Lucy’s role and protected her time for information literacy instruction when others expected Lucy to take on additional roles:

I think that my, uh, my career has been um, different, different from a lot of other librarians in the sense that, in my first job, I was hired to be the instruction and
assessment coordinator, so even when, um you know, there was some pressure from, like administration to add collection development or other duties to my job, my department head was very protective and said "nope, Lucy was hired to do instruction and instruction coordination" so she really protected my time from other competing things.

Allowing flexibility. The final way participants described communicating with their supervisors about managing their varying roles was in frequent communication about those responsibilities that allowed the supervisor to encourage flexibility about deadlines and about the ways that participants managed their daily work. Eric described his own supervisor as “flexible and understanding.” His supervisor, he said, understood when “we’re going to have to change the deadline on this because I’ve had x and y keeping me busy” as long as he [Eric] kept her [his supervisor] informed about x and y. Viola’s supervisor was also understanding about the strategies Viola used to manage her time. Viola felt like it would be acceptable to tell her supervisor “if [she] had to be a few days late with budget cuts.” Tammy’s library had recently acquired a new director, and Tammy greatly appreciated the director’s openness to conversations about priorities and ways in which the library staff members wanted to work. In particular, Tammy believed that the director would be amendable to altering the instruction librarians’ responsibilities to allow them to be “really, truly an instruction librarian.” This flexibility meant that the
participants’ and their supervisor worked together to construct a shared understanding of what it meant to be an instruction librarian at their library, rather than the supervisor handing down their vision for the participant to follow.

**Communication with colleagues.** Aside from their communication with their supervisors, participants in this study described communication with their colleagues as a valuable resource for helping them navigate their varied job responsibilities. Again, though, there were different communication strategies employed by the participants.

**Observing expectations.** For some participants, communication with colleagues took the form of observing the ways in which the participants’ colleagues navigated their own competing demands. While Dorothy said that she was “just trying to deal with [competing priorities] on [her] own,” she watched the ways in which other colleagues managed expectations:

…but I kind of do what I can and then gauge the responses of people, I guess.

Based on, if, you know, people are really upset that I didn't get to what they wanted me to, then I know maybe I should prioritize that a little more highly. Gina also observed her colleagues to help her understand how much time and resources to devote to her professional service obligations and understand organizational expectations:
I also observe everybody else in the library's patterns in terms of, you know, how active are they in national service organizations. How active are they in local stuff? You know, how much scholarship are they currently pursuing, what's their service load?

**Setting priorities.** Similar to their communication with their supervisors, the study participants also reported that their communication with colleagues helped them to understand and develop priorities. Jane, who was working in her first professional library position, found that colleagues helped her understand what she could reasonably accomplish:

So I've learned a lot from them in terms of like, what needs to happen when, what are like, actual, like right now priorities, what are some priorities longer term? I think my, like my natural inclination is like "I have to do everything right now" and they are helpful in reminding me to pace myself.

The flat structure at Nina’s library meant that she did not consider herself to have a supervisor beyond the library Dean. Instead, she turned to colleagues to help her navigate different priorities and responsibilities:

Yeah, I've definitely asked multiple people that question. I don't really have a supervisor. I guess the Dean is kind of my supervisor. We have kind of a flat structure. We don't really have much of a hierarchy. But, yeah, I have asked uh,
the person who coordinates instruction, you know, like how much time do you anticipate this will take. Everyone kind of approaches collection development differently. And so, um, I'm just trying to take in as much as, as much advice as I can and then figure out what will work best for me.

**Boundary setting.** Along with communicating explicitly with their colleagues and supervisors about priorities and expectations, participants also communicated boundaries with other members of their library or college/university. This helped them to define where their roles, or the roles of their library, ended and prevented them from taking on too many unrelated responsibilities. Boundary setting does not always come easily, however.

Renee experienced frustration at making some changes at her library when she began working as a director. She found that some proposed changes engendered resistance “because we’ve always done it that way, so why fix it if it isn’t broken” attitudes. By the time of our interview, Renee had realized that she needed to decide which changes were worth the “battle,” but she had instituted some boundaries, which she described as:

Renee: No, I won’t do scavenger hunts.
Renee: No, I won’t teach citation in info lit sessions (I know that’s a bit controversial, but I’m not the one who’s grading it and I am poop at anything but APA).

Fiona’s library had recently set boundaries about conducting one-shot instruction sessions for introductory level classes. Their alternate approach is described as an example of the outreach focus previously mentioned. As Fiona described it, however, not everyone appreciated the library’s newly found boundaries:

Yeah, I mean, there was so much hate! You could not believe. I was really like, “whoa everybody!” Did anyone think that those were working? Because we're pretty sure that nothing was happening as a result of those, so what we've tried to do is just to set it up and, you know, like subject librarians are still out there doing one shots with upper division courses. But, um, like introductory speech and rhetoric and the intro to composition classes that we used to meet with a lot. We just provided all the resources to the associate instructors so that they could teach the information literacy lessons and that seems to be going really well.

Fiona’s story, as well as those of the participants described in this section indicated that communication is a valuable tool for the participants as they sought to decide how to organize their daily activities and define the boundaries of their work. In cases where there were no organizational rules to define how the participant would
organize their work life and set priorities, they followed the lead of their colleagues or worked together to construct a shared understanding of what an instruction librarian would do at their library.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the results of this study and proposed answers to the study’s research questions. The first research question asked how academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction identify with organizational targets.

The participants in this study showed identification with their instruction role in the ways in which they described their work, through their prioritization of instruction work over other responsibilities, in their outreach to campus partners to promote information literacy instruction, and through voluntary professional development activities to improve their own teaching practices. Librarians in the study also indicated that they considered information literacy instruction to be important to their library, and their actions to orient their daily life to meet these priorities demonstrate identification with their organization. Many of the participants in this study described working what they would consider to be extra hours. Their motivations for doing so were complex, and each explained his/her personal rules about what work he/she would do at home. The ambivalence some of the participants expressed about working extra hours revealed the complexity of identification in light of multiple identification targets. Some of the
participants worked extra hours out of enjoyment of their work, while others did so simply to finish all of their work or because it was a part of the organizational culture to do so.

In the final section of this chapter, I reviewed the communication strategies that participants used to help them manage their various work-related responsibilities and construct an understanding how a librarian at their library should think of their work. Colleagues and supervisors both worked with participants to help them develop priorities and establish their day-to-day practices although, in some cases, this took the form of observation rather than direct communication between the participant and his/her colleagues. Participants also described cases in which they needed to set boundaries with their supervisor or with the campus community in order to do effectively conduct their work.

In the next chapter, I offer a discussion of how the results presented in this chapter inform our understanding of organizational identification among academic librarian engaged in information literacy instruction. I also explore any limitations in this research and offer suggestions as to directions for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the organizational identification of academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction. Specifically, I sought to understand how academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction identify with organizational targets and how they navigate their work-related identity or identities given that many of them occupy a variety of roles within their organizations. I pursued answers to these two research questions by conducting semi-structured online interviews with academic librarians from the United States and Canada. I used methods from grounded theory methodology in my data collection and analysis, seeking to develop an answer to these questions from the information provided by the participants.

In this chapter, I briefly review the results of the study related to each research question. From there, I turn to a discussion of the ways in which the results of the study inform an understanding of organizational identification among academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction and examine the implications of these findings for academic libraries and librarians. In this chapter, I address some limitations of the study that should be considered in assessing the results, and I provide some directions for further research that will help to illuminate some of the further questions that arise out of this study.
Research Question 1

The first research question asked how academic librarians come to think about their work-related identity or identities. To answer this question, I examined the participants’ motivations for becoming involved in academic librarianship and information literacy instruction. Few participants indicated that they were drawn specifically to work in academic libraries. Instead, they appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the student learning process in a higher education setting. Analysis of the data also showed the variety of ways in which participants demonstrate identification with their roles as instruction librarians. First, when discussing their work with non-librarians, participants frequently said they describe their job as teaching and purposely seek to counter perceived misconceptions about the work of academic librarians. Second, most of the participants engaged in a range of work aside from their teaching responsibilities, but tended to prioritize their instruction-related responsibilities, even when they would personally prefer to do other work. Third, the participants were generally outwardly focused and sought active campus collaboration in order to improve and promote information literacy instruction on their campuses. Fourth, this prioritization of instruction work often came from an understanding of the importance of instruction work to the library in which the participant worked, indicating that the participant identified with their employing organization. Fifth, participants engaged in voluntary professional
development activities in order to develop their knowledge of learning theory and

teaching practices. Finally, sixth, participants explained that they often put in extra hours,
sometimes motivated by enjoyment of their work and sometimes as a byproduct of the

confluence of time constraints and organizational expectations. Taken together, these
results indicate that the participants in this study show strong identification with their
information literacy instruction role and that their identification with that role is also tied
to identification with their employing organization.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question of this study asked how the participants navigated
their various work-related identities. Analysis of the interview data showed that the
participants used communicative strategies to navigate among their work roles. The
participants recounted communication with their supervisors as one of the main vehicles
used in deciding how to balance their different roles and responsibilities. Supervisors
helped the participants to set priorities about which tasks to address in the near future,
assisted the participants when problems arose with the participant’s work and negotiated
flexible deadlines and expectations to help the participants complete all of their work.

Along with their supervisors, the participants described communication with their
colleagues as a tool for navigating their different work-related identities, although this
communication could sometimes be in the form of observation rather than direct
conversation. Participants described paying attention to the ways in which their colleagues managed a range of responsibilities and responded to different demands from the organization. This observation helped the participant to decide how they would make their own decisions in these areas. Additionally, the participants reported that they communicated with their colleagues directly when negotiating priorities related to their work and to deciding which work should take precedence in time-scarce situations.

These communicative processes with supervisors and colleagues helped the participants construct a shared understanding of what it meant to be an instructor of information literacy at the participant’s library. This understanding then informed the daily actions of the individual librarians as they made decisions about their work life.

**Discussion**

**Identity as structure.** The results of this study show a range of behaviors among the participants that indicate identification with their instruction role and the ways in which the participants used communication to deal with differing work-related identities. This study drew from a structualational understanding of organizational identification (Scott et al., 1998) in which an individual’s identity serves as a structure. In Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory, structures are forces that enable individuals to engage in
social action. As an individual draws upon these structures in action, he/she reconstitutes those same structures.

Among the participants in this study, identity as an instruction librarian served as a structure that influenced decision-making in both their day-to-day work and their long-range career decisions. A number of the participants indicated that they valued the autonomy allowed by their chosen career and the library in which they worked. And, yet, their actions clearly supported the work of a library engaged in information literacy instruction. In general, participants described themselves as teachers when discussing their work with non-librarians. They engaged in active outreach to support information literacy instruction on campus. Some participants even sought out formal and informal learning opportunities to help them learn more about student learning and pedagogy so that they could better conduct information literacy instruction.

**Implications.** These identification behaviors have implications for libraries in which academic librarians work. Individuals who identify with an organizational target demonstrate a range of behaviors that are beneficial for the organization, such as increased cooperation with colleagues (Dukerich et al., 2002), decreased likelihood of retirement (Gümüş et al., 2012), and exertion of extra effort to help the organization accomplish its goals (Papa et al., 1997). Employees who are identified with an
organization or an aspect of an organization are simply more likely to make decisions in ways that favor the organization’s goals.

For libraries seeking to develop stronger information literacy instruction programs, it is worth considering the role that identification with instruction plays in the day-to-day life of academic librarians. As discussed in chapter two, identification is not applied to an individual by the organization. However, there are organizational activities that can encourage identification with an organizational target, such as engaging in frequent and consistent communication (Ferraris et al., 1993) about the library’s values and commitment to information literacy instruction. Such communication is particularly important if the library seeks to develop a more robust or effective information literacy instruction program or to advocate for the better integration of information literacy into the campus learning environment.

In an essay devoted to examining the barriers to developing strong information literacy programs in academic libraries, Bruch and Wilkinson (2012) identified organization-level challenges that prevent some libraries from building the type of information literacy instruction program they would like to see. These challenges have included administrative decisions to hire librarians without training in pedagogy and appointing librarians to instructor coordinator positions without endowing the coordinator with the power to enact organizational change. Bruch and Wilkinson pointed to Oakleaf’s
(2011) assessment of academic library mission statements as further evidence of unclear communication about the library’s role in information literacy instruction. Oakleaf found that only 20% of libraries in the Association of Research Libraries listed teaching as part of their organizational mission statements. While many of the libraries’ mission statements indicated support for the teaching and learning process, most statements did not position the library as an active participant in the learning process.

Mission statements are only one aspect of an organization’s communication about information literacy instruction. They can shed light, however, on the ways in which organizational discussions of information literacy fall short of supporting the identification of librarians with their teaching role. By and large, the participants in this study viewed themselves as active participants in the student learning process related to information literacy, a feeling that contradicts the mission statements of many academic libraries. At the very least, the mission statement does no favors for academic librarians who are engaged in outreach designed to develop information literacy instruction on their campus, as the mission statement communicates to the rest of the college or university a role for librarians that is at odds with how the librarians conceive of themselves.

Beyond the formal communication of mission statements, academic libraries can also foster a stronger sense of identification with the instruction role by examining organizational communication channels. DiSanza and Bullis’s (1999) research on Forest
Service publications and identification showed that the messages contained in the organization’s in-house publications influenced how individual employees identified with the Forest Service. As library administrators or public relations staff members communicate with librarians and the campus community about information literacy instruction, communicators should be aware of the ways in which the messages can influence the identification of librarians. For example, a library communication about the number of information literacy instruction sessions can communicate that the value of librarian work lies in the *volume* of students taught rather than the *outcomes* of those instruction sessions for students.

Academic library administrators interested in fostering a stronger sense of identification with the instruction role might also consider how the organizational structure and practices support the individual academic librarians. Gibney et al. (2011) found that perceived organizational support was tied to a strong sense of identification among employees. It behooves an organization, therefore, to understand what actions are understood as supportive among employees. Among librarians in this study, support for the librarians’ work often came from communication with the participant’s supervisors, who helped the participant establish priorities and solve problems. But other modes of support might also be considered, depending on the needs of the librarian engaged in information literacy instruction, as these will likely vary by institution.
Additional structures. While the identity of “instruction librarian” was clearly important to the participants in this study, it would be a mistake to consider this the sole basis for action and the only determinant of how the participants thought about their work-related identities. The participants’ experiences show two other types of structures that influenced the development of their identity and identification behaviors. Drawing from Stones’ (2005) outline of a strong structuration approach to understanding action, I argue that we can consider the librarians’ identity as an instruction librarian to be an internal structure, situated in their particular physical and historical context. The participants’ identity is derived from their knowledge of what it means to be an instruction librarian by profession and at their particular institution. As they engaged in action, the participants drew upon the structure to respond to situations in their daily life at each college or university library at which they worked. Analysis of the interview data and the answer to the research questions reveal two other structures that influenced the development of work-related identities among the participants.

Perceived misunderstandings of librarian work. An additional structure that appears to contribute to the development of the work-related identity of academic librarians is the perceived misunderstanding of librarian work. As described in chapter four, many of the participants engaged in behavior that would indicate disidentification with what they considered to be the dominant stereotype of the work conducted by an
academic librarian. When asked how they discuss their work with non-librarians, the participants said they sought to combat stereotypes of librarian work, including the image of the librarian as passively waiting for questions at the reference desk or as someone who spends his/her work time reading. Regardless of whether these stereotypes have ever reflected the work of academic librarians, the fact remains that many of the participants felt it necessary to distance themselves from these assumed roles.

While the participants’ disidentification processes were clearly in response to what they considered to be an external structure—what they thought colleagues, friends and family members thought of their work—I contend that, in Stones’ (2005) strong structuration approach, we would consider this to be an internal structure, in which action is based on the individual’s knowledge of the social context in which they move and helps them to determine how to act in a particular situation, or interact with specific groups of people (O’Reilly, 2012; Stones, 2005). External structures exist independently of the individual actor, and the individual will often feel as though he/she has no power to resist the constraining effects of the structure. In their conversations with non-librarians, most of the participants described exactly that: an effort to resist the constraints imposed by the structure. The participants’ previous experiences interacting with non-librarians had taught them that such interactions often required explaining their actual work practices in order to be understood.
Information literacy instruction infrastructures. A final set of structures that should be considered in understanding the identification of academic librarians is the ways in which information literacy instruction is integrated into the work of the library. What I am referring to here are information literacy instruction infrastructures (hereafter, infrastructures). The participants in this study described a range of types of infrastructures resulting in different teaching formats for the library staff. Instruction formats included “one-shot” instruction sessions in which the librarian works with students during a single course period, optional workshops presented for students enrolled in English courses, online information literacy tutorials, information literacy training for classroom instructors, and even credit-bearing courses in which the librarian served as the instructor of record. Other infrastructures influencing the identification of the participants included the range of job responsibilities and workloads for each librarian, the general education environment, and the ways in which those outside of the library understood library work.

While a few participants held positions solely focused on instruction work, most of the interviewees conducted other work, such as supervising other library staff members, spending shifts at the reference desk or staffing virtual reference services, developing the library’s collection or working on library promotion and advertising. Several of the participants worked in small libraries, which necessitated them taking on a
wide-range of tasks in addition to conducting information literacy instruction. The participants used a range of communicative practices to help them navigate these competing roles and decide how to prioritize their day-to-day work.

Some of the participants commented directly on the relationship between their work environment and how they thought about their identity. Eric, for example, explained that he had deliberately sought employment at his library because he believed that working in a small school would allow him greater interaction with students than he would at a more research-focused or larger institution. In a follow-up email, he commented that he believed his identity “is very much shaped by my place of work.” Gina, who began her library career in what she considered to be a more “traditional/old school/not current” environment eventually ended up working in a library where her colleagues “think outside the building” and develop more effective instruction opportunities for students. Like Eric, she considered her identity as an instruction librarian to have been influenced by her current place of work.

Olivia, who had recently moved to a new library with what she considered to be higher and more stringent expectations for librarians engaged in instructional activities, described her understanding of how the new library influenced how she thought about her work:
But I think even more of it [her ideas about what make for good information literacy instruction practices] came in practice, from being here in this particular library. I think the instruction management folks I work with really model all of those skills very well, and hold them up as something to aspire to, and that's really had a huge impact on me. It's been very inspiring to me to be in a place where library instruction is taken this seriously and held to standards this high.

Olivia was motivated by the library’s instruction environment with high standards and a strong focus on information literacy instruction, even though she admitted that she occasionally felt intimidated about the prospect of actually conducting instruction in this environment. In the cases described here, the participants not only thought of themselves as instruction librarians, but as instruction librarians working within a set of instruction infrastructures. Their organization influenced how they thought about the work that they performed.

In some cases, participants sought to change the infrastructures affecting information literacy instruction at their campuses. Bernadette, for example, had been charged with conducting outreach among faculty members to encourage the integration of information literacy into classes. The outreach grew out of a university-level decision to incorporate information literacy into its general education requirements. Fiona’s library had also made changes in how it approached instruction for lower-level students.
The library sought to replace the one-shot, librarian-led sessions with training opportunities for classroom faculty. The training programs would help the faculty members integrate information literacy instruction into their regular coursework and assignments.

Each library has its own infrastructures for instruction, but regardless of the format of information literacy infrastructures, they have the potential to serve as external structures that inform the action of each librarian. Giddens’ maintained that all social actors retained some measure of power over social structures given that social actors retain the power to “act otherwise” (1984, p. 14) even in situations of great difference in resources among actors, an idea Giddens described as the dialectic of control. Stones’s (2005) model of external structures, however, acknowledges that, in some cases, external structures operate entirely beyond the control of the individual or beyond the perceived control of the individual.

Stones (2005) outlined three properties an agent needs in order to offer resistance to an external structure. Individuals must believe that they have the power or capability to affect change in the situation. Beyond that, they must also have what Stones called “adequate knowledge of relevant external structures” (p. 114) and knowledge about alternate courses of action. Finally, individuals must be able to take a “reflective
distance” (p. 114) from the setting in order to begin to resist the effects of the external structure.

Given these conditions, I propose that the infrastructures that each librarian encounters will be an internal or external structure, depending on each individual’s perceived ability to affect change in the structures. We can see this in the case of Bernadette and Fiona, librarians whose work finds them resisting a current infrastructure. Each sought to mold one information literacy infrastructure at their library into one that is more effective in providing instruction for students. For some participants, the infrastructures proved difficult to resist. Dorothy, for example, found it frustrating that “others in the university [don’t] see librarians very much as teachers” even though she considered herself to be a teacher. Ursula also lamented an organizational structure that limited her ability to conduct effective instruction. The nature of the library in which she worked meant that the three librarians who provided instruction were “spread too thin,” and were not able to effectively engage in outreach about information literacy instruction. As she was not in a position to hire more librarians, Ursula remained constrained by the external structure that was the infrastructure at her library.

The overall information literacy instruction environment at each school is made up of a range of infrastructures that a librarian will encounter as they move throughout their work life. Each individual infrastructure has the potential to serve as either an
internal or an external structure depending on the librarian’s own relationship with that element of the instructional environment. Bernadette, for example, worked to better integrate information literacy into the general education program at her school. However, when it came to her need to take work home in order to complete all of her work, Bernadette considered that to be “a part of academia,” something that could not be changed.

**Implications.** The introduction of the new framework for information literacy for higher education (Gibson & Jacobson, 2014b) offers an opportunity to address the ways in which a library’s infrastructure might be adapted or remain static for the librarians involved in teaching information literacy. As discussed in chapter one, a task force has recently developed an updated definition of information literacy and an associated framework that outlines six threshold concepts related to information literacy. The threshold concepts provide a much deeper understanding of what it means to be information literate than the concepts that had been used in previous standards.

For example, the first threshold concept, “authority is constructed and contextual,” refers to students’ ability to evaluate and assess the quality of information. Since the advent of the Internet, librarians have taught students how to identify useful and credible sources of information out on the Web. Teaching evaluation often meant offering a guide to evaluating information on the web in simple terms like the delightfully
named “CRAP test” (for an example, see Mercer University Libraries, n.d.). These tests provided a handy mnemonic for evaluation criteria, but can be critiqued for oversimplifying the information environment into authoritative sources (those provided via a library subscription) and everything else. This conceptualization of the information world limits the student to the role of consumer of pre-packaged information (Seale, 2013). The new threshold concept, however, addresses concerns about oversimplification by emphasizing that authority depends on the context of information rather than existing independently of a situation (Gibson & Jacobson, 2014b). An information literate student, in this model, should be critical of all sources of information, not just those found on the Internet. In some cases, such as developing news events, the first-hand accounts that are accessible on the open-web are a more valuable source of information than an academic article.

The complexity of learning to identify authoritative sources should make it clear that such a concept could not be taught in a single library-based instruction session. To effectively learn to evaluate information in this model, students would need to encounter the idea in a variety of classroom settings over the course of their college careers. Librarians who seek to infuse information literacy skill instruction into the curriculum will likely need to affect major change in the information literacy instruction infrastructure at their college or university. This will mean ensuring that library staff
members possess the belief that they have the ability to influence how information literacy is thought about on campus. Librarians would also need strong knowledge of information literacy and pedagogical best practices as well as the time, space and ability to reflect on current practices and how their own work can influence the external structures that make up information literacy instruction infrastructure on their campus.

**Summary.** Taken together, the three structures outlined in this thesis offer a model of organizational identity development of academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction. Among the participants in this study, their identity as a teacher of information literacy was largely in evidence, as the librarians I interviewed displayed a wide range of behaviors that demonstrated their identification with this role. As described in Scott et al.’s (1998) structurational model of identification, the participants’ day-to-day behavior was both informed by their identity and served to reconstruct that identity.

Beyond their identity as an instruction librarian, however, I have argued that the work-related identity of librarians is influenced by two other structures that we can understand in terms of Stones (2005) strong structuration approach. The misunderstandings of librarian work was a force that the participants pushed against, seeking to develop a more accurate perception of their work. The participants’ beliefs that they could change these misconceptions indicated that those misconceptions are an
internal structure. The final structure I examined was the information literacy infrastructure at each college or university. Given Stones’ (2005) criteria for evaluating an individual’s perceived ability to resist the constraints of an external structure, I argued that each individual librarian would relate differently to the infrastructure. For those who perceive that they have little control over the infrastructure, it would be considered an external structure. Those who do believe they have the power to resist the constraining effects of the structure would be interacting with an internal structure as they engage in social action.

**Contributions**

In discussing their structurational approach to understanding identification behavior, Scott et al. (1998) called for further research as to the specific behaviors and communicative practices that are tied to individuals’ diverse organizational identities. This study responds to that call by showing the ways in which academic librarians identify with organizational targets. In addition to showing the specific behaviors that come out of librarians’ identification with their instruction role, the study also demonstrated specific communicative practices that librarians use to navigate their different roles and identities that make up their work experiences.

This thesis also brings together Scott et al.’s (1998) structurational understanding of identification with Stones’ (2005) conception of strong structuration. Stones addressed
some of the problematic issues of Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory, namely Giddens’ choice not to incorporate external structures into the theory of structuration. Stones’ (2005) model provides a more nuanced understanding how individuals engage in social action. The model shows how individuals reproduce the internal structures that come from their understanding of their social context. And while Giddens’ (1984) maintained that individuals always have the choice of whether or not to resist the constraints imposed by a structure, Stones’ (2005) model acknowledges that the issue of choice is more complex. There are simply some cases in which an individual cannot resist the effects of a structure without risking his/her ability to realize his/her “core commitments” (p. 115), or the person might lack the power needed to enact change. In such cases, it makes sense to consider the effects of external structures as a setting for social action.

In this instance, I identified two additional structures that influenced how the study participants thought about their organization-related identities. Use of Stones’ (2005) strong structuration model provides a richer picture of the lived experiences of academic librarians and encourages us to consider the ways in which the participants are constrained by those structures and the requirements for individuals to resist those constraints.
Limitations

I came to this research as an insider, or from an emic perspective (Olson, 2011). This perspective and standpoint brings with it some limitations that should be considered when assessing the results of the research. As an insider, I had ready access to members of the target population and was able to easily converse with them about a topic on which we were both familiar. However, as a member of their own profession, there is the possibility of social desirability bias in the reporting of the participants’ experiences.

Social desirability bias is often considered in the case of research on social attitudes about sensitive topics, such as race (Krysan, 1998) or matters of sexuality (Ingold, 2010). According to the theory of social desirability, a participant is less likely to reveal what he/she considers to be socially undesirable attitudes or experiences when asked about them by an interviewer (Wasylkiew, 2007). While the research topic at hand was hardly one of a traditionally sensitive nature, the fact remains that there is a strong emphasis on information literacy instruction within the library profession, as indicated by library deans’ and directors’ prioritization of information literacy instruction in their libraries (Schonfeld & Long, 2014). By the time of the interview, I had identified myself as a fellow librarian with an interest in information literacy instruction. Participants might have been unwilling to divulge ambivalence about information literacy given how important it is to academic librarians in general. That said, most of the participants
demonstrated strong and enthusiastic interest in information literacy instruction, and
named a variety of activities that they engage in that indicate they are truly enthused
about being teachers of information literacy.

Of greater concern are the issues of sampling and the salience of identities in
particular settings. I sought to develop a sample with librarians from a broad range of
personal and institutional backgrounds. I ultimately spoke with librarians who were
within their first few years of professional library work and those who had been in the
profession long enough to take on the role of library director. While the sample was
weighted in the direction of librarians employed at PhD granting institutions, I also spoke
with librarians from two and four-year schools. As discussed in chapter three, initial
analysis of the interview data did not reveal any differences in experiences among the
librarians who worked at different types of libraries or who were at different points in
their careers.

While the participants showed different behaviors that indicated identification
with their instruction role, overall, the group of librarians I interviewed indicated that
they considered their teaching role to be a vital part of their identity as a librarian. While
this paints a picture of a profession dedicated to information literacy instruction and
engaging in daily activities in support of that role, it is unlikely that this view is shared
universally across the profession. Julien and Pecoskie (2009), for example, have argued
that some librarians have not embraced the instruction role and might even harbor hostile attitudes towards their instruction work and the students they ostensibly teach. By seeking participants via a listserv dedicated to discussion of information literacy practice and indicating my own interest in information literacy instruction in the recruitment email, I likely lost the opportunity to speak with librarians engaged in instruction who do not identify with that role.

In addition to the limitations of sampling, the situated nature of identity and identification should also be considered. Scott et al. (1998) argued that identity and identification are influenced by the context in which an individual is located. They cite the example of an engineer who identifies with a production team while working with team and with the organization while planning the company budget with members of the administration. Before and during the interview, I identified myself as a librarian interested in information literacy instruction and engaged in a conversation largely about the participants’ experiences teaching information literacy. This communicative setting might have served to increase the participants’ own identification experiences, a theory borne out by Fiona’s reply to my member checking email.

Before beginning her lengthy response to my questions, Fiona noted that she found our conversation valuable in that it encouraged her to reflect on her own experiences and thoughts about her identity, stating:
I am happy to answer these questions and any others you may have. It's really helpful to me to be participating in this discussion with you, as these are not normally topics that I would time [take] time to think about deeply.

For Fiona, participation in the research process went beyond simply answering my questions about her work, but was also an opportunity to examine her own experiences in light of the research topic. While her fellow participants did not explicitly acknowledge the power of the interview to encourage self-reflection, the other librarians were still asked to think about and discuss their role as an instructor of information literacy as they answered my questions about their work. This setting might have increased the salience of their instruction-related identity and influenced the ways in which they described their behavior.

**Directions for Future Research**

Like many researchers, the process of developing answers to the research questions has left me with even more questions about the process of identification and identity among academic librarians. While this study indicates that many academic librarians who teach information literacy identify with this role, our understanding of this process would be further strengthened by seeking out librarians who are less enamored of information literacy instruction or who do not consider information literacy instruction to be important to their work-related identity. Connecting with these librarians could be
difficult given the current emphasis on information literacy within the profession. Participants are unlikely to respond positively to a call for librarians who dislike their work. Therefore, further research should seek out a range of academic librarians without mention of information literacy instruction for a broader discussion of identity issues. Alternatively, the academic librarians who have either left the field entirely or moved away from instruction-focused roles could be contacted to develop a broader understanding of identification. This option would allow for better understanding of the “back regions” (Scott et al., 1998, p. 314) of the former instruction librarians’ identities or their disidentification with the instruction role (Elsbach, 1999; Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001).

In addition to the limits of library type, the study sample did not seek to address issues of race or gender. Participants in the study were not asked to indicate their gender, but based on the gender traditionally associated with the participants’ real names, all but one of the participants appeared to be women. As a profession, librarianship skews female, with women representing more than 80% of the profession as a whole (American Library Association Office for Research and Statistics, 2012. Beyond the sheer numbers, the profession has long been associated with women, much like other “pink-collar” careers like nursing and teaching, a linkage that has consequences for both men and women who become librarians (Gaines, 2014, p. 85). Research on male librarians
indicated that experienced expectations that they would engage in work tied to their
gender such as heavy lifting or work with computers while also having access to a glass
escalator to leadership positions (Piper & Collmer, 2001).

The profession of librarianship has also come under scrutiny for a lack of
diversity in terms of race or ethnicity, a situation that Bourg (2014) decried as the
“unbearable whiteness of librarianship.” Addressing this lack of diversity, Gonzalez-
Smith, Swanson and Tanaka (2014) used identity theory to examine the ways in which an
individual’s identity as a librarian is bound up with their other social identities, including
race and/or ethnicity. Academic librarians of color must navigate these social identities in
organizational environments in they face racism in terms of institutional values and
expectations or microagressions in daily work life.

I spoke with the study participants at a particular place in time in which true
diversity of gender, racial, ethnic and other social identities are still lacking. Just as the
participants’ understanding of what it means to be an instruction librarian is situated in
their organizational context, further research could explore the ways in which
identification with organizational targets is situated within these broader social issues.
Given that librarianship and teaching, for example, are both highly gendered professions
with both positive and negative stereotypes about women (Gaines, 2014), it would be
worth knowing more about how male and female instruction librarians understand identify with this aspect or their work.

Along with seeking to understand identification among a larger and more diverse group of academic librarians, future research could seek to better understand the relationships between the structures described above that influence the work of instruction librarians. While the results presented here support the idea that these structures influence how academic librarians think about their work-related identity and identify with various targets related to their organization, the results do not clearly show the ways in which the structures are related. Of particular interest to libraries might be understanding how the structure of the information literacy instruction framework influences how academics develop their identity as instruction librarians. This relationship could have implications for the success of an information literacy instruction program and some aspects of the structure might be open to change by the organization.

Conclusion

As I wrote the introductory chapter to this thesis, the group charged with updating the definition of information literacy had just released its first draft of the document, generating great discussion among members of the academic library community. Over the past year, the new framework for information literacy has evolved into a nearly final
form that was presented to the ACRL board at the January 2015 American Library Association Midwinter Conference.

Over the next several years, the profession will likely see continued discussion about the meaning of information literacy and different attempts to use the new framework in practice. My own library has begun very preliminary discussions about what the new framework will mean for our own work. One of the strengths of the new framework is that it emphasizes the fluid nature of the information environment and the flexibility needed to teach information literacy in a wide variety of contexts. Depending on the nature of the course or discipline, librarians will likely approach information literacy instruction in different ways. In some colleges or universities where information literacy is already integrated into general education requirements, librarians will work with administrators and faculty to update standards and expected student outcomes. In other environments, librarians will negotiate individual class sessions with teaching faculty to help the librarian work with students in the most appropriate manner.

Regardless of the format that this instruction takes, the librarians who enact information literacy instruction will be doing so on the basis of their own identity as an instruction librarian. The evidence presented here indicates that this identity is strong among many academic librarians who teach information literacy skills. The study’s results also demonstrate that other factors play a role in the development of librarians’
identity. Many librarians report actively disidentifying with what they believe to be inaccurate stereotypes about their work. Librarians work within an information literacy instruction infrastructure that influences their identity as librarians and how they are able to do their instruction work. As they move forward to deal with the changes associated with the new information literacy framework, libraries and librarians would do well to reflect on the ways in which these structures are developed and reproduced in social action.
References


Budd, J. (2012). *The changing academic library: operations, culture, environments* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: ACRL.


Fay, M. J., & Kline, S. L. (2012). The influence of informal communication on organizational identification and commitment in the context of high-intensity


Gonzales-Smith, I., Swanson, J., & Tanaka, A. (2014). Unpacking identity: Racial, ethnic and professional identity and academic librarians of color. In N. Pagowsky & M. Rigby (Eds.), *The librarian stereotype: Deconstructing perceptions & presentations of information work* (pp. 149-174). Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries


Deconstructing perceptions & presentations of information work (pp. 1-38).
Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries.

certentive control systems: Member identification, empowerment, and the
doi:10.1080/03637759709376418

http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/broadband-technology-fact-sheet/

Journal of Academic Librarianship* 27, 406-411. doi: 10.1016/S0099-
1333(01)00226-9


Pratt, M. G. (1998). To be or not to be? Central questions in organizational identification.
In D. A. Whetten & P. C. Godfrey (Eds.), *Identity in organizations: Building
Publications.


Seymour, W. S. (2001). In the flesh or online? Exploring qualitative research methodologies. *Qualitative Research, 1*, 147–168. doi:10.1177/146879410100100203


doi:10.1080/10510974.2011.630439


Appendix A: Recruitment Email

RE: Seeking research participants on librarian identity

Greetings Colleagues,

I am conducting research on the organizational identification of academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction. The purpose of the study is to better understand the ways in which academic librarians identify with their role as an instructor and how they navigate complex work-related identities. The research is part of my work towards an MA degree in Organizational Communication.

Participants will be interviewed online via the Adobe Connect software. If you choose to participate, you will have the choice to interview via a web cam/microphone or via a text-only chat room in the Connect meeting room. I expect the interviews to take about 30-45 minutes.

Participants must be currently working as an academic librarian and engage in information literacy instruction as part of their work.

If you are interested in participating in the research project, please fill out the form at URL. I will be starting with a small initial sample and contacting potential participants throughout the next several weeks. Please contact me at hagman@ohio.edu if you have any questions.

Thanks!
Jessica Hagman

Reference & Instruction Librarian
Ohio University

MA Student
Communication Studies
Ohio University
Appendix B: Volunteer Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study on the organizational identification of academic librarians engaged in information literacy instruction.

Please fill out the following brief form. My methodology calls for an initial sample of librarians with varying levels of experience teaching information literacy, working in different types of libraries and with varying additional job responsibility. I’ll use the information you provide here to build this initial sample.

I will email you at the email address you’ve provided to arrange a time to meet via the Adobe Connect software.

1. How long have you worked as an instruction librarian? Please include work at any previous positions in addition to your current position.
   a. less than 2 years
   b. 2-5 years
   c. more than 5 years, but less than 10 years
   d. more than 10 years

2. Please indicate much of your work in a typical week is focused on information literacy instruction (including preparation for instruction, direct instruction time, assessment and other administrative work required to support your information literacy instruction)?
   a. Answer 0-100%

3. Please indicate the highest degree offered by the college or university supported by your library
   a. Less than a four year degree
   b. Bachelor’s Degree
   c. Master’s Degree
   d. Doctoral Degree

Please provide your contact information

1. Name (first and last)
2. Preferred email for contact
Appendix C: Interview Schedule

1. Can you tell me about how you came to be a librarian?
   a. And in your current position?
   b. What about the current position appealed to you most?
2. What made you want to work as a librarian?
   a. In information literacy instruction?
3. What do you do at your library in addition to your work in information literacy instruction?
   a. Only ask if their job has other components beyond instruction.
4. How would you describe your work to a person you had just met at a party, who was not a librarian?
5. In your opinion, what makes “good” instruction librarian? Specifically, what sort of practices do they engage in that make them a good instruction librarian?
   a. How do you think you came to know what a good instruction librarian is?
6. What aspect of your work are you most passionate about? Why?
   a. If nothing, what do you enjoy the most?
7. What do you enjoy least about your work? Why?
8. How important would you say your instruction work is to your identity as a librarian?
9. Can you tell me about at time when you had deal with competing demands for your time and how you managed that situation?
   a. How did you decide what to do?
   b. Did you talk to anyone about your decision?
10. Would you say were happy about how this situation turned out? If yes, please think of a time where you were not happy with how the situation turned out? If no, can you think of a time where you were happy with how a similar instance turned out?
11. As a fellow librarian, I know a fair bit about information literacy instruction and how librarians do that work. But my perspective is, of course, limited by my experiences. What do you think I’m missing? Or what should I have asked about?
Appendix D: Member Checking Email

RE: Thank you and follow up
Hello [Participant],

I’d like to thank you again for taking the time to be a participant in my research study on academic librarians identities and identification. Aside from helping me to complete my thesis, the interviews have proven to be a fascinating look at how academic librarians experience and think about their instruction work.

As we discussed in the interview, part of my methodology is the idea of member checking, in which I share initial analysis of the data with participants and ask for feedback or pose follow up questions. I’ve listed a few major observations from the data and questions related to those observations. I would be interested in your thoughts on the observations as well as answers to the questions listed for each. It’s possible we may have discussed these topics already in your interview, but I ask again in case you have anything to add.

- Several participants mentioned working beyond their regular hours, during their lunches or working at home, though they had different personal rules for doing so. Is this something you ever do? If so, is there any particular type of work you do at home or beyond your regular work hours? Do you feel like this is expected of you, or something you do of your own volition?

- Many participants talked about the instruction program in their library and its influence on their own work. This led me to question how much of one’s identity as a librarian is influenced by place of work. Do you think you might think differently about your identity as a librarian if you worked at a different library? Or would it be the same regardless of where you worked? If you have worked in more than one library, would you say that your identity changed at all when you changed libraries?

- One other major observation was that most of the participants described themselves as very interested in student learning and being involved in the learning process, even more so than they described interest in libraries or...
information literacy. Why do you think this might be true? Does this ring true to you, or is your experience different?