

Identity Incentives as an Engaging Form of Control: Revisiting Leniencies in an Aeronautic Plant

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Research has long shown that organizations shape members' identities. However, the possibility that these identities might also be desired and that members might benefit from this process has only recently been explored. In a qualitative study of a French aeronautic plant, I demonstrate how an implicitly negotiated leniency between management and workers around the use of company materials and tools, on company time, to produce artifacts for personal use, enhances workers' identities. This leniency applies to a select subset of workers and enhances their desired occupational identity. This practice produces an engaging form of control that relies on management's selective allocation of identity incentives. These findings document a previously overlooked type of control—one reliant on desired identities that engage rather than constrain. Desired identities, specifically previously enacted ones, constitute potent incentives for inducing efforts or actions.

Key words: informal behaviors; leniency; control; identity; aeronautic industry

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Organizational research has long shown that organizations can shape members' identities (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Van Maanen and Schein 1979), but the notion that members might also desire to enact these same identities has recently attracted renewed attention. Literature on organizational identity has perhaps embraced this notion most fully. The high degree of identification that members exhibit with given organizational identities (Albert and Whetten 1985) sets the ground for such a desire to emerge. Studies of members of rural cooperatives, a direct sales organization, or a feminist rape crisis center all point to instances where members eagerly adopt organizational identities (Foreman and Whetten 2002, Pratt 2000, Zilber 2002). Similarly, members of occupational groups are shown to readily engage with organizations that foster their occupational identity (Becker and Carper 1956, Fine 1996, Hughes 1971). Studies of accountants, engineers, and high-tech professionals, for instance, suggest members' pursuits of fostered and desired occupational identities (Covaleski et al. 1998, Kunda 1992, Perlow 1998). As an example, the enactment of an engineer's identity is both encouraged by an employer and also desired by engineers who want to be part of this occupational group (Kunda 1992). The Internet start-ups in New York's Silicon Alley, prior to the burst of the tech bubble, perhaps best illustrate the combined power of desired identities. Start-ups often employed workers who both desired to be seen as high-technology workers and were eager to identify with their employers' "rebellious" organizational identity (Indergaard 2004). The start-ups encouraged the emergence of those two identities, but members also desired them. Thus, members often look

forward to enacting the very identities that the organizations are trying to shape.

Given how attractive such identities can be to members, there is surprisingly little research on the selective use of desired identities as a form of control. The theoretical notion that identities can serve as incentives for action has been formulated but not explicated or detailed. Harrison White proposed, somewhat boldly, that "identities are the only source of intentional efforts" (White 1992, p. 236). He added that identities and control were inherently intertwined. Similarly, George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton argued that, alongside monetary compensation, "the ability of organizations to place workers into jobs with which they identify and the creation of such identities are central to what makes organizations work" (Akerlof and Kranton 2005, p. 11). Though they do not spell out what such identities might entail or the processes whereby actions might proceed from identities, these authors theoretically advance the notion that identities might function as incentives in organizations. The empirical evidence of the importance of identity incentives as a form of control within organizations is, however, scarce and typically confined to settings that offer only inspirational identities, such as social movements, public agencies, and highly regarded organizations (such as Amway). The literature on social movements explicitly discusses "identity incentives" when specifying elements that engage participants in such movements (Friedman and McAdam 1992). The "collective identity" of a social movement organization is assumed to drive its members' engagement (p. 157). The appeal of "identity pursuits" is also invoked in a study of public managers that finds

that managers participate in “activities that are primarily about the pursuit of identities rather than specific organizational outcomes” (Brower and Abolafia 1997, p. 305). Brower and Abolafia employ the term “identity rewards” and posit that some types of work (and presumably organizations harboring such work) offer greater identity rewards than others. Likewise, in a study of a highly esteemed direct sales organization, the esteem in which most members hold their employer explains their engagement (Pratt 2000). Together, these examples suggest that organizations that are predicated on identity use the engaging aspects of identity as a form of commitment and control. Yet the existence—beyond these types of organizations—of similar forms of control is rarely documented and not well understood.

Conversely, in literature focusing on control, when the question of members’ identities is discussed, studies mostly downplay the attractiveness of these identities. Instead, organizations are depicted as imposing identities on their members (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). When members’ desires for these (controlling) identities are noted, they often get discounted as “noise” within the broader findings. For example, in a study of self-managed teams that shows how the pressure to conform to the team’s identity (as a high-performing group) drives member behavior, the potential desirability of this identity to members is only noted in passing. Early on during the implementation of these teams, the author remarks, “The team decided to work late; members valued their commitment to a quality product delivered on time to their customers more than their individual time” (Barker 1993, pp. 421–422). By the end of the analysis, the idea of a desired identity (to see oneself and be seen as committed to quality) is trumped by notions of organizational constraint. More generally, the fact that much of the research on control draws on the more critical sociological tradition may explain this relative neglect of desired identities in this field of research. This tradition—dubious of any benefits that organizations might provide—appears at odds with the notion that organizations might shape identities in a direction desired by members. Charles Perrow perhaps summed up this discomfort best when questioning whether individuals are meant to “find themselves in organizations” (Perrow 1986, p. 60). That individuals might find desired identities in organizations, specifically corporations, seems dissonant with the classic literature on control.

This study juxtaposes literatures of occupational identity and organizational control to explicate how identity incentives—defined as the selective positive arousal of identity feelings that induce action or motivate effort—can be used to exert control. Whereas many identities can induce action or efforts, occupational identities are especially promising because individuals are attracted to them and often rely on them to guide their

work (Durkheim 1964, Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Although previous research has posited that identity incentives can be used to regulate behaviors in organizations, members’ potentially positive experience of such control has been left largely unexplored. Moreover, the exchanges between management and employees that create such a form of control reliant on the employees’ desired occupational identities remain largely unspecified.

Incentives for Enacting Desired Identities

The theoretical justification for considering identity as a source of control lies in the value and benefits that individuals derive from their social identities. Identity here refers to a dynamic social process by which meanings are developed and maintained through social interactions (Cooley 1902, Gergen and Gergen 1988, Goffman 1967, Mead 1934). Individuals have been shown to rely on identities to help determine their behaviors, including how they select activities, determine the frequency of their engagement in activities, and allocate their time (Ashforth and Mael 1989, Callero 1985, Stryker and Serpe 1982). In work settings, occupational identities help individuals gain insight into their central and enduring preferences, talents, and values (Schein 1978), all of which help determine actions and efforts.

Research indicates that individuals have a vested interest in enacting desired occupational identities at work, ostensibly with the hope of using those identities to be or become who they desire (Kahn 1990, Nelsen and Barley 1997, Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). A desired identity is defined as an individual’s desired sense of self, in the eyes of both the self and others (Farmer and Aguinis 2005, Schlenker 1985, Swann et al. 2002), in any domain of life. For instance, an individual may harbor a desired occupational identity, a desired family identity, and a desired religious identity. As an illustration, junior consultants and junior investment bankers rely on “provisional [occupational] selves” to help them decide “what behavior to try again, reject, or modify” when developing in their career (Ibarra 1999). The “consultant” or “banker” they “want to become” guides these decisions (p. 767).

But identities are not necessarily stable; they require that individuals find enactment opportunities to create and sustain the identity. Chess players, for instance, rely on tournaments or interactions with other players to sustain their identities as competent players (Leifer 1988); cooks perform in front of others as who they want to be (Fine 1996); and funeral home directors become who they are through interactions with families of the deceased (Barley 1983). Also, the ways in which identities get enacted entail “situated differences” that suggest individual agency in the construction of identities (Fine 1996). Identities might appear stable and homogenous, yet they require repeated work to be sustained. Given the

relational, enacted, and constructed nature of identities, it comes as no surprise that individuals value opportunities to enact desired occupational identities. Such pursuits become even more central in light of the result that *not* finding opportunities to behave in accordance with one's desired identity leads to changes in the salience of such an identity (Serpe and Stryker 1987). Thus, not only is the enactment of desired identities valued, but it also appears necessary to the preservation of those identities.

The study of identity incentives as a form of control calls for finding organizational interactions that allow for both the exercise of managerial control and the engagement of participants' occupational identity. Management needs to be in a position to grant and withdraw opportunities for the enactment of occupational identity, and individuals must in turn desire the identity enacted through these interactions. Many such practices exist—for instance, when managers distribute work among team members or when managers discuss opportunities for promotion with their subordinates—but the practice of managerial leniency is also ideal for such a study in that tacit or explicit managerial approval is a prerequisite for its occurrence, and the consequent interactions can lend themselves to enactment of participants' desired identities.

Leniencies Revisited

Managerial leniency, or tolerance of illegal work practices, is a fairly widespread and well-documented practice (Blau 1955, Burawoy 1979, Gouldner 1954, Roy 1959). In their classic formulation, leniencies are considered a form of control: their selective buffering against an organizational constraint is *de facto* assumed to benefit participants, who then implicitly exchange these benefits for compliance with managerial will (Gouldner 1954). For instance, as Burawoy (1979, p. 60) writes, foremen turn a blind eye when operators “make out” (i.e., manipulate their productivity to manage their time and efforts), which in turn allows these operators to escape organizational constraints (“reduction of fatigue, passing time, relieving boredom,” p. 85). The exchange between management and workers through which this control is achieved is, however, partly assumed. Thus, depictions of managerial leniencies have focused essentially on selective buffering against a constraint without reference to their identity implications.

Whether in a gypsum mine, a law-enforcement agency, or a factory, the main benefit that nonmanagerial employees derive from these leniencies is assumed to be greater freedom from constraints (Blau 1955, Gouldner 1954, Roy 1959). In Gouldner's work on informal nonenforcement of rules—or “mock bureaucracies”—as a means of control, the emphasis is on organizational patterns “where rules are usually neither enforced,

nor obeyed” (Gouldner 1954, pp. 186–187). The identity benefits that participants might derive from mock bureaucracies, as distinct from greater freedom, are not addressed. Similarly, managerial leniency toward employees who do not report bribe attempts (despite explicit rules prescribing that they do so) is depicted as selective relaxation of a constraint (Blau 1955, pp. 183–206). The possible links between the occupational identities of these employees (law-enforcement officers) and organizational tolerance of violation of the rule are not pursued, except when noting that reporting such bribe attempts might taint the reputation of these agents. Likewise, in Roy's account of “banana time” (1959) (an unauthorized daily break devoted to snacks and jokes among machine operators), the emphasis is again on escaping organizational constraints. Hence a lot is assumed about what leniencies disable (i.e., the organizational constraint) but very little about what they might enable. Burawoy (1979) comes perhaps closest to suggesting other “rewards” when he notes, without going into detail, “the social psychological rewards” of making out (p. 85). The identity-incentive hypothesis builds and extends this idea by suggesting that management might pursue and individuals might embrace leniencies for reasons that go beyond the relaxation of a constraint. Desired identities might also be at play when managerial leniency occurs.

This paper presents a case study of such a leniency in a French aeronautic plant and explicates how the desired occupational identity of participants enters into identity-incentive control. Leniencies are shown to engage participants' desired occupational identity. The practice of making prohibited factory artifacts (homers), described below, constitutes the setting of the study. Because it is illegal, making such artifacts requires tacit or explicit managerial approval. Homer making is also strongly associated with the occupational identity of a distinct group of factory members. This study highlights the identity dynamics embedded in these practices. More broadly, this article traces how desired identities can produce a form of control previously not explicated and discusses implications of this for literature on control and identity.

Research Setting, Site, and Methods

Homers: Officially Prohibited Factory Artifacts

The manufacture in factories, on company time and with company materials or tools, of artifacts for personal use is officially forbidden by company rules, yet it is often tolerated. For an overview of the practice, see Anteby (2006) and Banville (2001). Such factory artifacts, typically encompassing kitchenware and toys but sometimes more elaborate projects such as miniature engines intended as ceremonial gifts, are known in English as “homers.” The term, used by Haraszti (1978, p. 9), is

probably a double entendre, indicating both that these objects are taken home and that, because their creation violates company policy, they can cause their producer to be sent home. The practice is also known as “doing government jobs” (Dalton 1959, p. 205; Gouldner 1954, p. 51; Nickerson 1974, p. 138). In French, the language in which this research was conducted, homers are called “perruques” (Certeau 1984, p. 25).

Though rarely discussed, homer making is not a rare practice. Multiple sources suggest that it is relatively common in France (Anteby 2006). Personal communications with former employees at Bendix and General Electric and members of the U.S. Navy suggest its prevalence in the United States as well. Legal disputes involving homer makers also point to its occurrence in North America (California Court of Appeals 2001, Manitoba Arbitration 1997, Ontario Arbitration 2000, Texas Court of Appeals 1996).

Homers are cooperative endeavors, involving multiple participants. They are rarely manufactured by a single individual, because various skills are required, and workshop supervisors are often aware of such projects. A supervisor might even ask a blacksmith to make a homer for another supervisor or for an executive at the plant. The blacksmith might in turn ask a fellow welder for help. Producing the homer might also require the blacksmith to enroll a saw operator to prepare needed materials or a press operator to find suitable scrap metal. If scrap metal is not available, an office worker in charge of sourcing materials for regular production might be asked to locate needed materials. In short, homer making is a fairly cooperative endeavor. Numerous social interactions allowing for identity enactments are the norm. Such interactions also reinforce the occupational identity of the subgroup of factory workers who manufacture them, namely craftsmen: these artifacts constitute craft pieces that in many ways symbolize their desired identities. Homers require, as will be shown, skilled, independent manual work, attributes with which craftsmen strongly identify.

Homer-making also requires at least tacit managerial approval. Because it constitutes a breach of internal rules against theft of company time and materials, making homers could result in termination of employment or financial sanctions (such as unpaid leave). Management can therefore grant or withdraw permission to make homers seemingly at will. In most instances, only supervisors can sign off on material requests when new materials are required. All these circumstances make homer interactions a strategic research arena for understanding how identity incentives can be used as a form of control.

Research Site

I conducted an in-depth study of narrated homer interactions, from the vantage points of craftsmen and management, at a factory I call Pierreville (part of the AeroDyn

corporation). The study focuses on a period (the early 1970s to the late 1990s) during which my informants, retirees from the plant, worked there. The names of the company, the plant, and my informants have been changed to preserve anonymity. The main product of Pierreville was airplane engines. The activities pursued there were research and development, purchasing, maintenance, assembling engine parts, testing new prototype engines and mass-produced engines, and repairing engines. In 2000 the Pierreville plant employed approximately 4,000 individuals. The workforce was predominantly male (approximately 85%), with an average age of 43 years. The use of machines or tools without managerial approval, as well as the appropriation of materials, was explicitly forbidden by the plant’s internal code of conduct (posted in workshops and given to all employees).

Craftsmen constituted a fairly large contingent (several hundred people) at the plant. They entered Pierreville after earning a Certificate of Professional Aptitude (“Certificat d’Aptitude Professionnelle,” or CAP, in French), the culmination of a training course that qualified workers underwent prior to entering the factory. The highest concentrations of craftsmen were found in the experimental workshop, where a few hundred coppersmiths, fitters, welders, and others worked on prototypes, and to a lesser extent in the maintenance workshops attached to the testing and mass-assembly facilities. The attributes of this group did not match those of any official legal employment category. (Five principal employment categories prevail in French factories: workers, employees, technicians, supervisors, and executives or engineers.) Craftsmen were mainly workers, but they also included some technicians; thus, I looked at prior technical training, as signified by the CAP, to identify them.

Data Collection

To understand craftsmen’s and managers’ experiences of homer interactions, I relied on 135 accounts involving homers that were narrated to me in the course of 70 interviews I conducted with retirees. Because I was analyzing interactions that officially merited sanctions, I decided to interview retirees, who are less vulnerable to corporate sanctions. Though a retrospective bias cannot be entirely discounted, the events in question were cross-checked, whenever possible, with other Pierreville members to ensure that the recollection was shared. I designated each account mentioning a homer as a “homer event.” A homer event was defined as any recollection on the part of an interviewee about making, giving, receiving, or interacting with others about a homer at the plant. On average each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and yielded 1.9 homer events, with a range of 0–8 such events.

My interview sample was first constructed as a snowball sample and grew through direct solicitation. A formal call for interviews with retirees was published in the newsletter of the factory Labor Council, an elected employee body in France. Individual letters requesting interviews were then sent out to 650 randomly selected retirees whose names were on file at the Labor Council. The focus of the formal call and subsequent letters was the practice of receiving retirement homers (i.e., ones received upon retirement), a topic of interest to the Labor Council, which granted me access to its files. Receiving a retirement homer differs from participating in its manufacture or in interactions dealing with more generic homers, but retirement homers involve similar skills and similar access to materials than generic ones. All retirees within a 50-mile radius of Paris (where I was located) who provided contact information in a prepaid return envelope were contacted for interviews. Though I was particularly interested in the accounts of craftsmen and management, I contacted all respondents within my geographical reach, including unskilled workers and office employees who ultimately provided a fuller picture of homer interactions. I interviewed 40 craftsmen; 20 executives, engineers, or supervisors (representing management); and 10 unskilled workers or office employees. Though a sampling bias might remain, I tried to contact the largest possible pool of potential informants by sending out the call to 650 retirees.

Retirees were interviewed in their homes or in the Labor Council's building, located just outside the plant gates. With the interviewees' consent, interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. When informants declined to be taped ($N = 15$), extensive notes were taken. Interviews were conducted using an open-ended protocol covering employment history, retirement, and homers. Interviews usually began with questions about the retiree's work at the plant and proceeded to whether he or she had received a homer on retirement and his or her recollections about the manufacture of homers (see Appendix A for details).

Though the interviews themselves offered a useful window into social processes, I also spent further time with retirees to build trust and gain a fuller understanding of the retirees' narratives. For a cumulative period of 10 months, I spent time at the Labor Council building each Wednesday, either conducting formal interviews or simply "catching up" with retirees and Labor Council members (totaling more than 200 hours of observations). Many retirees visited the Council building to socialize, undergo medical exams, or conduct administrative tasks (such as submission of health claims).

I also consulted Pierreville's archives, including the plant's annual social reports, to learn about workforce trends that might help me understand occupational identity dynamics at the plant. French organizations employing more than a certain number of employees are

required to produce standardized social reports that detail the composition of and trends in the workforce. Trends in the size of a given occupational group can, for instance, be identified using these reports. Social reports are shared with government officials, unions, and any interested third parties on request.

Data Analysis

To build the sample of 135 homer events, the interview data were analyzed to identify all homer events involving more than one participant. The rare accounts of homers manufactured by a single individual without assistance ($n = 4$) were excluded from this analysis. Though multi-party interactions involving more than two individuals were mentioned, most homer events were narrated in dyadic terms, sometimes with additional mention of the recipient. Moreover, the occupation of participants was always specified. Thus, it was possible to distinguish interactions involving only craftsmen from those that also involved another occupational group. The artifacts mentioned ranged from an engine blade mounted on wood to miniature replicas of a plane and a workstation. Less ornamental artifacts included ashtrays, window frames, and barbecues. Most artifacts were unique, though a few series were described.

Analysis of the homer events was conducted in keeping with grounded theory guidelines (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Miles and Huberman 1994). Once transcribed, the raw homer-event text was analyzed for salient attributes. Any attribute of an interaction that participants made salient constituted an element that informed the participants' experiences of the event. As salient attributes of the interactions began to emerge—such as “the guy who did this one was a jewel maker”—I took note of them (“recognition of skills”) and used them to organize subsequent data. When new data did not fit a previously identified theme, I created a new theme. For example, when I noticed that informants talked about homer interactions in ways that resembled their regular work activities, the theme “regular work or job” was created. This method was used in an iterative fashion throughout the data analysis. One dominant theme emerged that related to the craftsmen's occupational identity. All the narratives in this theme contained at least one of the three craftsmen's occupational identity attributes (see, below, in findings: opposition to unskilled labor, skilled manual work, or independence)—thus, I named this theme “identity-engaging.” This allowed me to ultimately sort all the narratives into two main categories: occupational-identity-engaging homer narratives and other homer narratives. (See Table 1 for illustrative quotations from the interviews.) Narratives that did not fit the category of occupational-identity-engaging narratives were those that described the tasks executed or the artifacts produced, without reference to the craftsmen's

Table 1 Contrasted Meanings of Homer Interactions

	Identity component
Examples of occupational-identity-engaging narratives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If we do not do it ourselves, it [homer making] has no meaning. The guy who did this one was a <i>jewel maker</i>.” 	– Skilled work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It was like an illness: to recycle and transform everything we had. . . . One needs first to be ingenious, one needs to create, and in doing these homers <i>one creates with our hands</i>.” 	– Skilled work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A friend of mine used to be an electrician, <i>really skilled at his work</i>. He made this small electronic device when he found time. It was wonderful.” 	– Skilled work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He used to do these [metal cups] for his personal glory, to show to his friends. . . . <i>the pride of his know-how</i>. He used to be able to do whatever he wanted [with his hands].” 	– Independent – Skilled work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It was hard for me not to do this one. . . . <i>If you have a handy mind</i> and machines to work on. It was too beautiful, if you liked doing that.” 	– Skilled work
Examples of other narratives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In my department, I was often the person people came to, I was often stuck with it [homer making], so I did it.” [no reference to identity implications] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s the boss who would order homers in my department. My boss initiated this homer, it’s a small motor. I worked on it but did not get too attached to it.” [no reference to identity implications] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What you see here is not really a homer, more like a gift perhaps. . . . You can see them on every desk; yes these are very mundane.” [no reference to identity implications] 	

Note. Emphasis was added to indicate identity-engaging markers.

specific occupational identity. By contrast, occupational-identity-engaging narratives were presented in ways that supported the view of craftsmen as independent, skilled manual workers, as opposed to unskilled laborers. A native French speaker independently coded these homer narratives. The inter rater reliability with respect to the two main categories was 79%; remaining disagreements were resolved through discussions.

Because the occupational identity of homer-interaction participants, and specifically that of craftsmen, is a key variable in this study, a methodological choice was made to code for the occupational status of participants in these events. Three categories of participants were defined: craftsmen were coded as C; higher-level Pierreville employees, including supervisors, executives, and engineers, were coded H for “higher”; and lower-occupational-level Pierreville employees, such as office workers and unskilled workshop laborers, were coded L for “lower.” These categories reflect salient groupings from the perspective of craftsmen.

Finally, craftsmen could also receive homers. The occupational status of the recipient represented a further way to categorize the homer events described in narratives. Thus, homer events were coded not only for the status of participants but also for the status of recipients. As a result, all homer events were coded for (1) the themes articulated in narration of the event, (2) the participants’ occupational statuses, and (3) the recipients’ occupational status. The recipient could be one of the participants or a third party.

By analyzing interactions related to the production and exchange of homers at Pierreville, I identify a phenomenon—reliant on desired identities—that, when

promoted by management, constitutes an engaging form of control. This analysis makes evident how identity incentives that engage participants’ desired occupational identity can be used to further control. The next section characterizes the occupational identity of craftsmen and shows how their declining position at the plant was threatening this identity, thus intensifying their longing for interactions that affirmed their desired occupational identity. Then I explain how homer interactions contribute to the enactment of this desired identity. An analysis of homer events allows me to identify the role of specific homer interactions, namely those between craftsmen and for craftsmen, in enacting this identity. Finally, I show why management needs to maintain control of craftsmen, despite their declining position, and how leniency toward homer making can be a lever of managerial control.

Findings

Craftsmen’s Occupational Identity

Craftsmen’s occupational identity was made up of three key components—opposition to unskilled laborers, skilled manual work, and independence. First, craftsmen constructed their identity in opposition to less-skilled manual workers (in this case assembly labor), and their distinct identity was recognized as such by all plant members. As an illustration, a craftsman who once spent a summer working as a metal cutter prior to joining AeroDyn, a position typically held by less-skilled laborers at Pierreville, recalled, “I needed some money during the holidays and left [that job] because it wasn’t a solution; to be a cutter is given to anybody willing to do that,

right?” He added: “I can do anything other less-skilled workers do, but they cannot do what we [craftsmen] do.” These craftsmen, who entered the factory by virtue of succeeding on a professional exam, referred to themselves by profession (e.g., coppersmith, blacksmith, welder, fitter), whereas less-skilled colleagues usually identified themselves by naming their task (e.g., operator of press X). The arrival in 1982 of several hundred assembly workers from other AeroDyn plants highlighted the distinctiveness of Pierreville craftsmen’s occupational identity. A former assembly worker who arrived at Pierreville that year remarked that even though he belonged to the same union that the craftsmen in the experimental workshop did, he often felt “separated” and had difficulty interacting with them. His presence as an unskilled worker seemed, as he put it, to “devalue their work.”¹ Though distinctions existed among craftsmen (blacksmiths, for instance, were viewed as more highly trained than welders), they presented a fairly united front in comparison to other groups at the plant. Craftsmen referred to each other as “compagnons” (literally, companions); the same term is used to refer to them by management, office workers, and unskilled workers, and in internal plant documents.

Second, craftsmen’s occupational identity was based on their *skilled manual work*, specifically on prototypes, as opposed to mass production. As a craftsman explained, “When my coworker [another craftsman] was sent to do assembly work, it almost broke his heart. So when he could escape from the assembly work, to actually work on machines, it was nirvana for him.” Working on machines, here, meant using manual skills, such as precision drilling and cutting, to manufacture unique pieces. The value of being able to make something with one’s hands was repeatedly stressed by craftsmen. Though most office work was assigned a higher “grade” level and thus translated into higher salaries, it bore the stigma among craftsmen of “not producing concrete and unique material outcomes, aside from paper.” Unskilled workers and engineers often referred to craftsmen as “builders” and “golden hands” because of their ability to create unique manual outputs from scratch. The entry exam for craftsmen at AeroDyn, different from the CAP exam, required the execution of complex manual tasks, and this exam and other defining moments when their skills were tested constituted memorable events in their careers. All but three of the craftsmen I met, when asked, could recall the specifics of this entrance exam and their own and their peers’ other skilled achievements.

Third, craftsmen also grounded their identities in the core value of *independence*. The following quotes capture this: “We were part of AeroDyn, you see, but we really were independent from AeroDyn,” said Roger, a blacksmith. “This is what I liked.” André, another craftsman, explained, “Once there was a problem inside an engine, and everybody just stood there watching. So I

told them they were all cowards. I took my wrench, greased my arm so I could slide it in, reached in, and fixed it alone, right in front of them.” In an environment in which most tasks were intertwined, the luxury of being able to work on a piece independently, with little input or involvement from others, was rare. Craftsmen were given their own tools, which they carried in their tool cases to jobs they were assigned. The ideal of being an independent contractor—working on one’s own and for oneself—was quite salient among craftsmen.

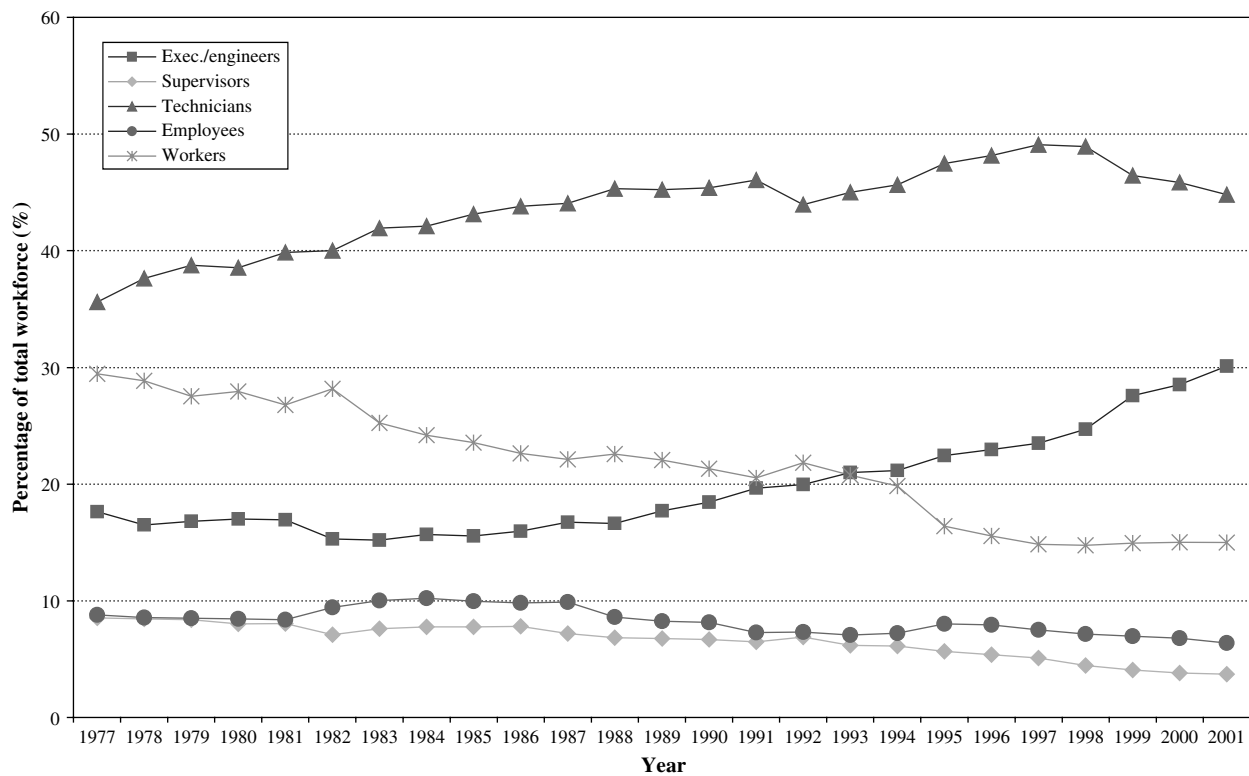
But beginning in the late 1970s, craftsmen’s presence in the plant slowly became marginalized. Figure 1 shows the evolution of the Pierreville workforce. Craftsmen’s identity, built in contradistinction to unskilled labor and grounded in skilled independent manual work, was increasingly threatened. The population of craftsmen was largely concentrated in the legal category of *worker* and to a lesser extent that of *technician*. Craftsmen were estimated by Labor Council members to constitute about half of all workers, a category that shrank from 29% of the total workforce in 1977 to 15% in 2001. During the same period, technicians were gaining representation in the factory (increasing from 36% of the workforce in 1977 to 45% in 2001). Most of the increase in the technician population was caused by outside recruiting, not internal promotion of craftsmen (91.2% of recruited technicians between 1993 and 1999 were outsiders). The craftsmen did not regard these new recruits as part of their group.

During the same period, moreover, the engaging experimental work that allowed craftsmen to enact their desired identity had migrated to computers. Technicians and engineers could now design engines on their computers; the help of craftsmen was not needed until much later in the development process. At the same time, many tasks that were previously performed in house, such as developing new tools and manufacturing engine subunits, were gradually being outsourced. In just three years (1998–2001), outsourced purchases as a percentage of total sales at all AeroDyn factories increased from 35% to 41%. (Exact plan-level outsourcing figures are considered proprietary company information and cannot be accessed.) Pierreville also experienced more abrupt workforce adjustments. In 1995 the experimental workshop, where new engines were developed and older models upgraded (and where many craftsmen had formerly been employed), was moved from Pierreville to another plant. This move abruptly made it clear that Pierreville could function without craftsmen and that their occupation was under threat.

Homers as Occupational-Identity-Engaging Interactions

“Homers were the pride of our know-how,” summarized one craftsman, whose views reflected those of all the craftsmen I interviewed. By offering opportunities

Figure 1 Craftsmen’s Threatened Position at Pierreville, 1977–2001



Notes. This figure shows the distribution of the workforce at Pierreville by legal employment category. Craftsmen were mainly concentrated in the category of workers.

Source. Pierreville Annual Social Reports.

for craftsmen to engage in independent skilled manual work, homer interactions embodied in many ways how craftsmen desired to see themselves and to be seen by others. Another craftsman described how making homers expressed the desired occupational identity of craftsmen: “It’s so nice to take a piece of square metal (not even a square), whatever piece of metal... even a piece of rusted metal, and make an artifact out of it. Something that will function, that will be useful, that will serve a purpose. This is a creation.” This craftsman also used the term *creation* to describe his past occupation: “We [manually] created and were independent [in our work] before we were asked to mass-assemble engines.” And a third craftsman affirmed the unique role of homer interactions in sustaining his occupational identity:

I joined AeroDyn in 1963... The firm had a good reputation. I started as a fitter. Unfortunately the trade of a fitter started to lose some of its value. With technical changes, new technologies were able to take over the work of a fitter. Work mostly wasn’t very rewarding [anymore]... It had nothing to do with what we had trained for, in the technical schools, when we used to do dovetails and complicated stuff... But as a fitter, people [also] asked me to do [homer] stuff... I am a manual guy.

Thus, many homer interactions allowed for the enactment of desired occupational identities.

It was not as much the frequency of engagement in homer activities as the craftsmen’s attachment to such engagements (and to the results of these engagements) that rendered homer activities so important to the craftsmen’s identity. Craftsmen could easily recall not just the precise location of the homers they kept (in the kitchen drawer, on the living room wall, in the garden shed...) but also all the steps that led to the often unique artifacts they made. The craftsmen’s descriptions of their homers echoed those they provided to me when describing the unique pieces they had produced *on their own* during their apprenticeship years. (For official production, craftsmen could describe the precise steps they participated in, but rarely the entire process leading to the finished product.) Thus, homers represented what craftsmen aspired to: skilled, independent work. Homers that craftsmen gave one another on retirement perhaps best exemplified these linkages between the artifacts and the craftsmen’s identity. Retirement homer gifts involving miniature reproductions of work settings (including the tools used) and symbolizing the craftsmen’s occupation were fairly common. By contrast, one craftsman I interviewed who did *not* want to be reminded of his past occupational identity—because of regrets he had about switching to an office job at the end of his career—hid his retirement homer in the basement.

Homer events were narrated in multiple ways, but the most prevalent narrative acknowledged the participants' main salient identity, namely the occupational identity of the homer makers. A typical example of such a narrative emphasized the skills of the homer maker: "A friend of mine used to be an electrician, really skilled at his work. He made this small electronic device when he found time. It was wonderful." Another illustrative interaction, described to me by a Pierreville blacksmith, involved repairs on a scooter: "A guy in the plant used to ride a scooter, with a metal fork. One day, his fork just twisted. So he brought it to me. I straightened it beautifully and painted it. It looked just like new, with no paint marks at all. He told me *this was work well done*" (emphasis added). Nearly half of the homer events depicted in the interviews—58 of 135 (43%)—include occupational-identity-engaging narratives—that is, narratives that portray homer events as expressive of the homer maker's membership in a given occupational group. Such narratives focused on the identity participants gained from the interaction being described. In contrast, other narratives largely concentrated on the task or exchange components of homer events, without reference to the craftsmen's occupational identities.

Occupational-identity-engaging narratives functioned in two broad ways: First, homer makers' occupational identity was recognized because of the homer work they engaged in for others; and second, recipients' occupational identity was acknowledged in the homers they received from others. A most desirable situation could combine occupational-identity-engaging implications for both participants: the homer giver could feel recognized as a craftsman in the process of making the homer, and the recipient could feel recognized in its bestowal. Philippe, a craftsman skilled at welding aluminum, described the occupational-identity-engaging implications of making a homer for another person: "At that time, people knew they could bring me anything. Be it a piece of an oven or a broken cast-iron stove, we would weld the piece. If it was a piece of split aluminum, anything, nobody else at Pierreville knew how to repair it." In other words, Philippe could *independently* engage in *skilled manual* work and be recognized for his ability by others. Through the interaction of returning a broken artifact fixed, Philippe sustained his desired identity. "To be a blacksmith," he added, "is to take a flat piece, to shape it, and adjust it. . . . I was happy when people came to me because I could [do this]." Each time a broken object was given to him and returned repaired, his desired identity was validated.

The second form of recognition centered on the recipient. A craftsman who received a homer cherished the interaction, not only because it was "made to specifications" for him but mainly because, in the words of this former craftsman, it "embodies [my] professional life."

A craftsman who had received a homer from his colleagues made sense of the interaction in the following terms: "This is the one [pointing to an individual in a group photograph of his colleagues] who did the homer I showed you. He was a carpenter. I thanked him since it represented wings and what I did in the plant. . . . One day I saw [him] work on it, and I told him it was beautiful. [When he gave it to me] it was a pleasure to receive because it represented my work." The artifact per se might be identity engaging, but the interactions around it, specifically giving and receiving, are the most meaningful venues for identity enactment. "These are works that find a meaning through their destination [the recipient]," explained a retiree from another French plant, discussing retirement homers (Comité d'Etablissement Snecma Evry-Corbeil 1984, pp. 16–17). Thus, these homer interactions embodied recognition of the recipient's desired identity.

Occupational-identity-engaging narratives were far more common in descriptions of craftsmen making a homer for another craftsman than in descriptions of homers occurring between a craftsman and a member of another occupational group, or even between two craftsmen making a homer for a member of another occupational group. Occupational-identity-engaging narratives characterized 65% of descriptions of homer events involving only craftsmen, as opposed to only 3% of those involving lower-level occupations and 16% of those involving higher-level occupations (see Table 2). Moreover, identity-engaging narratives appeared in 91% of the accounts of homer events involving only craftsmen (81 interactions, designated C-C in Table 2) when the recipient was another craftsman, but were quite rare when the third-party recipient belonged to a lower- or higher-level occupational group (see Table 3). These results suggest that not all homer interactions were equally conducive to occupational-identity-engaging narratives. Enactment of craftsmen's desired identity was

Table 2 Breakdown of Narrated Homer Events by Participants' Occupational Identities

Type of narrative	Percentages (and frequency) of types of narratives in each configuration		
	L-C	C-C	C-H
Occupational identity-engaging narratives	3% (1)	65% (53)	16% (4)
Other	97% (28)	35% (28)	84% (21)
Total	100% (29)	100% (81)	100% (25)

Notes. $N = 135$ dyadic homer events (described in 70 interviews); Chi-square = 42.58, $p < 0.001$.

L: lower-level employees (unskilled workers and office workers)

C: craftsmen

H: members of the factory hierarchy (supervisors, engineers, executives)

[C-C] narratives involve, for instance, two craftsmen.

Table 3 Breakdown of Narrated Homer Events by Participants' and Recipients' Occupational Identities

Type of narrative	Percentages (and frequency) of types of narratives in each configuration		
	C-C for L	C-C for C	C-C for H
Occupational identity-engaging narratives	0% (0)	91% (51)	11% (2)
Other	100% (7)	9% (5)	89% (16)
Total	100% (7)	100% (56)	100% (18)

Notes. $N = 81$ dyadic homer events (described in 70 interviews); Chi-square = 53, $p < 0.001$.

L: lower-level employees (unskilled workers and office workers)

C: craftsmen

H: members of the factory hierarchy (supervisors, engineers, executives)

[C-C for L] narratives involve, for instance, two craftsmen for a lower-level recipient.

more likely to occur when homer events involved two craftsmen and the recipient was a craftsman.

The meanings of homer interactions shifted depending on the recipient. One craftsman explained that the distinction he drew depended on the occupational identity of the recipient. When he made a homer for a peer, it was “something of high precision” that his peers recognized as uniquely expressive of his abilities and his identity. A homer manufactured for a boss, by contrast, was merely “made on demand” (without reference to identity implications), and one made for a lower-level worker was “open to anybody [to do]” (again without reference to identity implications). Though the manufacture of homers for higher-level Pierreville employees sometimes involved skilled manual work, the forced nature of these interactions excluded the independent dimension of the identity of craftsmen. In one instance when a shop manager ordered homers, a participant recalled, “It did not feel right. We [workshop members] weren’t happy about this. We made them because we had to, but this was not really homers anymore.” Similarly, interactions around homers for lower-level workers excluded the skilled dimension of craftsmen’s identity, in that lower-level workers were by definition less qualified to assess craftsmen’s skills. These interactions with lower- and higher-level plant employees allowed for the performance of manual work, but they lacked the dimensions of skill recognition and independence critical to craftsmen’s occupational identity.

Leniency as a Form of Managerial Control

The entire managerial chain (up to the directorship level) was aware and tolerant of the manufacture of homers. Nineteen of 20 managerial-level interviewees (executives, engineers, and supervisors) indicated that they were aware of the practice of making homers

for retirements and other purposes. A retired manager acknowledged both awareness and leniency:

A director came to see me to tell me we needed to draft a repair plan, and we went to the blacksmithing workshop. . . . We asked a worker to move things around to find the adequate metal sheet needed [for the repair]. When he did that, we saw a storage room with stools, chandeliers, homers: real homers! The director pretended he had not seen anything. I did the same.

Not all homer makers were granted such leeway. “People would get caught,” one craftsman recalled. “He [the homer maker] got a one- or two-day suspension. . . . But otherwise you could get fired on the spot.” Records of sanctioned homer makers, including craftsmen, attest to this. An analysis of the Pierreville archives for a ten-year period (1970–1980) yielded two firings, two pre-firing warnings, one eight-day suspension, one three-day suspension, and one warning for homer related activities. A typical case led to the three-day suspension of a welder who performed “personal work” in the workshop (manufacturing bookshelf corners) and was caught exiting the factory with them. The fact that more consequential homers (such as barbecues) went unsanctioned suggests selective enforcement of rules. As a supervisor explained, “The good workers were the ones always allowed to make homers; others rarely.” What constitutes, however, a “good worker” is left unspecified, a point I will return to in the discussion.

What rendered this leniency an effective form of control was that the threat of sanctions for homer making was real and perceived as such by craftsmen. Craftsmen engaging in homer production were easily spotted in the workshops; very little production actually escaped the eyes of supervisors. The cases of sanctioned employees cited to me attested to the threat. Though limited in number, these cases were widely publicized; most craftsmen I interviewed volunteered, without prompting, such cases. Sanctions varied and included filing a report with the personnel office, suspending an employee without pay, launching an internal audit investigation, firing, and filing criminal charges. Repercussions for getting caught ranged from a confidential one-on-one meeting with a supervisor to a full-fledged public hearing in court. One worker who took material from the stockroom out of the plant was fired. In this case, the presence of AeroDyn materials in his home—an occurrence associated with all homers—was enough to get him fired. The severity of the imposed sanction was jointly decided by upper management, supervisors, and human resource professionals. Management usually asked the workshop supervisor to “value” the loss to help determine the sanction. This step created another opportunity for managerial discretion in applying sanctions. These cases suggest that, despite their rarity, the threat of sanctions was real. Management had the power to severely reprimand those who

participated in making homers. At the same time, management also had the power to disapprove of those who refused to produce ordered homers (by assigning them, for instance, to more menial tasks such as the repair of broken tools, instead of the development of new engine parts).

From the perspective of management, however, there were good reasons to exhibit leniency toward homer making, the primary one being that the cooperation of craftsmen was vital to production. Craftsmen controlled the speed of development and manufacture of new engines, and delays were costly in that customers' payments were often linked to delivery. Discontent among craftsmen could rapidly become problematic: they were strongly united and highly unionized, and they could complain collectively when problems occurred. A craftsman who worked in the experimental workshop recalled, "Whenever we had a problem in the workshop [he whistled to indicate something impressive]... all of us were in the office of the workshop manager. If it did not go well with the workshop manager, we headed up to the department head. If that did not work, we went to the head of personnel." Work stoppages were not unknown. Moreover, the often-erratic timing of aircraft-engine purchases could create erratic work schedules in which idle periods alternated with nonstop workweeks and extra shifts. The irregularity of demand had long been a source of considerable uncertainty for management; the cooperation of craftsmen during periods of high demand was essential.

Another, secondary reason for managerial leniency toward homer making was to keep craftsmen engaged during periods of reduced activity. Idleness contradicted the craftsmen's self-view as skilled, independent "builders." A prerequisite to being a "builder" was the availability of work. When official production was slow, management—keen to avoid craftsmen's discontent—often turned a blind eye toward homer making, specifically when it involved "good" craftsmen.

The wage discrepancy at Pierreville was fairly flat and was rarely employed as a means of discriminating between employees, further restricting management's ability to exert control. Official wages at Pierreville were regulated by multiyear collective agreements that assigned specific salary levels to given job categories and grade levels. Within a given category, an advancement in grade could almost double an individual's average monthly salary. Employees advanced to higher grade levels mainly on the strength of seniority and training. This arrangement might appear to give management considerable room to maneuver, but the fact that grades were based on "objective" measures, largely outside the purview of management, severely restricted managerial discretion. Moreover, unions strictly enforced these collective agreements, further limiting the exercise of discretion. Nor did the dominant culture of AeroDyn

encourage large wage differentials. During the period when my informants worked at the plant (1970 to the late 1990s), the average monthly salaries of the highest-paid 10% and the lowest-paid 10% of the workforce differed by a factor of approximately three. Though salaries varied between and within categories, they rarely qualified as managerial levers with which to distinguish among individuals.

Identity and Control Exchange

Both management and the craftsmen were able to articulate selective leniency around homers as an implicit exchange. As a plant director explained, "Even though there might not be an open management of homer making, in the workshops, when cordial relations are maintained with workers, it is not a problem." (Again, and similarly to the "good worker" case, the definition of what cordial relations entail is here left open.) More bluntly, a manager called homers "the price to pay for the craftsmen's official work." But, as suggested, managers could also rely on homer violations to advance other goals, for instance, getting rid of workers they simply did not approve of. (In instances when bosses requested homers, workers mostly felt "protected" and immune to such sanctions.) A different manager made this clear: "The HR department had rules around homers. But they did not react at the blow of the whistle each time a mistake [a homer] was made... However, when you wanted to liquidate someone who was not cooperating, you could always pull out the homer mistake." Workers who did not "cooperate" were those management could not control.

Leniency by management around homer making was used to achieve various goals, including advancing the organization's objectives and asserting management's own power. The goals were reached by relaxing the organizational constraints and enabling workers' desired identities. Management was well aware of the latter mechanism: managers I interviewed referred to the "value" and "nobility" craftsmen attached to homer making and to the "contest to be the best craftsman" that occurred in homer making activities. One report of a homer violation in management's files cited also the "skill development" aspect of homer making as extenuating circumstances that reduced the sanction placed on the worker involved. One manager explained, "We knew this meant a lot to them"; and, echoing craftsmen's descriptions of homer making continued, "Homers were their pride." Management's knowledge of what homer making meant to craftsmen allowed for the use of leniency around homers as rewards for select craftsmen's efforts and actions.

The outcomes for management of this leniency are further evidenced by instances when management explicitly forbade select workers from engaging in homer making. The workers were barred from making

homers—or told they would be sanctioned if caught—because they did not deliver on their side of the exchange. As one manager recalls, “The guys who wanted to help [on official production] were willing to work overtime. . . . But the guy who did not, not because he could not, but because he did not want to. . . . I warned him not to get caught making anything.” Thus, the worker’s side of the exchange entails, here, efforts on official production. “As long as craftsmen were willing to work on urgent jobs, I did not mind them doing homers,” adds another manager. Urgent jobs mostly involved getting a prototype or a new engine out in time. But the expectations attached to managerial leniency were broader and best articulated by another manager. “The best position for a worker,” he explains, “is never to make a homer. . . . Once you make one, you become indebted to your boss.” Thus, a more generalized compliance with managerial will is the expected outcome of managerial leniency.

Craftsmen too recognized and accepted the implicit exchange. They were willing to engage in homer making for the managerial hierarchy in exchange for other rewards, most notably for being allowed to engage in more identity-enhancing interactions. As one craftsman explained, “I had nothing to be ashamed of. . . . I did my [official] work, so nobody could complain. That way, the day I did something that was not completely legit [a homer], nobody could reproach my doing it.” Similarly, another craftsman clarified:

Making homers was good for our self-respect and when we felt respected, the productivity [on official work] was high. But imagine you work with seven or eight guys, and the boss asks something from someone. If that guy tells the boss to piss off, well the day the guy wants to make a homer. . . . you can be sure that the boss will reciprocate. He will not allow him to do anything and tell him, this time around, also to piss off.

By expending appropriate efforts on what management wanted, in other words, craftsmen could participate in identity-engaging homer interactions. Not being responsive to management’s requests for homer meant low tolerance for future homers.

Identity enactment was not the only reason craftsmen made homers (only 43% of homer events involved identity-engaging narratives), but it was the main reason craftsmen made homers among themselves (91% of homer narratives involving only craftsmen were identity-engaging). Other reasons—most notably, power relations within the plant—also explain homer production. Only a few craftsmen explicitly stated this reason, perhaps for fear of not being seen as “independent.” But one of them notes, “It was hard to refuse to make a homer for a boss.” Another craftsman clarifies, “When a boss asked for a homer, we always did it.” The only valid excuse for craftsmen to refuse to make a homer for a boss was the priority of official work—yet even in that case, the

execution of the ordered homer was merely delayed, not abandoned.

Though management’s requests for homers might weaken its credibility to sanction workers who subsequently made homers (for themselves or others), it did not weaken management’s legal ability to do so. AeroDyn, like most companies, dealt with homer occurrence on a case-by-case basis. The company’s internal code of conduct stipulated that a worker was guilty when engaging in homer work, regardless of others’ behaviors. The argument that others engaged in homer making or requested homers held little weight; thus, the ability to prosecute always loomed large. The result of a trial of a “caught” worker from another French plant illustrates this: coworkers attending the trial shouted the names of executives they had made homers for in the courtroom (Beaud and Pialoux 1999, p. 120). Despite these protests, the worker was fired.

Management de facto controlled the manufacture of homers and, by extension, the associated interactions that affirmed craftsmen’s desired occupational identity. Thus, managerial leniency actually served as a mechanism of subtle, but nonetheless potent, control over craftsmen at the plant. These dynamics constituted a form of exchange between management and craftsmen: the craftsmen built their desired occupational identities while management was better able to regulate the workforce or, in other words, to build control.

Discussion

This study describes a distinct occupational-identity-engaging form of control that has not previously been fully analyzed. It also illustrates a broader category of organizational control, namely controls that rely on identity incentives, defined as the selective positive arousal of identity feelings that induce action or motivate effort. Leniency around homer making at Pierreville enabled craftsmen to validate a desired occupational identity grounded in skilled, independent manual work. Management in turn was willing to selectively tolerate violation of company rules—amounting to a covert distribution of identity incentives—in exchange for greater managerial control. This process generated outcomes favored by both craftsmen and management.

I first examined the occupational identity of craftsmen at Pierreville, showing how homer interactions—specifically those among craftsmen regarding homers manufactured for other craftsmen—contributed to enabling this identity. Craftsmen’s identities were grounded in skilled independent manual work, and the manufacture of homers was shown to exemplify this desired identity. This is not to say that their occupational identity was *only* enacted in these instances and that all homer making instances were identity engaging. Official work, hobbies outside of work, and

other social activities also offered opportunities for such enactments—see, for instance, Weber (1989). Moreover, some homer making instances contradicted craftsmen's sense of independence—one of their core occupational markers. Overall, however, homer making was nevertheless a viable salient venue for identity enactment. Though various configurations of homer interactions contributed to the validation of craftsmen's identity, interactions among craftsmen about homers made for other craftsmen were most conducive to enhancing this identity. Craftsmen were able to enact their identities most fully in these interactions. Validation by an expert eye—that of a person who understands what the occupational identity stands for and belongs to a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998)—was most precious.

In the context of the slow marginalization of craftsmen at Pierreville, opportunities to enact their threatened occupational identities through official work were becoming rare, thus enhancing the desirability of this identity and the opportunities for management to exert control using identity incentives.

Next I documented managers' awareness that craftsmen broke the official rules prohibiting homer making and their use of their managerial authority to selectively authorize and occasionally punish this forbidden practice in exchange for added control. The cooperation of craftsmen was historically important and still vital to operation of the plant, and wage variations could not be effectively used to discriminate among craftsmen. At the same time, managers knew homer making informed the craftsmen's identity. By exercising discretion around homer making and by extension around the manufacture of the desired identities of craftsmen, management was *de facto* allocating identity incentives and exercising control over these craftsmen.

Implications for Control

Classic characterizations of organizational control equate control with constraint and usually assume that control is achieved through the power to impose constraints (Edwards 1981, Perrow 1986, Weber 1958). These formulations assume that an organization member's aspirations for human freedom, dignity, and well-being compete with the organization's implicit need for control (Blau 1955, Hodson 1996, Osterman 1999). Members' aspirations, in other words, are at odds with the organization's need for control. This conflict of interest explains the necessity, from an organizational perspective, of implementing stick-like controls to curb behavior. Studies of members' resistance and of covert political conflict in organizations are consistent with this view of control (Morrill et al. 2003, Roscigno and Hodson 2004). Classic control is therefore mainly a matter of constraining behavior; voluntary engagement is

neither sought nor assumed to be necessary to achieve organizational control.

Constraints are, however, only one form of organizational control; reliance on members' voluntary engagement to produce control is another—a means that may be more effective than constraint (Eccles and Nohria 1992, Feldman and Khademian 2000, Soeters 1986). This alternate form of control requires the buy-in of participants, thus obliging the organization and participants to coconstruct the control. Complying members voluntarily act in certain ways favored by the organization to cocreate such control. Members' voluntary engagement can be achieved by various means, most notably through financial incentives (Fama and Jensen 1983, Jensen and Meckling 1976), the promise of motivating jobs (Hackman and Oldham 1976), the nurturing of organizational commitment (O'Reilly and Chatman 1996), or the promotion of appealing organizational cultures (Kunda 1992). A less widely understood way to elicit engagement is the fostering of select desired identities.

This study of homer interactions at Pierreville exposes a selective process of allocating desired identities that leads to control (Akerlof and Kranton 2005, White 1992). Identities—specifically desired ones, understood as “sources of intentional efforts”—partly underpin this control (White 1992, p. 236). Instead of paying an employee to perform certain tasks, management allocates “hidden” rewards to select employees (Ditton 1977). This exchange of hidden rewards for compliance is reminiscent of Burawoy's finding that the control relation that occurs between managers and workers is an exchange mechanism—“You look after me; I'll look after you” (Burawoy 1979, p. 61). When managers turn a blind eye, they expect workers to “drop what they are doing and punch in on the new job,” when “there is a hot job on the agenda” (p. 61). Similarly, when Pierreville managers exhibit leniency toward homer making, workers' compliance is expected. But at Pierreville, unlike in Burawoy's setting, the currencies of these hidden rewards often involved identity incentives, not only the relaxation of an organizational constraint. Thus, desired identities partly fuel these exchanges. The fact that such occupational-identity-engaging interactions occur despite their proscription highlights managerial discretion in this process. From management's perspective, the informal rule allowing for the selective violation of official rules is an implementation rule, or a “rule about a rule” (Van Maanen 1979, p. 86). Selective tolerance, under the threat of sanctions, is what makes this leniency an effective form of control. By allowing participants to enact their desired identities, leniency around homers manufactures control.

This study thus informs and elaborates the classic typology of control by explicating the linkage between desired identities and control. Adding an engaging form

of control to the classic coercive typology broadens our understanding of control. Edwards (1981) describes three classic forms of control in organizations. First is “simple control,” or the direct, authoritarian, and personal control of work and workers by the organization’s owner or hired supervisors. Hired helpers in small family-owned business, such as retail shops, often experience this form of control. Second, there is “technological control,” whereby the physical technology of the organization generates control. The moving conveyor belts still in use in some factories exemplify this form of control. Finally, “bureaucratic control” is based on the systematic rules observed within organizations. The requirement in retail banking that a supervisor approve loans above a specified amount exemplifies bureaucratic control. None of these forms of control requires any active desired engagement on the part of employees. This study, by contrast, spotlights a more engaging form of control that rests on desired identities. Managers at Pierreville could order work to be done (exercising direct control), make sure that the pace of production did not allow for much down time (technological control), and spell out all the tasks that craftsmen needed to complete to do their jobs (bureaucratic control); they could also selectively tolerate the practice of homer making (identity incentives control). This last form of control relied on the craftsmen’s desire to enact their occupational identity. Managers knew craftsmen were both keen on enacting their identity and potentially attracted by identity incentives.

More broadly, this study suggests an alternate form of occupational-identity incentives control. The fact that management could forbid occupational-identity-engaging interactions and that official work was slowly providing fewer opportunities to enact such interactions probably increased the strength of such a control. A less-potent form of control could entail providing select employees with opportunities for more or fewer occupational-identity-engaging interactions without the added leverage of sanctions. For instance, the allocation of interesting work or special projects to select individuals might constitute such a form of control. The allocation of advanced modeling work to mathematicians employed at financial institutions in exchange for extra effort on less-engaging projects exemplifies how this form of occupational-identity incentives control might play out in other professional contexts. Moreover, identity-incentive forms of control need not be limited to occupational identities. Though occupational identities have been hypothesized as important levers of engagement (Durkheim 1964, Van Maanen and Barley 1984), other identities also are attractive. For instance, identities linked to gender, ethnicity, age, disability, or sexual orientation, increasingly valued by employees (Piore and Safford 2006), could play into such identity-incentives forms of control. Whether such incentives potentially

lessen the importance of other organizational incentives (such as financial incentives) remains an open question. Data suggest that members of some occupational groups (in this case, biologists) are willing to take lower-paying jobs if provided with the opportunity to enact their identities (namely, publish academic articles) (Stern 2004). At the very least, identity incentives complement other forms of organizational control.

The organization’s role in shaping identities, specifically desired ones, is, perhaps, neither as ominous nor as positive as previous literature suggests. Organizations provide many opportunities to enact, and therefore shape, desired identities (Alvesson and Willmott 2002, Van Maanen and Schein 1979). Management can use these opportunities to its advantage: controlling members’ abilities to enact identities by allowing or restricting such opportunities. At the same time, members do not experience this control as mere instances of organizations imposing identities. Members benefit from the organization’s role in facilitating the enactment of desired identities. From the perspective of members, the positive role the organization plays in fostering desired identities cannot be discounted (Brower and Abolafia 1997, Friedman and McAdam 1992, Pratt 2000). Thus, the role of organizations in shaping members’ identities cannot be assumed to be unilaterally detrimental or beneficial to members—control and desire coexist. The compromise achieved through the engagement of both workers and management is what requires analysis.

Other engaging, nonmonetary forms of control—most notably commitment to an organization (O’Reilly and Chatman 1996) and attachment to its culture (Kunda 1992)—have previously been documented, but identity-incentive control differs from these forms of control in one important way. Identity-incentive control generates affiliation with a collective to which managers need not belong. Three dimensions of commitment have been identified: (1) instrumental involvement for extrinsic rewards; (2) involvement resulting from congruence between individual and organizational values; and (3) involvement based on a desire for affiliation (O’Reilly and Chatman 1996). The first two dimensions of commitment might apply to identity-incentive control as well, but the desire for affiliation differs. In fostering organizational commitment, managers try to elicit in others a sense of belonging to a collective to which they themselves *also* belong. Similarly, with respect to organizational culture, managers try to elicit a sense of belonging to a culture they *also* are part of (Kunda 1992). In contrast, identity-incentive control generates commitment to a group that managers are not necessarily part of (here, the occupational group of craftsmen). Thus, identity-incentive control is closer in form to monetary incentive control than to commitment- or culture-based controls.

Building belonging to an exclusive group of organizational members, without prospects of the group's membership expanding or rotating, often carries, from the organization's perspective, negative undertones. Such a form of internal "collusion" is frequently frowned upon by organizations. The interests of exclusive subgroups are suspected to compete with the organization's distinct interests (Crozier 1963). What can also be labeled "intimacy" between select organizational members is mostly resisted by organizations (Zelizer 2007). But this study shows that building belonging to an exclusive subgroup by fostering its identity might also breed control—in this case, the compliance with managerial will—and possibly advance organizational goals. Fostering members' exclusive subgroup identities cannot a priori be ruled out as detrimental to the organization's interests.

Implications for Occupational-Identity Enactment

The present study also contributes to the literature on identity in at least two ways. First, it adds to the repertoire of known processes of identity enactment by suggesting illegal work practices, as well as legal ones, as a locus of enactment. Second, it contributes to the literature on occupational identity by highlighting the role of *previously* enacted identities, alongside future ones, in individuals' desired identity pursuits—in other words, how past identities fuel desire.

Joining a growing literature that draws attention to the evolution and sustenance of occupational identities, this study tries to understand ways individuals enact these identities. It shows that alongside legal work practices, illegal practices can be as relevant, if not more, to identity enactment. Whereas past studies document identity enactment in work processes conducted mostly in the open and in relation to official work—such as task performance, role modeling, or reaction to feedback (Fine 1996, Ibarra 1999, Pratt et al. 2006)—this study shows that unofficial, illegal work practices are also conducive to identity enactment. The presence of peers is what appears to count most (Lave and Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998); occupational identities need not be enacted only in official, legal work. This study adds to the limited research showing evidence of identity enactment outside of official work processes, such as through the display of personal artifacts at work (Elsbach 2003) or the subscription to professional journals (Bidwell 1961). Illegal work practices provide a mainly overlooked, added locus of occupational identity enactment. Thus, opportunities for examining illegal work practices in light of identity pursuits might prove quite informative. One might argue that the study of illegal work practices proves *more* informative than the study of legal ones because participants are mainly left to their own devices in these instances. Illegal work practices might better reveal participants' preferred identities because participants probably choose to engage more freely in these practices than in legal ones.

Second, this study broadens the understanding of desired occupational identities by focusing on previously enacted desired identities, not only future ones. The notion of desired identity has mostly been used with the assumption that the identity has not yet been enacted (Farmer and Aguinis 2005, Schlenker 1985, Swann et al. 2002). Desired occupational selves, in particular, implicitly refer to future selves that have yet to become manifest (Ibarra 1999, Pratt et al. 2006). For instance, Ibarra's discussion of provisional selves builds on Markus and Nurius's (1986) concept of possible selves, defined as what individuals might become, would like to become, and are afraid of becoming: all of these definitions point to future-oriented desired selves. Whereas future selves are powerful motivators of action, desired selves, built on past enactments of identities—in other words, latent desired identities—also require consideration as drivers of action. Desired identities encompass both future and past selves. The broadening of the definition of desired identities suggests new ways to examine identity dynamics at work. For instance, remembrance ceremonies (anchored in the past) might be as crucial to identity enactment as learning opportunities with more experienced colleagues (pointing to the future).

In addition, latent desired identities might be becoming more widespread than desired future identities, yet their implications remain largely unexplored. Consider, for instance, the U.S. labor market: in an era of increased job mobility, in which 2.7% of employed Americans change jobs in any given month (Fallick and Fleischman 2001), the occupational mobility for (at least) male workers has been steadily declining for the past three decades (Moscarini and Vella 2002). This suggests that competence in one's occupation is perhaps increasingly required, but also that workers may be increasingly loyal to their occupations. Such a shift toward a more horizontal (occupational) instead of vertical (hierarchical) division of labor has been previously posited (Freidson 1973, Barley 1996). Thus, new organizational entrants might arrive with already salient occupational identities, including perhaps latent desired ones—the consequences of which need to be understood to better explain organizational practices and outcomes. Commitment and culture might have been the preferred engaging forms of control in the postindustrial era, but occupational identity incentives might become the engaging control of choice in contemporary labor markets.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations, some of which provide opportunities for future research. First, although the data presented here—specifically, the threats of sanctions and the selective enforcement of rules—indicate that control was occurring, they do not specify the purpose of the ensuing control. Management might, for

instance, be trying to drive organizational performance by rewarding productive employees. Alternatively, management could be trying to get craftsmen to essentially make homers for themselves, or management might be engaging in internal organizational politics by rewarding preferred craftsmen for their loyalty. External observers might find some of these hypotheses more worthy than others. Nonetheless, and regardless of purpose, control is being achieved. The definition of control used in the study is more inclusive than traditional conceptions of control; it encompasses both organizational and managerial control. Distinguishing between these types of control might be a fruitful next step for research.

Second, and like much ethnography-inspired and case-based research, this study fosters the generation of a theory, namely, identity-incentive control, but further research is needed to test its applicability. The aim of this study is to explicate one form of control at a single site, not to assess its frequency of occurrence. No other populations were systematically analyzed to learn whether officially forbidden but selectively tolerated identity-engaging interactions elsewhere might have similar outcomes. Thus, the existence of this form of identity incentives control in settings other than the Pierreville plant remains speculative. Identifying similar occupational-identity-engaging leniencies in other work settings would be an obvious next step in this line of research. Evidence suggests that such leniencies are not limited to craftsmen in factories (see Anteby forthcoming, chap. 9). Similar forms of control emerge, for instance, when emergency medical technicians (EMTs) “play doctor” by performing officially off-limits medical procedures on patients with the tacit approval of the remote attending physician (Palmer and Gonsoulin 1990). In this case, occupational-identity incentives and control dynamics also are combined: the EMTs’ expertise at life-saving medical interventions is part of their occupational identity. The physician’s leniency toward these practices upholds the EMT’s identity. Additional research on the frequency of such leniencies would require data from both workers and management, across occupations.

This study also raises intriguing questions about the conditions under which this form of control might generalize to other work settings. In other words, in what circumstances might organizations rely on occupational identity incentives as a form of control? Occupational-identity incentives might appeal first to employees whose desired occupational identities are not or cannot be affirmed by official work. The limited opportunities to enact occupational identities in official settings might, for instance, set the stage for the use of such incentives. The fewer official opportunities are offered, the more attractive occupational identity incentives might prove to be. Just as games on the shop floor (such as competitions

among machinists to get or finish a job) allow workers “to make real choices, however narrowly conceived” (Burawoy 1979, p. 27), occupational-identity incentives offer opportunities, however narrow, to enact desired occupational identities. Second, longings for such enactment might be heightened when organizations employ members of multiple occupations (Van Maanen and Barley 1984, pp. 331–333). In a law firm, for instance, lawyers probably have ample leeway for reinforcing their occupational identities at the organizational level. Their peers readily understand what is most important to them. By contrast, in-house lawyers at a large industrial firm might enjoy fewer opportunities to do so because they do not determine the direction of the firm. In settings where occupations coexist, the unique characteristics of each occupation are rarely reflected at the organizational level with the intensity desired by each occupational group. Thus, a high degree of occupational variety in an organization might make occupational identity incentives more appealing. Finally, the inability to officially discriminate between employees (regardless of the criterion employed) might create openings for occupational identity incentives. In these settings managers might be more inclined to rely on occupational identity incentives to reward complying employees.

A fourth and final limitation of this study is that it was not designed to collect longitudinal data. Thus, it cannot properly address the interplay between homer making and shifting power dynamics at the plant. In the absence of longitudinal data, one can only assume that as the power of craftsmen declined in the plant, homer making also declined (though its desirability probably increased) because managers no longer needed to secure the cooperation of craftsmen. Occupational-identity-incentives control might emerge among new and growing occupational groups at the plant that management now needs to control, namely computer-trained technicians. Anecdotal evidence points to homer-like practices involving computers (such as scale drawings of home-improvement projects, digital photographic manipulations, and newsletter production) among these technicians. Such developments are to be expected given increased reliance on computer-aided design to develop engines; with this shift in the locus of power, identity incentives are likely to change as well.

Practices such as homer making, officially forbidden by company rules but selectively tolerated by management, are sometimes classified as mere folklore. These practices, however, can encapsulate microstruggles for identities that might appear trivial in themselves but that cumulatively constitute crucial elements of desired identity pursuits. As such, they can also shed light on forms of control that build on these desired identities and on the exchanges that management and employees are willing to engage in to achieve their respective goals.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide (Translated from French)

How long did you work at AeroDyn?
How did you start working here? Why?
What education/training did you receive?
Did you receive a technical professional certificate (CAP)?

What did your first job in the factory entail?
What did you do?
What were your next jobs? Can you tell me your work history at AeroDyn?
With whom did you work at AeroDyn?

When did you leave the firm and for what reasons?
When you left, did you receive any gifts from your colleagues?
If so, could you describe them? Did your colleagues manufacture any of these gifts?
Was the practice of manufacturing a gift widespread in the factory?
What does this gift represent to you?

Can you recall other instances when such artifacts were manufactured?
Could you describe them and tell me how you knew about them?
Did you help in manufacturing them?
Do you have any other such artifacts in your home?
If so, could you tell me their story?
Who was involved in their manufacturing? Why did you receive them?
Were many people able to get such artifacts? If not, why?

We have mainly talked about these artifacts, but is there anything else I should be aware of regarding your work in the factory? Am I missing out on important work issues? If so, could you describe them?

Endnote

¹All quotes were translated from French.

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