Construction of Multiple Identities of Individuals at a Japanese SME: A Dynamic Perspective Toward Diversity Management

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This paper aims at exploring the complex interaction of multiple diversity attributes among organization members at a Japanese SME by adopting analytic lenses of an internal identity asymmetry and positive identity construction. More focus is placed on relationships among multiple identities highlighting when identities can be "positive" in the workplace. It is well known that an organization is a prime source of identity for individuals. The recent progress of diversity in organizational population, however, has revealed the multiplicity of identity of organization members—they are not only to identify with an organization, but also with various groups to which they belong, such as ethnicity, gender, occupation, employment status, and so on. While existing literature tends to focus on the difficulty of managing the organization members of multiple identities, this paper highlights the possibilities leading to cultivate a sense of inclusion through positivity. In particular, it reveals what triggers activating positive identities in a diverse workplace. In order to bring a novel set of insights to our understanding of how people negotiate multiple identities, the paper engages in the narrative analysis of seventeen semi-structured interviews with organization members of the Japanese SME. The current research would advance our understanding of the diversity management by explicating the enactment process of positive identities in the workplace, which is a more nuanced and dynamic view toward the diversity management.

Keywords: diversity, identity, positive psychology, SMEs, Japan

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made the workforce more diverse than ever, even in Japan—a nation long considered that an ethnic homogeneity of its population is a norm. This change has raised an awareness of Japanese organizations toward the presence of multiple identities in organizations. It has long been pointed out that an individual possesses multiple attributes of diversity (Taniguchi 2005). This notion of multiplicity of the attribute of diversity has not yet been properly addressed in the research work regarding diversity management. One of the reasons why this point has not been taken up comes from the limitation of the research method. When the quantitative methods are employed to study diversity at a workplace, it is often the case that only one attribute is chosen as an independent variable to discuss its relationship with a dependent variable—performance. With performance as a dependent variable, researchers are often restricted to pick up one diversity attribute so that they can show the one-to-one relationship clearly in a hypothesis they have developed. In contrast, qualitative research that employs a holistic approach can release the diversity management research from the constraint of considering only one diversity attribute at a time. Qualitative methods, such as ethnography can investigate multiple diversity attributes of one person and, moreover, they can examine the situation where those attributes of people in an organization would play out in a natural setting.

To study multiple diversity attributes in a natural setting, this paper draws on an identity construct to explore the complex interplay of multiple diversity attributes at a workplace. We define identity as the meanings that people attach to themselves (Gecas 1982). While a person's concept of self may remain fairly consistent over time, identity is recognized as a process that shifts and adjusts as it plays out in everyday life (Yagi and Kleinberg 2011). It is assumed that an individual's concept about oneself embraces multiple identities while addressing certain questions about self like, "Who I am?" and "How should I act?"

The answer to "Who I am?" can be complex and multifaceted. A person can have many identities based on diversity attributes such as organizational membership, profession, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and so on. For a society like Japan, where homogeneity of membership is considered as a benchmark characteristic of organizations, a notion of multiplicity of identity—a person can have many identities—is still unfathomable, even more so in the context of diversity management. Attributes of diversity can be categorized in many ways. One of the ways to categorize the diversity attributes is to differentiate them into the readily detected and the underlying attributes (Jackson and Joshi 2011). Readily detected attributes include gender, age, and race, which are easily discerned through observing appearance. For the underlying attributes, they generally become known only through interaction, such as personality, attitudes and skills, from a relationship-oriented perspective. The underlying attributes are also identified from a task-oriented perspective, such as task knowledge, organizational knowledge, and experience.

Regardless of the type of attributes, the idea that a focal person may possess those varieties of diversity attributes is less understood in the Japanese society. For example, "creating a workplace where women can play an active role" is a typical phrase in Japan to promote the diversity management. In that, a woman is a readily detected diversity attribute. This woman can also be a manager, a longtime veteran worker, a capable accountant, and a caring mother, and so on. Thus, her diversity attributes include a variety of readily detected and underlying attributes. However, it is often the case that the nation's propaganda of the diversity management casts a light only on a role identity that is a woman as a mother. The complexity and multiplicity of diversity-based identity are rarely taken into account during policy development and diversity management.

The same issue can be applicable to an attribute of ethnic diversity. Japanese government put into effect a revised immigration control law in April 2019. The revision is expected to increase the number of foreign workers coming to Japan. The increase has raised the nation's awareness toward the diversity management of foreign workers. In that, foreigners who come to work to Japan are boxed into a single diversity attribute of ethnicity and seen only from that aspect, even though a foreign worker has a combination of multiple identities that can range over age, education level, skill, etc.

This paper attempts to redress this situation by exploring the complex interaction of multiple diversity attributes among organization members by analyzing qualitative data gathered at a Japanese SME. In doing so, the paper adopts two lenses of analysis—an internal identity asymmetry and positive identity construction. When we assume that people do have multiple identities, it is more likely that an individual would experience an internal identity asymmetry—the asymmetry that a person feels he/she is misidentified by others (Meister, Jehn, and Thatcher 2014). While coping with a stressor, such as an internal identity asymmetry, previous studies have focused primarily on the negative outcomes of incongruence of the multiple identities. The perceived identity asymmetry, however, can bring the positive outcomes, such as construction of positive identity. The paper examines the positive side of asymmetry outcomes. It is important because it has been long known that individuals wish to construct positive identities in their work domain (Turner 1982). Positive identity construction at a workplace is linked to important organizational outcomes, such as dealing with adversity and stress (Hobfoll 1989), facilitating individuals' access to different knowledge domains, fostering creativity (Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee 2008), providing a vehicle for leaning from different cultural experiences to enhance work process (Ely and Thomas 2001), and promoting adaptation to new work settings (Beyer and Hannah 2002). Then, the current research contributes to explore the ways how people from diverse backgrounds can achieve positive outcomes in organizations despite the high possibilities that their multiple identities are misidentified by stakeholders, such as their organization members.

In the following section, the paper touches the current issues of diversity management in Japan as a backdrop of the current research location—a Japanese SME. Then, it proceeds with introducing two frameworks that help analyze the field data—an internal identity asymmetry and a positive identity typology of four pathways. Together with the backdrop and the theoretical frameworks, the paper proceeds with an analysis of the interplay of multiple identities at the Japanese SME by unpacking the contingencies in which three types of positive identity emerge. The concluding section contains the findings in relation to two frameworks and explores future directions of research that examine the multiplicity of diversity attributes.

INTERESTS IN DIVERSITY ISSUES IN JAPAN

Diversity management is continuously becoming more and more popular in Japan. Various diversity attributes have drawn the nation's interest including, nationality (foreign workers), sexual orientation, gender (women), and disabilities. Only two of those attributes, nationality (foreign workers) and gender (women) have been picked up and presented because these are relevant to the field this research paper is about.

Foreign workers: A revised immigration control law, which expands the acceptance of foreign workers, came into force in April 2019. Japanese government has established a new status of residence called "specific skills" and opened the door to simple labor for foreigners. It is expected to accept up to 340,000 foreigners in five years in 14 industries such as nursing care and construction where labor shortages are severely felt. This revised law is controversial because it touches two elements that have been a kind of taboo in Japan. First, it paves a way for foreign workers to become permanent residents. Second, it allows some workers to bring their families to Japan. Still Prime Minister Abe insisted the revised law was not adopting a "so-called immigration policy" in the parliament (Harding 2018). Opinion polls suggest that 54 per cent of the public support the current revision, while 34 per cent oppose it. The young are especially positive, reflecting a slow shift in attitudes toward acceptance of foreign workers.

Women: Prime Minister Abe got approved by the cabinet in 2014 setting up an office that aims at promoting "a society in which all women shine". His move has created controversies in the nation. He, being regarded as a conservative politician, has opposed the enforcement of any gender equality policy. Horie argues that it is not surprising because the central aim of Abe's women's policy is to increase the labor supply of women—it is economic policy, not gender equality policy. Anything that is likely to be useful for short-term consequences (such as the rise of stock price and economic growth), Abe would mobilize it. That attitude of using anything insofar as it contributes to the realization of the purpose was what made the Abe administration went for such a women policy, Horie concludes (Horie 2016).

The above portrayal of the diversity issues in Japan illustrates that it is still a single diversity attribute that the nation concentrates on. Little recognition has been given to the fact that an individual has got multiple diversity attributes. As the diversity attribute, both foreign workers and women are perceived as having a collective identity, in that they are group-level characteristics differentiating them from other groups. However, from an individual point of view, those two attributes—foreign worker and woman—can easily be in one person. That is, for a foreign woman (in Japan), being a foreigner and being a woman—both can be a source of identity for one person. Until we ask her, we do not know what she means to be a foreigner or a woman. Just two attributes presented here could exemplify the complexity of seeing diversity attributes from an individual's point of view. In a natural setting, an individual person needs to handle many more identities to shape one's self.

In the next section, we introduce the first theoretical framework, an internal identity asymmetry, in order to better understand the situation where an individual person handles multiple identities.

INTERNAL IDENTITY ASYMMETRY AND POSSIBLE COPING RESPONSES TO PERCEIVED DIVERSITY

Assuming that a person has got multiple diversity attributes, it is plausible that multiple identities of the person may be misidentified by others. Internal identity asymmetry is a framework that explains such a situation. It is defined as an individual's belief that he or she is misidentified by his or her colleagues in terms of their work-related identities (Meister, Jehn, and Thatcher 2014). Internal identity asymmetry is differentiated from "external" identity asymmetry, a concept explores discrepancies between an individual's work-related identity (how the individual self-identifies at work), and how others actually see the individual at work. Internal identity asymmetry is experienced when an individual believes there is a discrepancy between his or her work-related identity and perceived professional image (how the individual believes others see him or her at work). This is an important distinction, Meister et al. argue, because individuals' perceptions of a social phenomenon are critical to decide their subsequent response to that phenomenon. Consequently, they suggest that despite whether an asymmetry actually exists (e.g., external identity asymmetry), it is an individual's perception, or belief that the asymmetry exists, that makes it important.

Meister and her colleagues delineate three moderating characteristics—importance, mutability, and valence—which differentiate asymmetries, and mediate an individual's preferred coping response. By doing so, they argue that an individual may want to maintain, rather than resolve, the asymmetry. Importance is considered as an individual's appraisal of the asymmetry's relevance to his or her future well-being. The more important the individual deems the asymmetry, the greater urgency it places on him or her to employ a coping response to handle its demands. Mutability means the extent to which an individual believes he or she can alter the asymmetry. Mutable asymmetries are those that are potentially resolvable, while immutable asymmetries are those that are unlikely or unable to be resolved. Valence refers to whether the individual appraises the asymmetry as having a negative or positive influence on future well-being. Negative asymmetries are potential threats to cause harm or loss, whereas positive asymmetries offer a potential challenge indicating the possibility of benefiting from the asymmetry. Meister et al. assume that the valence of the asymmetry, in combination with its mutability, directs which specific coping response the individual will employ.

Further on, they argue that how individuals appraise the importance, mutability, and valence of an internal identity asymmetry, and how it will dictate their likely coping response to the asymmetry. They conceptualized four types of coping responses. The first type of coping response is to alter internal identity to match perceived external views. This coping will be taken when the importance and the mutability are high and the valence is positively appraised by an individual. In contrast, an individual is supposed to take a coping response to alter his or her perceptions of others' views, when he/she regards the valence as negative in a given asymmetry situation. The third type of response is to maintain asymmetry. When individuals appraised the mutability is low, or the asymmetry is immutable, yet the valence is positive, then they are supposed not to alter, rather to maintain the asymmetry. Lastly, people would endure asymmetry when the mutability of the asymmetry is low and the valence is negative.

After an individual has employed a certain type of coping response to an internal identity asymmetry, Meister et al. consider two broad outcomes —positive or negative— would come out that influence an individual's well-being and the quality of his or her interpersonal relationships. On an intrapersonal level, an internal identity asymmetry relates to outcomes that have been consistently used as indicators of individual well-being; such as the positive and/or negative effect, and self-esteem (Hoyt and Blascovich 2010; Schmitt et al. 2002). On an interpersonal level, they explore how internal identity asymmetry relates to outcomes that have been consistently linked with strained or strengthened interpersonal relationship; such as other-directed affect, trust, prosocial or antisocial behavior (Aquino and Douglas 2003; Williams 2007).

The construct of internal identity asymmetry, therefore, provides a useful framework to understand how people respond when their multiple identities are mistaken—a situation where the likelihood of occurrence will sharply increase in the diverse workplace. In the next section, we will introduce the

second analytic lens—positive identity perspective and its four theoretical typologies. This is to explore the conditions under which positive identities will be obtained even when individuals are under a stressor, such as an internal identity asymmetry.

POSITIVE IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE AND BUILDING OF SOCIAL RESOURCES

Dutton, Roberts, and Bednar (2010) presented four theoretical perspectives on positive work-related identity. The modifier "work-related" means that their perspectives focus on the aspects of identity which are tied to participation in the activities of work or membership in work-related groups, organizations, occupations, or professions. They claim that work as a life domain is important for self-construction. Most of us spend large portion of our lives at work. Since research assumes that identities are created in relationships with others (Charon 2001), our daily work interactions make work a central domain for construction of self.

Because researchers have conceptualized the positivity of work-related identities in a myriad of ways, Dutton, Roberts and Bednar (2010, 268) organized the conceptualization into a four-part typology: virtue, evaluative, developmental, and structural. The virtue perspective posits that "a work-related identity is positive when the identity content is infused with virtuous qualities or character strengths that correspond to the qualities distinguishing people of good character and which are defined as inherently good" (p. 268). When individuals construct an identity which contains master virtues, such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence, their identity is positive. The evaluative perspective focuses on how people do associate with their work-related identities. Individuals derive self-esteem from subjective evaluations of their identity characteristics and identity groups (Hogg and Terry 2000). Therefore, identities which are favorably regarded by the self or by others are positive.

While the virtue and the evaluative perspectives focus on identity content and its evaluation, the developmental perspective focuses on the change in an identity or self-definition over time. This perspective is divided into two approaches: the progressive approach and the adaptive approach. In progressive approach, the positivity of an identity comes from its progression toward a higher-order stage of development (Carlsen 2006). However, the adaptive approach suggests that individuals systematically alter the content of the identity to achieve a more appropriate fit with a set of internal or external standards. Thus, when there is a greater fit between the identity content and internal or external standards, then a work-related identity is considered more positive (Ibarra 1999).

The structured perspective posits that an individual's identity structure is more positive when the multiple facets of identity are in a balanced and/or complementary relationship with one another, given the multifaceted nature of identity. Accordingly, the structural perspective calls the different ways that individuals attempt to organize and structure their multifaceted identity—two primary processes are: a balanced approach and a complementary approach. The balanced approach suggests that the positivity of a person's identity lies in the relationship between personal identities and social identities. These two types of identities create structural tensions that require individuals to balance inherent desires for inclusion and belonging against the desire for uniqueness and differentiation (Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep 2006). The complementary approach focuses on the perceived complementarity between different social or role identities as an indicator of positivity. Multiple identities are viewed as compatible with one another, in that the possession of one identity (e.g., cultural background) can facilitates the execution of expectations related to the other identity (e.g., task performance) (Ely and Thomas 2001). Dutton and her colleagues claim that positive identity construction is a mechanism of helping to build and sustain the social resources which are critical to employees and organizational functioning. They consider social resources as the number, diversity, and quality of relationships which an individual does have at work. It is assumed that employees who have more social resources acquire other resources (e.g., information, access, trust) to strengthen them for enduring stress and hardship while take on new and more demanding challenges.

Each perspective of positive work-related identity is assumed to have a different mechanism which links positive identity and social resources. For example, in the case of virtue perspective, a more virtuous

work-related identity can alter individuals' preferences for building connections with others, and facilitating the cultivation of social resources. Reed and Aquino's (2003) experiments demonstrate that when a moral identity becomes more salient, people expand their "circle of moral regard," suggesting that one effect of having a more central moral identity is that it minimizes ingroup-outgroup distinctions and increases sympathy toward outgroups. As a result, one might expect that individuals who define themselves with attributes consistent with a moral identity (e.g., more caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, hardworking, honest, and kind) will be more open while interacting with members of out-groups in their work organizations. In work organizations, members of outgroups might include people who are in other units or departments, as well as people who are at different organizational levels.

With two lenses of analytic frameworks in mind, we start examining the Kanto Foods, a research field, in the next section. It is a sphere where not only people experience multiple identities but they also construct work-related identity.

WORKPLACE AS A STAGE FOR IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Work is a salient source of meaning and self-definition for most individuals (Ashforth and Mael 1989). People form and modify how they define themselves and others in the context of work-based situations and activities (Pratt 2000). That applies to organization members working for Kanto Foods (all the names appeared in this section are a pseudonym) as well. Work-based situations and activities at Kanto Foods have two distinctive characteristics which affect each other: diverse backgrounds of workforce and a demanding working environment.

Diverse Backgrounds of Workforce

The diverse workforce at Kanto Foods was having at least the diversity attributes of nationality, language, gender, employment status, positions/posts at work, family, and education. Each one of these attributes was relevant to identity construction of organization members. A nationality attribute contains Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, and Brazilian. Language indicates that besides Japanese, a common language at Kanto Foods, national languages of the foreign workers, local languages spoken only in some parts of the country, and English considered as a lingua franca of the world. The employment status includes *seishain* (full-time and permanent employees), *paato* (part-time employees), *haken* (temporary staff) and *gino jisshusei* (technical interns). Positions at work are divided into top management team, middle managers, and the rank and file. Family means those with a spouse and children, and singles.

Some of these attributes are skewed in terms of the way they overlapped. For example, all the part-time workers are Japanese housewives and the temporary staff workers are foreigners. Regardless of the degree of overlap, all those attributes are all important source of identity for organization members of Kanto Foods.

Demanding Working Environment

A factory of Kanto Foods was characterized by a Japanese term, 3K. Three Ks stand for *kitsui* (difficult or tough), *kitanai* (dirty), *kiken* (dangerous) which symbolize an undesirable workplace for job seekers. This demanding work environment partly explained the diverse backgrounds of workforce. Such work environment made it difficult for the company to recruit Japanese youngsters. Therefore, the company started relying on housewife part-timers and foreigners.

Such a demanding work environment often places "taint" on work. Hughes coined a term called "dirty work," defining it as tasks which are "physically, socially or morally" tainted (1958: 122). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) built upon Hughes's work by expanding the definition of dirty work and proposing a theoretical model of how those who do dirty work often maintain a positive identity in the face of pervasive stigma. In the aforementioned positive identity framework, Dutton et al. (2010) classified the way the workers with stigmatized occupations overcome these taints as the complementary approach. Studies examining complementarity highlight how competing demands and values which are associated with various facets of identity can generate internal tension or identity conflict. People who

experience this dissonance within their identity structures employ a variety of coping strategies to reduce the conflict. They are motivated to increase complementarity between identities.

Methodology

Dyer and Keller-Cohen (2000) argue that the narratives of personal experience contribute greatly to the construction of the broader institutional discourse of professional identity. The paper significantly considers their argument and focuses on analyses of narratives on scrutinizing the identity construction of the organization members. In that, a researcher engages in systematic practices to make the narrative approach as an emergent circular process. Yoshinaga and Saito (2017) indicated three roles of organization researchers who engage in the practices. First, researchers should be a device that brings out various narratives. Second, researchers must be a witness of narrative approach practices. Lastly, researchers should manage the practice process of narrative approach and do good practice. The current research followed this set of roles to surface the identity construction processes of interviewees.

The sample consisted of 17 semi-structured interviews with the rank and file workers as well as the top management team members. These included ten, five, one and one from Filippines, Japan, Brazil and China respectively. In addition, the author had a series of conversations with a Japanese manager of general affairs who managed schedule for one-hour long interviews. Interviews were held in Japanese when possible; English was used for interviewing Filipinos; and a Chinese translator was used and she interpreted the conversation into Japanese.

The interviews were closely read and re-read, along with coding around the themes of identity construction, and meanings people associated with their identity. In the next section, two narratives will be presented. They juxtaposed different types of positive identity and efforts to construct such a positive identity. Analyses also pay attention to identity asymmetries, if any, the organization members may experience, and examine if the identity asymmetry may serve as an antecedent of the positive identity construction.

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT THROUGH POSITIVE IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The following section contains analysis of the narratives of Mrs. Taira, a longtime part-time worker, and of Juan, a Filipino temporary staff. Analysis starts with their experience of multiple identities. A focus is placed on the asymmetries among multiple identities—whether they experience any internal identity asymmetries in every day work. Then, the analysis proceeds with their coping method against the asymmetries. Examination of their narratives reveals that some form of positive identity emerges through the coping process. Finally, we examine if the positive identity leads to generate any social resources for respective workers.

Pathway from Internal Identity Asymmetry to Developmental and Complementary Positive Identities

Mrs. Taira had the longest tenure among the part-time workers. Actually, she was the first interviewee that the top management team allowed the researcher to interview. She recognized that she was so trustworthy for the top management that she was regarded like a full-time employee. That was why she was chosen as the first to talk to the researcher, she contemplated. She believed that a pseudo full-time worker identity was asymmetric to her work-related identity as a part-time worker. Indeed, she complained a lot about the way that full-time managers were working. "They do not fulfill the responsibilities as full-time workers," she pointed out. "Even if they see temporary workers not observing the safety rules, they just look and ignore. It is their responsibility to reprimand such violation of rules." Those remarks indicate Mrs. Taira's frustration owing to incongruence between the image she believes that the management has about her and her identity as a part-time worker.

On the other hand, her full-time worker image is based on her competency of leadership. It is a skill-based identity which is relatively easy to add to her work-related identity. Thus, her coping method to resolve the asymmetry is to alter the full-time employee image to the leader image. The leader identity

is congruous with her other identities, such as a long-time worker and a caring person. From the positive identity framework, this change and addition of the work-related identity of Mrs. Taira applies to the adaptive approach in the developmental perspective. According to the adaptive approach to positive identity development, the positivity of identity increases as the identity content better fit with some combination of internal and external standards (Ibarra 1999; Pratt and Foreman 2000).

Another pathway that her positive identity takes a form is the structural approach in the complementary perspective. According to the complementary perspective, having multiple compatible identities is an important feature of positive identity structures. Mrs. Taira was engaged in multiple domains in Kanto Foods. Not only with the part-time workers, with her added repertoire of leader identity, she also got engaged with the full-time workers. According to Kahn (1992), when people draw connections between different facets of their self-concepts, their increased sense of wholeness or intimacy with self also translates into building intimacy with others. Complementarity promotes authenticity and trust, which help people safely work through differences and difficult situations, Dutton et al. argues. Mrs. Taira's experience of multiple identities fits well with this framework.

Pathway from Internal Identity Asymmetry to Virtuous Positive Identity

Juan was a temporary staff from the Philippines. His trajectory of work in Japan showed that it was because of his Japanese ancestry (his grandfather was Japanese). He started a job at Kanto Foods when he first came to Japan. Having the information provided through the network of Filipino workers in Japan, he joined some other job which paid more. After having spent a few years at the new workplace, Juan came back to Kanto Foods. "Pay is not the ideal. But the working environment is better here," he explained.

The analysis of Juan's experience of multiple identities started with an observation of his behavior by one of his colleagues, Mrs. Isoda. Mrs. Isoda was a Japanese part-time worker who had been working for 7 years at Kanto Foods. She mentioned her experience when she was dragging a container filled with heavy vegetables, such as pumpkins, potatoes, and onions. Juan came by and carried the container for her. She said, "People from the Philippines are kind, I thought." She found a different attitude in the Filipino worker than that of Japanese men because Japanese male workers seldom gave such a helping hand to female workers. Such a meaning associated with his behavior casts a congenial "colleague" image on Juan.

On the other hand, the top management had a different image of foreign workers, including Juan. Such image was due to incompetence of foreign workers to learn Japanese language. "Foreigners were incapable of understanding the Japanese signage for safety instructions," one of the top management members said. On the contrary, Juan thought that these instructions were meaningless—they were within the scope of commonsense. He and fellow foreign workers did understand what they meant and could behave accordingly. For the foreign workers, the issue of safety instructions was not at all related to the language proficiency.

Asymmetries of identities were there for Juan. For the congenial co-worker image, it had a positive valence for him—a positive influence on his future well-being at Kanto Foods. According to cognitive appraisal theories, stressors such as internal identity asymmetries may offer an individual the potential for master or personal growth, which often induce positive effect (Folkman and Moskowitz 2000). When Juan's perceived image was more favorable than his current self-view, this may be a self he aspired to—a desired, ideal, or possible self (Markus and Nurius 1986). Thus, he wanted to internalize this identity.

The image of incompetent Japanese speaker was another asymmetry experienced by Juan. This is an immutable identity or image that he had little control to change because it was tied to a race which was a visible identity. Meister et al. (2014) consider that the internal identity asymmetry based on the immutable identity is likely to be perceived as difficult to resolve, and the individual would employ a maintenance coping response.

In this situation, Juan possessed a positive identity classified as virtuous identity. It is evidenced by Juan's satisfaction with the current workplace and his compassionate behavior extended to his Japanese colleagues (Frost et al. 2000). Dutton et al. (2010) claim that the positivity of the identity is in the

virtuous content of self-definitions. Juan's identity contains the qualities associated with universal virtues or strengths like compassion, and such an identity is considered positive.

CONCLUSION

Diversity management literature has scrutinized a variety of diversity attributes and comes up with refined ways to categorize these attributes. While typologies of diversity attributes have been refined, their thinking to the structure (how multiple diversity attributes are organized in a single person) and the relationships between them (in what ways multiple diversity attributes interact with one another) is still at the nascent stage. Researchers have started recognizing the complexity among a fixed set of demographic categories as they intersect with each other (Clair et al. 2019). This paper advances the line of investigation in two facets—methodological and conceptual.

For the methodological facet, it demonstrates the capacity that qualitative method has to examine the complex phenomenon such as the negotiation of multiple identities in a work setting characterized by the diversity. Insights gained from the narrative analysis liberate an individual person from the situation confined to only one diversity attribute such as gender and nationality. A foreign worker is not just a foreigner but he is a caring colleague and a worker who prudently examines future well-being at the same time. His foreignness itself bears multiple meanings—incompetency of linguistic skills versus capability that is readily accustomed to a foreign workplace. Different meanings, in turn, shape asymmetrical identity perception to him. Such an unpacking of multiple identities can be achieved only by a qualitative method. Qualitative approach that is motivated by a desire to understand individuals' lived experience, such as people's subjective experience of work, relationships, time, and so on, brings different set of understanding toward the diversity management than quantitative approach does (Maitlis 2017).

The existing literature on diversity management regards the presence of identity asymmetries from a negative side or as a cause of negative consequences (O'Reilly, Williams, and Barsade 1997). This paper shows that the case is not necessarily so. Perceived identity asymmetries do not always lead to negative consequences. It depends on the mutability and valence of asymmetrical identities that affect the people's coping strategies for the asymmetry. This paper attempts to integrate the theory of positive identity and diversity management by utilizing the identity asymmetry as a bridging construct. By doing so, it delineates some pathways how an individual-level experience of multiple identities relates to an organization and/or group-level phenomenon of diversity management, in particular, shedding a positive light on the subject. Drawing on Dutton et al.'s (2010) model, positivity is regarded as the subjective positiveness at an individual identity level as well as the social resources at a group/organization level.

The approach taken in this paper enables to understand the diversity management research in more nuanced and dynamic ways. Not just examining the impact that one diversity attribute would have at a time but it also investigates the magnitude that a simultaneous interplay of multiple diversity attributes would provide in a given situation.

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