Author approved version of:

Ellram, L. M., Harland, C. M., van Weele, A., Essig, M., Johnsen, T., Nassimbeni, G., ... & Wynstra, F. (2020). Purchasing and supply management's identity: Crisis? What crisis?. *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, *26*(1), 100583.

Purchasing and Supply Management's Identity: Crisis? What Crisis?

Abstract
Purchasing and Supply Management (PSM) has been subjected to a number of examinations, all concluding that PSM is not an academic discipline as it lacks its own theories and common themes of research. It is perceived by many as an applied social science and field of research applying theories from other disciplines. But, to date, these examinations have not revealed more definitively what PSM is, i.e., its identity. This Notes and Debates paper was stimulated by two focused meetings, a question panel at IPSERA 2019 and solicited views from IPSERA participants. These were synthesized and developed through grounding them in identity and social identity theories. They are provided to stimulate the debate on PSM's internal and external identity coherence and legitimacy.

1. Introduction

Purchasing and Supply Management (PSM) has come a long way from its origins embedded in the five rights – right quality, quantity, delivery, price and service – and the purchasing operational process. Today it is a far more strategic and policy oriented field, proactively shaping strategic decisions, such as those relating to globalisation, outsourcing and sustainability. From its original focus on private sector purchasing and supply in manufacturing, the field now embraces the study of public, private and not for profit sectors, manufacturing and service environments. Previously focused on PSM within firms and its immediate relationships with suppliers, PSM researchers now examine supply chains, supply networks, complex systems of supply (such as the United Nations) and supply markets. While early research was largely atheoretical, gradually scholars started to use Transaction Cost Economics, Resource Based View, Agency Theory and Relational Theory, as examples, to examine PSM issues (Spina et al. 2016; Giunipero et al. 2019, Wynstra et al. 2019).

The development of PSM as a field of practice and academic study has been rapid since the 1960s. The role of PSM practitioners has changed substantially (Johnson, Shafiq et al. 2014). Academically the start of a debate about whether PSM is an academic discipline has signaled it is on the path to become one (Pfeffer 1993, Van Maanen 1995). But have we, as PSM scholars, ever stopped to question what PSM is now, and what we aspire PSM to become?

This current debate on the identity of PSM arose from a number of conversations at the annual International Purchasing and Supply Education and Research Association (IPSERA) conference 2017 concerning the wide range of topics presented. Some focused on studying PSM to contribute to the literature on leadership, human resources and emotions, rather than contributing to PSM. This breadth of topics is also a concern within the IS discipline: "Our concern is more fundamental: We are worried that the IS research community is making the discipline's central identity even more ambiguous by, all too frequently, under-investigating phenomena intimately associated with IT-based systems and over-investigating phenomena distantly associated with IT-based systems" (Benbasat and Zmud, 2003, p.184). Another concern expressed at IPSERA was the increasing array of theories that appeared to be applied in an unsystematic way in PSM research. This is supported in a current review of PSM literature, where Giunipero et al. (2019) note that of the 520 PSM-focused articles published in a variety of supply chain-oriented journals from 1995-2017, more than 120 different theories were used. A high level of fragmentation in research as indicated here has been viewed as a sign of an identity crisis (Klein 2003).

The term 'identity crisis', is used here to describe a lack of clarity on what PSM is and aspires to become (as implied in Benbasat and Zmud 2003); this term was used by some participants of IPSERA 2017 who questioned and debated the identity of the field. To delve into this further, a focused meeting of PSM scholars was held in the autumn of 2017 to discuss and debate the evolution of PSM's identity in research and practice. This involved a range of PSM academics – some more practice based and applied, others more theory focused - questioning PSM's status as an academic discipline. The resulting conversations and sharing after the meeting illuminated diversity of views and curiosity as to the direction the debate was taking, such that a further focused meeting involving more PSM scholars was held a year later. Growing interest from the broader PSM community led to a plenary question panel at the IPSERA 2019 annual international conference. Following the conference, a set of questions based on issues of interest arising during the panel was sent to conference participants to collect more views relating to PSM identity. In this way the debate has been opened up to the IPSERA community to participate.

The focused meetings' participants found it interesting that among a relatively small group of established PSM scholars, including numerous past and current journal editors, there were such diverse views on whether PSM is as an applied field of study versus an academic discipline. There were also differences in opinion regarding what the nature of PSM research and identity building should be in the future. The purpose of this Notes and Debates paper is to share some of the similarities and differences in opinions, keeping in mind that this paper is based on discussions of a sub-group of experienced PSM researchers representing primarily Western Europe and the U.S., not a rigorous research study.

To ground this discussion and provide some perspective, an introduction to the literature on identity is provided, examining what it is and why it is relevant for any field. Focusing on external and internal coherence and legitimacy, a brief review on the identity of PSM as it relates to operations, marketing, logistics and supply chain management is proposed. Next, views on the potential future identity of PSM are shared. Initial conclusions are formed and questions posed to stimulate wider debate.

2. Identity – what is it and why is it important?

2.1 What is identity?

There are three main aspects of identity. First, identity can be defined as a self-concept (how we see ourselves); this aspect is rooted in individualist approaches to social psychology (Sampson 1977, 1981, Pepitone 1981,). From this perspective professional identity has been defined as "one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences" (Slay and Smith 2011, p.86). Second, identity can be viewed as a form of social identification (how others see us) (Ashforth and Mael 1998). 'Roles' are considered to be bounding aspects of identity and are linked to positions in a social structure, which could be a work setting. Identity can exist at various levels in the workplace, including department, function, cohort and hierarchy (Ashforth and Mael 1998). Roles can therefore combine the individualist and social identification perspectives of identity and relate to different workplace levels. Individuals have internalized meanings associated with their own roles (Stryker and Burke 2000) including how they perceive themselves in those roles (Brown and Lewis 2011, Brown and Toyoki 2013), and how this impacts on their own behaviors (Morrison 1994, Bergami and Bagozzi 2000, Brown and Toyoki 2013). Others have

expectations of individuals shaped by their perceptions of the individuals' roles (Nuttall 2004) that socially identify them. The third perspective of identity is about how we, in our 'communities' relate to other individuals, groups and functional areas (Slay and Smith 2011); this may relate to the institutional workplace or international communities, such as conferences and associations. 'Defining communities' shape individuals' perceptions of their identities (Taylor 1989). Individuals in their communities may continue community traditions (MacIntyre 1981). Our focus here is on the academic identity of PSM, not its professional identity, although acknowledging that academic identity of our field is influenced by PSM practice.

2.2 Why is identity important?

Individuals want to feel good about their jobs and the organisations they work for, as this forms an important part of who they are and how they perceive themselves; identity coherence gives individuals clarity and a feeling of "stability" and grounding in their roles and actions (Syed and Juang 2014). Identity related to a community provides a moral framework encompassing obligation to others, provision of meaning and variables influencing individual dignity, respect and self-esteem (Taylor 1989). Individuals prefer a stable sense of identity and, if given the choice, tend to select situations which fit with their existing sense of identity (Stryker and Burke 2000, Castells 2011). When individuals identify with and commit to an organisation or a community, they are more likely to demonstrate good citizenship behavior, view the organisation or community as legitimate, and try to support the achievement of collective success (Brown and Toyoki 2013). Through conversations within the community, a common language, ideas and experiences may help members of the community to understand the world better (Taylor 1989, Mulhall, Swift et al. 1992).

2.3 The formation of academic identity

Within universities, academic departmental and faculty organisations provide subject boundaries, forming and shaping identities of individuals working within them. These boundaries also give rise to power and disputes between resource groupings (Rourke and Brooks 1964). Traditionally it has been argued that individual academics' main focus for their identity lay within their institution and within their academic department (Clark 1986). One aspect of academic identity formation, therefore, relates to where we work and that institution's perception of the academic boundary of the department, relative to other departments, and of subject groups within the department.

Beyond individual institutions, scholarly disciplines define their boundaries as containing discipline specific research topics and activities (Benbasat and Zmud 2003). Defining academic discipline identity as its core set of properties i.e. concepts and phenomena studied, provides a 'dominant design' (Aldrich 1999). From a pedagogical standpoint, it has been argued that strong classification and boundaries that protect the space between groups, disciplines or discourses are important for establishing academic discipline identity (Bernstein 1996). Power and conflict between academic discipline groups create, legitimise and reform boundaries between disciplines (Bernstein 1996, Castells 2011). Disciplinary power manifests as individual measurement and control, and hierarchical differentiation of individuals and their value, which can be both repressive and productive (Brown and Lewis 2011). The increasing use of cross-disciplinary indices of individuals, such as the 'h' index, provides a common currency for measurement, control (Harland 2013) and power (Spearman, Quigley et al. 2010). Big data processing by bibliometric search engines and

databases has enabled academic journal rankings to contribute to academic discipline identity formation (Harland 2013).

2.4 Academic identity crises

The overall context of higher education is changing globally. The previous situation of academic autonomy within which academics identified with their discipline and their institution (Castells 2011) is changing, as increasingly governments seek to set agenda and policies for research (Henkel 2005). This changing policy landscape and associated 'managerialism' leads to 'schizophrenic universities' (Shore 2010) with academic and practice oriented objectives. These two streams of objectives have greater impact on applied fields such as PSM feeding an identity crisis of what it is and what it should be – academically respectable, managerially relevant, or both.

Within organisations identity must satisfy three criteria – claimed central character, distinctiveness and temporal continuity (Albert and Whetten 1985). Academic identity is very much about legitimizing a field for its members and relative to other fields (Lyytinen and King 2004, Messner, Becker et al. 2008); identity discourses seek cognitive and socio-political legitimacy (Messner, Becker et al. 2008). Academic identity crises centre on perceived deficiencies of internal and external coherence and legitimacy. Internal coherence and legitimacy has been emphasised in a number of applied fields, most famously in the vitriolic identity discourse in the management discipline relating to observations of the academic field of management as a 'weed patch' or a 'well-tended garden' (Pfeffer 1993, Van Maanen 1995). Within the IS area, discipline origin of members of a field has been highlighted as a contributor to its identity crisis (Benbasat and Zmud 2003), in addition to lack of unique paradigms (Somers 2010). Logistics as a field is also concerned about its identity, especially in light of the broader movement to combine purchasing, logistics and operations into the single academic unit of SCM. There has been a call for logistics to retain its identity professionally and academically, arguing that the identity of logistics is much clearer and better established than that of supply chain management (Zinn and Goldsby 2014). Distinctiveness and identity of operations management as a discipline is enhanced because its members largely come from physical sciences (Chase 1980). However, as supply chain management (SCM) has emerged, and some claim it as part of operations management (OM), there is a clear internal divide in perceptions of identity between empirical and modeling researchers (Dooley 2009). PSM internal coherence is, therefore, embroiled in the identity crises of other related fields as they struggle with their own internal identity coherence.

External coherence and legitimacy can relate to perceptions of boundaries of other academic fields; systems engineering has debated its identity crisis relative to other 'overlapping disciplines' (Emes, Smith et al. 2005). Marketing has discussed its identity crisis as relating to practice, particularly the position of marketing practitioners in the board room (Brooksbank, Davey et al. 2010). IS has struggled with its academic identity as IT researchers and others encroach upon its domain (Somers 2010). As PSM has increasingly been claimed by OM and SCM, its external coherence and legitimacy has been influenced and shaped by these other domains. Varying reported perceptions of the place (or not) of PSM within business schools and schools of management reflect this external identity coherence crisis.

Academic identity, therefore, can be perceived to be about internal and external coherence and legitimacy. In section 3, themes of agreement on defining PSM identity (internal coherence) relative to other academic fields (external coherence) are provided, answering the

'what crisis?' question. Differences in views on coherence and legitimacy are aired in section 4, debating and illustrating the crisis.

3. Shared views of PSM identity
In this section the flavour of the debate is provided on what, broadly, was agreed on about PSM identity. Without deliberate or conscious intent, boundaries and territory rights as a way of discussing PSM identity were focused on; this flowed into far more discussion on internal than external coherence, which as only PSM academics were involved in the debate, is understandable. Concerns were expressed that PSM should pursue greater internal coherence to be more externally coherent; if we don't know who we are, how can we expect others to be clear on what the PSM field is? The coalescence of views around emerging themes is presented here.

3.1 The academic field of PSM is closely linked to practice
Whilst this Notes and Debates paper does not specifically focus on PSM professional identity, it is discussed here as it impacts on PSM academic identity.

The main task of PSM in practice is to make the external resources of goods, services, and knowledge *contractually available* to supply operations. PSM's role in practice has evolved from an ordering function, fulfilling organisations' demands for inbound materials and services for the right price, quality, quantity, and delivery time from the right source, to a far more strategic role. Vertical disintegration, outsourcing, offshoring are variations of the same theme – buying more, doing less inside the organisation – leading to increased demand for sourcing, contracting and managing relationships with materials and service providers, hence a growing role for PSM. In line with this growing and changing role, PSM in practice has been subject to frequent change in its responsibilities, reporting lines within the organisation and job titles (Johnson, Shafiq et al. 2014). Continuous change makes it difficult to form identity coherence and gain the support of organisational members in practice (Reissner 2010).

Agreement was expressed around the challenges of forming clear academic identity in an academic field close to a dynamically changing practice. Similar challenges have been reported relating to other professions and academic disciplines with strong links to practice and action (Jawitz 2009).

3.2 PSM relative to other academic fields
Core to PSM is its knowledge of, access to, and management of suppliers. Key areas of research and knowledge dissemination that are central to PSM include managing the purchasing process from requisition to payment, supplier management, supply market research, contract management, supply management strategy and execution. Logistics is responsible for *physical availability*. Operations management *transforms* inbound resources into products and services. Marketing makes products and services *contractually available* to customers. Supply chain management has emerged as an integration of parts of PSM, operations management, logistics and marketing, though boundaries and definitions of SCM have been the source of ongoing debate since its inception in the 1980s (Harland 1996).

Operations management as an academic field and, in some organisations as the responsibility of a COO, has claimed territory rights over PSM and SCM (Slack et al. 1995). But the PSM scholars involved in the meetings agreed that their core role, relating to suppliers, supply

relationships and supply markets, has usually remained outside the interests of operations and supply chain management that have focused more on physical than relational aspects.

3.3 PSM as a boundary spanner and bridge builder

PSM is a boundary spanner between the company and its external supply markets. PSM has access to many new ideas and organisations, and can play an orchestration role that has not yet been fully leveraged in our field. The boundary spanning role of PSM enables participation as an expert or contributor to many multi-functional decisions around cost analysis, risk assessment and new product development (NPD), as examples. PSM can use its boundary spanning capability to serve as a gatekeeper to screen out less capable suppliers, and also to act as a bridge builder to bring current and new suppliers into the organisation to work with other functional areas on activities such as NPD, quality improvement and cost reduction efforts.

Participants in the focused meetings agreed that the dynamic boundary spanning role is an important unique selling proposition (USP) for PSM. Marketing brings in the views of customers and customer markets, and communicates these to the organisation. Logistics provides the physical transportation and distribution capabilities to customers and either directly, or through logistics service providers, provides a bridge for physical flows. PSM goes beyond this as a bridge builder. It not only represents the organisation to suppliers, and the suppliers to the organisation, it also helps to establish relationships between suppliers and other key functions with whom the supplier should interface, such as design, engineering and manufacturing. PSM adapts and changes its language and focus to accommodate and communicate with other functions and suppliers, taking a business view. Brokers provide a connection between parties, share information, and continue to engage in the process of linking groups; PSM in its boundary spanning role may serve as either a broker or a bridge builder.

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, PSM can lead internal stakeholders (management, internal customers) across the bridge (the boundary) to connect with existing suppliers (members of existing supply networks) and potential suppliers (within the broader supply market). In this two-way exchange, PSM can also lead existing and potential suppliers across the bridge to connect them with internal stakeholders. From a network perspective, PSM may build bridges among suppliers at the same level in the supply chain or different levels in the supply chain. These can benefit the external supply network, and also be linked to internal stakeholders where appropriate. PSM may continue to engage with suppliers and internal parties, or release that relationship to the appropriate function, re-engaging when PSM-related matters come to the forefront. PSM knows how to bridge to connect demand from customer markets with supply from supply markets. The relational focus and the ability to adapt the most valuable type of supplier, relationship and contract for the situation, trading off cost, risk and value form part of the USP of PSM.
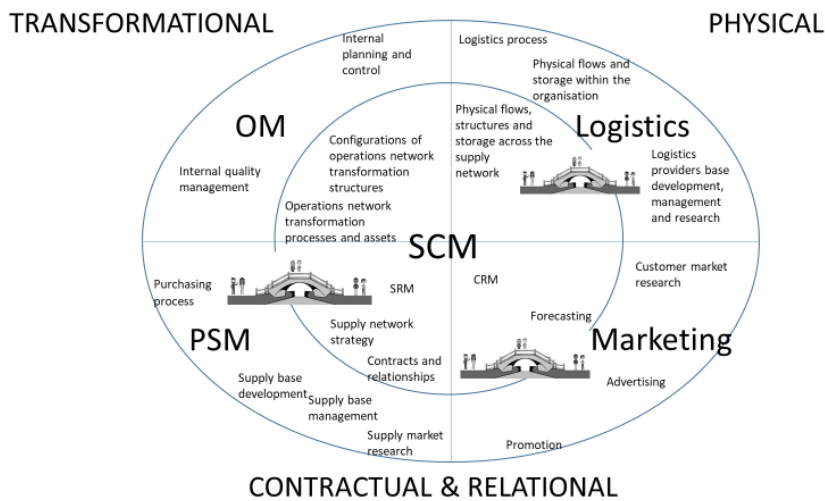
Figure 1: PSM's role and identity relative to other related academic fields

The outer boundary of Figure 1 represents the boundary of these academic fields. The inner boundary that PSM, Marketing and Logistics bridge, represents the current boundary of interest of SCM. SCM is positioned centrally to include within its boundary only some parts of OM, PSM, Marketing and Logistics which it links, integrates and coordinates across the supply chain (or network). This is true even for those fields or functions that are not adjacent in the figure, such as OM and marketing.

On reflection, the participants in the focused meetings agreed that PSM was ambidextrous in its inward and outward focused role and activities (providing some basis for internal coherence) and external coherence and legitimacy were thwarted by the turf wars from the OM and SCM academic camps. However, within the PSM field there were different opinions on the current status and importance of both internal and external coherence and legitimacy that are discussed next.

4. How did opinions on PSM identity differ?

Some of the discussions revealed differences in opinions on coherence (different views about the content and boundary of PSM) and others on legitimacy. Views are attributed to those who expressed them to give a flavour of the ongoing debate and to provide readers with a richer understanding of the origins of different views (following Simpson et al. 2015). Unless otherwise identified, opinions are from those attending the first two focused meetings.

An important aspect of an academic discipline is general agreement about its domain (Pfeffer 1993). Differences in views about what PSM studies, or should study, were not expressed in terms of adamant disagreement, but were more nuanced by different emphases. These different emphases were strongest relating to 1. PSM as a function, 2. PSM's 'reach' into

dyads, chains, networks, bases and markets, 3. PSM's focus upstream or upstream and downstream, and 4. PSM's perspective economically, psychologically, and/ or sociologically.

4.1 PSM as a function

Differing views on internal coherence of PSM were held by focused meeting participants; some concentrated on defining PSM as a function or set of processes and activities within the organisation:

"Purchasing can be defined as the activity in organisations that makes goods, services, works and knowledge available through contracts with external suppliers." van Weele

"PSM studies processes and activities that make products, services, ideas and resources contractually available to users against the best possible conditions." van Raaij

We are also reminded that PSM plays an important role in all types of organisations:

"We have responsibilities to the wider communities where supply chains operate and will benefit by recognizing that not all chains / networks are run to make a profit." Pagell

Others questioned the value of defining PSM as a function.

"There is practically no strategic choice and organisational process that can bypass the domain of the function. Therefore, the role / contribution of P&S managers is so transversal (both horizontally and vertically at organisations), that the term 'function' itself may be questioned." Nassimbeni

An explanation based on core competences might clarify this internal coherence debate:

"I see P&SM as a boundary spanner, bridging buying organisations and suppliers (or service providers). This bridging role has traditionally been as gatekeeper but I think there are signs that P&SM is moving towards a collaboration facilitation role." Johnsen

It might be expected that all academic courses would address core areas and competences. More developed practice and advanced courses would examine these various strategic contributions to a wide range of decisions. There is currently a movement in Europe to provide standardized content for purchasing education through a massive on-line open course (MOOC). A recent study is also moving in the direction of coherence for purchasing knowledge by identifying 17 key purchasing knowledge domains (Bals et al. 2019).

4.2. PSM 'reach' into supply dyads, chains, networks, bases and markets

Some participants focused their emphasis on the dyadic relationship with suppliers as the core of PSM:

"We have a unique position in that we study many phenomena that are really dyadic in nature." Rozemeijer

"I would say PSM should study everything that has to do with relationships (with internal stakeholders and suppliers) and how to leverage such relationships for value creation." Van Raaij

However, to form dyadic relationships, PSM connects the needs of internal users with the most appropriate external resources in the supply market:

"PSM actors are boundary spanners. They lead internal stakeholders (management, internal customers) across the bridge (the boundary) to the supply market, and they lead suppliers across the bridge to the users". Van Raaij

[PSM has an] "increased focus on supply markets, suppliers and supplier relations as opposed to the internal, administrative process of purchasing." Wynstra

Some emphasised the transitional development of PSM beyond the dyad:

"...beyond the single company or the supplier relationship (dyad) as unit(s) of analysis of PSM towards the network." Essig

Others were more emphatic that a larger unit of analysis than the dyad was already central to PSM:

"We learned that it was the system that mattered by recognizing the outsized role that suppliers played in the success or failures of our operational improvements." Pagell

"If PSM goes beyond the dyadic relationship to examine chains, networks and systems of supply then structure of the network and position in the network are important. Strategy would be for relationships, chains, networks and systems." Harland

"PSM cannot neglect the whole interorganisation network." Nassimbeni

If the PSM academic community encourage a broad range of research and teaching relating to internal purchasing activities, dyadic relationships with suppliers, understanding and developing supply bases and markets, supply chains, networks and complex systems of supply, this will proliferate the range of theories and academic perspectives being taken. The internal coherence that is important in establishing an academic discipline will be more challenging as, for example, psychological perspectives may be more appropriate relating to dyadic relationships whereas systems dynamics and resource orchestration may be used to consider chains, networks and systems of supply. If PSM instead encouraged focusing on the dyadic relationships with suppliers in markets and supply bases, this may improve internal coherence but those researching supply chains, networks and systems may gravitate more to SCM or OM in search of their identity.

4.3. PSM focus upstream or upstream and downstream

Related to the previous points on PSM focus being on dyadic relationships with suppliers or embracing examination of chains, networks and supply systems, there is also a question of direction of focus. Is PSM, Janus like, looking upstream and downstream at relationships,

chains and networks? Or is PSM reacting to internal customer demands and concentrating its gaze upstream?

"The PSM academic community, initially focused on "upstream" issues, has progressively extended its interest in downstream flows… It is above all in the analysis of upstream dynamics that we can enhance our unique expertise." Nassimbeni

Again, a core competence approach might be taken to include within PSM interest both upstream and downstream relationships, chains and networks but that our 'centre of gravity' is more upstream. There was a reluctance to proliferate discussion on 'bounding' or 'limiting' PSM, but rather to embrace the ideal of a broad perspective at this stage of the field's development.

"I do not believe in boundaries, certainly not in the light of the 'wicked' and complex business challenges that lay ahead of us. I foresee more and more collaboration with other disciplines." Rozemeijer

This interest in widening viewpoints supports a broad perspective but challenges PSM identity in terms of its internal and external coherence. It may make it difficult to establish paradigms that are important in defining an academic discipline (Somers 2010). When relating this discussion back to the 'well-tended garden' vs 'weedpatch' debate in the academic field of management studies, many PSM participants wanted to be able to spread like weeds as their interest dictated. But the downsides of organic development were also voiced:

"How can we grow if we are duplicating efforts, teaching completely different material, changing identities within an organisation?" Tate

The strongest polarisation of views was apparent relating to identity legitimacy when the participants argued about whether PSM is an academic discipline or should aspire to become one.

4.4 The PSM academic discipline debate
A substantial part of the debate amongst the workshop participants centred on whether PSM is a discipline, an emerging discipline or, rather than a standalone academic discipline, a multidisciplinary field of research drawing on, and perhaps linking other disciplines. There were also strong views expressed on whether PSM should aspire to become a discipline.

First, there is not agreement on whether PSM is already a discipline. Some argue it could be perceived by some as a discipline by virtue of evidence of a community of scholars, journals and conferences:

"If a discipline is "a branch of learning or knowledge" (Oxford English Dictionary), characterized by "a community of scholars, a tradition or history of inquiry, journals in which research is published, teaching at higher education level …", PSM is de facto a discipline." Nassimbeni

"[The] most important indicator [of PSM being a discipline is that it has its] own conferences and own journals." Schiele (IPSERA 2019)

"PSM is a functional oriented sub-discipline of business administration." Glas (IPSERA 2019)

Some argued that PSM is an emerging discipline and aspire for it to become one. The main reasons why these scholars do not think it is currently a discipline is because it does not have its own theories and does not contribute theory to other disciplines

"If we use the definitions and arguments from our 'Supply Management: Is it a discipline' 2006 paper [(Harland et al 2006)] *and subsequent retests of whether we are a discipline* [(Spina, Caniato et al. 2016)], *we would have to conclude we are still not* [a discipline], *as we do not have a cohesive body of theories and rules that disciplines all coalesce around."* Harland

"*However, we almost never communicate back to the source discipline, especially in terms of building new theory that could explain / predict outside the PSM realm. PSM takes, but does not give back; it is then a field not a discipline."* Pagell

"PSM research is most appropriately seen as a multi-disciplinary field. We observe that much of the early work on PSM has been conducted from a marketing-discipline perspective, while nowadays probably the Operations Management discipline is more influential. Acknowledging this diversity, and mapping the patterns of prevalence and influence over time, could help raise our understanding of the historical development of PSM research, and may provide some interesting insights regarding future development opportunities. Thus, we argue that Purchasing and Supply Management in its very essence is a multidisciplinary research field (Kline, 1995), united by its study object: the design, initiation, control and evaluation of activities within and between organisations, aimed at acquiring products and services from suppliers (Wynstra, 2006). Wynstra

4.5 The PSM discipline and identity issue
There is some concern that struggling for a mono-identity as a discipline rather than embracing our multi-disciplinary nature with other disciplines could weaken PSM.

"Sub-dividing the operations and supply chain management (OSCM) field by focusing on PSM does us a disservice, especially when the wider OSCM domain suffers from the same issues when it comes to theory. Within academia, OSCM groups often struggle for recognition. Further sub-division makes that worse not better. This is especially true when we start to think about purchasing as a multi-disciplinary field not a discipline. We are seemingly so concerned with our factions (empirical v analytical, PSM v SCM, logistics is / is not part of SCM) that we end up fighting with ourselves and diminishing our influence." Pagell

However, there are also concerns expressed about claiming our identity as a multi-disciplinary field of research, rather than an aspiring academic discipline Plurality is seen as weakening an academic disciplines' establishment of identity (Somers 2010).

"Still, we have to be aware to not reduce ourselves to being only an interesting context/domain, we have to continue claiming our position as an academic discipline. For example, when studying innovation, creativity or leadership in the context of PSM, it can be tempting to engage with the respective academic communities, conferences and journals and move away from our home-base… and forget about where we came from and what we bring to the world." Rozemeijer

"I think there is power in numbers – and a more standardized approach to the discipline." Tate

So currently there is not agreement within our community on whether we are already a discipline, close to becoming one or a field of research that is and should continue to be multi-disciplinary, borrowing theories from other disciplines. This is challenging for PSM's identity in terms of its internal and external coherence. However, it also reveals challenges in PSM's legitimacy. PSM is legitimately an applied field of research but is not legitimately an academic discipline; members within the community challenge this legitimacy on the grounds of not having our own theories. Other disciplines do not look to PSM for theories explaining relationships, chains, networks or systems of supply.

Section 3 provided points of agreement particularly on internal coherence. Internal to PSM there was also agreement on possible reasons for lack of external coherence. This part of the discussion does not send out strong signals of an identity crisis, hence the 'what crisis?' question in the title. But Section 4 illustrated the main themes where differences in opinions featured more strongly in the debate. Here cracks in internal coherence as well as external coherence were evident. Strong concerns were voiced about the consequential lack of legitimacy of PSM identity, playing to the 'Crisis?' question in the title. It appears that, currently, there are some foundations of agreement on identity to build on but there are also doubts and challenges to be met to clarify PSM identity.

The question posed here is 'what should our academic community do to improve coherence and legitimacy of our identity?'

5. Possible routes forward to improve PSM identity coherence and legitimacy
In Section 3 there was agreement on what PSM is and, academically, what is inside the boundary of PSM; this supports the view that scholarly boundaries contain identifiable research topics and activities (Benbasat and Zmud 2003). PSM is the core area that deals with external transactions in the marketplace:

"The economic transactions between actors are at the heart of purchasing and supply management. The point here is that it is not just the material flow of goods and services that is the core issue (as in traditional Logistics), but how to best arrange the ownership, financial and other business conditions of transactions." Wynstra

Relationships are increasingly important here:
"Purchasing relies both on contractual and relational governance." Van Weele

The core set of properties of PSM focusing on the relationships with suppliers and the bridge and broker roles of connecting internal customers and suppliers provides a 'dominant design' (Aldrich, 1999). Identification of the core focus of PSM and marketing as 'relational' compared to OM as 'transformational' and logistics as 'physical' provides 'space' between groups (Bernstein, 1996) and legitimises PSM relative to other fields (Lyytinen and King, 2004). Whilst there are different views across the PSM community, there is evidence of considerable support for recognising PSM as an emerging discipline, for strengthening its identity and for making progress to establish it as a discipline (Bäckstrand and Halldórsson 2019).

"I would like to see PSM become a discipline and establish a clear identity." Ellram

This does not exclude those scholars who continue to believe PSM should remain as a multi-disciplinary field of research using theories from outside PSM. Whilst concern has been expressed about 'schizophrenic universities' (Shore, 2010), interest in the applied side of PSM does not have to be opposed to theoretical aspects of research. Rather it plays to the broad-perspective argument that there should be space to work on theory development as well as for perpetuating applied research and applying existing theories.

"Whereas theory development is clearly desirable for PSM it should not become a straightjacket but instead continue to allow the freedom to choose whichever theoretical perspectives." Johnsen

"We need portfolios of capacity and capability to deliver applied, empirical research as well as theoretical/ modelling research." Harland

"It might be useful to look on theories that deal with economic aspects of knowledge. This is even more important as we move more and more from a physical economy to a digital, service-dominated economy." Essig

There was support for theory combining and elaborating.

"Until we learn to make actual contributions to theory via proper testing, elaborating and building of theory, we won't be able to create our own theoretical foundations let alone contribute theory to other domains" Pagell

"Perhaps we should focus on combining theories in new ways to provide deeper insights. Combining the issues or constructs that we study in new ways that fill in the [gaps] and provide better explanations than existing theory that we adapt could move us up the disciplinary hierarchy to theory creation." Ellram

Many participants were passionate that PSM needs to build its own theory

[PSM needs] *"Authors who can and dare to do theory building research, reviewers who can constructively review theory building research, and editors who dare to publish theory building research". Van Raaij*

Commented [ELMD1]: Not sure what this means…

Commented [CMH2R1]: This relates to the earlier use of this quote where concerns were expressed about universities having to be academically respectable and managerially relevant. The split personality of schizophrenics echoes the frantic voices I have heard in senior management meetings containing hard-line traditional academic scholars and those academics who adapt, change their language and strive to engage practice in academic endeavours. The concern has been expressed particularly by the likes of Oxford and Cambridge who would not entertain the idea of having a business school until relatively recently as study of business was viewed as unscholarly. I'd leave it in because I've heard this debate throughout my academic career, particularly in the university board room

14

"We cannot be a discipline or even a respected field if we cannot – at least occasionally-create theory of our own. Even the most constrained definition of PSM – a dyad – crosses organisational boundaries and any other configuration (triad or beyond) then gets into the network space. Yet, most theories were not designed for networks. Therefore, at a minimum we should be creating mid-range theories for network relationships within the PSM/ SCM sphere. And really, as the organisational scholars most likely to study a network we should be leading the creation of network theories that are used by others". Pagell

But growing identity as an academic discipline is not just about PSM having its own theories, it's also about clarifying key constructs that identify PSM, and that theories help to explain how these constructs relate to each other.

"If being a discipline is having a cohesive body of theories and rules that the disciples coalesce around, the disciples would need to:
1. *identify the key constructs of what they are studying*
2. *examine the current supply market of available theories*
3. *evaluate whether there is supply availability in the theory market to study the key constructs*
4. *if not, try to elaborate or build new theories, possibly collaboratively with practice or with other disciplines*
5. *if there is supply availability in the theory market, we use those and happily continue without elaborating or building our own, conceding that we are an applied field of practice, or an applied social science, that progresses knowledge through the application of theories to solve real P&SM problems."* Harland

"It is true that our field is halfway between the so-called hard sciences and the soft (social) sciences (we deal with both things and peoples), and universal laws here do not exist". Nassimbeni

Proposals were made that PSM journals should support theory development:

"Reference journals should be therefore more open to theoretical contributions and to encourage theoretical work through special issues, Notes and Debates." Nassimbeni

"Provide more resources and guidance to reviewers of such papers, perhaps giving them a specialty role dedicated to those theory building or theory creation in specific types of PSM papers." Ellram

More training on theory and theory building was encouraged.

"Provide in depth training for those interested in improving their application and development of theory in their research. This could include people at all stages of their career, provided they have a high level of interest and motivation in this area. Newly trained researchers should be exposed to seminal theory building papers." Ellram

Another proposal was made for collaborating on theory building with scholars outside PSM.

"Collaborative theory building sounds less risky than an insecure, theory naïve field trying to do it from scratch itself. For example, teaming up with a leading social networks or neural networks scholar might help us to build inter-organisation supply network theory." Harland

In conclusion there appears to be a movement within the PSM community for more theory based research and the pursuit of becoming an academic discipline, whilst embracing and nurturing a broad portfolio containing applied research. There are risks associated with this:

"Researchers need to be willing to take the risk and dedicate the time required to really build the theory and work through the issues. This type of paper can be very risky, in that they generally require a great deal of development, along with numerous presentation and feedback cycles. More established [researchers] *may be more willing and able to take this risk, but may lack the patience for it. On the other hand, less well-established researchers may not be willing to take the risk associated with this type of publication, and the impact that failure could have on their tenure possibilities."* Ellram

Yet, is this a challenge that we should try to tackle independently of SCM and OM researchers, continuing our arguments about whether we are a discipline, a subdivision or sub-discipline of other areas or an applied field of research?

In spite of these discontinuities, the PSM community is likely to continue to grow and strengthen. Its relationship with practice will remain important but members of that community are also identifying more clearly the need to strengthen its theoretical and academic identity. It is important for junior PSM researchers to identify with a coherent and legitimate academic community and for external recognition of PSM by other disciplines and within schools and universities to be more coherent and legitimate.

6. Concluding comments
There is much room for continued discussion and debate on whether PSM is an academic discipline and even whether it should aspire to become one. In other disciplines, such as IS, these has been a clear call for supporting IS as a discipline, with less digression into the notion of whether trying to establish IS as a discipline is a good idea. The PSM profession, textbooks and research have been around half a century before supply chain management was conceived in 1982 (Oliver and Webber, 1982). This rise of supply chain management has contributed to the disciplinary confusion of the respective domains of PSM, OM and logistics, feeding the PSM identity crisis illustrated in these debates.

Going forward, more perspectives on the future of PSM as a discipline are needed. It would be interesting to use the work of Abbott (2010, 2014) and Somers (2010) to explore the linkage of PSM professional practice and academic identity and understand how these interact and benefit each other. It would also be helpful to develop a better understanding of what SCM views as its domain, and how that may enhance or weaken the position of PSM as a discipline. The same is true for the position that OM takes towards PSM. Perhaps there is not room for four distinct disciplines of PSM, OM, SCM and Logistics, which begs the question 'how many disciplines might be sustained and what should they be? Will organic and divergent emergence of disciplines weaken all four areas? While the PSM identity crisis, or not, continues to be debated, professional practice continues to evolve, with greater automation of all processes, more analytics, and fewer non-professional employees. As we

enter the latest era of technological change, led by artificial intelligence (AI), the role of purchasing is changing. This represents an opportunity for PSM's to re-direct its time and focus in practice to foster relational governance and focus on appropriate supplier relationships and contractual governance for given situations. This could make the relationship bridging role even more valuable, as information becomes almost ubiquitous, while relationships become an even more important differentiator. If PSM embraces these changes, it can provide value to organizations in almost any technological environment. If it does not, its role will become narrower, and its numbers few. Similarly, with the expanding threat of global climate change and growing awareness of human-rights issues in supply chains, there is an opportunity for PSM to play a leadership role by building bridges in responsible, environmentally-friendly supplier selection and management. There is limited value in PSM simply taking direction from the top down-approach to sustainability followed by most companies.

Perhaps greater clarity on identity might guide conference organisers to emphasise what IPSERA should (and should not) include to enhance PSM as a discipline rather than just an object of study. There is still much to discover and debate, more empirical evidence to be gathered, and greater reflection required. We might view this discussion as 'group therapies' to support how we dissipate any perceived identity crisis.

References

Abbott, A. 2010. Chaos of disciplines. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Abbott, A. 2014. The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Albert, S., Whetten, D. A., 1985. Organizational identity. Research in organizational behavior.

Aldrich, H., 1999. Organizations evolving. Sage, California.

Ashforth, B. E., Mael, F. A., 1998. Sustaining valued identities. Power and influence in organizations, Chapter 5 in Power and influence in organizations, edited by R.M. Kramer and M. A. Neale. Sage, California.

Bäckstrand, J. and A. Halldórsson 2019. Engaged scholar(ship) in purchasing and supply management (PSM): Creative tension or squeezed in the middle? Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 25 (4).

Bals, L. H. Schulze, S. Kelly and K. Stek (2019). Purchasing and supply management (PSM) competencies: Current and future requirements. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 25 (5).

Benbasat, I., Zmud, R. W., 2003. The identity crisis within the IS discipline: Defining and communicating the discipline's core properties. MIS quarterly, 183-194.

Bergami, M., Bagozzi, R. P., 2000. Self-categorization, affective commitment and group self-esteem as distinct aspects of social identity in the organization. British Journal of Social Psychology, 39(4), 555-577.

Bernstein, B., 1996. Pedagogy symbolic control and identity theory, research, critique. London & Bristol, Taylor and Francis.

Brooksbank, R.,Davey, J., McIntosh, J., 2010. Marketing's great identity crisis: A revised definition and an urgent research agenda. World Journal of Management, 2(1), 81-97.

Brown, A. D., Lewis, M. A., 2011. Identities, discipline and routines. Organization Studies, 32(7), 871-895.

Brown, A. D., Toyoki, S., 2013. Identity work and legitimacy. Organization Studies, 34(7), 875-896.

Castells, M., 2011. The power of identity, second ed. John Wiley & Sons.

Chase, R. B., 1980. A classification and evaluation of research in operations management. Journal of Operations Management, 1(1), 9-14.

Clark, B. R., 1986. The higher education system: Academic organization in cross-national perspective. University of California Press, California.

Dooley, K.D. 2009. The empiricism–modeling dichotomy in operations and supply chain management. Journal of Supply Chain Management, 45(1): 38-43

Emes, M., Smith, A., Cowper, D., 2005. Confronting an identity crisis—How to "brand" systems engineering. Systems Engineering, 8(2), 164-186.

Giunipero, L.C., Bittner, S., Shanks, I., Cho, M.H. 2019. Analyzing the sourcing literature: Over two decades of research. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, in press.

Harland, C.M., 1996. Supply Chain Management: Relationships, Chains and Networks. British Journal of Management, 7, Mar, S63-S81

Harland, C. M., 2013. Supply chain management research impact: an evidence-based perspective. Supply Chain Management-an International Journal, 18(5), 483-496.

Harland, C. M., Lamming, R.C., Walker, H., Phillips, W.E., Caldwell, N.D., Johnsen, T.E., Knight, L.A., Zheng, J., 2006. Supply management: is it a discipline? International Journal of Operations & Production Management, 26(7), 730-753.

Henkel, M., 2005. Academic identity and autonomy in a changing policy environment. Higher Education, 49(1-2), 155-176.

Klein, Heinz K. (2003). Crisis in the IS field? A critical reflection on the state of the discipline. Journal of the Association for Information Systems 4 (1): Article 10.

Kline J.S. 1995. Conceptual foundations of multidiscipinary thinking, first ed. Stanford University Press, California.

Jawitz, J., 2009. Academic identities and communities of practice in a professional discipline. Teaching in Higher Education, 14(3), 241-251.

Johnson, P. F., Shafiq, A., Awaysheh, A., Leenders, M., 2014. Supply organizations in North America: A 24 year perspective on roles and responsibilities 1987–2011. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 20(2), 130-141.

Lyytinen, K., King, J. L., 2004. Nothing at the center?: Academic legitimacy in the information systems field. Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 5(6), 8.

MacIntyre, A., 1981. After virtue: A study in moral theory. First ed. London: Duckworth,

Messner, M., Becker, C., Schaffer, U., Binder, C., 2008. Legitimacy and identity in Germanic management accounting research. European Accounting Review, 17(1), 129-159.

Morrison, E. W., 1994. Role definitions and organizational citizenship behavior: The importance of the employee's perspective. Academy of Management Journal, 37(6), 1543-1567.

Mulhall, S., Swift, A., 1992. Liberals and communitarians, First ed. Wiley- Blackwell, Oxford.

Nuttall, J., 2004. Modes of interpersonal relationship in management organisations. Journal of Change Management, 4(1), 15-29.

Oliver, R..K., Webber, M.D., 1982 Supply chain management: logistics catches up with strategy. In M. Christopher, 1992, Logistics: the strategic issues, 63-75, Chapman and Hall, London, UK

Pepitone, A., 1981. Lessons from the history of social psychology. American Psychologist, 36(9), 972.

Pfeffer, J., 1993. Barriers to the advance of organizational science: Paradigm development as a dependent variable. Academy of Management Review, 18(4), 599-620.

Reissner, S. C., 2010. Change, meaning and identity at the workplace. Journal of Organizational Change Management, 23(3), 287-299.

Rourke, F. E., Brooks, G. E., 1964. The" managerial revolution" in higher education. Administrative Science Quarterly, 154-181.

Sampson, E. E., 1977. Psychology and the American ideal. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35(11), 767.

Sampson, E. E., 1981. Cognitive psychology as ideology. American Psychologist, 36(7), 730.

Schoenherr, T., Modi, S.B., Benton, W.C., Carter, C.R., Choi, T.Y., Larson, P.D., Leenders, M.R., Mabert, V.A,, Narasimhan, R.,Wagner, S.M (2012) Research opportunities in purchasing and supply management, International Journal of Production Research, 50:16, 4556-4579.

Shore, C., 2010. Beyond the multiversity: Neoliberalism and the rise of the schizophrenic university. Social Anthropology, 18(1), 15-29.

Simpson, D., Meredith, J., Boyer, K., Dilts, D., Ellram, L. M., Leong, G. K. 2015. Professional, research, and publishing trends in operations and supply chain management. Journal of Supply Chain Management, 51(3), 87-100.

Slack N., Chambers, S., Harland. C., Harrison, A., Johnston, R., 1995, Operations management. Pitman, London, UK

Slay, H. S., and Smith, D. A., 2011. Professional identity construction: Using narrative to understand the negotiation of professional and stigmatized cultural identities. Human Relations, 64(1), 85-107.

Somers, M. J. 2010. Using the theory of the professions to understand the IS identity crisis. European Journal of Information Systems, 19(4), 382-388.

Spearman, C. M.,Quigley, M.J., Quigley, M.R., Wilberger, J.E., 2010. Survey of the h index for all of academic neurosurgery: another power-law phenomenon? Journal of Neurosurgery, 113(5), 929-933.

Spina, G., Caniato, F., Luzzini, D., Ronchi, S., 2016. Assessing the use of external grand theories in purchasing and supply management research. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 22(1), 18-30.

Stryker, S., Burke, P. J., 2000. The past, present, and future of an identity theory. Social Psychology Quarterly, 284-297.

Syed, M., Juang, L. P., 2014. Ethnic identity, identity coherence, and psychological functioning: Testing basic assumptions of the developmental model. Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 20(2), 176-190.

Taylor, C., 1989. Sources of the self. The Making of the Modern Identity, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts.

Van Maanen, J., 1995. Style as Theory. Organization Science, 6, 133-143.

Wynstra, F., 2006. Editorial. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 12 (5), 235

Wynstra, F., Suurmond, R., Nullmeier, F. 2019. Purchasing and supply management as a multidisciplinary research field: Unity in diversity? Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management (forthcoming this issue).

Zinn, W., Goldsby, T., 2014. Logistics Professional Identity: Strengthening the Discipline as Galaxies Collide. Journal of Business Logistics, 35(1), 23-28.