'Who am I … in this organisation?':
The Development of Organisation-based Identities and the Consequences for Individuals and Organisations

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the psychological relationship between the individual and the organisation, and its effects on behaviour, continues to have strong theoretical and practical relevance for identification researchers (van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Indeed, it has been argued that an organisation can not be fully understood without understanding the identity dynamics that arise from the interactions between the organisation, its social environment, and the individual psychology of its members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2014; Hodgkinson, 2013; Tajfel, 1981).

The goal of this thesis project was to undertake an indepth exploration of employee identifications in one organisation undergoing large-scale change. The first major aim was to illuminate the particular identities that were most salient for participants as they reflected on their experience of the changes. The second aim was to conduct an indepth exploration of those identities, to shed light on their origins and core features, and to understand why they were evoked during change. A third aim was to explore the relationship between the identities, and participants' perceptions and responses to change. Finally, a key aim was to illuminate any features of the organisational and social context that were related to the presence, development and effects of salient identities.

The guiding methodology was interpretive qualitative research, chosen for its acute sensitivity to identity processes and associated contextual features (Yin, 2009). The advantage of this approach is that it allowed for indepth exploration of the nature, sources and effects of employee identifications, including contextual aspects involved in shaping and sustaining important identities.

Eighty-three organisational members participated in two phases of data collection over a period of more than two years. The first phase used oral history interviews and allowed for exploration of participants' experience of broader
changes across the organisation. The second phase utilised unstructured interviews to explore participants’ perceptions of one single and discrete change that was being implemented as part of the broader change process. Together, the two phases produced a combined data set of more than 30 000 lines of text.

The grounded theory method was used to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the full data set. At the conclusion of data analysis, three core identity groups – Warders, Carers and Change managers – emerged as the most salient identities for participants as they spoke about their experiences of change in the organisation. The three identities were latent and implicit, in that neither were listed as a formal group in the organisation chart, yet they emerged as common themes in the data, with each theme revealing a particular way of viewing the organisation and one's place within it that was shared among three informal groups of employees.

This thesis contributes to research and practice by describing three core and underlying work-based identities that have not been identified in previous research, yet they influenced how participants perceived the organisation and responded to the changes. This thesis outlines in rich detail the fundamental attributes and formative origins of the three identities, and the processes and dynamics that were occurring between them. This thesis project further contributes to identification research in organisations by presenting a substantive model of identity development, which illuminates various individual, group, organisational and social factors that contributed to establishing, maintaining and validating the three identities in the organisation. These included organisational structures and symbols, links to formal groups, the influence of external powerholders, and other factors, all of which contributed to the preservation and continuity of the three identities.

This thesis highlights the importance of understanding identities, and offers new insights into employee identification with organisations. First, the
thesis adds to our understanding about the identities that are important to employees, and highlights the influence that informal and latent identities can have on individual behaviour, and their consequences for organisations. Second, the thesis illuminates temporal and contextual features involved in identity development and expression, such as pre-entry factors that can influence an individual's acquisition of an identity before they enter the organisation. Third, the thesis shows how emotional reactions to change are an integral feature of identity expression, with participants in all three identity groups displaying emotions that were unique to their respective identities. Finally, the thesis shows how latent identities may become deeply embedded in the organisational context, while other identities may be less fused with the pre-change organisation.

Overall, the thesis provides an identity-based explanation of employee behaviour during change, and demonstrates that multiple identities may exist, each of which may be linked to different features of the organisation (Cian & Cervai, 2014). Each of which may, in effect, reveal a completely different organisational reality, with different historical and temporal qualities, as opposed to one shared understanding of an organisation's central and distinctive attributes (Gilpin & Miller, 2013). These meanings strongly influence what organisational members 'hear' as they listen to organisational communication, and serve as anchoring points for individuals as they perceive and respond to change. The findings also suggest that latent identities may endure beyond change, particularly when the identity continues to be supported by identity markers within the organisation, and validated by external stakeholders. The conclusion is, therefore, that identities matter in organisations, and are important in understanding individual and organisational dynamics, particularly during change.
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And my final word of thanks goes to the individual who served as the initial inspiration to complete my education – Drew Stokes, my beautiful son and best mate – who continues to inspire me to strive for my dreams and be the best human being that I can be.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: ..............................

Lorraine Stokes

Date: ..............................
CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

‘The same social processes that form a society also give rise to an individual’s self.’

Michael G Pratt and Matthew S Kraatz

Background to Research

The idea for this thesis project originated from a question posed to senior members of a research team by the executive director of an Australian hospital. The research team was assisting the organisation to track employee adjustment to large-scale change. The executive director’s question, ‘How do we make them listen?’, echoed the challenge that organisational leaders face when they communicate and implement large-scale organisational change – that of motivating individual employees to accept a new vision for the organisation, and modify their behaviours accordingly.

The executive director’s use of the word ‘we’ was understood as an inclusive term that referred to membership of the organisational group to which he belonged – a senior management group responsible for overseeing the changes in the organisation. In contrast, the manager’s use of the word ‘them’ was an exclusive term that referred to the much larger group of organisational members who were required to listen to messages about change and respond favourably. The ‘we-they’ distinction invoked the intergroup nature of organisations – in which individuals’ membership of organisational groups, or their social identities within the workplace, are considered to exert strong effects on organisational behaviour (Bartel, Blader, & Wrzesniewski, 2007; Randsley de Moura, Leader, Pelletier, & Abrams, 2008; van Dijk & van Dick, 2009).
The executive director's question, though stated rhetorically at the time, issued an implicit challenge to a student researcher in organisational psychology, setting me on a path to conduct an indepth exploration of individuals' social identities within the organisation – with the aim of illuminating the particular identities that were most influential for organisational members as they engaged in, and responded to, communication about change, and exploring the implications of those identities for employees, managers, and the organisation itself.

Rationale for Research

More than one research discipline has shown an enduring interest in identity dynamics in organisations – including organisational psychology, social psychology, organisational communication, and sociology. In a special issue dedicated to the study of identification processes in organisations, Pratt and Foreman (2000b) recognised that theories of identification have derived from a diverse discipline base, and welcomed the benefits that this diversity can offer to our knowledge and understanding of identity dynamics in organisations. The diversity reflects a shared desire among researchers to better understand the relationship between the individual and social structures – with varying emphases on individual factors (e.g., social cognition), social factors (e.g., social networks) or a dual emphasis on both (e.g., social identification). What appears to be well accepted across disciplines of study is the notion that individuals develop self-concepts that are strongly influenced by the social environments in which they live and work, with a propensity to develop attachments to social groups and roles that contribute to self-definition, and guide beliefs and behaviour (Giddens, 1984; Stryker, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These attachments can become so strong for individuals that they are internalised as part of the self-concept, so that an individual's behaviour can at times reflect the shared norms that are socially
appropriate for membership of a particular social category, rather than the individual's personal beliefs and values (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). Indeed, it has been argued that no organisation can be fully understood at a practical or theoretical level without understanding the identity dynamics that develop from the fundamental interaction between the organisation's social environment and the individual psychology of its members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2014; Hodgkinson, 2013; Tajfel, 1981). This has substantial implications for organisations, which represent a natural context for identity dynamics and intergroup processes given that they comprise numerous subgroups and social roles with which members may identify (Hogg & Terry, 2001). In an organisational context, individuals may actually be more likely to be perceived as members of work groups, or occupants of work roles, than as individuals (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995).

Social and role identities are conceptualised by researchers as the lenses through which individuals view and understand the world around them (Smith, 2011). Identity has been construed as an internal cognitive schema within an individual's self-concept – that comprises information about the individual's own identities, as well as the identity beliefs that he or she shares with other members of a work group or organisation. Identity has also been construed as an external and objective reality – that reflects the structural properties of an organisation and the projected corporate image that an organisation portrays to external stakeholders (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). Research has also demonstrated that identity can reside at individual, group and organisational levels, and that individuals have identity orientations that can have corresponding effects on behaviour at each level (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Theories of identity have demonstrated that factors such as the power and status of a particular organisational group, and the size of the social network that relies upon one's work role, can compel an individual to engage in the normative behaviours that
are associated with that group membership or role, even in the face of organisational pressures to release or modify these attachments. However, while a great deal has been learned about identity dynamics at the intergroup level, identity theories have focussed largely on what happens after individuals categorise themselves as members of organisational groups, and far less on the origins and development of identities in organisations, including how they are established and maintained within the organisational context, and how they influence individual and organisational behaviour (Ybema, 2010).

Literature on organisational identity has challenged the idea that employee identities may be easily changed (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008). For example, to what extent does organisational change require individual identity change? When senior managers change the identity of an organisation, are they changing individual members' identification with the organisation, or are they changing individuals' own identity? It may be relatively easy to change an organisational role by modifying a job description, but how does this affect individuals who identify strongly with that role? Accordingly, there have been calls for more research that attempts to understand the link between employees' identities and their perceptions of, and responses to, organisational change (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Despite a plethora of change models designed to facilitate the management of change in organisations, it has been widely reported that large-scale change continues to fail at an extraordinary rate (Burnes, 2004; Jones, 2010; Karp & Helgo, 2009). Despite the alarming statistics, change models that emphasise the interpersonal skills of change managers continue to dominate the literature – such as Kouzes and Posner's (1987) five best practices, and Vandermere and Birley's (1997) motivate, influence and communicate model. The focus on the communication skills of senior managers has continued despite a social identity perspective having a logical applicability to organisations, which
comprise a multitude of groups and roles that can come under threat during organisational change (Kezar, 2001).

Radical change represents a unique opportunity in the life of an organisation to examine social identities in the workplace (Alvesson et al., 2008). This is because individuals' roles, work teams and departments may be restructured, or completely removed, as a new overarching identity is constructed for the organisation (Williams & Connaughton, 2012). Accordingly, large-scale change has the potential to fundamentally reshape the social structures that support and maintain employees' existing identities, roles and group memberships within the organisation (Gendron & Spira, 2010). Despite the potential contributions of identity-based research, however, the proportion of research that examines identity and intergroup, rather than interpersonal, dynamics in organisations continues to be relatively low, with numerous calls to redress the imbalance (e.g., Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004; Paulsen, Graham, Jones, Callan, & Gallois, 2005b; Randsley de Moura et al., 2008; Riketta, 2008; Rooney et al., 2010).

Nonetheless, it has long been accepted that identity matters to individual wellbeing and collective outcomes in organisations (Alvesson et al., 2008; Haslam, 2014). Most existing knowledge in this area derives from research based on social identity theory, which focusses primarily on employees' membership of organisational groups – such as the work unit, occupational group, or the organisation itself. The analytical focus is therefore on employee responses at group and organisational, rather than interpersonal, levels (Roberts & Creary, 2013). This research also emphasises an organisation's identity – with the aim of assisting senior managers with the practical task of changing an organisations' identity, and also explores organisational mergers – with the aim of facilitating the transfer of employees' identification from an 'old' to a 'new' organisation (e.g.,
Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, & Thomas, 2010; Lok & Willmott, 2013; Vieru & Rivard, 2014).

However, despite Tajfel's (1982) groundbreaking research on the formation of social identities, insufficient attention has been given to learning more about the identities that matter most to individuals themselves in organisations. Research has been applied to this task, however, early studies relied mainly on quantitative methods, typically requiring employees to rate their comparative degree of identification with a small number of functional identity categories selected by the researcher (Ravasi & Canato, 2013). This approach has yielded important insights about the influence of particular identity categories on employee behaviour, such as demonstrating that employees prefer to receive change-related information from their immediate supervisors (who are perceived as members of employees' immediate work group) rather than from senior managers (who are perceived as members of the senior management group).

However, this approach has important limitations. First, these studies focus on groups nominated by the researcher, thereby overlooking other group memberships and social identifications that may be equally important for employees. A number of researchers have highlighted the importance of conducting research that explores the social identities that are important to employees themselves (e.g., Gardner, Paulsen, Gallois, Callan, & Monaghan, 2001; Paulsen et al., 2005b). Second, these studies restrict the research focus to a small number of functional groups within the organisation. As such, they may not have tapped into a wide enough range of meaningful groups for employees, and may have overlooked the importance of other sources of identity (such as the groups that form part of employees' social networks across the organisation). Third, these studies place more emphasis on the consequences of employee identification in organisations, paying less attention to the origins and sources of identity (Millward, 1995), processes of identification – such as how identities
actually form and develop over time (Ashforth et al., 2008), and the content of identities in organisations (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Tanis & Beukeboom, 2011).

Nkomo and Cox (1999, p. 100) assert that quantitative methods “fail to capture the complex meaning and construction of identity”, such as how identities manifest and what they mean to organisational members, aspects which could be vitally important to more fully understand the nature and effects of employee identification in organisations, particularly during change.

While the amount of research exploring identity dynamics in organisational contexts is increasing, no research has yet explored in depth, the actual organisationally based identifications that matter most to employees during the communication of change. One exception is a study that explored the subjective identities of IT employees by asking participants to nominate identities that were important to them in the workplace, though the organisation was not undergoing change (Thatcher, Doucet, & Tuncel, 2003). A thematic analysis of the data revealed an extensive range of descriptors that included personal, role and social identities. A long list of social and organisational categories, and identity attributes, was identified, however, the descriptors tended to be more individualistic, suggesting that employees’ personal, rather than social, identities may have been more salient. This may have been an artefact of asking directly about individuals’ identities, as well as the absence of relevant outgroups that might trigger the salience of social group memberships. Researchers have suggested that it may be more effective to ask employees indirect questions about their organisational identifications rather than relying on conscious expressions of employees’ identities (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Copeland, Reynolds, & Burton, 2008). However, few researchers have taken a step back to examine if there are other identities of subjective importance to individuals in organisations. Questions therefore remain about the nature and type of identities that matter most to organisational members, including how
these identities manifest, and exert their effects on employees’ attachment to organisations and adjustment to change.

Research has also given insufficient attention to contextual factors that influence identity and change in organisations (Kuhn & Corman, 2003). While these concepts are socially situated, identities in particular are well known to have a strong contextual basis (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, despite widespread knowledge of the importance of context, studies that attend to contextual factors – that may be relevant to understanding the nature of identities, and identity dynamics in organisations – remain scarce.

Another limitation is that early organisational research tended to privilege the view of managers in attempting to understand how employees perceive organisational phenomena (Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008; Gilpin & Miller, 2013). For example, initial understandings about employee responses to change were based largely on the perceptions of management, as research often did not directly examine how employees themselves make sense of change (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006a). Contemporary studies are gradually reversing this trend. For example, sensemaking theory is being used to examine the meanings that organisational members at all organisational levels attach to change communication (e.g., Bartunek et al., 2006a; Weick, 1995). Researchers are also using inductive approaches to explore narratives and discourse across all organisational levels (e.g., Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Similarly, interpretive research approaches are increasingly being used to highlight how employees at different levels perceive communication about change in organisations (e.g., Sonenshein, 2010). Studies like these are highlighting that not only may recipients have different interpretations to senders of change communication, but organisational change may be directly undermined by change leaders, who may themselves hold negative or ambivalent views about change (Sonenshein, 2010).
Given that identities are thought to form the content of the self-concept, and provide individuals with a sense of meaning about self, and the organisations in which they work, further research contributions remain key to elaborating the nature of identification in organisations, and its influence on individual and organisational behaviour (Ashmore et al., 2004). Accordingly, this thesis project responds to calls for more studies of identity that offer thick description of real-time identity dynamics and processes within the organisational context (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

The next section outlines the core research goals, and the research approach used to undertake the thesis project.

Research Goals and Approach

There is an extensive list of identity questions that remain largely unanswered within the identity literature (e.g., Alvesson et al., 2008; Cornelisson, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007; He & Brown, 2013; Pratt & Foreman, 2000a; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Tomkins & Eatough, 2012). Some of these questions include:

1) Where do identities come from (identity antecedents)?
2) How do identities in organisations actually form (identity formation)?
3) What do identities comprise (identity content)?
4) How do identities develop over time (identity development)?
5) Where do identities reside (identity claimants)?
6) Who actually has the identity – the individual or the organisation (identity source)?
7) To whom or to what do identities refer (identity targets)?
8) Who is viewing the identities (identity audience)?
9) Can identities within the workplace actually be changed, or are they stable and resistant to change (identity change)?
Through an indepth, qualitative study of employee identities in an organisation undergoing change, this thesis project was designed to pursue answers to questions like these. The first, and primary, goal of the thesis project was to identify the particular identities that were salient for participants, as they talked about their experience of the changes that were occurring in the organisation. The second goal was to conduct an indepth exploration of the salient identities that emerged, with the aim of illuminating their core features and attributes, and understanding why they were evoked during change. A third aim was to explore the relationship between the salient identities that emerged, and participants’ perceptions and responses to organisational change. Finally, a key aim was to illuminate any features of the organisational and social context that were related to the presence, development and effects of salient identities.

From a theoretical perspective, the thesis that is presented here aims to extend knowledge about the type of identities that matter to individuals, and the underlying nature of identity processes and dynamics, in organisational contexts. From a practical viewpoint, the hope was to develop new insights that could assist relevant stakeholders to better understand and manage identities within organisations. The thesis project was therefore exploratory in nature, with the aim of contributing to practice and theory development, by seeking further insights about the identities that inform and influence employee behaviour, during change, in one organisational context (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010).

The guiding methodology for the thesis project was interpretive qualitative research, which involves indepth analysis to describe and understand human action and experience (Higgs, 1997). An interpretive method of inquiry was chosen for its acute sensitivity to the nuances of identity processes and related contextual features. The advantage of a qualitative method is that it allows for the exploration of people’s constructions of meanings in ways that may not have been explored previously (Yin, 2009). Interpretive qualitative research offered a
good fit for the thesis project because it is a form of naturalistic inquiry in which
deep understanding of a particular phenomenon is sought, as opposed to wider
generalisations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Where quantitative research may be
more concerned with cause and effect, interpretive qualitative research is
cconcerned with processes and meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). A key aim is to
contribute to theory building by observing "phenomena in their full complexity"
(Ellemers, 2013, p. 6). A qualitative approach therefore enabled deeper
exploration of the sources and effects of employee identifications, including
aspects of the broader organisational and sociohistorical context involved in
establishing, shaping and sustaining the identities.

Structure of Thesis

This chapter has introduced the argument that social identities can have a
major influence on what individuals perceive, think, feel and do in an
organisational context, and that important gaps remain in our understanding of
identity dynamics during organisational change. It has also introduced the core
research goals and approach for this thesis project. Chapter 2 introduces two
major theories of identity relevant to the organisational context. The chapter
reviews relevant identity literature and further elucidates the practical and
theoretical importance of conducting this thesis project. Chapter 3 explores the
communication of large-scale change as the primary context for the thesis
project. The chapter reviews how change leaders generally approach the
communication of change, and how organisational members tend to respond to
change, particularly as a function of their social identities.

Chapter 4 explores some of the contextual elements that were relevant to
this thesis project. This includes a brief description of the culture and history of
the organisation in which the project was undertaken, and a summary of the
change process. Chapter 5 presents the research methodology, and the research
methods that were employed to gather and analyse the data in order to address the research goals.

Chapter 6 presents the three core social identities that emerged as salient for participants as they talked about their experience of change within the organisation, including the origins of these identities, and their central features and attributes. Chapter 7 describes how participants perceived and responded to change in the organisation, and links these to the three core social identities presented in the previous chapter. Chapter 8 presents a substantive model of identity development, which outlines the processes and factors involved in the formation and maintenance of the three core social identities, and the consequences for individuals and the organisation.

Chapter 9 discusses the implications of the findings for the communication and implementation of large-scale organisational change. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the thesis project and relevant directions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: IDENTITY AND ORGANISATIONS

The previous chapter highlighted gaps that this thesis project attempts to address, and established the rationale for the importance of this thesis project. This chapter introduces major theories and concepts that currently address and explain identity in the organisational context.

Theories of Social Identity

This section outlines two theories of identity – the social identity approach and identity theory. The social identity approach originated in the discipline of social psychology with the study of intergroup conflict, while identity theory was developed within the discipline of sociology, and has roots in social psychology and symbolic interactionism.

Social Identity Approach

The social identity approach studies individuals' membership of groups, which exist within social structures, such as organisations. As a consequence, organisational research from the social identity approach explores participants' membership of various work groups, including work units, professional and occupational groups, as well as membership of the organisation itself. Given that individuals live, work, and socialise in groups, group memberships can contribute positively to a person's sense of self, and exert strong influences on individual behaviour (Hogg, 2003). Occupations and work groups are often nominated by individuals as important components of their self-concept.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979, p. 40), a group is

A collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of
social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it.

The effects of group membership have long been recognised by organisational researchers. Over 80 years ago, Viteles (1932, p. 619) stated that “problems of supervision and management grow out of the fact that in industry the individual is always acting under group conditions” and “at no time at work is the individual freed from the powerful influence of the group”. The well-known Hawthorne studies, conducted in the late 1920s, also highlighted the impact of work groups on employee responses to management communication, with the finding that “workers developed a strong group identity as the research progressed, which in turn spawned group norms that powerfully shaped on-the-job behavior” (Guzzo & Shea, 1990, p. 200). And Walter Schramm, a well-known scholar of communication, noted, “it is only natural that when communication enters an area where it touches one of our group memberships, we should recall the norms and roles of the group and check the communication against them” (Schramm & Roberts, 1971, p. 28). To date, however, theories and models of change in organisations have largely overlooked the influence of group-based identification on employees’ experience of organisational change.

Intergroup behaviour is defined by Sherif (1966) as occurring “whenever individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identification” (p. 12, italics in original). From this perspective, even though an interaction may occur between two individuals, it can be viewed as an intergroup (rather than interpersonal) interaction when either one of the individuals uses words or actions that reflect the normative attitudes and behaviours associated with one of their group memberships (Guzzo & Shea, 1990). For example, a psychiatrist and a nurse who belong to the same work unit in a hospital, but belong to different professional groups (i.e., psychiatry and nursing) may disagree over care
planning for a patient. This is an intergroup interaction if either individual communicates from the perspective of their membership of those particular work groups. The same coworkers may later discuss what they both did on the weekend. During the conversation, the psychiatrist (a male) might make a remark that the nurse (a female) is a ‘typical woman driver’. The conversation may once again develop into an intergroup interaction, this time because the psychiatrist is communicating from the perspective of a member of the male gender group. This may trigger the nurse's awareness that she is a member of the female gender group, and she may respond by saying something like, ‘Oh, you guys are so wrong if you think you are better drivers’. Thus, some interactions between two individuals may remain interpersonal, while others may be better construed as intergroup interactions. And, as demonstrated in the example above, even a single interaction between two individuals may flow between interpersonal and intergroup communication, and may activate multiple group memberships, some of which (like gender) may not be a formal part of the organisation itself (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2004). Whether communication between two (or more) individuals can be construed as interpersonal or intergroup depends on the degree to which any individual communicates the shared beliefs, or behaves in accordance with the shared norms, of one of their group memberships.

Groups that are most salient for an individual at any given time tend to guide behaviour. One's group memberships can become salient through communication, or through interactions with other individuals that bring one's own, or others’, group memberships to the fore. Ashforth and Johnson (2001) argued that the salience of an organisational group membership is determined by its subjective importance and situational relevance. A subjectively important group membership is one that is central to an individual’s core sense of self, or relevant to an individual’s core goals and values. A situationally relevant group membership is one that is socially appropriate in a given context. Subjective
importance is thus defined by individual factors, whereas situational relevance is determined by contextual factors. Moreover, the subjective importance of a particular group membership is expected to remain relatively stable over time whereas its situational relevance would alter according to the particular context the individual is in at the time. The more subjectively important and situationally relevant a particular group or identity is for an individual, the more the individual will draw on the identity to define a particular social situation, and will engage in behaviours that are not only consistent with the identity, but are largely unconscious and automatic (Ashforth, 2000).

The social identity approach has been widely accepted as one of the most established and prominent theoretical frameworks of social identification, and is generally viewed as the most accurate conceptualisation of the relationship between individuals and the groups to which they belong (Alvesson et al., 2008; Haslam, Reicher, & Reynolds, 2012). The social identity approach comprises two separate, though related, theories – social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), which are outlined below.

Social identity theory (SIT) was originally developed to explain between-group discrimination and conflict in social settings (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Where previous theories explained organisational behaviour largely in terms of interpersonal interactions between individuals, SIT offered an explanation as to how individual behaviour could be influenced by membership of groups in the organisational context (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Researchers previously studied and perceived groups as external entities and explored how individuals tend to behave when they are in and around groups. Tajfel, however, was interested in how groups manifest within the self-concept of the individual, and how an individual's sense of group membership influences psychological functioning (Miller & Prentice, 1994).
SIT distinguishes social identity from personal identity. Personal identity reflects an individual's self-perceptions of his or her unique personal characteristics as compared with other individuals, and includes an individual's unique knowledge, skills, abilities, tastes and personal attributes (Tajfel, 1981). In contrast, social identity reflects an individual's self-perceptions of him- or herself as a member of social categories, including broad social categories such as gender, nationality and religion, as well as small social groups such as sports clubs and work teams. Thus, membership of groups exists in that part of an individual's self-concept referred to as social identity.

Group membership is not just an affiliation with other individuals in the same group, but is part of one's social definition of self, and is defined as the individual's “perception of oneness with, or belongingness to, some human aggregate” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). While personal identity helps an individual to answer the question, ‘Who am I?'; social identity assists an individual, as a member of a social group, to answer the question, ‘Who are we?’. At the level of personal identity, individuals are concerned with how they differ to other individuals (i.e., ‘what makes me unique?’), and at the level of social identity, individuals are concerned with how members of their group differ from members of other groups (i.e., ‘what makes us unique?’) (Harwood, 2006).

Personal identity represents the sum of an individual’s personal characteristics, while social identity represents the sum of an individual’s group memberships, and the two combine to form dual parts of the self-concept (Hogg et al., 2004).

Tajfel (1982 p. 2) defined social identity as “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”. Tajfel (1981) described three primary components of social identification:
• Cognitive: the individual’s knowledge that he or she is a member of a group,
• Affective: the individual’s emotional attachment to each group, and
• Evaluative: the value assigned by the individual to each group membership.

A fourth component was added by van Dick (2001).

• Conative: the individual’s participation in group behaviours.

While the cognitive component refers to an individual’s self-classification as a group member, the affective component reflects the individual’s feelings about membership of the group. The evaluative component reflects the importance of the group within the individual’s self-concept, and the conative, or behavioural, component reflects the individual’s participation in behaviours that are normative for the group (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, Christ, & Tissington, 2006).

One of Tajfel’s (1981, p. 49) key assertions was that to understand intergroup behaviour, the focus of identity theories needs to be on aspects of “the individual” rather than on “socially shared patterns of individual behaviour”. He suggested that other theories of intergroup processes tend to describe cognitive, emotional and evaluative dimensions as attributes of a group rather than as “individual processes” that lead to a “social-cognitive consensus about group membership”, and argued that the psychology of individual behaviour was fundamental to understanding uniformities in social behaviour. Tajfel referred to social identity as “the group in the individual” as opposed to “the individual in the group”, and sought to explain how intergroup behaviour originates within the psychology of the individual. While SIT was initially used to examine intergroup relations between large social categories, it has since been applied to a variety of social settings, including organisations, and has become widely accepted as a
general theory of group membership, social identification and intergroup processes (Hogg et al., 2004).

SIT was enhanced by the development of self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1985). Self-categorisation theory (SCT) elaborated the psychological basis of group membership by drawing on principles from cognitive psychology to explain the sociocognitive processes that underpin social identification, and facilitate intergroup behaviour (Turner et al., 1987). SCT also contributes to knowledge regarding the functions and consequences of group membership (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). The theory describes how the cognitive process of self-categorising oneself as a member of a group (an ingroup) and categorising other individuals as members of other groups (outgroups) activates an individual's social identity (the social part of the self-concept) to produce group-based perceptions and behaviours.

Social categorisation defines the boundaries between self and others. When individuals self-categorise themselves as similar to other members of a particular ingroup (e.g., doctor) they simultaneously categorise or perceive themselves as different to members of contextually relevant outgroups (e.g., nurse) (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Group memberships thus take the form of self-categorisations, and the process of social comparison assists individuals to classify and structure the social world, define their place in it, and guide their expectations regarding socially appropriate behaviour (Hogg, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

A key premise of SCT is that self-categorisation can lead to a depersonalisation of the self whenever a particular group membership is salient (Turner, 1985). Depersonalisation is a psychological process that switches on an individual's social identity each time the individual perceives him- or herself as equivalent to other members of an ingroup (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Central to this idea is that, whenever a group membership becomes salient, the individual's
social identity may come to the fore of his or her self-concept and exert greater control over behaviour than the individual's personal identity (Simon, 1999). When a valued group membership becomes salient, behaviour may thus be influenced more by the social part of the individual's self-concept so that the individual will behave more as a typical group member than a unique individual (Hogg & Terry, 2001; Turner, 1999).

Hartley (1996) noted that definitions of group membership tend to give primacy to self-categorisation, thereby assuming that self-identification with a group is a necessary condition for group membership to exist. However, he argued there are many cases in organisations where groups are defined by non-members, so that an individual only has to be perceived by others to be a member of a group for intergroup behaviour to occur. For example, an individual may be categorised by others as a ‘computer geek’, and the individual may not need to define him or herself as a computer geek for others to develop the consensual view that he or she is a member of that social group. Group membership may also be ascribed rather than chosen (e.g., gender, ethnicity) and imposed (e.g., prisoner). These observations notwithstanding, the extent to which an individual self-identifies with each of their group memberships is believed to be an important feature of social identification. This is because the more strongly an individual identifies with a particular group, the more they are likely to adopt the behaviours that are normative for that group. In other words, the stronger the degree of self-identification with a group, the more likely an individual is to demonstrate the core values, attitudes and behaviours of that group and discriminate against contextually relevant outgroups (Hogg, 2001a). Strength of identification has represented a major focus of intergroup research in organisations, with the aim of identifying the groups with which employees identify most strongly and, therefore, the particular organisational groups that are most likely to influence an employee's attitudes and behaviour. Self-
categorisation processes, however, have received less systematic attention in organisational research so less is known about how individuals actually come to identify with particular groups (Hogg & Terry, 2001).

According to the social identity approach, social identity therefore includes the knowledge that one belongs to a group and the feelings and behaviours associated with group membership (Roberts & Creary, 2013). Individuals' social identities comprise all of their group memberships, and provide a cognitive and motivational basis for their attitudes and behaviours in social settings (Turner et al., 1987). Once a group becomes part of an individual's self-concept, the individual can experience a depersonalisation process when the group is salient, so that the individual's beliefs, feelings and actions can become prototypical of the group's norms. The fundamental hypothesis shared by both theories within the social identity approach is that individuals' self-concepts are defined in part by their identification with and membership of social groups, which in turn influences behaviour (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). The social identity approach thus combines social and psychological factors to understand behaviour in social settings, in which social groups serve as a frame of reference for individual and organisational behaviour (Kramer, 1991).

**Identity Theory**

While the social identity approach demonstrates how a range of group memberships can exist within the social part of an individual's self-concept, identity theory explains identity in terms of the social roles individuals occupy (Stets & Burke, 2000). A role is a position that an individual holds in a social structure (Burke & Stets, 2009). Roles are external referents that correspond to the multiple positions that make up social networks, and a role identity comprises all of the internalised expectations and meanings that an individual associates with the performance and occupancy of each role. Organisations are just one
type of social structure that comprise a multitude of formal, predefined and
prescribed roles. Indeed, one cannot be a member of an organisation without
occupying a role within the organisation. Identity theory thus construes roles as
central to an individual's sense of self, so that the self-concept is inherently
socially structured, comprising a network of roles that closely reflect external
social structures (Roberts & Creary, 2013).

In an interesting parallel to the social identity approach, identity theory
also has two main theoretical branches – one that focusses on the reciprocal
influence between social structures and individual identity (Stryker, 1980) and
another that emphasises internal cognitive processes (Burke, 1980). Both of
these perspectives treat identity as "parts of a self composed of the meanings
that persons attach” to all of the roles they occupy within and across their social
networks (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 284).

Stryker’s branch of identity theory is based on structural symbolic
interactionism and role theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). Central foci include social
structures (e.g., social groups, communities, institutions and networks), language
and human interaction. A key premise underlying symbolic interactionism is that
symbols in the immediate environment are central to social identification.
Language is one form of symbolic communication, which can serve as a social
cue that provides meaning about roles, and contributes to meanings becoming
learned and shared. Structural symbolic interactionism is premised on the idea
that the social world can be understood by paying attention to individuals'
understandings of their immediate social context, or the meanings that individuals
attribute to their surroundings, because their actions are likely to be based on
those meanings (Burke & Stets, 2009). Key foci of this branch of identity theory
therefore include how social structures, and the symbols within them, shape
individual identities, and how interactions between individuals contribute to
maintaining those identities. The relationship between individuals and social structures is thus central to this branch of identity theory.

Burke’s branch of identity theory is informed by sociological social psychology. Whereas researchers in psychological social psychology focus more on group membership, researchers in sociological social psychology place greater emphasis on social roles (Burke & Stets, 2009). A key focus of this branch of identity theory is identity verification processes, as a motive for social identification. This is based on the idea that individuals are motivated to interact with other individuals who are able to confirm an identity, and will therefore seek to maintain relationships, and social situations, which have previously verified an identity. This branch of identity theory places greater emphasis on study of “the internal dynamics within the self that influence behaviour” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 38).

As social constructions, roles and identities are considered to be reciprocal, in that they are both shaped by society, but also shape society, so that individuals may both ‘act’ and ‘react’ in relation to the day-to-day symbols that they experience within the social environments of which they are a part (Stryker, 2000). Accordingly, both branches of identity theory acknowledge the mutual influence between individuals and social structures – in that individuals create social structures, and social structures mirror the actions of individuals and the meaning that individuals give to them (Burke & Stets, 2009). Individuals in organisations are therefore likely to act on the basis of the meaning that the organisation has for them. When individuals attribute meaning to their surroundings, this helps an individual to define his or her place in the context, and guides behaviour. Just as the context supports particular identity behaviours, identity behaviours in turn reinforce and maintain the context. In addition, the more that other individuals share the same identity behaviours, the more an
identity is validated and reinforced, so that interactions between individuals continue to mutually reinforce the identity.

Like the social identity approach, identity theory is relational to the degree that roles acquire greater meaning for individuals when they are socially compared with other roles, which are referred to as ‘counter-roles’ (Burke, 1980). For example, within the organisational context, the role of manager serves as a counter-role to the role of subordinate. Not only do counter-roles help to inform the meaning of a particular role, but individuals who occupy a counter-role may also be directly involved in an individual's understanding or performance of the role (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Within the self-concept, external roles are stored internally as cognitive frameworks that assist individuals to define and interpret social situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Roles form the basis for behavioural expectations of self and others, and are used by individuals to make sense of situations and guide socially appropriate behaviour. Organisations incorporate a variety of roles that individuals may use to define self – including leader, employee, coworker, team player, conscientious worker, and many more (Caza & Wilson, 2009). Non-work roles may also influence an individual's behaviour while at work (e.g., parent) (Rothbard & Ramarajan, 2009). The amount of time an individual spends in each social role can also help to determine the importance of particular roles to the self (Ashforth, 2000).

With its roots in symbolic interactionism, identity theory tends to have an interpersonal focus on role-based interactions (Ashmore et al., 2004). Accordingly, the focus of much identity theory research is on patterns of social interaction within social networks and the extent to which individuals engage in role-based behaviours that are consistent with their identities (Ashforth, 2000). As such, the social contexts in which roles are enacted tend to be viewed as networks of interpersonal communication (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). As part of the
variety of symbols that derive meaning within social networks, roles acquire meaning through ongoing interactions between the individuals who occupy them (Stryker, 2000). As noted by Stryker and Serpe, "we come to know who and what we are through interaction with others" (p. 202).

Social roles thus become an important part of the self-concept, and serve as a major frame of reference for the meaning individuals attach to their own and others' behaviour, informing how they interpret situations and encounters, as well as how they think, feel and act in any given social environment (McCall & Simmons, 1966). For example, an individual who is both a mother and lawyer, is likely to enact the role of mother quite differently in the home environment to the way she enacts the role of lawyer in a work context. Our knowledge of roles (and counter-roles) also inform expectations as to how individuals in other roles may be expected to behave – for example, the mother above would naturally expect her child to comply with the rules she sets at home, but would herself comply with a judge's orders when she is in a courtroom. In this way, roles serve as social constructions that inform the self by providing information about how to behave in different social settings.

Summary

The social identity approach and identity theory share the view that individuals develop identities that help to define the self in relation to social structures. As such, individuals attribute and derive meaning from surrounding social contexts – associated with their membership of groups, and occupancy of roles (Roberts & Creary, 2013). Both agree that individuals classify their social world. The social identity approach centres on the concept of social identity, as the part of the self-concept in which individuals' group memberships are cognitively organised. In contrast, identity theory views the self-concept as containing role identities, corresponding to all of the roles that individuals occupy.
A fundamental premise shared by the two major theories of identity is that the purpose of identity is to situate an individual within the social world, which then guides and informs behaviour in meaningful and purposeful ways (Brickson, 2013).

Despite their different standpoints, both approaches comprise ideas in common that contribute to understanding identity processes and dynamics in organisations (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005). They share the view that identity defines self, social structures, and the psychological connection between the individual and social systems. They concur that identity provides a fundamental link between individuals and social structures, so that identity is both socially derived and socially embedded, suggesting that a wide range of social categories, groups and roles can become a strong source and basis for self-definition (as well as definition by others) in organisations. Social categories can include formal and informal groups and roles, and identity incorporates a fundamental sameness between an individual and others who occupy the same group or role (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Both theories hold that an individual's identity can comprise a multiplicity of group memberships and roles, that can be cued at any time by social interaction. The content of these identities can, in turn, influence individual choices, beliefs and behaviours so that individuals are likely, in social settings, to engage in identity-based behaviours that are normative for particular social groups or roles (Ghidina, 1992). Both theories also suggest a degree of temporal stability in self-conceptions of identity (Burke, 1980).

There are also some key differences. For example, while both theoretical approaches incorporate psychological processes, SIT research tends to place more emphasis on situational factors while identity theory research focusses more on personal factors (Ashforth, 2000). Identity theory also emphasises 'doing' or what an individual does, while social identity emphasises 'being' or who a person is (Stets & Burke, 2000). While both approaches address which identity
may become cognitively cued in a given situation, and view social interaction as important in identity formation and maintenance, social identity research in particular has demonstrated that interaction with others may not be necessary for a given identity to be cued. Furthermore, while the theories demonstrate the substantial influence of groups and roles on individual behaviour, role-based behaviours are often formally and explicitly mandated in organisations through written policies and job descriptions, while group-based behaviours are often informed more by unwritten rules and norms. Individual identities in organisations may also incorporate group memberships and roles that represent overlapping categories – for example, a nurse represents both a professional identity as well as a caregiving role.

Groups and roles thus give meaning to social situations, provide individuals with certainty about how to behave, ground self perceptions in social and organisational settings, and offer a sense of connectedness to, and distance from, others (Ashforth, 2000; Burke & Stets, 2009; Hogg et al., 2005). An increasing volume of empirical research has been conducted under the social identity tradition within the context of organisations, while identity theory has rarely been explored in organisations. While identity theory explains role-based behaviours, including the roles that individuals occupy in organisations, social identity theory research has gone a great deal further in addressing how individuals respond to their environments as a function of their social identities, and has clearly demonstrated the potential for individuals to perceive and respond to communication about organisational change from the perspective of their work-based groups and occupational roles.

While the social identity approach has perhaps contributed more to the identification literature, particularly in the organisational setting, the aim of the current thesis project was to adopt a neutral and exploratory approach. Accordingly, it was deemed important not to unduly privilege, nor use exclusively,
either theoretical perspective to examine identification processes in this thesis project. Thus, in this thesis, both social identity and identity theories are drawn on frequently to examine identity dynamics in the organisation under study and, whenever appropriate, the links to these theories are clearly articulated. Another point of note is that, while social groups form the basis of identity from the social identity perspective, and social roles form the basis for identity theory, both of these terms (group and role) will be used throughout the remainder of the thesis, and may thus be interpreted interchangeably to refer to any social group, role or category with which individuals may identify, or are a member (Stets & Burke, 2000). For consistency, therefore, the terms group and role will be used inclusively, to incorporate any formal and informal groups and roles that may serve as a source of employee identification.

The following sections explore the concept of identity in more depth, commencing with a brief review of the reasons that individuals may choose to attach themselves so strongly to social groups, roles and categories in organisations.

Antecedents of Social Identification

Research on group formation has identified factors that are believed to serve as antecedents of social identification (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). These include physical proximity and regular contact (e.g., employees who work together in the same work group), similarity (e.g., employees who share the same skills or physical features), and common or shared fate, which refers to the extent to which people in a given situation experience similar outcomes (Campbell, 1958). Individuals with common career goals or needs, shared history, and shared interests or beliefs, are more likely to develop a sense of shared group membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Individuals may also have complementary interests that bring them together to meet mutual needs in a form of social
Organisations are a prime example of social exchange, given that individuals are employed to support an organisation to achieve its goals and, in return, receive remuneration and rewards that help them to achieve their own personal and career goals.

Similarities in the demographic composition of a group have been suggested as a key factor in facilitating social identification and group-based behaviour (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). For example, social identification with an ingroup may be more likely to occur when group members are relatively similar (such as an all female group). However, these commonalities and similarities may also prove problematic for an organisation, particularly when a group becomes overly homogenous (e.g., Janis, 1972). In contrast, when group membership is diverse, individuals' personal, rather than social identities, are likely to be more salient (Pratt, 1998).

Social identity theorists have undertaken extensive study to understand the particular factors that trigger individual identification with groups. SIT originally derived from laboratory studies that became known as the minimal group paradigm (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The aim of these studies was to establish a baseline for identification (and, therefore, intergroup behaviour) by commencing with a trivial criterion of group membership, and gradually adding elements in order to identify the necessary conditions for group formation. What researchers did not anticipate was that bias toward an ingroup, and discrimination toward an outgroup, would occur immediately that participants were aware that an outgroup existed (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). This eventuated even though participants were assigned randomly to artificial groups that had no membership criteria, no pre-existing history, and no social interaction with other group members. Group membership was purely perceptual. Participants engaged in judgement or allocation tasks in which monetary rewards were allocated by the participant to anonymous ingroup and outgroup members.
Results of the studies repeatedly showed that ingroup categorisation based on minimal criteria of group membership led participants to demonstrate ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination. Participants were even willing to give less in absolute amounts to ingroup members in order to ensure the ingroup received relatively more rewards overall than outgroup members (Turner et al., 1987). These studies demonstrated the powerful influence of social identification on individual perceptions and behaviour and showed that mere perception of group membership was sufficient for individuals to engage in intergroup behaviour (Tajfel, 1982).

While fieldwork has not shown the same findings, some studies have replicated the type of immediate identification demonstrated by participants within the minimal group paradigm experiments. For example, Mael and Ashforth (1995) conducted a study in which immediate and strong organisational identification was found in a sample of US army recruits. In another study, student participants were randomly assigned to groups of permanent versus casual employees (Veenstra, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2004). Those who perceived themselves to be a permanent employee expressed more willingness to engage in a range of organisational behaviours, suggesting that compliance behaviours may occur in organisations even at the mere thought of group membership.

Individual motivations that impel people to identify with social groups have represented a particular foci of social identity research, and these are explored next.

**Individual Motives**

From an organisational perspective, perhaps the most functional reasons for an individual becoming a member of an organisation or its subgroups include gaining employment for financial reasons, and developing one's career. Theories of human motivation, such as Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, suggest that
joining organisational groups can meet a range of individual needs, including basic survival needs (e.g., a job delivers an income to provide for one's family), a sense of belonging (e.g., friendship and affiliation), esteem needs (e.g., achievement, respect) and higher order needs (e.g., social justice, service to others).

One of the central tenets when SIT originated was that social identification is motivated by an individual's need to achieve a positive self-concept by enhancing self-esteem (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This relates to the idea that how an individual perceives him- or herself, or is perceived by others, is determined in part by his or her membership of social groups. Self-esteem is considered to serve as both a motivator and consequence of social identification, such that low self-esteem motivates identification with a group, and being part of a group that contributes positively to one's self-concept enhances self-esteem (Hogg, 2003).

Thus, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979), one of the key motives for identifying with a social group is self-enhancement, or the desire to achieve a positive self-concept. Their argument was that, because individuals derive their identity (or sense of self) in part from their group memberships, they prefer to be in a group that contributes to a positive social identity. From this perspective, it might be argued that an employee would try to retain membership in an organisational group that affords them the highest status or prestige, because that group would contribute positively to the individual's self-concept.

Laboratory research deriving from the minimal group paradigm provided extensive support for the self-esteem hypothesis (e.g., Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991). However, following a review of the empirical research on social identity, Hartley (1996) found insufficient evidence for the self-esteem hypothesis, and concluded that it may well be a consequence, but not an antecedent, of social identification. While evidence for the self-esteem hypothesis has been inconsistent, Hogg (2003) suggested this
may reflect differences between individual versus collective self-esteem, and
other variables – such as strength of identification, or the level of threat – may
moderate the relationship between self-esteem and group-based behaviour.

The concepts of pride and respect have also been offered as an
alternative explanation to the self-esteem hypothesis. These two concepts refer
to status evaluations that individuals make about the organisation in which they
work (Fuller et al., 2009). Pride is internal, and refers to the extent to which an
employee perceives that belonging to the organisation is worthwhile. Pride
affords individual status and to some degree reflects the affective and evaluative
components of social identification. Respect is external, and refers to the extent
to which the employee perceives that others (particularly those outside the
organisation) view the individual as an organisational member (and is associated
with the social standing, or status, of the organisation itself). Pride and respect
are both found to be significantly related to self-esteem in experimental studies
(e.g., Smith & Tyler, 1997). One study, conducted in a large Australian
organisation, tested whether pride and respect were individual rather than group-
based constructs (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000). Results supported a social
identity explanation, with the findings linking these variables to participants'
salient social identities more than individual factors.

Consistent with the results of minimal group studies, the social identity
approach also posits that social identification is motivated by a need for positive
distinctiveness. This involves enhancing the value of a group membership by
maximising positive differences between the ingroup and relevant outgroups, so
that any characteristic that positively distinguishes an ingroup from a relevant
outgroup is evaluated more favourably by ingroup members (Tajfel, 1982). To
achieve positive distinctiveness, individuals can go to great lengths to accentuate
the similarities between themselves and other ingroup members, and maximise
the differences between ingroup and outgroup members (Brown, 2000).
Participants in laboratory studies consistently demonstrated a preference for strategies that maximised relative differences between the ingroup and outgroup, rather than maximising ingroup profit. These results occurred even when allocations were to the category of self (as an individual) versus other ingroup or outgroup members, and demonstrated that “minimal group affiliation overrode personal gain, which was sacrificed for positive ingroup distinctiveness” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 42). Accordingly, it has been suggested that the need for a distinct identity may be more of a motivator than the need for a positive identity (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999).

Brewer (1993) explored this concept further and redefined it as optimal distinctiveness, in which the fundamental tension between the human need for affiliation versus uniqueness leads individuals to seek an optimal balance between inclusion with, and differentiation from, others (Brewer & Pickett, 1999). An individual's need for inclusion is satisfied by identification with an ingroup, while the need for differentiation is satisfied by favourable intergroup comparisons. Indeed, organisations provide individuals with a rich context of diverse groups to meet needs for inclusion versus distinctiveness (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Brewer suggested that individuals prefer to identify with smaller groups (which may include a subgroup within a larger group – such as a work group within an organisation) because large groups exceed the desired level of inclusiveness. This has been supported by laboratory and field studies which demonstrate that as group size increases, ingroup bias tends to decrease (Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). While Hogg and Terry (2000a) agree that employees may be more likely to identify with smaller groups, they argue that uniqueness may be satisfied by individuality, whereas inclusion may be satisfied by group membership.

Given its focus on the cognitive processes of identification, SCT proposed that a primary motive for identification with social groups is to reduce uncertainty
(Hogg & Mullin, 1999). Social identification assists to reduce uncertainty in the social world because group memberships (and roles) provide individuals with information about how to behave in any given social context. Because each person is a member of multiple groups, an individual thus cognitively scans their various group memberships to find one “that renders the social context, and one’s place within it, most subjectively meaningful” (Hogg & Terry, 2000b, p. 125). Terry and Hogg (2000) refer to this as a ‘search for meaning’ that assists individuals to make sense of their social world, which then reduces uncertainty.

Researchers conducted a series of survey studies on six distinct motivations – self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy and meaning (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006). All six motives were identified as important to individuals in relation to identity construction and enactment, with the motive for meaning demonstrating effects on the perceived centrality of identity elements beyond that of self-esteem. Place theorists suggest it is a “fundamental aspect of human existence” for individuals to attach meaning to their relationships with particular places, though most of this line of research has been conducted on peoples’ homes and residential neighbourhoods, so that little is known about how other places, such as organisations, “can help inform one’s sense of self” (Manzo, 2003, p. 52).

Uncertainty reduction is not only a core human motivation (Hogg & Mullin, 1999), but is particularly relevant to organisational change, given that a job that was once stable and predictable can become highly unstable during change. Not surprisingly, uncertainty has been identified as an aversive state for employees during organisational change (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004a) and has been linked to higher levels of stress (Haslam & Reicher, 2006), lower levels of organisational commitment (Terry & Jimmieson, 2003) and perceived threats to identity (Burke, 1991; Van Dick & Haslam, 2012). When an employee experiences uncertainty, self-identification with a salient group can provide the
This is based on the idea that individuals seek a social frame of reference, and the norms of a salient group can help to provide individuals with "context-specific attitudes and behaviours appropriate for group members", particularly when the environment is in flux (Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000, p. 72). These norms can develop immediately after a group has formed (Flynn & Chatman, 2003). The more homogenous the group, and the more well-defined and consensual the ingroup norms, the more effective the group membership may be in reducing an individual's subjective uncertainty (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Social identity research has consistently supported this hypothesis by demonstrating that social identification tends to be stronger when uncertainty is high, and weaker when uncertainty is low (Grieve & Hogg, 1999).

Some of the sociostructural factors that have been identified and researched by social identity theorists include status, power, legitimacy, stability, and permeability. Status has been the most widely researched by social psychology researchers, with a substantial amount of early SIT research testing the theory's assumptions and predictions regarding low versus high status group membership (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). It has been widely accepted among social identity researchers that people will seek to maintain membership in a high status group, and to maintain the existence of that group (Terry, Carey, & Callan, 2001). Status refers to “the relative position of groups on valued dimensions of comparison” (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991, p. 3). Power refers to “the degree of control that one group has over its own fate and that of outgroups” (p. 3). While status alludes to a group’s social standing in a given context, power alludes to the group’s access to resources in that context (Rothbard & Ramarajan, 2009). Status and power tend to be affiliated, in that high status groups are typically also high in power (Boldry & Gaertner, 2006). However, laboratory research has shown status and power to be independent constructs. For example, Boldry and
Gaertner manipulated both in an experimental study and multiple measures yielded consistent patterns indicating that status affects intergroup perceptions independent of power. Tajfel (1982) suggests they are bidirectional, such that power can confer status, and status can confer power.

Belongingness is also viewed as an important motive and central component of social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Cotting, 1999; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). Brewer (2003) argues that a fundamental human need for belonging drives identification with social groups because it satisfies an individual's need for affiliation and security. Researchers agree that an individual's need for safety may be an important factor in social identification. Pratt (1998) argues that identification is an adaptive and protective function which may be as much about psychological as physical safety because it provides an individual with continuous information about who they are. Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggest that ingroup identification helps to buffer external threats in organisations because individuals are psychologically aware that their interests are shared and supported by like-minded group members. Pratt further suggests that safety concerns may motivate greater identification with an organisation in situations where the individual feels compelled to join or remain with an organisation because of a lack of alternative employment options.

Ashforth (2001) identified a range of motives that are more closely linked to the self-concept – including self-knowledge (locating oneself within a context), self-expression (enacting a valued identity), self-coherence (maintaining a whole self across identities), self-continuity (maintaining a whole self across time) and self-distinctiveness (valuing one's uniqueness). The concept of self-verification was later added, and is similar to self-continuity, in that it refers to the need to maintain a sense of consistency and stability over time in one's perception of self (Ashforth et al., 2008; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). Given its perceived importance in maintaining a sense of stability across time and contexts, researchers have
argued for self-verification to be viewed as a more fundamental identification motive than self-enhancement (Swann, 1990).

The motive of self-continuity is a central element in identity theory because identities provide individuals with stable information about the social roles they occupy (Brickson, 2013). Identity theory also incorporates motives of self-consistency and self-verification, in that individuals prefer to act consistently with the expectations they have in relation to enacting particular roles, despite the presence of situational disturbances (Burke & Stets, 2009). Identity theory studies have also demonstrated support for self-esteem as a consequence, rather than antecedent, of role enactment.

In summary, individuals may be motivated to identify with social groups and roles because they offer certainty about how to behave in the social world; provide important information about one’s essential and ongoing self; satisfy individual needs for safety, affiliation, and belonging versus uniqueness; and contribute to a positive self-concept. To address the inconsistencies identified in previous research, Hartley (1996) argued that groups in the organisational context should be studied and theorised about separately to other intergroup contexts. Others agree that studies in organisations should be carefully contextualised to gain a deeper understanding of identification processes in work settings (Hennessy & West, 1999; Riketta, 2008). Similarly, Stott and Drury (2004) assert that intergroup dynamics can not be properly understood in isolation from their surrounding context. Turner (1999) criticised research for focussing overly on the positive social identity motive, and not enough on sociostructural variables (such as the status relations between groups in a particular context). He argued that the need for positive identity may combine with perceptions of the status relations in a particular context to determine an individual’s responses to their environment. Thus, organisational research that sheds light on the reasons why employees identify with groups in specific and
unique organisational contexts is important to better understand the dynamics of identity within organisations.

This section has discussed some of the factors that motivate social identification with organisations and work groups. The next section explores some of the consequences of social identification for individuals and organisations.

Consequences of Social Identification

An immediate consequence of individual identification with a group or role is that individuals' thoughts, feelings and behaviour are likely to become group- or role-based whenever a particular group or role is cognitively salient. This is because social groups and roles provide individuals with information about how to behave in related social settings (Hogg & Reid, 2006). For example, the organisational norms attached to manager and employee roles inform individuals as to how to behave whenever they enter an organisation (Watson, 2008).

As individuals continue to remain members of a particular group (or occupy a particular role) identification is likely to increase as they spend more time with other group members (Riketta, 2005). Individuals become more likely to act in accordance with group-based norms, demonstrate loyalty to group goals, and engage in helping behaviours aimed at benefitting the group. This, in turn, can lead to greater agreement with, and liking for, fellow members, and the willingness for rewards to be directed toward the group as a whole rather than to oneself as an individual member (Forsyth, 2010). Over time, the group itself can become more cohesive. This process leads not only to social cooperation among group members, but also to collaborative responses, including collective action to ward off perceived threats to the group (Turner et al., 1987). One of the most obvious examples of this, within the organisational context, is the tensions that develop between managers (who represent an organisation's interests) and
union members (who represent workers’ interests) during industrial disputes. Researchers have noted that, while remaining with a group over time can strengthen identification with an ingroup, some identities (e.g., gender and nationality) may involve long tenure, but their involuntary nature means they may be less influential than the groups individuals actually choose to join (Scott, 1997).

SIT studies have found outgroup bias and discrimination to be consequences of identification with a group. However, while findings from the minimal group paradigm have been replicated in numerous laboratory studies, the findings of field research have not shown the same consistent relationship between ingroup identification and outgroup discrimination (Ashforth et al., 2008; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1999). Brown (1978) did find that, during pay negotiations, employees tried to preserve wage differentials that favoured their ingroup. Hennessy and West (1999) conducted a study with hospital employees, in which they asked participants to allocate monetary rewards in imaginary scenarios. While the participants did show ingroup bias, analysis of qualitative data revealed they wished to distribute the money where it was most needed (even if this was outside the ingroup). However, because they had limited knowledge of the needs of other groups, participants allocated the money to the ingroup because they knew (due to greater knowledge of the ingroup) that the money would be well spent. This example shows that intergroup behaviour is not always present in natural group research, and also demonstrates the benefits of qualitative methods to illuminate underlying identification processes in organisational settings. Some of the inconsistencies observed in field research have also been attributed to potential confusion between sources of identification. For example, Hennessy and West suggest that the findings of some early studies may have been misconstrued due to accidentally measuring participants’
identification with the organisation rather than the immediate work unit (e.g.,

The consequences of identification with groups can be observed at
multiple levels, including individual (e.g., self-enhancement), group (e.g., social
status), intergroup (e.g., conflict) and organisation (e.g., productivity). The
consequences may also be mutual. For example, employee involvement and
compliance with an organisation can lead to positive outcomes for the individual,
work group and organisation. Committed group members within organisations
have been shown to engage in pro-organisational and extra-role behaviours,
such as volunteering to help orient new employees (Blader & Tyler, 2009). Other
positive organisational outcomes can include reduced absenteeism, high job
involvement, and intention to remain with the organisation (van Knippenberg &
Sleebos, 2006). During large-scale change in an organisation, positive
consequences of work-based identifications may therefore include greater
individual commitment to the organisation’s vision and goals, and the willingness
to be open, and respond favourably, to communication from senior managers
about proposed changes.

The next section identifies the various groups and roles that are known to
exist in the organisational context, and that can serve as sources and targets of
identification for organisational members.

Identification in Organisations

Organisations are a social environment in which groups and roles
abound. The concept of an organisation derived from organising people into
structured groups and roles to achieve a particular purpose (Daft, 1989).
According to Sofer (1972, p. 3), organisations are “associations of persons
grouped together around the pursuit of specific goals” which have “a life span
beyond the period of membership of their members”. Statt (1994, p. 26) asserts
that most definitions of what constitutes an organisation include three common factors. First, an organisation is “a group with a social identity” with individual members feeling “a shared sense of belonging”, because the organisation has “psychological meaning” for those who belong to it. Second, an organisation involves some degree of “coordination” of people and activities. Third, an organisation is “goal-directed” because its members and activities are arranged and structured to achieve specific goals. All of these conceptualisations bear direct relevance to the study of identification processes in organisations. Indeed, an organisation is most effective when its members function, not as individuals, but as members of high performing work groups and roles.

Organisations comprise a wide range of formal and informal social groups. Formal groups include structural and functional task groups that are deliberately created and formally sanctioned by managers to assist an organisation to achieve its goals (Paulsen et al., 2005b). These include departments and work units, occupational and professional groups (e.g., technical, medical, administration), levels of management (e.g., senior and middle management), employment status (e.g., full-time, part-time, casual) and temporary groups including committees and project teams. It is the formal and functional groups and roles that are explicitly targeted during organisational change because they form part of an organisation’s tangible structure, which is often remodelled as part of large-scale change. Work units and departments may be merged, downsized or removed altogether, and new work groups may be established that integrate employees who previously belonged to different work groups. Informal groups, on the other hand, generally do not serve any particular organisational function but are nonetheless present in organisations (Gilpin & Miller, 2013; West, 1996). These may include natural group memberships such as gender, age and ethnicity. These groups can have a greater sense of permanence than most organisational groups. Other informal groups include
organisational tenure (e.g., new members tend to be easily differentiated in organisations from long-term members) and social groups or cliques that may form naturally or be intentionally formed by employees (Terry, 2003). Formal groups in organisations are generally tightly governed by written rules, policies and procedures, with clear leadership structures in place, whereas informal groups tend to be less structured, and governed by rules and codes of conduct that are largely unwritten (Furnham, 2005). Similarly, roles exist within organisations that are formal and highly regulated, while informal roles can also exist with their own set of unwritten norms, such as a 'whistleblower'.

From an individual perspective, each employee belongs to multiple social groups within an organisation (Scott, 1997). For example, an employee will be a member of a range of formal organisational groups (e.g., work unit – ‘I work in Ward B’; occupation – ‘I am a nurse’; organisational level – ‘I am a middle manager’; and the organisation itself – ‘I am an employee of ABC company’), as well as informal groups that exist within an organisation (e.g., gender – ‘I am male’; ethnicity – ‘I am Australian’; and social groups – ‘I am in the tennis club’). Organisations are also structured into role groups – such as manager, full-time employee, receptionist, gardener, etc. External roles are also relevant to organisational contexts (e.g., auditor, union representative, regional manager, etc). Both the social identity approach and identity theory have shown that work roles in organisations can contribute strongly to individuals' self-definitions. Moreover, not only do work roles guide day-to-day behaviour in organisations, but changes to an individual's work role (even if the individual's work group remains unchanged) may be equally influential to an individual's identity-based perceptions and responses during organisational change.

Employee group memberships and roles may also transcend the boundary of the organisation. For example, while employees' membership of a particular work unit may be bounded within the structure of the organisation,
professions (e.g., doctor, accountant) are group memberships that extend beyond the boundary of the organisation, so that an individual will potentially identify with members of the same professional group who work for other organisations (Hotho, 2008). Ashforth and Johnson (2001) describe these as cross-cutting groups. These are contrasted with nested groups that remain nested within the organisation itself. Ashforth and Johnson further distinguish nested groups as higher order identities (e.g., department, organisation) and lower order identities (e.g., work group). Higher order identities tend to be relatively inclusive because they encompass multiple lower order identities (such as a department with several work units), whereas lower order identities are more exclusive because they tend to comprise fewer members who possess unique or specialised skills. Ashforth and Johnson state that nested identities are formal groups institutionalised in the organisational structure, while cross-cutting groups comprise both formal and informal groups. They argue that while informal groups such as families can be very important to individuals, formal groups will be more important for individuals in the organisational context because they carry more status, reward and career opportunities.

Alderfer (1987) differentiates between identity and organisational groups. The characteristics of an identity group involve the shared meanings that develop between members due to shared biological features (e.g., gender), shared history (e.g., family) and shared social experiences (e.g., sports fan). Organisational groups comprise individuals who belong to various work groups. The two groups are not mutually exclusive, though identity groups are more likely to involve a permanent sense of membership across different social settings, whereas organisational groups tend to be less stable and enduring.

Identities in organisations have also been described as acquired versus ascribed. For example, an employee may be allocated to a particular work unit (ascribed identity) or may work hard to earn a promotion (acquired identity). A
distinction can also be made between voluntary and involuntary group memberships. For example, a person can voluntarily join an organisation, but has no choice regarding their nationality or the family into which they are born.

Much existing identity research in the organisational context has tended to focus on what researchers have perceived to be the primary targets for individual identification within the organisational context. The most commonly researched targets include employees’ work unit, profession, and the organisation itself. The following sections review each of these targets, commencing with the most superordinate target – the organisation.

**Organisational Identification**

When an individual forms an attachment to an organisation, this is a form of social identification known as organisational identification. Research in this area originated within the social identity approach and explores how employees identify with the organisation of which they are a member (Pratt, 2001). Organisational membership has represented a major focus of social identity research (Hodgkinson, 2013). Organisational identification is defined by Mael and Ashforth (1992) as “the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member” (p. 104, italics in original).

As a form of social identification, organisational identification is considered to have cognitive, affective, evaluative and behavioural dimensions (van Dick, 2004). Employees’ beliefs about the organisation become self-defining, and are integrated into the self-concept (Pratt, 1998). This integration, in turn, helps to give sense and meaning to the individual’s life (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). Organisational identification has been shown to fulfill basic individual needs, such as affiliation and self-esteem, and be positively associated with job satisfaction and motivation (van Dick, 2004). Bergami and Bagozzi
suggest that organisational identification is more than a cognitive self-categorisation with an organisation, because it has an affective component that associates identification with emotional wellbeing. Harquail (1998) refers to this as affective identification, and links it to an individual's perception of the emotional significance and value of the identity.

From an organisational perspective, the greater an individual's attachment to the organisation, the greater the willingness to remain and cooperate with the organisation, comply with management directives, and behave in the organisation's best interests (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). The individual essentially thinks, feels and behaves as a prototype of the organisation's mission and values (Stuart, 2012). It has been demonstrated that the more individuals identify with the organisation in which they work, the more they will be governed by that membership, involving attitudes and behaviour that positively reflect the values of the organisation – including organisational citizenship, extra-role behaviour, enhanced productivity and low absenteeism (He & Brown, 2013; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Riketta, 2005; Tyler, 1999; van Knippenberg, Martin, & Tyler, 2006).

Rousseau (2000) describes organisational identification as a cognitive expansion of self to the level of the organisation, which begins with situated identification to a discrete work setting. Over time, this develops into deep structure identification, characterised by a sense of belonging that translates to multiple work roles and work units across the organisation. Deep structure identification changes the self by integrating the organisation's values into the self concept. This has been described as a 'psychological merging' of self and organisation so that the individual is no longer just part of the organisation – the organisation is part of the individual (Ashforth et al., 2008; van Knippenberg et al., 2006). Deep structure identification is more common among longer term
employees and can endure even after an individual leaves an organisation (Meyer, Becker, & van Dick, 2006).

From a social identity perspective, aspects of the organisation can become internalised and self-referential, so that when employees who identify strongly act congruently with the organisation's values, they are essentially acting in accordance with their conceptions of self (Ashforth et al., 2008). This sense of belonging can be reinforced by identity markers that include organisational symbols and language, such as use of the inclusive term ‘we' (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), and by external validation, whereby individuals' views about the organisation receive support from non-members outside the organisation (Fiol, 2002). Pratt (1998) suggests that, in a similar process to social identification, it is the point at which an individual's beliefs about the organisation become integrated into his or her identity, and become self-defining, that represents the real essence of organisational identification. He describes two key paths to organisational identification – affinity (in which the individual perceives that the organisation is similar to oneself), and emulation (in which the individual modifies his or her self to be similar to the organisation). Both paths establish a sense of congruence that is self-affirming, and produce a psychological sense of 'oneness' with the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Pratt (1998) differentiates identification from the concept of person-organisation fit, suggesting the latter refers more to the costs and benefits associated with membership of an organisation, whereas identification answers a more fundamental question, 'Who am I in relation to this organisation?'.

Research has increasingly revealed the multidimensionality of organisational identification (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Scott, 2007). For example, different forms of identification include *disidentification* (the degree to which a person defines him- or herself as *not* sharing the same attributes that he or she believes define a particular
organisation), neutral identification (the absence of any identification or disidentification with an organisation), ambivalent or schizo-identification (where a person identifies strongly with some aspects of an organisation and disidentifies strongly with other aspects), and overidentification (in which a person develops a pathological attachment to an organisation). It has also been recognised that individuals who are not actually members of an organisation may still identify psychologically with organisations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Social identity research has explored the organisational characteristics that attract member identification (Pratt, 2001). Individuals are believed to identify with an organisation to satisfy a variety of needs, including meaning, safety, affiliation, self-enhancement and altruistic motives (Pratt, 1998). According to the social identity approach, individuals are more likely to identify with organisations that offer distinctiveness and a positive external image (Dutton et al., 1994). For example, an individual's self-concept is enhanced when he or she is making inter-organisational comparisons that favour the status and prestige of the individual's organisation (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Mael and Ashforth add that organisational identification is also related to shared or common fate, or perceived similarity, among members.

One criticism of organisational identification research is that it has focussed mainly on top-down organisational processes, with much less examination of bottom-up processes, such as how members themselves contribute to and shape their identification within the organisation (Ashforth et al., 2008). An exception is Ibarra (1999), who conducted two case studies of junior consultants and investment bankers to demonstrate how professional employees modified their self-conceptions – which they achieved by observing role models, experimenting with possible selves, and using internal standards and external feedback to evaluate the results. Pratt (2000) and others have demonstrated how organisational members can internalise properties of the organisation into their
self-definition through a process of emulation. Brickson (2013) presented a model of identity congruence after analysing how individuals evaluate their organisation as an identification target – concluding that congruence between an organisation's identity and an individual's personal identity may fulfil the individual motivation for self-continuity, while congruence between an organisation's current and envisioned identities may satisfy the individual need for self-esteem.

While much of the research implies that organisational identification equates to acceptance of the organisation’s values and goals, there has been some dispute over whether this reflects organisational identification or organisational commitment, which is discussed next.

Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment has been defined as an employee’s a) belief in and acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values; b) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, and c) desire to maintain membership (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Several dimensions of commitment have been recognised (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Riketta, 2005; van Dick, 2001). These dimensions include compliance commitment (willingness to comply with organisational rules), identification commitment (attachment to, or social affiliation with, the organisation and other employees), internalisation commitment (internalisation of the organisation’s values), affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organisation), normative commitment (intention to remain with the organisation) and continuance commitment (perceived cost of leaving the organisation).

It has been argued that it is the cognitive component of social identification that distinguishes it from organisational commitment or job involvement, with commitment reflecting more of an affective state, and involvement more a behavioural state (Boros, 2008). It has also been suggested
that affective commitment reflects the emotional component of social identification (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). One study found support for this by showing that correlations between organisational identification and positive affect disappeared after controlling for affective commitment (Herrbach, 2006). Others have argued that identification may be the substance of an individual’s relationship with the organisation, while commitment may be the form that it takes (Russo, 1998).

From a social identity perspective, identification is widely viewed as intrinsic to a person’s sense of self (Gautam, van Dick, & Wagner, 2004). For example, individuals may be committed to an organisation because it serves as a vehicle for pursuing career goals, however, commitment can be easily transferred to other organisations. Identification involves a greater degree of psychological attachment between an individual and the organisation, including a greater sense of loss when that attachment is broken (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Postmes, Tanis, & de Wit, 2001). From this perspective, organisational commitment may enable continuation of one’s career, whereas organisational identification may ensure continuity of one’s sense of self (Logan & O’Leary-Kelly, 2007).

In a review of organisational change research, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) suggest that research using commitment as a criterion variable to assess the impact of organisational change on the employee-organisation relationship could offer insights into whether employees are committed to a change. However, this may be more complex in the case of organisational identification. For example, strong identification to the 'old' organisation may be inversely related to an employee’s commitment to the 'new' organisation. Fiol (2002) describe how a highly identified workforce could actually serve as an impediment to change, because employees who are committed to an organisation in its current form may be more, rather than less, resistant to attempts to change the organisation.
Following extensive research into both organisational commitment and organisational identification, the current consensus appears to be that they are unique and empirically distinct, though related, constructs (Haslam, Postmes, & Ellemers, 2003b; Riketta, 2005). Furthermore, while organisational identification and organisational commitment generally imply positive behaviour on the part of an employee toward the organisation, the reality of the employee-organisation relationship may be much more complex. For example, Herrbach (2006) found that organisational identification, unlike commitment, may also be positively correlated with negative emotion.

Identity theory also incorporates a concept of commitment. From the identity theory perspective, commitment refers to the extent to which other members in a particular social setting rely on an individual to play a particular role within that social network (Stryker, 2000). In other words, to the degree that an individual's relations with others in a social structure depend on the individual continuing to perform a particular role, the individual is more likely to remain committed to that role. Commitment is, therefore, measured as the perceived costs associated with giving up a particular identity if this means having to give up the relationships formed with others as part of that identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). This could be influenced by the size of the particular social network for the individual, the number of relationships that have been formed around the role, or the importance of the role to the individual. Like many concepts in identity theory, commitment derives directly from symbolic interactionism (Ashforth, 2000). It can thus refer to interactional commitment (which refers to the number of social interactions or relationships that are associated with a particular identity), and affective commitment (which refers to the degree of emotion that might be attached to the loss of a particular identity). The concept of commitment, as defined within identity theory, is perhaps more closely associated with
organisational commitment than social identification – such as identification commitment, affective commitment and normative commitment.

The next section explores a social identity construct that is closely related to, and sometimes confused with, organisational identification – organisational identity. While organisational identification refers to an individual's degree of identification with an organisation, organisational identity is generally used to refer to the identity of the organisation itself.

Organisational Identity

Organisational identity has been conceived as both a unitary construct that describes an organisation, and a collective construct that describes the shared characteristics and qualities that are attributed to an organisation by its members. As a unitary concept, organisational identity has been used to personify organisations by treating them as independent entities with human attributes (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003; Gilpin & Miller, 2013). From this perspective, organisational identity can involve an organisation asking itself, 'Who am I'? Organisational identity is thus treated similarly to personal identity in that an organisation can be viewed as having a personality that comprises traits (e.g., aggressive), emotions (e.g., caring), values (e.g., ethical), knowledge (e.g., expertise), qualities (e.g., innovative) and motivations (e.g., responsive). An organisational identity can also reflect various aspects of an organisation, including its structure (e.g., bureaucratic vs flexible), strategy (e.g., bold vs prudent), and its geography or community context (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003). In the same way that individual identity can be associated with social roles, the organisation's identity can also be linked to its social role or mission (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

As a collective concept, organisational identity is widely defined as members' shared beliefs about an organisation's central, enduring and distinctive
characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This represents the sum of members' consensual beliefs about what distinguishes the organisation from other organisations (Paulsen et al., 2005b). A strong organisational identity is considered to be one that is “widely shared and deeply held by organizational members” (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004, p. 8). From this perspective, organisational identity can be used by those who belong to an organisation to answer the social identity question, 'Who are we?'.

A third construal of organisational identity is the external image of an organisation held by external stakeholders such as customers (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). For example, organisational identity can reflect a product created by an organisation’s marketing and public relations teams, communicated externally as a projected image, and designed to enhance external perceptions of an organisation's positive qualities (Cian & Cervai, 2014). It is this projected image that is generally defined as corporate identity (Cornelisson et al., 2007). Organisational image can also refer to the perceptions that various external stakeholders hold about an organisation (Price & Gioia, 2008). The impressions of external stakeholders about an organisation are not only important to an organisation's financial viability, but can also have a powerful effect on insider perceptions of an organisation's identity. This was demonstrated in a longitudinal study by Dutton and Dukerich (1991), who describe how members of a large transport authority reinterpreted their organisation's identity over time as management took various approaches to deal with homeless people sleeping on organisational property. Employee perceptions of the organisation's identity continued to be reshaped over time as they gauged how outsiders responded to management's attempts to deal with the social issue of homelessness.

Researchers are increasingly showing that one organisation can mean "different things to different people", and have identified ways in which organisations can accommodate more than one identity (Alvesson et al., 2008, p.
13). For example, Albert and Whetten (1985) distinguish between ideographic and holographic organisations. An ideographic organisation comprises multiple identities that exist in different parts of the same organisation (Corley, 2004). For example, Glynn (2000) observed two constructions of identity in an orchestral company – with management perceptions centering on the organisation's business identity while musicians emphasised the organisation's artistic identity.

A holographic organisation is one in which multiple identities exist that are held by all members. For example, a university may be considered holographic because it is perceived by members as both a research facility and a teaching institution, with most academic staff identifying with both of these roles.

Organisations have also been described as having a dual or hybrid identity, whereby one organisation has two (or more) different and simultaneous identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985). For example, Foreman and Whetten (2002) studied a rural cooperative that was widely perceived by members as having both business and family identities. Their findings not only showed between-member conflict as a function of the dual identity, but also showed internal conflict within individuals who were attached to both identities.

A review of research in a special issue of the British Journal of Management found that social, organisational and corporate identity research in organisations tends to be marked by different ontological and epistemological assumptions (Cornelisson et al., 2007). For example, organisational identity has been viewed as a psychological concept that exists in the minds of its members, a social concept that is shaped over time by the interactions of organisational members, and a structural concept that represents a property of the organisation (Corley et al., 2006; Kuhn & Nelson, 2002). These differences raise issues regarding how an organisation is conceptualised. For example, is an organisation an independent and external entity with its own identity, or is it the sum of its members' beliefs, or a product of its members' interactions? Organisations have
been conceptualised as both a collective which can establish a sense of self as an independent entity, and as a social group with which individuals may identify (He & Brown, 2013). Researchers argue that an organisation is more than just an aggregation or manifestation of the shared experiences of its members, suggesting an organisation can be viewed as a 'social actor' that is capable of its own purposeful and goal-oriented behaviour (King, Felin, & Whetten, 2010). King et al. explain that organisations are granted this status by internal and external stakeholders, who collectively behave in and toward organisations as if they possess intentional qualities that go beyond the mere agency of their members. Brickson (2013) notes that the conceptualisation of an organisation as an 'identity-based actor' makes it unique when compared with other social categories that serve as targets of identification for individuals, which are not afforded such agentic and self-reflective properties.

This also raises issues as to how identity is conceptualised and studied within organisations (Ravasi & Canato, 2013). For example, Whetten (2007, p. 268) advocates the social identity approach for studying "the social identities of organizations" (i.e., organisational identity) though expresses concern about use of the social identity perspective to study "organizations as social identities" (i.e., organisational identification). The two offer very different conceptualisations of identity in the organisational context, because one suggests a single organisation may be, as King et al. (2010) suggests, a social actor with its own identity, while the other refers to an organisation as a identification target for numerous members' social identities. To complicate things further, Cornelissson et al. (2007, p. 6) suggest "a social identity can be grounded in organizational group membership and hence be an organizational identity". From this perspective, organisational identity may not just refer to a collective view by organisational members of the central or defining features of an organisation, but may also refer to the different psychological meanings that individuals ascribe to their self-
concept when they identify with the organisation. As such, identity has been perceived as reflecting both psychological and social realities so that identities in organisations can define the self as well as the organisation (Haslam, Eggins, & Reynolds, 2003a). Some argue that this is a cyclic and reciprocal process, in that the norms and values of an organisation may be internalised by individual members, and the beliefs that individuals hold about an organisation can shape organisational life (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011; Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005).

What seems clear is that identity is both part of the organisation and part of the self. It can thus become confusing when groups or organisations are treated as individuals (Albert & Whetten, 1985). There remains a lack of consensus on its core meaning, with confusion as to whether organisational identity is an objective reality or a subjective construction (Corley et al., 2006; King & Whetten, 2008; Puusa, 2009). Given that organisational identity appears to incorporate both psychological and social realities, researchers have suggested that social identity be used when referring to individuals' group-based identities, and collective identity be used when referring to the identity of a group or collective, such as an organisation (Pratt, 2003). Some have gone further to suggest that the term 'organisational identity' be used to describe collective phenomena in organisations, while alternative terms (such as 'organisationally based identity') be used to describe that part of the self-concept that defines an individual's connection with an organisation (Corley et al., 2006).

A common research finding is that individuals identify strongly with their immediate work unit, over and above other targets of identification in organisations, and this is explored next.

**Work Unit Identification**

Studies of work unit identification have shown it to be a strong predictor of work-related perceptions and behaviours – including job satisfaction, job
involvement, and intentions to remain in an organisation (Barker & Tompkins, 1994; Scott, 1997; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). One explanation for the importance of the work unit to organisational members is that it is a lower order identity that may be more subjectively important and situationally relevant than a higher order identity such as the organisation itself (Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004). Ashforth and Johnson (2001) offer several reasons for this. First, individuals tend to interact more frequently with other employees from the same work group. Second, based on the theoretical assumption that an individual's group membership is likely to be more salient when a relevant outgroup is present, they argue that employees are more likely to encounter lower order outgroup members (i.e., employees from other work groups in the same organisation) than higher order outgroup members (i.e., employees belonging to other organisations). Third, employees are perhaps more likely to represent, and be perceived by others to represent, their work group during interactions with others in an organisation. And finally, based on the assumption that a work unit will comprise members with compatible skill sets, members may have more in common with each other, leading to greater homogeneity within work units. Based on these arguments, Ashforth and Johnson assert that the work unit is likely to serve as a primary group membership in an organisation. However, one contradiction is noted. Ashforth and Johnson suggest that lower order identities may be more salient for employees because they have more in common with members of their local work group. At the same time, they argue that higher order identities (such as identification with the organisation itself) may be less salient for the same reason (i.e., because this is a group membership that all employees have in common). The authors do cite conditions under which an organisation may be more subjectively important and situationally relevant for employees than their immediate work group, such as when the organisation is
uniquely linked to an employee’s personal goals and values (e.g., a religious organisation).

Some of these arguments are supported by other researchers. For example, van Knippenberg and van Schie (2000) concluded from several studies that employees are more likely to identify with work groups because they are smaller, there is more similarity and familiarity, and they offer more inclusiveness and distinctiveness. Kramer (1991) agrees with the primacy of the work unit on the basis that employees are known to interact more frequently with their work group than with other organisational groups. Brewer (1991) also supports the idea of the work group featuring more prominently because it offers an optimal balance between the need for inclusion versus autonomy. One organisational study found that if the norms of a work unit contradict the norms of the organisation, it is the norms of the work unit that employees are more likely to follow (Oaker & Brown, 1986).

While there is strong support for the important impact of the work unit on employee behaviour, the literature shows mixed results. Some organisational research provides support for the greater salience of work groups and smaller nested identities in organisations (e.g., Barker & Tompkins, 1994; Jetten, O’Brien, & Trindall, 2002; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000) while other studies demonstrate the greater salience of higher order identities or some degree of compatibility between the two (Hennessy & West, 1999; Scott, 1997; van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, & Wieseke, 2008). Concern has been expressed that these findings may be marred by quantitative research methods that may at times measure identification in a way that confuses participants’ identification with their work unit versus organisation (Hennessy & West, 1999).

The next section explores identification with one’s profession or occupation.
Professional Identification

Occupations and professions are recognised as common targets of identification for employees in organisations (Chreim, 2007). Professional and occupational identification refer to individuals' identification with their profession or occupation (e.g., nurse, manager). For staff who work in a healthcare organisation (such as the organisation that forms the basis for this thesis project), it is likely that employees' profession or occupation could offer salient group memberships for individuals, particularly during organisational change. This is because identification, for some employees, may be more closely tied to an external professional group, than to the organisation or work unit (Fuller et al., 2006). For example, in a survey of 12 000 managers, conducted across 25 countries, results revealed a substantial loyalty shift during 1980-1990 tending away from employers to professional associations (Kanter, 1991). It is possible that this decrease in loyalty away from the organisation has been associated with the increasing volume of change occurring within organisations, such that individuals may look to their profession to provide greater continuity and certainty in relation to their careers.

A study of newspaper journalists by Russo (1998) revealed significantly higher identification with the profession of journalism than with the employing newspaper. Scott (1997) also found high occupational identification among employees working in a geographically dispersed organisation, but this may have occurred because employees did not have a stable work base, given that the employees were required to move regularly between area offices. The preference of professional identification over work unit identification has also been demonstrated in a number of studies (e.g., Millward, 1995; Oaker & Brown, 1986; Skevington, 1981).
Given that targets of employee identification exist at different levels of an organisation, the research on identity orientations is reviewed next.

**Identity Levels and Orientations**

Social identity research comprises multiple levels of identification (Ashforth et al., 2008). Brewer and Gardner (1996) originally described three loci of the self – the self as an individual, the self as an interpersonal being, and the self as a group member. Researchers have argued for the existence of three identity orientations – personal, relational and collective – with each orientation considered to be associated with different motivations, social comparisons, behaviours and consequences (Brickson, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). For example, while the concept of identity encompasses all levels of the self, research is increasingly showing that an individual's frame of reference can differ for each orientation (Vignoles et al., 2006). The frame of reference can include oneself (where people define themselves via personal identity, so that they perceive others comparatively as individuals). It also includes one's interpersonal relationships (where people define themselves via their relationships with significant others – such as friends, partners or work colleagues – and make self-other comparisons with other individuals in similar relationships). Finally, it includes one's groups (where self-definition is based on group memberships and self-other comparisons are made with members of relevant outgroups).

While personal identity emphasises one's own welfare, relational identity involves a greater focus on the welfare of one's relationships, and collective identity involves an emphasis on the welfare of the group. Each orientation is thus considered to influence the nature of individual behaviour toward others, and toward organisations, in ways that are consistent with the particular orientation (Brickson, 2005). For example, a relational orientation is likely to be associated with relational behaviours, such as loyalty to one's coworkers, whereas an
individual orientation might be expressed in competitive behaviours with one's work colleagues. A collective orientation, in contrast, could be reflected in loyalty towards one's work unit or the organisation itself. Brickson explains that this has implications for understanding individual behaviour in organisations, given that an individual orientation involves primary concern for one's personal welfare, whereas relational and collective orientations feature greater concern for others as a primary motive. In the face of large-scale organisational change, an organisational orientation might lead individuals to engage in behaviours that support the change (or, conversely, to advocate for aspects of the current organisation to remain intact) while an individual orientation may result in individuals electing to leave the organisation.

Brickson's (2013) research on identity congruence suggests that individuals may seek out organisations that offer a match for their identity orientation. For example, an individual with a collective identity orientation (such as a passion for social justice) may be attracted to an organisation with a similar orientation (such as a community welfare organisation) thereby contributing positively to the individual's identity. Similarly, and consistent with the principles of identity theory, identity orientations may also correspond with different organisational roles – such as a preference for working in autonomous, relational or team-based roles (Brickson, 2007). The motives may also differ for each orientation. Cooper and Thatcher (2010) offer theoretical propositions around the notion that individual self-concepts may be oriented toward individual, relational or collective selves. For example, self-enhancement is an individual motive that involves comparing oneself to other individuals, whereas reducing uncertainty may reflect a collective motive that involves comparison to a group or collective.

Structural differences have also been found across levels of identification (Gioia, 1998). For example, a study of franchise organisations showed that employee identification predicted employee attitudes and behaviours at the same
level of identification (Ullrich, Wieseke, Christ, Schulze, & van Dick, 2007). Specifically, the authors found a positive relationship between employees' organisational identification and behaviour aimed at benefitting the individual franchise, while employees' corporate identification was positively associated with behaviour that benefitted the broader franchise system. Studies conducted with German school teachers and bank accountants similarly showed higher correlations between identification at individual, team and organisational levels and dependent variables at corresponding levels (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2004).

Levels of identification to some degree mirror the individual, group and organisational levels of analysis in organisational research – with individual identity research tending to focus more on internal cognitive structures; group identity research tending to focus on shared aspects of group membership (e.g., cultural norms); and organisational identity research placing greater emphasis on structural dimensions of the organisation (Brown, 2001). As a consequence, social identity tends to be viewed as an "internalised knowledge structure" while organisational identity is commonly understood as a "system of shared meaning" (Cornelisson et al., 2007, p. 3).

The work on identity orientation is challenging traditional construals of identification by suggesting the interplay of a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes in which individuals may engage in a conscious evaluation of individual and organisational identity congruence before they choose to identify with, or even join, an organisation. For example, it highlights the possibility for individuals to engage with organisations in different ways, and at different levels, and to internalise distinct aspects of the organisation into the self (Brickson, 2013). Moreover, an organisation may not serve merely as a social category that guides norm-based behaviour (in which an identified member emulates the actions of prototypical organisational members), but may enable the enactment of
organisation-based roles that involve an identified member behaving as an active and purposeful social agent for the organisation. In effect, an individual can represent or behave as a microcosm of the organisation (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Brickson (2013) highlights how it is this agentic behaviour that may not only differentiate membership of an organisation from membership of other types of social categories, but may also help in understanding how it is that organisations come to be attributed with person-like qualities.

Summary

The previous sections explored common targets of identification in organisations. Common organisational targets of identification include the work unit, one's profession or occupation, and the organisation itself. Individuals can also identify with social roles in and around organisations, and can have orientations toward identifying socially with people at individual, relational and group levels. Research has also illuminated new and unexpected targets of identification. For example, Morgan et al. (2004) found that employees' families featured strongly in identification with an agricultural organisation. Russo (1998) also revealed unexpected sources that journalists incorporated into their workplace identifications – including coworkers, subordinates, and readers of the newspaper. The findings were revealed through qualitative methods, leading Russo to challenge the appropriateness of traditional quantitative methods that involve asking employees to directly report identification in terms of "unspecified global constructs" (p. 102). Examples like these demonstrate that sources of employee identification in organisations may not always be readily apparent to managers or researchers, particularly when they relate to targets outside the organisation. Accordingly, they attest to the benefits of utilising qualitative methods to illuminate the identifications that matter most to organisational members.
The final elements of social identification to be reviewed in this chapter are the content and processes of identification.

Identity Content and Processes

The social identity approach differentiates between the concepts of identity, which alludes to the content of identities, and identification, which refers to the process of identifying with social categories. According to the social identity approach, an individual's social identity is a psychological concept that forms part of the self-concept, in which the individual's group memberships are represented as cognitive prototypes, with each prototype portraying an ideal or exemplary (as opposed to typical or average) group member (Hogg et al., 2004). A group member prototype embodies a range of properties — including beliefs, attitudes, emotions and behaviours — that are deemed central to membership of the group. In contrast, outgroups are framed cognitively as stereotypes, which are used to describe members of relevant outgroups. Hogg et al. explain that the maximum differences observed in the minimal group experiments are reflected in this process, because the prototypical features of ingroup members tend to be polarised from outgroup stereotypes, so that 'whatever they are, we are not'.

The social identity approach has gone the farthest to outline the process of identification. According to this approach, identification in any social context tends to be relational and comparative, in that individuals define and evaluate their group memberships by comparing them with other groups in the immediate social environment (Spears, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SCT explains how individuals use a process of social comparison to distinguish ingroups from relevant outgroups whenever they self-categorise as an ingroup member (Hogg, 2003). A group member will therefore perceive him or herself as 'one of us' while at the same time viewing members of a comparative group as 'one of them'.
Identifying as 'one of us' represents direct identification as a member of a social group (e.g., 'I am a middle manager'), while identifying another individual as 'one of them' represents indirect identification with an ingroup. The latter is achieved when an individual explicitly categorises another person as a member of an outgroup (e.g., ‘He is a doctor’) which implicitly signifies the individual's identification with a different group (e.g., ‘I am a nurse’). Another form of indirect identification involves making explicit or implicit references to other social groups or categories (e.g., 'I'd never work part-time'), which represents identification with a different group (e.g., permanent employees) by differentiating oneself from the relevant outgroup (i.e., part-time employees). From the social identity perspective, the process of identification thus involves an individual recognising at least two groups: 1) an ingroup – the group with which an individual identifies, or perceives him or herself as a member; and 2) one or more comparative outgroups – the groups to which each ingroup is cognitively compared, and from which an individual's ingroup is positively differentiated (Hogg, 2006). As such, the process of social categorisation carries with it both explicit and implicit ingroup versus outgroup (i.e., 'we-they') distinctions. Self- and other-categorisations are linked and group memberships hold more meaning when compared with other groups (Harwood, 2006).

In summary, from the social identity perspective, the process of identification involves an individual identifying (or being identified) as a member of a social group, which includes cognitive representations of an ingroup (prototype) and relevant outgroups (stereotypes). These representations, combined with an individual’s strength of identification with a particular group, influence the way the individual behaves toward others, who are perceived and treated as either ingroup or outgroup members. Identification thus brings together the social and the psychological, so that in any given context individuals cognitively map the social categories in their immediate social world, in order to
make sense of their place in it, and inform their expectations about how to
behave towards, and be treated by, others. This is why social identities are
considered pervasive in defining who we are and how we should behave in any
social context, including organisations (Hogg, 2001b).

Identity theory, in contrast, conceptualises identity as the cognitive
framework within which individuals store all of the internalised expectations and
meanings that they associate with social roles, which represent the positions that
comprise individuals' various social networks. Like the social identity approach,
identity theory is relational to the degree that roles acquire greater meaning for
individuals when they are socially compared with 'counter-roles'. For example,
the role of employee assumes the existence of a manager role, so that
expectations attached to roles like these tend to be interrelated.

Social norms are incorporated into the content of both social and role
identities, representing expectations, derived from social interactions and
experience, about how individuals are expected to think, feel and behave as
group members and role occupants. Thus, identity comprises the normative
expectations associated with a wide range of group memberships and roles, and
provides individuals with information about who they are as a social individual,
and about how they and others may be expected to behave toward each other
within different social contexts.

The organisational context has not been a major focus of research from
the identity theory perspective. However, while there has been more research
conducted in organisational settings from the social identity approach, the early
emphasis on intergroup relations and conflict led researchers to focus more on
intergroup behaviour, exploring struggles between minority and majority groups in
social settings. The research on mergers is an example of organisational
research that follows this trend. However, this type of research tends to focus on
what happens in organisations after social identification has occurred, and
overlooks the origins and content of identities and the processes of identification in organisations. As a consequence, social identity research in organisations has been criticised for focussing more on a static state of 'being', rather than a more dynamic process of 'becoming' (Jian, 2011; Schultz & Hernes, 2013).

Research on identity work is one exception, and can be found mainly in the group process and sociology literatures. Identity work is considered to be driven by a self-verification motive and refers to the tactics individuals use to form, maintain, revise and strengthen their identities (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). It also includes how identities come to be imbued with meaning (Koerner, 2014; Roberts & Creary, 2013; Watson, 2008). While individuals are portrayed as active agents in processes of identity construction and maintenance, much of this research focusses on within-group processes – such as how particular groups establish a sense of shared identity among members (e.g., Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996); relational processes – such as how individuals manage their self-identities in response to feedback from others, and deal with threats to their identity (e.g., Ely & Roberts, 2008; Watson, 2008); and broader social processes – such as the social movement of identity groups (Snow & Anderson, 1987). Like early identity research in organisations, the focus in organisational research has also tended to be on how individuals identify with functional groups and roles that are selected by the researcher, such as the manager role (Beech, 2008).

More recent research exploring identity work in organisations has utilised qualitative methods, such as research on identity narratives (Roberts & Creary, 2013). This is based on the idea that individuals draw on available cultural and discursive resources to construct coherent self-narratives that adequately define their work-based identities (Alvesson et al., 2008; Watson, 2008). This line of research suggests that individuals play active roles in co-constructing their identities in organisations (Koschmann, 2012; Watson & Watson, 2012). A longitudinal qualitative study by Pratt et al. (2006) is one example, in which
medical residents were found to resolve discrepancies between the work they
did, and their professional identities, by tailoring their self-concepts to match the
work content.

Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) also used the concept of identity work to
develop a process model of narrative identity work during work role transitions, in
which individuals are proposed to engage in identity narratives before
internalising a new identity, by assessing the extent to which a new identity is
internally consistent and externally validated. Vough (2012) also explored
individuals' identity narratives during a study of how employees in an architectural
firm articulated their identification with three organisational targets – the work
group, profession and organisation – though the study did not take place during
organisational change. Participants were asked to rate their level of identification
with the three targets, and follow-up interviews were used to explore the ratings
in depth. The findings suggest that individual narratives about identity (e.g., Who
am I? What do I value?) form a key part of the process of identification, along
with information provided by target agents (e.g., Who are we? What do we stand
for?), as well as individuals' day-to-day experiences and knowledge of the targets
(based on their interactions with target members). Vough identified four themes,
labelled sensemaking logics, that assisted individuals to make sense of their
identification with each target.

- Familiarity – How well do I know and understand the target?
- Similarity – What do I share with the target?
- Benefits – What does the target provide me?
- Investment – What or how much have I given to the target?

Some of these logics appear instrumental suggesting that work
identifications may be evaluated for their utility (e.g., assessing their costs and
benefits), thereby reflecting principles of social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelly,
1959). This is similar to the idea that work-based identities can seem attractive
because they provide individuals with status, prestige and self-enhancement, although social identity benefits such as these reflect intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivators because they contribute directly to an individual's self-concept. However, the instrumentality of the logics may simply be a function of asking participants directly about their identifications, leading individuals to reflect more on the actual target, than on their self-concept, including what the individual has in common with the target, and the pros and cons of being associated with the target.

Research that explores organisational members' work-based identities is increasing, particularly through qualitative approaches that are shedding more light on the content of members' identities, and the processes by which identities that are important to members themselves, are formed and developed. Much still remains to be learned, however, particularly in relation to the substance and origins of individuals' identities in organisations, and their effects on members' responses to organisational events such as change (Cornelisson et al., 2007).

Summary

This chapter has introduced two major theories of identity, highlighting the nature of group and role-based social identities in organisations. This includes the reasons that identities are important to individuals and organisations, and the individual benefits offered by identification with work groups and roles – such as meaning, connectedness and social status (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). The chapter has also explored common targets of identification, and reviewed some of the social groups and roles that have been linked to identity dynamics in the organisational context.

This thesis project contributes to the field of identity research by conducting an indepth, exploratory study into one organisation undergoing large-scale change. Key aims include learning whether other identities matter to
individuals in the organisational context, by illuminating the sources and targets of identification that are most salient for participants as they talk about the changes occurring in their organisation. The thesis project also aims to shed light on the content of these identities, the processes through which individuals develop these identifications, and the consequences for individuals and the organisation. Given that the communication of organisational change represents a core context for the exploration of identity in this thesis project, the next chapter reviews relevant literature in this area.
CHAPTER THREE: IDENTITY, COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE

This chapter reviews organisational change as the social setting for the study of employee identities in this thesis project. The chapter commences with a brief review of the nature of large-scale organisational change. This is followed by an exploration of assumptions underlying organisational communication, and the practice of communicating change. The remainder of the chapter focusses on how employees in organisations tend to perceive and respond to communication about change. This includes a brief description of individual concepts that have dominated research in this area, followed by a review of research that explores how employees perceive and respond to change in organisations as a function of social identities. This chapter extends previous chapters by introducing and reviewing relevant literature and further outlining the aims and rationale for this thesis project.

Organisational Change

Organisational change involves “change in how an organization functions, who its members and leaders are, what form it takes, or how it allocates its resources” (Huber & Glick, 1993, p. 216). A change process typically involves moving an organisation (and those within it) from a present (undesirable) state to a future (desirable) state (Lewin, 1951). Large-scale change is transformational in nature because it involves completely restructuring an organisation’s functional work groups (Burnes, 2004).

Organisations are required to change in response to both internal and external drivers – such as new technology, consumer demand, competition, mergers, and changes in government legislation (By, 2005). Such changes are generally directed at improving performance, reducing costs, complying with regulations or conforming to industry standards. Whilst changes designed to
improve performance and profits may be implemented internally to enhance an organisation’s survival, regulatory changes are mandatory and demand organisational compliance.

Change in organisations is commonly differentiated as planned versus unplanned (Poole & Van de Ven, 2004). Planned change is an intentional path to a known state, which involves proactive decisions to change the way an organisation functions with the aim of improving organisational effectiveness (Smither, Houston, & McIntire, 1996). In contrast, unplanned change is an unintended path to an unknown state, involving a reactive response to internal or external factors. Organisational change can also be categorised as incremental versus radical (Burnes, 2004). Radical change refers to large-scale programs aimed at transforming the entire organisation, while incremental change projects tend to be smaller in scale and may only involve selected work units within the organisation. Similarly, Weick and Quinn (1999) distinguish between episodic and continuous change. Episodic change is incremental change that has a clear beginning and end, and only occasionally interrupts an organisation’s equilibrium. In contrast, continuous change comprises constant improvements in which the organisation continues to evolve over a longer period. Change theorists have also distinguished between first- and second-order change (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). First-order change involves small adjustments to internal systems and processes, such as the implementation of quality improvements. Second-order change is more radical and multidimensional, involving transformations to an organisation’s fundamental properties, including its structure, culture and identity (Levy, 1986).

Organisations themselves have been categorised as bureaucratic (Blau, 1956) versus flexible (Sofer, 1972), having mechanistic versus organic structures (Burns & Stalker, 1961), with directive versus consultative styles of leadership (Dunphy & Griffiths, 1994). As such, organisations are generally considered as
entities that can be placed along a continuum that ranges from rigid and autocratic to flexible and adaptive. In relation to change, it could be argued that rigid and autocratic organisations require a more planned, structured approach to change that is driven down from the top, while flexible and adaptive organisations are more likely to promote employee initiative through participative processes that may better allow organisations to evolve in a process of continuous adaptation to their environment.

The scale of organisational change over recent decades has been well documented (e.g., Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Burke, 2008; Self, Armenakis, & Schraeder, 2007). Incremental change was once the norm in most organisations, involving small and episodic changes to organisational practices and systems, however, global advances in standards and processes have compelled organisations to undergo more radical and multidimensional change in order to maintain pace in their respective fields (Marks, 2007). Accordingly, large-scale transformational change has become the norm, with organisations being required to adapt to their environment by realigning internal structures and processes to meet a continuous flow of external demands (Poole & Van de Ven, 2004). However, this type of change represents a substantial challenge for managers, as it requires balancing the pressures for change with the need to maintain organisational stability and continuity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Large-scale change is made even more difficult with workforce changes increasing the importance of retaining employees in such a dynamic employment environment (Scott, 1997). Continuous change also places pressure on managers by forcing them to respond more rapidly to environmental threats. Managers are increasingly required to make decisions that may involve significant change to their organisation, and large-scale change can be costly when it fails (Maurer, 2010). In a review of large-scale change initiatives, Burnes (2004) estimated that between 40 and 70% of all change efforts fail. Similarly,
Marks and Mirvis (1998) estimated that more than three-quarters of corporate restructures fail to achieve anticipated business results, and Karp and Helgo (2009) cite survey research that identified a failure rate in change programs of more than ninety percent. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999, p. 310) conclude that a common change result is “temporary adoption, but ultimate rejection of the new behaviours necessary to achieve lasting success”. Karp and Helgo argue that change management fails because change continues to be grounded in traditional approaches (e.g., systems theory, scientific management) and views of organisations (e.g., mechanistic), and because change processes involve structured and rational approaches that fail to appreciate the importance of employee identities, which can impact on the organisation’s capacity to change.

The costs of change include economic costs to organisations as well as personal costs for employees. Organisational costs include loss of productivity, reduced organisational commitment (Fugate, Kinicki, & Scheck, 2002), poor return on investment (Cascio, 1993), team dysfunction (Marks & deMeuse, 2003), interpersonal conflict (Terry & Callan, 1998), and the loss of skilled employees who leave the organisation during change (Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg, & Sikora, 2008). Human costs include uncertainty (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007), job loss (Legatski, 1998), depression (Brockner, 1992), stress (Ashkanasy & Ashton-James, 2005), and other long-term psychological impacts.

As large-scale organisational change has continued to gather pace, work-related psychological injuries (e.g., stress, anxiety and depression) have increased in prevalence and cost to organisations (Marks, 2007). Even successful change has a cost. For example, an analysis of 530 corporate transformations found that while positive improvements were typically achieved in organisational criteria (e.g., service, quality and productivity), negative outcomes were often observed in human measures (e.g., organisational commitment, climate and morale) (Gilmore, Shea, & Useem, 1997). Gilmore warned that side effects like these can
ultimately undermine sustained change. This has led to an increase in research to better understand how employees adjust to large-scale change within organisations (e.g., Terry & Jimmieson, 2003).

Organisational change not only poses a threat to existing groups and work-based identities, but also establishes new work groups and identities. While large-scale change necessarily involves changing the configuration and functions of formal groups and roles within the organisation, managers may be far less aware of the extent to which they may be reorganising the structure and boundaries of less obvious groups in the organisation (such as informal groups), any of which may be central to an employee's self-concept (Paulsen et al., 2005b). While organisational change continues to have such a substantial and detrimental impact on individuals and organisations, it remains critical to conduct ongoing research in this area, and learn more about how employees experience and respond to large-scale change initiatives. Accordingly, this thesis project responds to calls for more research on employees' experience of change, by examining the particular social identifications that are most salient for participants as they perceive and respond to communication about change within one organisation (Paulsen et al., 2005a; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Because radical change destabilises perceptions of stability and continuity, it offers an exceptional opportunity to examine the foundations of identity in one organisational context (Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002).

The next section explores the communication of change in organisations.

Organisational Communication

The question that prompted this thesis project was communicated by an executive member of the organisation being studied, and was expressly about communication (i.e., 'How do we make them listen?'). The question attests to the challenges that managers face in communicating change, and in motivating
organisational members to listen and respond favourably to communication about change initiatives. As such, communication is central to this thesis project, because organisational communication is both a method that managers use to inform employees about impending change, and a vehicle by which social identities become salient for individuals. Communication in organisations, however, is rarely perceived by managers as identity-based or intergroup communication, with the majority of research exploring communication in organisations construing it as interpersonal communication that occurs between individuals (Harwood, 2006; Jones et al., 2004).

Not only is communication important to management efforts to change an organisation, but some researchers go as far as to argue that communication constitutes and explains organisational life (e.g., Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Cornelisson et al., 2007; Ford & Ford, 1995). Thayer (1968, p. 18) states, “it is the communication that occurs and the patterns of intercommunication which ensue that define and determine the structure and the functioning of any organization”. Park and Burgess (1970, p. 103) assert that society “not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication” (italics in original). Similarly, Mumby (1988, p. x) claims “to speak of organization is to speak of communication”, and Wiio (1988, p. 95) argues “without communication there can be no organization”. Putnam, Phillips, and Chapman (1999) also view theories of communication and organisation as reciprocal, with each comprising implicit references to the other. As such, communication is perceived not just as a passive medium for conveying information, but as an active and dynamic influence on social and organisational processes – including the construction of identities (Koschmann, 2012). For example, during a 9-month study of communication of planned change within a government department, Kuhn and Corman (2003) identified ongoing patterns of divergence and convergence in
members' sensemaking about events that occurred during the change, which "constructed, reconstructed, adjusted and reinforced" new knowledge structures that eventually embedded the changes within the organisation (p. 222).

Communication is thus seen by many as a process of social construction that "creates, maintains and, potentially, changes understandings of organizational reality" (McClellan, 2011, p. 466).

Before reviewing how organisational members tend to communicate about, and respond to, change, it is important to first understand how early theoretical perspectives on communication influenced practical approaches to communication in organisations.

Early Perspectives

While communication has long been a topic of interest to scholars, it is only in relatively recent times that more has been understood about the use of communication to promote behaviour change. Propaganda messages during World War II were the subject of some of the earliest research into communication designed to elicit behaviour change (Rogers, 1994). Consistent with its military context, this research led to the view that recipients were 'sitting targets' so that communication essentially involved 'hitting the target'. Schramm and Roberts (1971, p. 8) coined the 'bullet theory of communication', which referred to the misguided assumption that as long as a message 'hit' a target, that person’s attitudes and behaviour could be changed. Essentially, the bullet theory inferred that as long as a person reads or hears a message, he or she will immediately agree and act in accordance with it.

Thus, at that time, theorists viewed human communication as a one-way, causal event where information was transferred automatically from one mind to another (Lasswell, 1971; Thayer, 1968). Models depicted communication as "a transmission process in which messages travel across a channel from one point
to another” (Krone, Jablin, & Putnam, 1987, p. 23). This was referred to as the ‘conduit metaphor’ and was consistent with the view of communication as a one-way, linear process (Putnam et al., 1999). Essential to this approach was the notion that “one mind influences another, as a one-way and intentional process”, with the underlying assumption that employees will respond favourably as long as they interpret change messages in the way managers intended (Rogers, 1994, p. 198).

Gradually, however, the idea of a passive receiver was abandoned as studies began to demonstrate that individuals are not so easily persuaded, and often interpret the same message differently (Rogers, 1994). As a result, two-way theories of communication emerged which drew attention to the equally important role of the receiver, and of contextual aspects of the communication process, in determining how messages are perceived. This opened up exploration of a wider range of factors in understanding communication (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Sudweeks, & Stewart, 1995; Harris, 2002). According to Schramm and Roberts (1971, p. 8), communication came to be thought of as “a relationship” rather than “something someone does to someone else”. Rogers described this acceptance of an active, versus passive, audience as “the most dramatic change in general communication theory” (p. 200).

Despite this shift, however, research on communication in organisations continues to place very little emphasis on the receiver’s role in perceiving and responding to communication. For example, early research privileged the perspective of senders of communication, often canvassing the views of managers only, and on how managers communicate information about change, than on how employees across all levels of an organisation perceive and respond to change (Kezar, 2001). The focus on managers’ perceptions reinforces a view of communication in organisations as a one-way, downward directed process (in which managers speak and subordinates listen). This perpetuates one-way views
of communication and traditional management approaches that view a manager as someone who directs and controls behaviour by telling subordinates what to do (Palmer & Dunford, 2008). This began to change when it was realised that managers consistently hold more positive views about communication than employees at other levels of organisations (Puusa, 2009). Organisational researchers have demonstrated that employee perceptions of communication are an equally important factor influencing how they respond to change-related information (Jones et al., 2004; Paulsen et al., 2005b). As a result, however, insufficient effort has been invested in considering how all employees perceive and respond to information about change, particularly from an identity-based perspective (Harwood, 2006).

The next section explores how managers tend to communicate change in organisations.

The Art of Communicating Change

Decisions about how change should be communicated are deemed by researchers and managers alike to be critical to the implementation of planned change (Forsyth, 2012). Communicating about change is considered to be one of the most important roles of a manager (Linstead, Fulop, & Lilley, 2009). For example, a review of the change management literature, combined with an observational study of change leaders, highlighted that the role of communicating takes up more of a manager's time than any other role during change (Jones, 2010).

Motivating employees to change their attitudes and behaviour, and enact a new organisational identity, is critical to the success of large-scale organisational change (Stuart, 2012). Thus, a primary goal of communication is to secure employee acceptance of, and support for, the change (Burke, 2008). Experts advise managers to outline a compelling vision, emphasise face-to-face
interactions, communicate a consistent message repetitively, and use multiple communication channels to reinforce a change message (Russ, 2008; Self et al., 2007; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994). The popular view has been that when a change message is communicated effectively, it can improve employees’ acceptance of change by inspiring them to understand, and agree with, the rationale for change, which will then translate into favourable action. As a consequence, change leaders place considerable emphasis on designing and delivering persuasive change messages to generate employee dissatisfaction with the current organisation and demonstrate why a new state will be better (Nadler, 1987).

It is generally assumed that a well-crafted message will ensure that employees understand the need for change (Forsyth, 2012). Accordingly, managers try to communicate a clear vision of the future state, including how this will enhance and benefit the organisation, which is designed to inspire and motivate employees to let go of the past and embrace the changes. Kotter (1996) asserts that if leaders are perceived to offer a clear vision when communicating change, employees respond by feeling a greater sense of control.

A classic study conducted by Coch and French (1948) led to a widespread view that managers should justify change in order to gain acceptance. This led to an emphasis on crafting messages that communicate the rationale for change (Self et al., 2007). There has been wide acceptance for the view that communicating a compelling and inspiring change message is more likely to motivate employees to change their behaviour, which then enables an organisation to move toward the desired state.

Communication about change generates uncertainty and anxiety for employees (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2004b). However, a common view is that the more uncertain employees feel regarding a proposed change, the more information they need, and the more persuasive the
information needs to be in order to reduce uncertainty and secure participation (Elving, 2005). Another widely held view is that the more information employees receive about the benefits and reasons for change, the more likely they are to accept it (Smeltzer, 1991). Recent studies suggest it is not the quantity of information, but employees’ perceptions of the quality of information they receive, that facilitates more positive attitudes toward change (Allen et al., 2007). For example, in a survey study of hospital employees, Bordia et al. (2004a) measured strategic, structural and job-related uncertainty, and found that management communication was effective only in the reduction of strategic uncertainty.

The communication strategy most used by managers to inform and persuade employees is ‘telling and selling’ (Russ, 2008). This generally involves a one-way, top-down flow of information using the same hierarchical communication channels traditionally used to direct and control employees (Putnam et al., 1999). Consistent with this one-way perspective, Smeltzer (1991) found, through 184 interviews with managers and employees from 43 organisations, that managers believed that simply telling employees (e.g., ‘we told them’, ‘we let them know’, ‘they were kept informed’) was the right strategy to communicate change. In contrast, employees in the same study reported a lack of confidence in management communication and reacted negatively to the use of change terms such as ‘rightsizing’. Results also showed that managers frequently framed change messages positively and rarely attended to the negative impacts on employees. For example, in one organisation a relocation to another state was framed as an opportunity for employees rather than a substantial disruption to their lives. Smeltzer concluded that managers generally fail to appreciate the interpretive nature of change communication.

Similarly, and consistent with a one-way view of communication, it is widely recognised that managers tend to focus more on disseminating
information than on soliciting input from employees, and perceive ‘getting the word out’ as more critical to the success of change than engaging with employees (Lewis, 1999). For example, Ellis, Bryan, and Jones (1994) found that managers regarded competent communication as **sending clear messages** whilst subordinates preferred communication that focussed on **mutual understanding**. Managers within the study emphasised the clarity of the message as a way of ensuring accurate understanding, whereas subordinates preferred communication as an exchange of information to enhance understanding.

Managers who conform to a one-way view of communication naturally focus their efforts on message delivery rather than on how employees actually hear the message (Cranswick, 2003). The emphasis tends to be on ensuring that the message is clear, compelling and delivered in a timely manner. In contrast, managers who subscribe to a two-way view of communication focus on the receiver as well as the message, thereby emphasising communication strategies that allow employees to ask questions and offer feedback (Harris, 2002). The strategy of one-way communication is perhaps reinforced by the lack of time managers generally have to effect change. Project timelines are often so tight and economically driven that managers simply do not have time to listen to employees, understand the organisational context, and develop relationships with stakeholders (Saka, 2003). Thus, it is possible that participative and two-way strategies are used less frequently because the time and organisational resources needed for this type of communication are simply not available to managers (Russ, 2008).

Balogun and Johnson (2005) explored the perceptions of middle managers to the implementation of regulatory change within a utility organisation. They tracked perceptions of change over a 12-month period, and found that the way in which middle managers made sense of change was informed more by informal communication among their own subgroup, than by formal channels of
communication from senior managers. The authors noted that models of change typically focus only on formal communication and fail to appreciate the importance of informal channels of communication that help to shape employee perceptions and responses to change.

The content of change-related communication in an organisation also tends to be more strategic than operational, focussing more on the 'what and why' of change, than the 'how' (Quirke, 1995). It tends to be fact-based (e.g., fact sheet, organisation chart, newsletter) not person-based, and the content often matches managers’ strategic needs more than employees' needs (Huy, 2011). For example, research shows that managers prefer to engage in task-related communication during change, whereas employees tend to seek more supportive communication (Karp & Helgo, 2009). Saka (2003) describes this as a rational style of communication that largely overlooks the social and cultural aspects of organisational life that are crucial to interpretation and meaning. A standard approach is also to communicate the same message to all employees, which further demonstrates that managers rarely consider the impact of a change message from the employee’s point of view (Kramlinger, 1998). For example, managers often fail to design appropriate messages for different occupational or work groups, or for employees at different levels of the organisation, even though it is known that individuals and groups can respond quite differently to the same change message (Smeltzer, 1991).

Ultimately, change-related communication may be viewed by managers more as a tool for providing information, and something that they do to others, rather than as a way of understanding those affected by change (April, 1999). Change managers view employees largely as passive objects of communication rather than participating subjects during change (Jabri, Adrian, & Boje, 2008). Accordingly, organisational communication is often practiced as a 'monologue' rather than a 'dialogue' (Cranswick, 2003).
Understandably, the competencies of an effective change manager have come to be viewed as clarity in specifying the goals and benefits of the change, and possession of the right communication skills to persuade employees to listen and commit to change goals (Forsyth, 2012). While the environmental circumstances that lead to change are often constructed in negative terms, senior managers are encouraged to frame the effects of change in positive terms (Oswick, Grant, Michelson, & Wailes, 2005). As a result, interventions designed to improve change communication focus largely on training managers to be more persuasive communicators, rather than understanding how employees actually listen and respond to change messages (Ellemers, de Gilder, & Haslam, 2004). The prevailing view is that if change is successful, the manager must have been a competent communicator (Jablin & Sias, 2000). And if it is not successful, employees misinterpreted the message or refused to listen (Jabri et al., 2008). However, while a manager’s skills may be necessary to ensure the accuracy of a change message, they may not be sufficient when individuals’ social identities become salient during change-related communication.

Communication and Identity

Organisational researchers recognise identity and communication as key constructs in the explanation of individual behaviour in organisational environments (Ashforth et al., 2008; Haslam & Ellemers, 2011; Scott, 2007). While most research treats communication and identity as distinct from each other, some researchers view them as inextricably linked, with the view that communication serves both as an expression of one’s identity and a means by which collective identities (including an organisation’s identity) are constructed and maintained (Koschmann, 2012). From this perspective, communication is not merely a tool to disseminate information about change, but is itself a core part of identity and organisation development processes.
The question that prompted this thesis project highlights the tendency for senior managers to view other organisational members as one large group to whom changes are communicated (Lewis, 1999). Viewing all employees as one inclusive group conveys the assumption that when the right communication strategy is employed, it will somehow impel all employees to listen and respond favourably (Palmer & Dunford, 2008). As a consequence, research has tended to overlook the importance of employees’ social identities during change (Jones et al., 2004). Identity researchers are, however, demonstrating that the groups and roles with which individuals identify at work can exert a substantial influence on their attitudes and behaviour in the workplace (e.g., Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Huy, 2011). Rogers (1994) reviewed the work of Kurt Lewin, a well-known researcher of change and group behaviour, who suggested that

Identification with a group provides an individual with a point of view, a perspective, and a self-meaning. When an individual receives information through a communication process, the meaning of the message is determined, in part, by the group to which the person belongs. (p. 324)

Identity researchers assert that social identities can strongly influence how communication is sent and received in any social context, and that the interpretations and efficacy of communication about organisational change may vary considerably as a function of individuals’ identities (Gilpin & Miller, 2013; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Reid & Giles, 2005). For example, research from the social identity approach provides evidence that recipients’ group membership can influence how a communicator constructs a message (Wigboldus, Spears, & Semin, 1999). This is because communication is an integral feature of identity, with one of the privileges attached to group membership being the ability to understand the codes and symbols of communication that are unique to one’s group. Accordingly, communicators will often tailor their communication differently
for ingroup versus outgroup members (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). The content and style of a person’s communication may therefore reflect their self-identity, which in turn may influence how others perceive and respond to a message (Witherspoon, 1997).

Social identity researchers believe that when communication occurs between organisational members who share the same group membership (such as communication within the top management group) there is a greater probability that individuals will be open to communication from each other, interpretations will be more similar, meanings more likely to be shared, and responses more collaborative (van Knippenberg, 2011). This is because groups tend to develop their own distinctive forms of communication, using language and terminology that are common among ingroup members. When an individual acts collaboratively in response to communication from a fellow ingroup member, it can enhance a sense of ‘we-ness’ that reinforces the group’s status and stability. On the other hand, if the speaker is a member of a different group (such as a senior manager communicating change messages to employees at lower levels of the organisation) the likelihood that recipients will understand the message and respond favourably will not be as high (Haslam, 2014). Lower level staff may be less familiar with the language and terminology used by members of the senior management group, and may therefore be less likely to hear the message accurately. In instances when the social identity of speakers and receivers is not shared, recipients may be less motivated to respond favourably to what is essentially outgroup communication. The responses of lower level staff would more likely be consistent with their own ingroup norms which, according to the social identity approach, are strongly motivated by a need to positively differentiate the ingroup from other groups within the organisation. Communication can therefore serve as a marker that enhances an employee’s
awareness of their membership of a particular group, as well as their non-membership of relevant outgroups (Robinson & Giles, 2001).

As an integral property of identity, communication can define the boundaries between identities (Haslam, 2001). The most obvious example is when group members speak different languages (e.g., English versus Chinese). In these cases, communication is highly group-specific, so that group members share distinct codes of communication that others are unable to comprehend. The core premise is that “those who share a communicator’s social identity will always have the most access to his or her meaning” (Haslam, 2001, p. 128). It follows that communication is more likely to be effective between members of the same group (who have a shared identity and therefore share similar communication codes), and less effective between members of different groups (who do not share a social identity so that receivers are unfamiliar with the communication codes of the speaker). As an example, research from the social identity perspective consistently shows a positive relationship between employees’ perceptions of leader prototypicality and leadership effectiveness (e.g., Cicero, Pierro, & van Knippenberg, 2010; Graf, Schuh, Van Quaquebeke, & van Dick, 2011). Individuals have also been shown to interpret the same behaviours differently, depending on whether the individuals displaying the behaviours are ingroup versus outgroup members (Hewstone, 1990). Accordingly, predictions become possible about the degree to which change communication might be effective, as a function of senders’ and receivers’ respective social identities. As such, who communicates the information is just as critical as how the information is communicated (Fiol, 2002).

Other differences have been found in employee perceptions of communication based on group-based identifications. For example, survey research by van Knippenberg et al. (2006), during the merger of two Dutch professional associations, found that employees who identified strongly with the
organisation focussed more on communication about change processes, while low identifiers expressed greater interest in communication about change outcomes. In a field study of communication in hot desking work environments, Millward, Haslam, and Postmes (2007) found that employees who were assigned to a regular desk reported higher identification with their team (which was strongly linked to face-to-face communication) while employees who were not assigned a desk reported higher identification with the organisation itself (which was strongly related to electronic communication).

Because communication, from a social identity perspective, is not just a medium of information exchange, but a property and expression of group membership, an intergroup perspective may actually explain why managers maintain ineffective communication (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). This is because, from an intergroup perspective, a manager may actually be communicating effectively when other employees do not get the message. For example, communicators have been shown to modify their communication behaviour to accentuate intergroup boundaries between themselves and message recipients. Thus, it could be argued that top managers, as ingroup members, may be motivated to communicate in a way that maintains their positive distinctiveness by differentiating themselves from other groups in the organisation (such as middle managers and lower level employees). Senior managers may draw on various aspects of communication (such as the content, process and channels of communication), consciously or unconsciously, to maintain their dominant position. Thus, the fact that senior managers preserve the traditional downward flow of communication may actually serve as a symbol of status that differentiates those with power from those without it (Bourhis, 1991).

Communication is also likely to increase employee uncertainty during organisational upheavals, and ingroup norms have been shown to fulfil an important role in reducing uncertainty (Hogg & Terry, 2000b). Thus, while
communication theories exhort senior managers to communicate more information, more frequently, to reduce employee uncertainty, such efforts may actually increase the likelihood that employees (who perceive the communicator as an outgroup member) will turn to salient ingroups to inform and guide their responses. From an identity perspective, therefore, an unstable organisational environment may lead individuals to actively seek out information that confirms their current sense of self, because this helps to reduce uncertainty by maintaining one's self-consistency (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003).

Not only do these examples attest to the value of researching social identities during change, but communication also represents a natural fit for this thesis project, in order to illuminate the particular group-based identities that are salient for organisational members as they talk about their experiences of the changes within the organisation under study. In so doing, this thesis project responds to calls from researchers to better understand identity factors during the communication of organisational change (Gardner, 2001; Harwood, 2006; Jones et al., 2004; Lewis & Seibold, 1998; Paulsen et al., 2005b; Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney, & Seibold, 2001).

The next section and the remainder of this chapter focusses on how organisational members tend to perceive and respond to change. The initial focus is on some of the traditional explanations that have dominated the literature. This is followed by a review of research that explores how perceptions of, and responses to, change may be shaped by social identification and intergroup processes.

Responses to Change

While it may seem relatively straightforward for senior managers to manipulate an organisation’s functional groups on an organisation chart, large-scale organisational change is inherently more difficult when the attitudes and
behaviours of every individual across the organisation are required to undergo radical modification. Change management research has demonstrated that inspiring and motivating employees to change their individual values and behaviours is not an easy task and, despite a substantial amount of research and literature on the topic, is rarely achieved successfully (Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Maurer, 2010). Thus, the real challenge for organisations is in modifying the beliefs and behaviours of individual members, so that employees' perceptions and responses to change-related communication become pivotal to a change process (Kitchen & Daly, 2002).

Research has conceptualised how organisational members perceive and respond to change in various ways, with most deriving from an individual cognitive or dispositional perspective (Erwin & Garman, 2010). Such concepts include readiness (Holt, Armenakis, Harris, & Feild, 2007), engagement (Kahn, 1990), compliance (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999), and resistance (Coch & French, 1948). Readiness is a dispositional construct that incorporates positive attitudes and intentions (Kwahk & Lee, 2008), an understanding and acceptance of the need for change (Chreim, 2006), and is associated with individuals' perceived self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to cope with the demands of change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Engagement involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural involvement (Kahn, 1990). Commitment also refers to an employee's motivation to be involved in change (Jaros, 2010). Compliance or conformity with an organisational directive is viewed as a transaction, whereby an employee chooses to act appropriately to gain a reward or avoid punishment (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Resistance generally refers to an absence of motivation to engage with change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). This concept has tended to dominate the literature, with the underlying assumption that individuals generally fail to embrace change in organisations because they are reluctant to lose their current status or benefits. The concept of resistance is explored next.
**Individual Resistance**

The concept of resistance was first introduced by Coch and French (1948) and virtually all models of change include resistance in some form as a key stage in the change process (Jaffe, Scott, & Tobe, 1994). This includes Kurt Lewin's (1951) classic 3-stage model of change, which continues to serve as an exemplar for modern change processes (Sonenshein, 2010). Resistance has been construed in various ways. These include a lack of motivation or readiness to engage with change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993), cynicism (Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005), dissent (Thomas & Davies, 2005) and avoidance (Lines, 2005). Other construals include a reluctance or refusal to participate in change (Jaffe et al., 1994), the inability to comprehend the meaning of change (Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, & Mullane, 1994a), holding on to what is trusted or familiar (Hoag, Ritschard, & Cooper, 2002) and disobedience (Saka, 2003). While each of these conceptualisations varies in content, they all share a view of resistance as a characteristic of individuals that is maladaptive, with negative effects on change programs (Ford et al., 2008). Essentially, any signs of resistance are viewed negatively by change managers, with almost any discrepancy in employee responses labelled as resistance (Kuhn & Corman, 2003; Palmer & Dunford, 2008).

The genesis of the construct dates back to a popular theory of change developed by Kurt Lewin (1951). Drawing from physics, Lewin developed field theory, which posited that two opposing sets of forces can be identified in situations that involve change. The first set comprises *driving forces*, which promote change. The second set consists of *restraining forces*, which resist change. Lewin argued that when the two sets of opposing forces are approximately equal, they create a kind of equilibrium or status quo that tends to resist change. His recommended solution was to remove the forces that restrain
change, because this simultaneously frees driving forces to exert their natural influence. The term ‘resistance’ was coined around the same time in the title of what is widely regarded as a classic article in the change literature (see Coch & French, 1948). This led to managers being viewed as a driving force for change, and employees being viewed as restraining forces against change. The notion of employee resistance became widely accepted as a problem for change leaders, despite Lewin’s (1997) assertion that restraining forces may not always be negative and driving forces may not always be positive. That is, the same forces that can restrain change in one situation may actually drive change in a different situation. For example, employees may urge managers to push changes even further (Sonenshein, 2010).

Redding (1985) described the development of a management ideology that shaped management attitudes, so that managers came to view themselves as informed, rational decision-makers, and view all other employees as uninformed and irrational subjects of change. Similarly, Wiio (1988, p. 96) described a “myth of rationality”, which highlighted a common perception that employees will respond rationally to organisational change as long as they receive clear and accurate communication from organisational decision-makers. Accordingly, there is a tendency for management attitudes to portray employees as irrational and illogical, with resistance to change being widely viewed as an expression of these traits. The underlying assumptions include that change is positive, management communication is rational and informed, and resistance to change by employees is irrational and unreasonable (Cascon-Pereira & Hallier, 2013). These views have led to a prevailing management culture in which employees are treated as barriers to change that managers must overcome (Piderit, 2000).

Several researchers have suggested that resistance may at times be a self-fulfilling prophecy by managers who are heavily primed to expect resistance
before it occurs (e.g., Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Lewis, 2000). For example, in a study of change within a private nursing home, researchers found that senior managers assumed from the outset that the change would be met with apathy at best, and hostility at worst, which led them to adopt a coercive communication strategy (Meston & King, 1996). As managers encountered the expected negative responses toward the change, their own commitment to the change decreased. However, results of the study revealed that managers overestimated the actual level of resistance that other organisational members felt toward the change. Similarly, during a study of cultural change workshops with senior and middle managers in a telecommunications company, researchers found that senior managers responded negatively to middle managers, after interpreting their questions and ideas about change as resistance, which led the senior managers to engage in more coercive communication, which then generated actual resistance (Thomas, Sargent, & Hardy, 2011). The dialogue between senior and middle managers was labelled by the authors as "degenerative" because it resulted in "polarized" meanings and "oppositional" relations between the two groups (p. 33).

Piderit (2000) shed new light on resistance by reconceptualising responses to change as multidimensional attitudes that incorporate cognitive, emotional and behavioural / intentional responses that can be positive as well as negative. The cognitive dimension refers to individuals' attitudes about change (e.g., beliefs about how the change will affect them), and the emotional dimension refers to individuals' feelings (such as fear and anxiety about the changes). Piderit described how employees at all organisational levels can have positive, negative and ambivalent attitudes, emotions and behaviours about change, sometimes simultaneously. For example, an employee might be positive about, and agree with, the rationale for change, but may hold negative views about how changes are implemented. Later studies not only support the
multidimensionality of resistance, but demonstrate that all organisational members can demonstrate resistant behaviours and attitudes during change, including senior managers (Smollan, 2011). Studies of middle managers have shown that they also can be both agents and resistors of change (Thomas et al., 2011).

While managers prefer that employees respond rationally to change, Piderit (2000) demonstrated that change can include emotional responses, particularly when change threatens things that were once stable and familiar for individuals (Koerner, 2014). Terry and Jimmieson (2003) highlight how the very nature of large-scale organisational change is stressful for employees, particularly when it has the potential to impact negatively on their job security, careers and status within the organisation (Callan, 1993). Communication about impending change can induce strong emotional reactions, including fear and anger (D'Aprix, 1996). The uncertainty associated with change can also cause anxiety, which can lead to withdrawal, panic and active resistance to change (Nadler, 1987). The more disruptive a change, the more it can create acute emotional reactions, which can have a negative impact on how employees view the organisation and behave in relation to it (George & Jones, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

Despite knowledge that emotions form a natural part of individuals' responses to change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the subject of emotions has received little attention in organisational change research (Kiefer, 2002). One study incorporated measures of affect in a study of change (Bartunek, Rynes, & Ireland, 2006b). While the authors failed to find an expected relationship between positive affect and perceived gains from the change, the findings did reveal unexpected group effects, in which "significant shared emotion" was found in work groups, described by the authors as "a kind of emotional contagion" that involved an implicit transfer of emotions between members of individual work
units (p. 202). This finding is consistent with social identity research that suggests emotions form part of the social norms associated with group membership (Turner et al., 1987), which may be transferred automatically and unconsciously between members (Barsade, 2002). Not only can individuals’ emotions be influenced by fellow group members, but change leaders’ emotions can also influence the responses of other employees during change (Klarner, By, & Diefenbach, 2011).

Piderit (2000) argued that individuals may display resistant behaviours because of the anticipated individual, rather than organisational, impacts – that is, employees may resist changes to self, as opposed to changes to the organisation. If the notion of self is an intrinsic part of individuals' membership of an organisation, then changing the organisation would no doubt require that individuals change their definition of self, which is a considerably more complex challenge for employees than merely changing their knowledge about the organisation, and the way they perform their job role (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012).

Despite substantial research into concepts such as readiness and resistance, the findings from this type of research have not yet improved the poor statistics on change failures. This could be because other key factors remain overlooked, such as employees’ identification with, and membership of, organisational groups that form part of their self-concept (Fuller et al., 2006). Research into employees' social identifications in organisations may therefore prove useful in understanding why it is that employees often fail to respond favourably, no matter how skilful managers are at communicating change.

The next section reviews research that explores how employees perceive and respond to change in organisations as a function of their social identities.
Change and Identity

The relevance of identity to the implementation of large-scale organisational change is reflected in an expanding volume of research on organisational identity, which is viewed as an integral feature of the type of change that involves radically modifying an organisation's core purpose, restructuring its work groups, and aligning employee attitudes and behaviours to a new set of organisational values (He & Brown, 2013). As such, organisational identity – which refers to members' shared perceptions of the identity of the organisation itself – has been recognised as an important factor for managers implementing large-scale change (Armenakis, Harris, & Feild, 1999). Indeed, key tasks for managers during large-scale change are not only to establish a new organisational reality, but to persuade employees through communication to transfer their individual identification from the 'old' to 'new' organisation (Cheney, 1983). Hence, the management of organisational identity, and of subordinate organisational identifications, is considered a fundamental and vital role for change managers (Pratt & Foreman, 2000b).

There has been debate about whether an organisation's identity is stable or fluid (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006b). In other words, can an organisation's identity be easily changed? This is particularly relevant to organisations that undergo major changes to their structure, identity and culture (Armenakis et al., 1999). Change managers are assumed to have the power to fundamentally redefine an organisation's identity by building new structures, designing strategies to align with the new identity, and developing new work groups and roles for employees.

The assumption underlying much of the literature is that employees who identify strongly with an organisation will be more likely to believe in the organisation’s goals, and may therefore respond favourably to communication
about change (Fuller et al., 2006; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994). However, while it might seem logical to assume that a strong organisational identity, combined with strong employee identification with the organisation, might be assets for an organisation, they may in fact be liabilities because both factors can make an organisation resistant to change (Fiol, 2002). For example, research has shown that an organisation can shape the perceptions and coordinate the behaviour of its members so that strong identification can lead organisational members to become cohesive and support the organisation's goals. However, this process has also been shown to result in organisational members opposing perceived threats to the organisation's stability (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012). Employees who maintain loyal ties to the organisation may be highly valued, but those ties need to be flexible enough to prevent individuals from becoming too attached to the organisation in its current form (Fiol, 2002). Given that large-scale organisational change requires employees to dis-identify with the existing organisation, and re-identify with a new organisation, the irony is that an employee with a low, rather than high, attachment to the organisation may actually be less resistant to change (Chreim, 2002). Thus, identification behaviours that "were once functional, become a hindrance to the implementation of change" (p. 1123). Similarly, the longer an organisation has maintained a stable identity, the harder it may be for the organisation itself to change, particularly if large-scale changes are needed to realign employee behaviours with a completely new set of organisational values.

Research is also increasingly showing that organisational members may hold different views about the identity of their organisation (Brickson, 2005). For example, Corley (2004) found differences across hierarchical levels in employees' beliefs about the defining features of a global technology firm – with senior managers linking the organisation's identity directly to its purpose and strategy, while lower level members associated the organisation's identity more
with its cultural values. These were, in turn, associated with different perceptions about how organisational change should be implemented – with senior managers believing the organisation could be changed simply by modifying descriptions of the organisation's core purpose, while lower level employees believed change would require longer-term processes to embed behaviours reflecting the organisation's new cultural values. The senior management group showed no awareness that employees differed on the content of the organisation's identity, and failed to recognise that attempts to change the organisation's identity were not being received positively at lower levels of the organisation. This finding reflects a common view that organisations have 'a single and sovereign identity' that can be both easily modified, and interpreted accurately, by all stakeholders (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Studies like the one above are demonstrating that organisations can comprise multiple or fragmented identities that exist in tension with each other. This moves away from the traditional view of organisational identity as one agreed set of shared and consensual beliefs held by members about an organisation, and toward the view that there may be multiple internal and external organisational realities (Brickson, 2005; Fuller et al., 2009; He & Brown, 2013). In recognition of this, the concept of an 'identity claim' was coined by Albert and Whetten (1985), in their seminal examination of organisational identity, to refer to the socially constructed and individually motivated claims and statements made by internal and external constituents about the underlying meaning ascribed to an organisation's identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

The idea that organisational members may perceive and respond to change based on different interpretations of the core content of an organisation's identity, has found support in several empirical studies. For example, Sonenshein (2010) conducted a study of organisational discourses to explore employee perceptions of large-scale change in a chain of retail stores, and found different
subgroups of meaning constructed by employees about the change. These included two contradictory narratives by senior managers during their communication about change, which described the change as both a major and a minor event in the history of the organisation. Two different subgroups of meaning were also identified among lower-level employees, reflecting one group of employees who were resisting the change, and another group that was championing the change. Further subgroups were identified among those employees resisting the change – with one subgroup more concerned with perceived threats to job security, and a second subgroup more concerned with perceived threats to the organisation's identity and image. A study of change in a technology firm also found senior managers were engaging in competing and contradictory narratives about change (Larson & Tompkins, 2005). In one change narrative, management communication was supporting the need for a change of identity, while in the second narrative, management communication continued to support the organisation's current identity. The result was a tension that was described by the researchers as an 'identity struggle', which fuelled employee ambivalence toward the changes.

Bartunek et al. (2006a) utilised a sensemaking approach to explore the meanings given by nursing staff to change communication in a hospital. Using a combination of survey and archival data, their analysis revealed three main themes. The first theme comprised a set of meanings around the notion of 'empowerment'. This set of meanings was consistent with the goals of the change and accurately reflected the intent of the change messages. The second theme, however, reflected negative perceptions about change messages as inconsistent, contradictory and dishonest. The third and final theme comprised a set of meanings that centred on perceived personal impacts of the change. Not only are these avenues of research extending knowledge about organisational members'
perceptions of change communication in organisations, but they are implicating the importance of identity during organisational change.

A large body of research has been conducted from the social identity approach on identity in organisations, which explores how individuals behave in organisations as a function of their group memberships, and this is explored next.

**Group Membership and Change**

Numerous studies have documented that groups can powerfully shape their members' preferences, attitudes and values (Hackman, 1990). When individuals are treated as group members, or when a valued social group is salient, individuals have been shown to respond as group members and act in accordance with group norms (Jimmieson, White, & Zajdlewicz, 2010). The Hawthorne studies represented one of the earliest programs of research to implicate group membership during organisational change. The research program comprised six field studies, conducted between 1924 and 1933 on work groups in an electric company in Chicago. The studies involved changing levels of lighting to determine the impact on employee productivity (Sonnenfeld, 1985). In one study, a work team was split into two groups, with only one exposed to increasing levels of illumination, however the performance of both groups improved, and the gains were maintained even when lighting levels were dramatically reduced (Haslam, 2001). The researchers subsequently hypothesised that it was not the lighting that improved productivity, but the process of communicating information about the change to workers, which they responded to favourably due to the perception that managers were showing an interest in their working conditions. As a result, the workers’ productivity, which had previously been idiosyncratic, became more uniform as informal group norms developed. These studies highlighted how informal groups can develop as an integral part of the work context, and that how employees respond to
management communication can be strongly associated with the shared beliefs attached to membership of groups (Guzzo, 1996). The ensuing qualitative studies, which further explored these dynamics, showed that the meaning workers attached to communication about the changes could only be fully understood by appreciating the broader social context in which the participants were located (Adair, 1984; Sonnenfeld, 1985; Sundstrom, McIntyre, Halfhill, & Richards, 2000).

Haslam et al. (2000) assert that employees act in accordance with group norms because they are self-defining. That is, they derive from the part of the self that is defined by identification with a social group. The more self-defining the group membership, the more vigorously the individual may wish to protect the existence of that group. The key here is that it is not so much the group itself that is as important as the sense of self that group membership provides to individuals. For example, if membership of a particular work group becomes a central component of an employee's self-concept, the employee is not only primed to behave in ways that are normative for group members, but may be extremely reluctant to support any attempts to change the group because this would require changing their own identity and sense of self. For example, a study of secondary teachers experiencing a major organisational change found a strong correlation between perceived threats to their professional identity and resistance to the change (Ellemers, 2003). Research has also shown that individuals respond more positively to change in organisations when valued social identities are preserved (Haslam, 2014).

The social identity approach posits that, through an ongoing process of social comparison, individuals, as members of groups, compete with each other “to be both different and better” than other groups (Hogg et al., 2004, p. 258). A key product of this intergroup comparison is social status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Tajfel and Turner explain that perceptions of status reflect an individual's
assessment of the ingroup’s position, relative to an outgroup, on some comparative dimension. To maintain a positive social identity, ingroup members are generally considered to compare their group with an outgroup on dimensions via which downward comparisons can be made. For example, one of the first studies of SIT in a natural setting was conducted during a period of change in the British higher education sector (Bourhis & Hill, 1982). Bourhis found that both university and polytechnic lecturers demonstrated positive social identity, but university lecturers based theirs on possessing academic knowledge, while polytechnic lecturers based their identity on possessing applied knowledge. Members of the two groups both perceived high status but stressed different attributes in comparison to the other group, rather than compare themselves on the shared dimension of teaching. The higher an ingroup’s perceived status, the greater the contribution of the group membership to the individual’s self-concept.

Research on organisational mergers has explored the effects of members’ perceptions of group status on their willingness to transfer their identification to a new work group or organisation (He & Brown, 2013). Most studies have been conducted in white-collar organisations, however, the findings of a study that included blue-collar workers found similar results to previous studies (see Boen, Vanbeselaere, & Cool, 2006). The general findings are that members of a high status group are motivated to protect threats to their current status by resisting change, while members of a low status organisation tend to view a merger as an opportunity to improve their identity by gaining entry into a higher status organisation (He & Brown, 2013). In Boen et al’s study, researchers found that while perceptions of post-merger status were positively related to post-merger identification, this occurred only for employees who expressed weak, rather than strong, ties with the pre-merger organisation. In other words, those who reported strong ties to the pre-merger organisation were not necessarily motivated by the status of the new organisation to release their ties to the old organisation. The
findings of organisational merger research have consistently shown that organisational members are not only required to reconstruct their social identities during change, but can find it difficult to give up group memberships formed previously in the organisation and adopt ‘new’ group memberships (Amiot, Terry, & McKimmie, 2012; Terry & O’Brien, 2001).

Social identity researchers view organisational members' experience of change as an expression of their identification with salient groups. The fundamental assumption is that groups form part of an individual's self-definition, and the individual may therefore behave, at times, in accordance with the norms and values associated with membership of any one of those groups (Terry & Hogg, 2000). Identification with groups causes a cognitive change within an individual so that responding to change may not be a personal choice, but may involve emulating the behaviours and beliefs that reflect a group prototype (Hogg et al., 2004). This is because identities give meaning to self, situate individuals within organisations, and can strongly shape the meanings that individuals give to organisational activities (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). The longer a work group has been a part of a person’s social identity, the more culturally embedded and resistant to change an individual’s work-based identity and normative responses may be.

From this perspective, the way in which individuals perceive and respond to change on the basis of identities in the workplace has important implications for the success of large-scale organisational change. This is because effective change, from an identity perspective, may be the capacity to re-anchor an employee’s identification with a new and different work group or organisation. An individual’s membership of organisational groups is, therefore, considered by social identity researchers to be vital in order to fully understand employee perceptions and behaviours in the workplace (Paulsen, 2003; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Given the psychological nature of group membership, however,
managers may not be aware of the particular identities that are most likely to serve as a reference point, or be psychologically significant, for individuals in organisations (Morgan et al., 2004; Reynolds, Oakes, Haslam, Turner, & Ryan, 2004).

Social identity theorists assert that individuals are only likely to respond in accord with the norms of a particular group membership if that group is salient. Accordingly, the next section explores the concept of identity salience.

.Identity Salience

Salience is a concept that is used in both social identity and identity theories, though refers to different concepts in each theory (Ashmore et al., 2004). From a social identity perspective, salience is an important element in determining whether individual responses are identity-based (van Dick et al., 2006). Salience refers to the cognitive accessibility of a particular group within the social environment and, thus, the psychological activation of an individual's social identity to social cues in the immediate context (Cameron, 2004; Hogg & Terry, 2000b). Social identity research suggests that salience is a vital factor that determines which group-based norms may become relevant to an individual's perceptions and behaviour. The more salient the social cues for a particular group membership, the more likely an individual will think, feel and act in ways that are consistent with that identity (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Salience is thus crucial because an individual's social identity comprises numerous group memberships, across a wide range of social contexts, so that each context may offer an array of possible group memberships that could guide beliefs and behaviour (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). According to the social identity approach, the extent to which individuals may be influenced by membership of any one of these groups therefore depends on the immediate salience of the group.
According to the social identity approach, an individual experiences a cognitive change when a group membership is salient so that group norms can lead to non-compliance with a management decision even when the individual understands and agrees with the rationale for the decision. Essentially, social identity has the power to override an individual's personal identity beliefs (Gardner et al., 2001). In circumstances where a valued group membership is salient, individual behaviour during organisational change can therefore become group or intergroup behaviour, such as the concept of 'identity-based resistance' described by van Dijk and van Dick (2009). This is because ingroups have prototypical attributes which serve as prescriptions for members' attitudes, emotions and behaviour (Hogg et al., 2004). An individual's self-concept and behaviour may thus become group-based when a contextually relevant group is salient (Haslam et al., 2000).

The meanings that individuals attach to their group memberships can be triggered by the presence of either ingroup or outgroup members. For example, while ingroup norms communicate information about how a group member is meant to behave, outgroups provide information about how ingroup members are not meant to behave. Perceiving ingroup or outgroup members in the immediate environment can therefore enhance an individual's awareness of a particular group membership, which may then align the individual's behaviour and feelings with the ingroup norms associated with that group membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The individual may respond by pursuing group rather than personal goals, enacting the ingroup's values, and cooperating with fellow group members even if this may be in direct conflict with the individual's personal values (Dutton et al., 1994; Pratt, 1998).

Salience can also be cued by communication (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). For example, in a series of studies into employee responses to electronic communication it was found that, even in the absence of face-to-face
interactions, communication can induce strong individual conformity to group norms (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1999). Thus, an employee who is alone, reading about an organisational change in a written newsletter, may be no less subject to the normative influences of an ingroup than an employee who is hearing about the change in an information forum alongside fellow group members. Moreover, an employee does not have to be physically located within the organisation for communication to trigger an organisational group membership, with some researchers arguing that identification serves as a psychological ‘glue’ that bonds employees with their organisation (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999). These examples highlight how salience can be merely cognitive, and the presence of ingroup and outgroup members may be real or imagined, accentuating the psychological nature of identity, and reinforcing the power of communication in triggering normative responses associated with identities and group memberships in the organisational environment (Smith, 1993).

Social identity theorists argue that salience depends on the interaction between accessibility and fit in any given context (Turner, 1999). Group memberships that are more cognitively accessible for an individual are those that have prior meaning and significance in a particular context (van Dick et al., 2006). Situational accessibility occurs when a group becomes salient within a particular social context, and chronic accessibility occurs when a group membership is frequently salient for an individual because it is a central and valued part of their self-concept (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). The concept of fit refers to the degree to which a particular group provides an individual with relevant information about how to behave in a particular context (Oakes, 1987; van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher, & Christ, 2005). For example, a group has normative fit when the similarities and differences between ingroup members match the individual’s expectations. In contrast, a group has comparative fit when the differences between ingroup and outgroup members outweigh the differences
between ingroup members (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). If the fit is poor, individuals are likely to continue to check through their group memberships to find one that offers a better fit for the immediate context. The group with optimal fit, that best accentuates intragroup similarities and intergroup differences, offers the best meaning for the context and guides behaviour.

Identity theory, on the other hand, conceptualises salience as an individual's "readiness to act out a particular identity" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 17). This is determined by the prominence of an identity, and the probability that a given identity will be invoked for an individual in and across particular situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). From an identity theory perspective, salience is closely related to an individual's commitment to a social role. This includes the centrality of a role to an individual's sense of self, the importance of a role to an individual, the frequency with which an individual enacts a particular role, and the degree to which others depend on the individual to continue enacting a role (Ashforth, 2000). Identity theorists describe a salience hierarchy, in which roles that are higher in an individual's hierarchy are the most central and pervasive. Over time, these roles become less context-specific, and more likely to guide the individual's behaviour across social situations and contexts (Burke & Tully, 1977). There has, however, been some divergence among identity theorists as to whether salience and centrality are distinct, though related, constructs (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). In a similar fashion to the social identity approach, individual beliefs and actions are believed to derive from the attitudinal and behavioural expectations that individuals associate with a salient role (Stryker, 2000). The more salient a particular role-based identity, the more likely it is that an individual will engage in role-specific behaviours, and seek out further opportunities to do so (Stryker & Serpe, 1982).

Ashmore et al. (2004) suggest that the view of salience as an individual's readiness to act out a particular social role is most closely related to the social
identity construct of chronic accessibility, because they both refer to a stable
disposition. The identity theory concept of salience has also been compared to
the social identity construct of subjective importance (Ashforth, 2000). Ashmore
et al. express concern that the different ways in which salience is defined has led
to confusion within the identity literature, with the emphasis in identity theory on
salience as a stable and dispositional part of the self, and the emphasis in social
identity on the degree to which the external context may activate a particular
identity. Moreover, from a social identity perspective, salience serves as an
antecedent to identity-related behaviour whereas, from an identity theory
perspective, salience is a consequence of commitment to a role that an individual
perceives as important to self (Ashmore et al., 2004). Both theories agree,
however, that salience connects the psychology of the individual with the
immediate social context, and serves as a mechanism that can prime individuals
to act in accord with their social identities.

Another important consideration in determining the extent to which
identities may influence individual responses to change include how strongly
individuals identify with particular work groups or roles, and this is explored next.

*Strength of Identification*

Strength of identification, or the degree to which an individual identifies
with any given identity, is considered by social identity researchers to be an
important aspect that can govern how individuals perceive and respond to
change (Ellemers, 2003). Psychological centrality is a similar concept, employed
by identity theorists to refer to the degree to which a particular role-based identity
is an important part of an individual’s self-concept. The greater the strength of
identification with a particular group, or the psychological centrality of a particular
role, the more likely it is that the group or role will contribute strongly to the
individual’s sense of self. The individual’s behaviour may thus closely accord with
the norms and expectations that are prototypical for that particular group or role (Ashforth, 2000; Branscombe et al., 1999). The more individuals identify with a particular identity, the less they may wish to abandon that identity (Boen et al., 2006). From a social identity perspective, the stronger the identification with a particular identity, the less motivated individuals will be to leave the group that supports the identity, the more effort individuals will exert to advance the group, and the greater the likelihood that individuals’ goals and values will be in alignment with the group’s goals and values (Riketta, 2005).

Social identity researchers have argued that strength of identification with a social group is a key factor that determines whether an individual’s response to any kind of identity threat will be individual or group-based (Spears et al., 1999). It makes intuitive sense to assume that an identity that is highly valued, and with which there is a strong degree of identification, might be more intrinsic to an individual’s sense of self, and engender greater resistance when the identity is threatened (Terry & Callan, 1998). For example, an employee who has been a highly regarded member of a work team may identify strongly with that team because of the positive benefits it offers, and would no doubt feel some degree of identity threat if the team was disbanded, or merged with a larger team, during organisational change.

Organisational roles have been found to continue shaping the identity, beliefs and social ties of employees well after a change has occurred (Houston, Walker, Hutt, & Reingen, 2001). For example, Grunberg et al. (2008) conducted a study in which “deep emotional ties” reported by participants endured even after the ties were broken by major changes. Similarly, Terry, Callan, and Sartori (1996) found that, following organisational change, employees continued to identify with groups that no longer existed, demonstrating that an individual’s attachment to a group can remain intact even though the group may have been formally removed during the change. Findings like these suggest that

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attachments to work-based identities can be deeply held, and become permanent
and stable parts of an employee's self-concept (Haslam, 2001).

Research has shown that employees' tenure, or length of involvement
with an organisation, may be positively related to their strength of identification
with the organisation, and their readiness for change (Ashforth et al., 2008;
Hameed, Roques, & Arain, 2013; Riketta, 2005). Studies have also found a
strong positive relationship between tenure and organisational commitment
(Barker & Tompkins, 1994; Scott, 1997). O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) found that
tenure was positively related to the pride and ownership that employees felt
about their organisation. In one of the earliest studies of organisational
identification, Cheney (1983) found that employees were also likely to identify
more strongly with their organisation if they had worked in few, or no other,
organisations.

In their study of self-managing teams, Barker and Tompkins (1994) found
that longer-term employees tend to set the standards and norms for work-related
behaviours, which other employees are required to meet. Organisational
membership is becoming more diverse, associated with an increase in casual
and temporary employment options, and the advent of virtual organisations
(Bartel & Dutton, 2001). Perhaps unsurprisingly, studies in these areas indicate
that employees who have permanent (Veenstra et al., 2004) or full-time status
(Paulsen, 2003) tend to identify more strongly with their organisation. Overall,
there have been mixed results in research exploring the effects of tenure and
organisational identification on responses to change, showing that it can be
associated with loyalty to an organisation's new identity during change, as well as
a reluctance to let go of an organisation's existing identity (He & Brown, 2013).

The concept of overidentification has also highlighted that employees’
strength of identification may have undesirable consequences for an
organisation. For example, researchers suggest that while overidentification may
lead individuals to conform with management directives, it can also lead to a lack of individual flexibility, which may be crucial in the context of change (Dukerich, Kramer, & Parks, 1998). The negative consequences of identification suggest that the longer employees have been members of an organisation, the more they may identify with the organisation in its current form, which may present a challenge in motivating employees to transfer their identification to a new organisational reality.

**Summary**

To date, employee responses to change have been conceptualised largely as individual resistance. According to identity theorists, however, the social part of employees’ self-concepts is structured in the form of social identities, derived from work groups and roles, which can substantially influence beliefs about, and behaviours within, organisations. When the organisational context changes, individuals may therefore respond in line with the shared norms and expectations of a valued social or organisational identity. Social identity researchers, in particular, have conducted extensive organisational research aimed at identifying which of an individual’s work-based identities is most likely to inform behaviour during change, though this research has been limited to exploration of a select number of formal organisational groups chosen by researchers. Much less research has been conducted within organisations from the identity theory perspective. Identity theory research in organisations has tended to focus on role conflicts, such as the conflict between an individual’s work and home roles, and how individuals manage the expectations of multiple roles (Roberts & Creary, 2013). While not specific to organisational change, this type of research does show that in managing role conflicts, individuals will generally seek to align their actions with the social expectations attached to a
valued role with which they identify strongly, and to maintain existing networks of relationships that are linked to a valued role.

What seems clear is that identity-based beliefs can serve as powerful mental models in people's minds, and influence the way employees perceive their organisation and interpret organisational initiatives (Reger, Mullane, Gustafson, & DeMarie, 1994b; Williams & Connaughton, 2012). Accordingly, the real threat for employees during organisational change may be the threat that change poses to their sense of self (Karp & Helgo, 2009; Matherne, Ring, & McKee, 2011). Karp and Helgo argue that responses to large-scale change in organisations may actually be more about holding on to one's identity, than holding on to one's job or career. Similarly, radically changing an organisation's identity may actually be about changing how individuals define themselves in relation to the organisation (Puusa, Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013). While senior managers are responsible for constructing and communicating new organisational realities during change, researchers of identity and communication are generally of the view that senior managers do not have 'discursive control' over employee identities in organisations, and may have difficulty imposing a new identity on organisational members during change (Watson & Watson, 2012).

The final section in this chapter outlines the contributions of this thesis project to the literature on identities and identity dynamics in organisations.

**Contribution to Research**

The introductory chapters have presented the argument that employee identities can have a major influence on what individuals perceive, think, feel and do in an organisational context, and that identity management is a crucial role for senior managers implementing large-scale change. There is a growing body of research contributing to the view that multiple socially constructed identities exist in organisations, which are underpinned by the shared meanings that individuals
associate with work groups and roles within the organisation, and can shape employee responses to organisational events. However, gaps remain in our understanding of the nature of identities, and identity dynamics, in the organisational context.

This thesis project contributes to existing research by conducting an indepth, qualitative study of the identities that are most salient for participants as they reflect on their experiences of the changes occurring in one organisation. Not only does this thesis project illuminate salient identities that have not been identified in previous research, but it describes the core attributes and origins of those identities, as well as the broader identity processes that are occurring within the organisation, in rich detail. This thesis project also contributes to existing research by presenting a substantive model of identity development, which illuminates a range of individual, organisational and contextual factors that contributed to formation of the identities, and perpetuated them over time. This thesis project further contributes to the literature by demonstrating how these identities influenced individuals’ perceptions of, and responses to, change within the organisation, and exploring the implications for individuals and the organisation.

The field of social identification has strong theoretical frameworks in the social identity approach and identity theory, and this thesis project does not set out to challenge these. On the contrary, the aim was to build on existing knowledge and frameworks to gain deeper insight into identities in organisations, and their effects on employee perceptions and behaviours. This thesis contributes to the social identification literature in that it specifically addresses identity-related behaviour within the focal area of organisational change. The research also contributes to the fields of organisational psychology, organisational communication and change management. It is important because
it adds to our understanding of the antecedents, motivations, behaviours and consequences of identification in organisations.

This chapter has reviewed relevant literature and further elucidated the practical and theoretical importance of conducting this thesis project. The next chapter introduces the organisation, and the large-scale program of change, which served as the context for this thesis project.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH CONTEXT

‘What occurs is just as much a function of where as of who.’

George J McCall and Jerry L Simmons

This chapter focuses on contextual factors relevant to this thesis project. In so doing, the thesis project responds to calls from researchers within and across scholarly disciplines – including identity, communication, change, organisational and methodological studies – for research that pays greater attention to context, including contextualising the research itself and attending to contextual influences on the phenomena being studied (Brickson, 2000; Rousseau & Fried, 2001; Singelis, 1996). Accordingly, this chapter is devoted to aspects of the context that were considered important to the thesis project.

Context “encompasses stimuli and phenomena that surround and thus exist in the environment external to the individual, most often at a different level of analysis” (Mowday & Sutton, 1993, p. 198). The notion of context refers to the immediate and broader settings that surround individuals involved in a study, which contain an array of factors – including structural, demographic, political, organisational, cultural, historical, and more – that can play a role in shaping the perceptions and behaviour of participants, as well as the observations and interpretations of the researcher (Ashmore et al., 2004). Organisations function as unique social systems in their own right, comprised of interdependent subgroups that are commonly viewed by systems theorists as existing in a dynamic relationship with the broader social system and surrounding environment (Paulsen & Hernes, 2003; Scott, 1998). Despite this, context tends to take the form of a constant in most organisational research, and is largely under-examined, even though it is a multilevel phenomenon that can affect,
constrain, moderate, influence, and be influenced by, individual and organisational behaviour (Johns, 2001).

The sociohistorical context is largely ignored in organisational change research, despite the fact that it can exert a strong influence on change processes, and the responses of those involved (Pratt & Dutton, 2000). The relationship between the organisation and the broader social context in which it resides, influenced by history, culture and by employees’ previous experiences with change, can serve as a critical factor that affects and shapes organisational members’ attitudes and responses during organisational change (Martin, 2002). Behaviour is rarely context-free, and the context can modify the meaning that individuals give to organisational events (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995).

The next section offers an overview of the importance of context to identity dynamics, and is followed by a brief review of the influence of culture and history on organisational dynamics. The ensuing sections describe the organisation, and the program of change, that served as the core context for the thesis project.

Identities in Context

It has long been known that the social context is an important source of information for individuals in the workplace (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Zalesny & Ford, 1990). Kramer (1991) describes individuals in organisations as social actors “embedded in a complex network of intra- and intergroup relationships” (p. 195). According to the social identity approach, self-identification is a contextual process and reflects individuals’ sense of fit within their immediate social setting (Reicher, 2004). The social groups that form a basis for identities offer a degree of certainty and stability that grounds individuals within the social environment (Jetten et al., 2002). The extent to which an individual acts in terms of social
identities depends on the particular social cues that are present in the social context (Reynolds et al., 2004; Shen & Dumani, 2013). As such, the self-concept is "context-sensitive" so that the way people think and act can vary “in both level and content” depending on who they compare themselves to in any given context (Haslam et al., 2000, p. 327). As a consequence, Tajfel (1982) suggested that identity and intergroup relations can not be fully understood unless the broader sociohistorical context is taken into account. Capozza and Brown (2000) state, “to handle adequately the full range of social identity possibilities outside of the laboratory, we need to move beyond individual traits to the more social and contextualised meanings that important identities carry with them (p. 6).

Similarly, identity theory links individuals' identities to the roles that make up a social context. Individuals develop a strong sense of identity from the expectations that they associate with the roles they occupy, many of which are unique to particular contexts. For example, organisational roles are generally only enacted while individuals are at work in an organisation, so that work identities tend to be contextually grounded. McCall and Simmons (1966) outline the importance of context in supporting versus constraining identity-based behaviours, such that individuals' identities tend to be limited to the particular social locations that support them, and by the degree to which a given context continues to enable the identity. For example, a particular identity may be supported by the presence of physical symbols within the immediate environment, which carry meanings about the identity, or by a common language shared with others (Stets, 2006).

From both theoretical perspectives, it is easy to see why large-scale organisational change represents a useful context for examining identity, and identity-based behaviours, given that it involves substantial change to multiple aspects of the organisational context, which may have supported particular individual or organisational identities. Indeed, it is possible that contextual factors
unique to specific organisations may actually help to explain some of the inconsistencies found in previous research. Most researchers agree that identity and intergroup factors are more complex in natural settings, highlighting the importance of "extending research to multigroup situations, in field settings, with real groups with existing history and symbolic meaning" (Smith, DiTomaso, Farris, & Cordero, 2001, p. 352).

Rooney et al. (2010) called for research that illuminates the broader social and cultural factors that may contribute to the development and influence of employees' social identities. The next section briefly explores the roles that history and culture play in organisational dynamics.

Organisational History and Culture

Culture is generally referred to within organisations as ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) and forms when organisational members develop shared assumptions about the meaning of things they perceive and experience in the organisation (Danisman, 2010). From an identity perspective, the meaning of every behaviour is situated in the interactions that occur with others as part of any cultural context (LeBaron, Glenn, & Thompson, 2009). Culture comprises the explicit rules and implicit assumptions about the shared values that underlie organisational behaviour, all of which may be required to undergo substantial shifts during large-scale change. Change succeeds when new behaviours replace old routines to become the 'new' way that things are done within the organisation. Accordingly, new behaviours need to become rooted in organisational norms and shared values in order for change to succeed. Organisational communication is thought to be equally context-dependent (Singelis, 1996) and is generally considered to be more effective when it conforms closely to the organisation's existing communication norms (Smeltzer, 1991).
While it is well known that cultures tend to be context-sensitive, and the meaning of symbols depends largely on the context in which they appear, organisational research rarely attends to the influence of an organisation's context (Kezar, 2001; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). A number of researchers have highlighted the importance of conducting research that explores employee identification in natural organisational settings, that have a culture and a history, during times of change (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2001; Jones et al., 2004; Puusa et al., 2013; Stott & Drury, 2004). He and Brown (2013) assert that organisational history continues to be overlooked by researchers to understand how individuals make sense of social identities within organisational contexts. An organisation's culture and history are important because they inform how individuals experience organisations and, consequently, how they may experience and respond to communication about change (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

Theorists have argued, particularly when a change process is intended to change an organisation’s identity and culture, that accounting for the organisation’s history may be essential to effective change (e.g., Gioia et al., 2002). Others argue that the success of change depends, to some degree, on its fit with the existing culture of the organisation (Ellemers, 2003). A study of two banking institutions found that second order change was unsuccessful because the change proved incompatible with the desired identity and image (Fox-Wolfgamm, Boal, & Hunt, 1998). The authors concluded that for change to be sustainable in an organisation, it must be consistent with either the current or envisioned organisational identity. Similarly, Schein (1999) suggests that communicating a new vision and values may be fruitless if these are not first 'calibrated' against the organisation's existing culture and values.

Saka (2003) criticised models of organisational change for overlooking the importance of an organisation’s history and culture. For example, it is believed
that the way an organisational change is implemented can itself be a manifestation of its culture (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Smircich and Calas (1987) went further to argue that culture may not simply be something an organisation 'has', culture may be what an organisation 'is'. Others assert that the perceived meaning of change communication in organisations is inherently historically and culturally situated (Danisman, 2010; Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004; Pratt & Dutton, 2000; Thomas et al., 2011) and that cultural norms provide a major source of identity-based behaviour in organisations (Haslam et al., 2003b; Stets, 2006). Researchers lament that "organisational change literature has paid insufficient attention to context, time, history, process and action" (Palmer & Dunford, 2008, p. 211).

Organisations are situated within, and informed by, the broader social context. Thus, context not only informs individual identity, but also informs who or what an organisation is (Pratt & Kraatz, 2009). The identity of the organisation is closely linked to its culture because culture is thought to comprise the underlying beliefs, values, assumptions and behaviours that reflect the essence of the organisation's identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Because an organisation’s identity and culture form slowly over the course of its history, norms and rules become increasingly embedded and entrenched over time so that behaviours become routinised and enacted automatically (Pratt, 2003). The history of an organisation (or group) is incorporated into descriptions about the organisation, which can offer a sense of predictability among members in relation to expectations and behaviour (Oakes et al., 1994). A key point here is that normative patterns of behaviour develop that may be enacted in groups and organisations at a subconscious level, so that employees are aware of their existence but, when asked about them directly, often find them difficult to articulate verbally (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). As such, cultural patterns of behaviour can be difficult to directly measure or explain and are more likely to be
expressed indirectly in what employees say and do on a day-to-day basis. Like culture, identities tend to be associated with beliefs that are deeply held, and can thus be latent and outside an individual’s conscious awareness, so that the meanings underlying identities may not always be readily observable (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Corley et al., 2006). This is why it is important to utilise a research method that can explore what is implicit in employees' reflections about organisational change, rather than an overt method that asks individuals directly about identities that are meaningful to them (Alvesson et al., 2008).

Halpern (1995) asserts that people's behaviour is very much influenced by their perceived relationship with their immediate environment. Indeed, it has been argued that it is impossible for organisational members to perceive change-related information without interpreting it in accordance with their place in the organisational context (Rooney et al., 2010). An organisation's cultural norms can both reflect and prescribe beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behaviours, and ingroup prototypes embody how an ideal group member is expected to think, feel and behave (Terry et al., 2000). From this perspective, the cultural norms that exist within an organisation may not only define the organisation, they may also define the individual identities of organisational members (Ellemers, 2003). A central question, therefore, is how the existing identities within an organisation, that are informed by and reflected in the organisation's culture and history, might influence how organisational members perceive and respond to communication about change (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). Organisational researchers have called for more research that combines communication and change, and that accounts for the broader historical and contextual influences on the meanings that employees attach to communication during change (Jones et al., 2004; Kuhn & Corman, 2003; Lewis & Seibold, 1998; Marshak & Grant, 2008; Self et al., 2007; Sonenshein, 2010; Whetten, 2007). The next section introduces and describes the organisation in which the thesis project was undertaken.
The Organisational Context

The organisation in which this thesis project was conducted is an Australian psychiatric hospital, which was undergoing large-scale change as part of an unprecedented period of change within the health sector. The information presented in this section was accumulated from historical accounts of the organisation – including archival data and records held within the organisation's library, state and local government records, and books and articles written by local historians and mental health advocates.

The organisation was established as a psychiatric institution in the mid-1800s, and was founded on the principle of 'separation', which involved establishing the organisation in an isolated geographic location for the purpose of protecting the community from its occupants. This form of social exclusion was considered appropriate at the time because mental illness was not well understood. Because individuals afflicted by it were perceived as a danger to the community, they were confined in asylums away from large population centres (Link & Phelan, 2001). The first intake, comprising 69 occupants, was relocated to the hospital from prison. The intake included people with mental or other illness, people who were old or destitute, and people with no family or means of support. Occupants were enclosed in gender segregated and locked wards surrounded by high fences. For many years, conditions included inadequate accommodation and clothing; poor ventilation, hygiene and sanitation; and overcrowding. Historical accounts suggest that there was little expectation of recovery or rehabilitation for any person who was admitted to the institution, so that occupants were expected to remain housed in the institution for life.

As was historically the case for psychiatric institutions across the globe, the hospital was a regular subject of parliamentary inquiries and royal commissions, initiated following reports of unsanitary conditions, rumours of
cruelty and neglect, indecent behaviour, drunkenness, and disturbing and violent behaviour. Multiple formal inquiries were conducted within the hospital’s first five years of operation, and formal investigations into patient mistreatment continued to occur regularly throughout the organisation’s history up to the time of the present change process. The organisation became well known throughout the broader community, and developed an infamous character that was fuelled and perpetuated by negative stereotypes associated with mental illness.

By 1908 the hospital housed over 2000 patients and patient numbers were believed to reach a peak of close to 3000 during the 1950s. Staff numbers also increased significantly though the exact numbers employed during these periods are unclear. A repatriation pavilion for returned servicemen suffering mental disturbances was added to the complex in 1948. The civil rights movement of the 1960s began to raise awareness of the rights of minority groups, including people with mental illness, and independent advocacy groups were established that began influencing the mental health sector.

The 1970s saw major change in the organisation with the establishment of acute care wards, which dealt primarily with admission, convalescence and short-term clinical care, while long-term wards continued to house patients with more serious or chronic conditions (e.g., schizophrenia), and forensic patients in legal detention. While long-term wards remained locked, acute care wards were open wards, and allowed short-term patients freedom of movement around the facility. During this change, part of the organisation was remodelled to construct a central kitchen and cafeteria that enabled acute care patients to mix socially.

The practice of segregating wards on the basis of gender ceased during the 1970s and patients were instead grouped into wards on the basis of diagnostic criteria. Allied health professionals entered the hospital for the first time during this decade – including occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers – to support a new focus on short-term acute care. A patient
advocate role was established by the state health department in 1977, and this position was occupied by an allied health professional. Domestic staff were also introduced during this time, to attend to domestic chores so that nurses could focus exclusively on patient care.

The 1980s continued to see the introduction of new staff and new ideas, as trained psychiatric nurses from other states and countries (such as New Zealand) began to enter the organisation, with many of these staff relocating from other psychiatric hospitals in which similar changes had already occurred. Patient numbers began to decrease as patients from acute care wards were assisted to relocate back into the community, and elderly patients were relocated to aged care facilities.

The 1990s represented the beginning of the large-scale program of change, and this is outlined next.

The Change Process

During the 1990s, the organisation began a large-scale program of change that had its origins a world away from the organisation itself. The change was mandated from outside the organisation, and the source could be tracked directly to the United Nations, when it facilitated a global shift in approaches to mental health care. The General Assembly passed a resolution, which outlined new world standards for the improvement of mental health services and the protection of people with mental illness (United Nations General Assembly, 1991). Based on notions of human rights and consumerism, the resolution contained a detailed set of principles, which were subsequently incorporated into a 'Statement of Rights and Responsibilities' by the Australian Government. This statement formed the basis for development of a National Mental Health Policy, which earned recognition as the first national health policy to receive endorsement by all of Australia’s Commonwealth, State and Territory Health
Ministers (Mental Health Consumer Outcomes Taskforce, 1991). The National Mental Health Plan, released subsequently, documented the timeframe for national implementation of the policy (Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council, 1992). The wheels of legislative reform continued to turn in each state and territory as each health department developed state-based mental health reform strategies based on the national policy and principles. In 1996, a new state-based mental health strategy was published, which provided the strategic platform for change within the hospital.

Broad changes to the state’s health sector commenced in 1990 with a process of regionalisation, which rearranged the state’s boundaries for decision-making. This allowed for greater input into the hospital’s governance by qualified mental health professionals than had previously been the case. In 1991, merit selection was introduced statewide, replacing the longstanding organisational practice of internal recruitment on the basis of seniority. These changes provided a catalyst for increased employment of qualified health professionals from outside the organisation. Soon after, the first tertiary-trained senior manager was appointed to a leadership role within the organisation. By the late 1990s, a completely new senior management team, with combined qualifications in psychiatry, nursing and management, had been recruited to replace the pre-change management team.

External changes were pivotal to the change process. The National Mental Health Policy established the requirement for accreditation, placing a greater focus on organisational transparency and accountability. This saw the introduction of a national accreditation system that was linked to national quality standards for mental health care, and demanded compliance if the organisation was to remain in operation. This included quality standards for clinical practices, organisational governance, management structures and other organisational processes.
Based on the national plan and the state mental health strategy, members of the new senior management team developed a comprehensive document in 1999 that outlined a new model of service delivery for the hospital, and detailed a framework for clinical, structural and operational changes within the organisation. The organisational reforms were unparalleled, and represented a new paradigm that required a substantial shift from the previous model of service delivery, to one that was empowering patients by giving them a voice in decisions about treatment and care, and offering them a new sense of identity. For the organisation, the new paradigm required an almost complete reversal of beliefs, services, practices, and power relationships between patients and staff. The radical shift in service focus was placing patients at the centre of service provision, moving them away from passive institutionalisation in a closed custodial environment, to self-determined rehabilitation in a more open environment.

The concept of recovery was a key driver for the change process. Recovery was defined as "living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life even with limitations caused by illness" (Anthony, 1993, p. 15). Recovery involves a personal journey for individual patients, and would thus require the establishment of individualised care plans, to be developed in collaborative communication between patients, family, carers, and the various hospital staff who would be involved in supporting each individual's plan. The new model of service delivery recognised that the social environment is a critical aspect of individual recovery – including the degree to which the patients' physical environment facilitates a sense of identity and worth, the capacity of the cultural environment to validate the patient as a whole and unique individual, the patient's access to participation in meaningful activities, and the existence of supportive and respectful social relationships between patients and those involved in their care (Onken, Craig, Ridgway, Ralph, & Cook, 2007).
An organisation-wide recruitment process was undertaken, in which all existing employees were required to be assessed in order to retain a position in the new hospital. The selection process was coordinated by an independent consulting firm and required employees to undergo a rigorous competency and value-based assessment process, with the aim of retaining employees who demonstrated the best fit for the new model of service provision. The organisation was required to downsize by approximately half, and a dedicated team was established to offer vocational assistance to employees who were unsuccessful. This included offering practical and emotional support to individuals following the loss of their job, and exploring alternative employment options, such as retraining or redeployment to community mental health facilities across the state. Related job seeking support was provided, such as assisting individuals to develop skills in resume writing, job applications and interview skills. Unsuccessful employees were also offered early retirement or voluntary redundancy packages.

The change process involved a budget of over $140M, reflecting a substantial increase in funding allocations to the mental health sector (Link & Phelan, 2001). The change program represented the largest program of change ever undertaken by the state's health department, and the organisation's new senior management team played a leading role in managing the change at the state, as well as organisational, levels. At a state level, the change involved

a) managing the change budget;

b) redeveloping general hospitals throughout the state to incorporate tertiary mental health units;

c) relocating long-term patients from the hospital to receive inpatient care in community health or aged care facilities across the state, or to receive outpatient care in new community mental health facilities that were being established across the state as part of the change process;
d) developing long-term collaborative relationships and partnerships with a wide range of government sectors – including housing, education, disability, employment, and community sectors, as well as non-government community agencies and social support services – to provide the social support that patients leaving the hospital would need to live as outpatients in the community; and

e) educating a wide range of external stakeholders about the various changes.

At the organisational level, the changes involved substantial transformation and renewal, impacting on every aspect of the organisation, including

a) the internal relocation of patients into wards and facilities being built within the existing hospital grounds, including new residential-style accommodation for acute care patients;

b) the gradual decommissioning of dilapidated wards and buildings as new structures were built;

c) the merging and physical relocation of an independent high secure unit for chronically ill and forensic patients into the larger hospital;

d) a complete restructuring of all major service areas;

e) downsizing of staff (from approximately 780 to 350);

f) redefinition and reorganisation of all job roles;

g) the introduction of multidisciplinary teams;

h) restructuring of all internal health services and patient support activities; and

i) a radically different culture, based on the concept of empowerment, involving a redefinition of patients from ‘inmates’ to ‘mental health consumers’.
By 2001, an intensive building program to construct new accommodation had begun and old wards and buildings were being demolished. By this time, the organisation was in a state of flux, as patients and staff who remained (including unsuccessful employees who had not yet left) were relocated to interim wards while new buildings were completed and outfitted. In this interim setting, the new model of service provision was beginning to be enacted across the new service areas and a range of new policies and procedures were being written and implemented. In 2002, the last of the employees who had been unsuccessful in retaining a job within the hospital were in the process of leaving the organisation. Most surviving employees had been reassigned to new roles and the restructuring of the management team had been completed. The building program was well underway and several new buildings had become operational, with acute care patients beginning to move into the new residential-style accommodation. The new model of service delivery was becoming further integrated into the hospital’s day-to-day functions, and new processes and procedures were continuing to be put in place to enact the new standards in mental health care.

The change involved major shifts in organisational practices, including unlocking doors and dismantling fences that had previously surrounded many wards. Since the hospital’s inception some 130 years previously, the organisation had served as an exemplar of the asylum-based model of institutional care, which removed people with mental illness from the broader community and assumed complete responsibility for their lives (Whiteford & Spencer, 1995). Given that the process involved significant changes at organisational, community, national and global levels, it was one of revolutionary social change, as well as organisational change, because it was fundamentally changing the social status of people with mental illness. For those who worked in the organisation, the reforms heralded an unprecedented era of turbulence, uncertainty and loss as the organisation
changed from a custodial environment with locked wards and tall fences designed to keep people in, to open spaces designed to enable and empower people.

In summary, global, national, state and local reforms all served as platforms for change within the organisation. It was not just the organisation that was changing; the entire mental health sector was changing. The roles of employees, managers, and external regulators were all changing to ensure accountability to new performance standards. External changes required internal decision-making that was constrained by global standards in mental health care, and demanded compliance across all levels of the organisation. Each and every organisational structure and practice was being refocussed toward patient empowerment and recovery, and new systems were eroding previously long-held structures of identity, power and status within the organisation.

The change thus represented a unique opportunity to conduct research on identity dynamics and intergroup processes within the organisation. If an organisational context does indeed facilitate the development, expression and continuity of identities, then each and every member of the organisation was required to renegotiate their place in, and connection with, the organisation as part of a program of change that was fundamentally reshaping all of the organisation’s groups, roles and identities, and the relationships among them (Ashforth, 2009).

Methodological Context

Attending to the methodological context is another important aspect in conducting research (Johns, 2001). Given the indepth and exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative research approach affords rich contextual description, including "the role that context plays in influencing the meaning, variation, and relationship among variables under study" (Rousseau & Fried, 2001, p. 7).
Interpretive research, in particular, centres on the assumption that individual and organisational behaviour are informed by the sense that individuals make of their organisational environment, and the meaning they attach to various symbols and cues within the immediate context (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). The interpretations of the researcher are also critical to this type of research, and may be made more transparent for readers by utilising reflexive strategies and incorporating direct quotations from participants when presenting the findings (Klag & Langley, 2012).

The aim of this thesis project was to capture identity dynamics in their full complexity in one organisation (Ellemers, 2013). Meso theories and models provide one way of integrating processes at different levels in order to understand organisational phenomena, by examining more than one level of analysis, such as individual, group, organisational and social levels (Frink et al., 2008; House et al., 1995). Meso theory involves a focus "on the process by which micro and macro variables interact and affect one another (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999, p. 250). Multilevel approaches are considered important to provide a richer understanding of the relationship between contextual influences and organisational behaviour (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999). Given that identity links individuals with the social context, researchers suggest that identity is a concept that can bridge multilevel processes in organisational studies (Albert, 1998; Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

In summary, identities are always embedded in context, and contextual factors are an important aspect of research, particularly during qualitative study of identity, communication and change in organisations. This is because aspects of the context can have a direct influence on the dynamics under study, and can also play a role in the interpretations of what is observed. Understanding contextual elements therefore seems critical to more fully understand identity phenomena and dynamics in organisations.
This chapter has explored some of these important contextual features and introduced the organisation and change process that served as the context for this thesis project. The next chapter outlines the research methodology, including the methods used to guide data collection, data analysis and presentation of the findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methods used to conduct this thesis project. The opening sections introduce the overarching methodology and the principles that underpinned data collection. These are followed by a detailed outline of the grounded theory method, which was used to analyse the data and interpret the findings. The final section explicates the methods used to optimise the veracity of the findings.

Introduction to Research

The thesis project was conducted in conjunction with an Australian Research Council SPIRT study on the role of communication and intergroup perceptions on employee adjustment to organisational change. The broader research program involved a collaboration between researchers from two Queensland universities. Ethical clearance for the research program, and this thesis project, was obtained from the University of Queensland's Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee and Griffith University's Human Resources Ethics Committee. My participation as a doctoral student provided me with opportunities to attend research meetings and organisational forums, and directly observe employees and managers within the organisation over an extended period. Though not an employee of the organisation, I spent extensive time visiting the organisation over a period of approximately three years, and was able to move around the organisation and invite employees from any level or work area to participate in the thesis project.

1 Strategic Partnerships with Industry – Research and Training
Methodology

A research methodology provides a means to generate knowledge that reflects a set of beliefs and assumptions about how to study phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Interpretive qualitative research reflects the underlying ontological view that there are multiple socially constructed realities rather than a single, universal truth (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). The interpretive paradigm is grounded in humanistic philosophy and assumes that people develop different perceptions of reality through ascribing different attributions of meaning to the same event (Higgs, 1997). Derivatives of this type of research include hermeneutics, phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). All of these methods look holistically at a phenomenon and take into account the context, history, culture and subjective meanings of people in a situation. A key aim is to interpret the substance of the shared and consensual meanings of social actions from the point of view of those who perform and experience them (Morse & Field, 1995). Interpretive research aims to accurately represent what research participants perceive as their ‘reality’ rather than to establish a more generalisable ‘truth’.

Organisational communication is one action through which an organisation’s reality is established. It has been argued that communication, from this perspective, creates not only a sense of community among a group of individuals, but an individual's sense of self (Rogers, 1994). The ‘reality’ of an organisation may thus be constructed through members’ interactions, and the way employees talk about their organisation becomes an object of study (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Tesch, 1990). As noted by Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998, p. 306), "examination of communicative expressions of identification" is an important phenomena to study and a key aim was to give voice to the individuals who participated in the thesis project (Pratt, 2008).
The related epistemology is that knowledge is subjective and contextual, as opposed to being objective or generalisable, and that in order to understand human behaviour it helps to understand the social environment in which it occurs (Van Maanen, 1983). This reflects a constructivist world view, which holds that individual behaviour is shaped over time by the cultural and social systems in which people live and work, and the meaning of everyday behaviour in a given context is the product of the shared, cultural understandings that develop from the common experiences of individuals in the environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The knowledge generated is therefore contextually bound (Higgs, 1997).

To understand human behaviour within an organisation is to understand the way its members generate and interpret meaning in that context (Sexton & Griffin, 1997).

Within the guiding methodology of interpretive qualitative research, the grounded theory method was chosen to analyse the data. Within this framework, analysis of data involves illuminating the differences and similarities in participants’ experience and understanding of communication about change, and their behaviour in response to it (Charmaz, 2006). In developing the grounded theory method, Glaser and Strauss (1967) formulated a set of procedures for coding, conceptualising and integrating qualitative data. If quantitative research begins with a theory and tries to prove it, grounded theory research begins with an area of study, and allows what is relevant to the area to emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The grounded theory approach remains popular with qualitative researchers as a method for exploring, describing and explaining a wide range of social processes. Grounded theory data can include interviews with informants, observations, organisational documents, and reading extant literature (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Glaser, 1994). The grounded theory researcher can capture personal observations and reflections in written field notes and
theoretical memos that incorporate rich and detailed descriptions of the
behaviours observed and the context in which they occurred (Patton, 2002).

With its sociological underpinnings, the theoretical basis of the grounded
theory approach is informed by symbolic interactionism (Locke, 2002). Symbols
include words and language, gestures and actions, objects and ceremonies, all of
which are contextually embedded (Van Maanen, 1983). This view holds that
individuals construct their reality through interactions with other individuals, so
that people become active participants in creating meaning within a given context
(Morse & Field, 1995). Individuals are considered to “learn their basic symbols,
their conceptions of self, and the definitions they attach to social objects through
interaction with others” (Denzin, 1989, p. 5). Denzin adds that the social context
“is not made up of objects that have intrinsic meaning” but “the meaning of
objects lies in the actions that human beings take towards them”. Put another
way, the meaning that is attached to organisations is a human construction
(Golembiewski, 2001). In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, symbolic
interactionism reflects the view that “the human individual confronts a world that
he must interpret in order to act” (Blumer, 1969, p. 15). Individuals make sense of
things by implicitly interpreting the meaning of the patterns of symbols and
actions in a given context, and base their responses on this interpretation (Van
Maanen, 1983).

Data Collection

The large-scale program of change within the organisation was expected
to take several years to complete and the opportunity to conduct the thesis
project arose after the first change management plans had been developed and
communicated to staff. The thesis project comprised two phases of data
collection. The first phase commenced almost two years after organisational
members received the first formal communications about the proposed changes.
It is important to note that, prior to the first formal organisational communication, employees may have been exposed to a variety of external information in the health sector and news media, some of which may have had direct or indirect relevance to the organisation. The first phase of data collection took eight months to complete. The second phase of data collection commenced approximately one year later, and also took eight months to complete.

The first phase of data collection focussed on the broader context of change. Oral history interviews were used as the data collection method. As a data collection method, oral histories are very similar to an unstructured interview. They are used when a central aim is to explore and illuminate the history and culture of a particular group of people, and to capture their lives and experiences, and the social and personal meanings given to these (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). They represent a type of biographical method, emulating the traditional method of learning the history of a given social group via the oral evidence provided by its members (Denzin, 1989). Oral histories produce a dialogue between past and present, and allow individuals to draw on the past to interpret the present (Opie, 1988). Thompson (1988) notes that “every historical source derived from human perception is subjective; but only the oral source allows us to challenge that subjectivity; to unpick the layers of memory, dig back into its darknesses” (p. 150). According to Thompson, to achieve this the interviewer requires “an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and, above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen” (p. 196). The interview questions invited participants to reflect on the broader context of change, and share their experience and perceptions of change communication in the organisation – past and present – including how the current program of change may have been similar or different to previous changes experienced in the organisation.
The second phase of data collection focussed on one single and discrete aspect of the change process, which was occurring as part of the larger program of change. This was the introduction of individual professional development plans, which were designed to identify gaps in employees' skill sets, so that relevant development opportunities could be offered to assist individuals to develop the knowledge and skills required to work with the hospital's new model of service delivery. Unstructured interviews were used as the data collection method in this phase. While individual professional development plans did form part of the broader change, interview questions in this phase invited participants to reflect on how this particular aspect of the change was being enacted within participants' immediate work areas, rather than on the changes that were occurring across the organisation more widely. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate the use of unstructured interviews, because they limit the researcher’s influence on the data generated. While the same core questions were initially asked of all participants, participants were able to control the length and subsequent direction of their responses. Flexibility also existed in the degree to which follow up questions could be asked of each participant (Berg, 2001). For example, probe questions were used when needed to allow deeper exploration and insight into particular responses, and to enable a more accurate understanding of the nature and meaning of individual participants' responses. Probe questions were necessary and useful because the primary interview questions were intentionally indirect in nature, so that participants were not asked to speak directly about the social identities that mattered to them in relation to the changes that were occurring in the organisation.

The choice to conduct two phases of data collection was contextual, in that the phases were designed to allow different contextual influences to be identified and observed as organisational members responded to questions about their experience of change. Interview questions across both phases were
carefully constructed to situate participants in their experiences of the communication at organisational and work unit levels, and to allow salient social identifications to emerge during their responses. This choice was made to shed light on contextual factors that may have been involved in the formation, development and maintenance of important identities, and on the capacity of those identities to adapt to the demands of change.

Data was therefore collected using two different interview methods, with two different samples of employees, at two different time points, and focussed on different levels of the change program, which enabled exploration of the social identifications inherent in participants’ responses from different perspectives. Importantly, the senders of change-related communication also differed for participants at each time point. For example, employees were more likely to hear communication about the broader program of change from members of the organisation's senior management team, whereas discrete elements of the change were more likely to be communicated to employees by the supervisor of their immediate work unit.

**Grounded Theory Method**

The aim of grounded theory analysis is to generate a theory or model from the data, and to make sense of the phenomenon being studied by describing and interpreting participants’ actions and meanings. The grounded theory method emphasises social processes and the primary aim of early grounded theory researchers was to develop ‘process theories’ – either substantive or formal – in relation to the phenomena being studied (Charmaz, 1995). A substantive theory offers a link between the research data and formal theory by helping to define conceptual categories and their properties, and the relationships between them, in order to contribute to the cumulative knowledge about a given phenomenon. The aim of this type of theory is to provide
information that is rigorous enough to explain what is occurring in one particular setting, yet flexible enough to evolve through ongoing research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Substantive theories serve as a precursor or adjunct to formal theory. A formal theory is a higher level theory that may be applicable to more than one setting. Glaser (1994) notes that the grounded theory approach is particularly effective for generating theories of “process, sequence and change pertaining to organisations” (p. 192).

One of the current debates in grounded theory literature is that, because grounded theory research was originally intended to be process oriented, it should not be overly descriptive. For example, Charmaz (2006, p. 133) state that “most (grounded theory) studies are descriptive rather than theoretical”, and grounded theory is sometimes used more as a coding method than a method of theory generation. Grounded theory studies that provide 'static' description of a phenomenon, rather than offering a process theory, are thus criticised suggesting that 'true' grounded theory research should always steer the results toward construction of a process theory. Despite this, the number of psychology studies increasingly using the grounded theory approach to 'describe' phenomena suggests that many researchers recognise its descriptive properties as one of its strengths.

Fagerhaugh (1986) suggest that most, though not all, core categories in a grounded theory analysis reflect a social process. In this thesis project, a key aim was to identify the particular groups or roles that were most salient for employees as they listened to communication about organisational change. This aim is inherently descriptive, rather than process-oriented. However, the research also sought to illuminate social and organisational processes relevant to the formation and maintenance of salient group or role identifications. These include antecedents (e.g., how salient identities may have become established within the organisation), conditions (e.g., how salient identities may have been supported
and reinforced over time) and consequences (e.g., how identification with salient groups or roles might have influenced how organisational members perceived and responded to communication about change).

In this thesis project, grounded theory represented a conscious and informed choice as the preferred method of data analysis. The grounded theory method offers a set of coding methods that are unique in their capacity to generate deeper insights into a phenomenon by unearthing information that adds to and develops, rather than recreates, existing theory. This is consistent with Glaser's assertion that grounded theory offers an analytic method for "fresh interpretations" rather than "final or complete theoretical interpretations" (Charmaz, 1994, p. 97). In relation to group membership, the field of intergroup relations is currently well supported by a strong theoretical position in the form of social identity theory (Turner, 1982). My research did not set out to challenge this theory, nor to generate an alternative theory of group membership or identity. Rather, the aim was to take an indepth look at one organisation undergoing large-scale change to see what more could be learned about the importance of identity, by exploring the implicit social identifications that appeared to matter for organisational members as they reflected on their experience and perceptions of change within the organisation. This endeavour reflects Glaser and Strauss’ original intent in developing the grounded theory approach, which was based on their belief that social research was missing a step in theory development – that of discovering all of the relevant concepts pertaining to a particular area of study.

Grounded theory was also selected as the most appropriate method for data analysis because it allows for a sociocultural perspective, in which social and organisational norms that have developed in relation to communication about change are able to emerge. Most importantly, it is an analytic method that allows for implicit salient identities to emerge, and enables the suspension of a priori assumptions about which groups, roles or social identifications might matter to...
employees in the context of communication about change. Because it facilitated
the exploration of commonalities in perceptions and behaviour within one
organisational context, the grounded theory approach was used in this thesis
project to identify and describe the core identities that were particularly salient for
participants during the communication of organisational change, and expose the
similarities within, and differences between, perceptions and responses to
change as a function of those identities.

Phenomenology represented an alternative research method because it
also explores phenomena by focussing on the shared meanings held by
participants. However, there is an important difference in focus between
phenomenology and grounded theory. Phenomenology is designed to “describe
psychological realities by uncovering the essential meaning of lived experience”,
whereas grounded theory is designed to explain “social psychological realities by
identifying processes” relevant to the phenomena of interest (Baker et al., 1992,
p. 1357). On the surface, this difference may appear subtle, but it represents a
chasm with one describing “psychological structures” while the other explains
“social processes”. Phenomenology would therefore not yield the same depth of
contextual or social analysis to identify emergent themes and concepts relevant
to the study of social identification in organisations. Furthermore, phenomenology
involves asking participants directly about the phenomenon of interest, whereas
grounded theory allows for an indirect exploration of the implicit groups and roles
that matter for participants as they talk about the communication of organisational
change.

One of the central debates in grounded theory is reflected in the public
divide that developed between its founders. Whilst both Glaser and Strauss
continued to conduct research using grounded theory methods, they each
developed different interpretations of its fundamental procedures. Some theorists
argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing, as all research methods need to be
critically evaluated over time to expand their analytic power (Whetten, 1989). Unfortunately, however, this divide has made the grounded theory method somewhat ambiguous for novice researchers. In the search for clarity and rigour, one option for a novice researcher is to select one of the founders and emulate their approach. However, my approach was to apply the method in a way that attempted to demonstrate equal respect to both founders, by conforming as closely as possible to the core tenets and elements of the method, about which there is greatest agreement and concurrence between original and contemporary grounded theory researchers. For example, there is general agreement that there are three major phases that combine to form the constant comparative method of data analysis advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967): 1) open coding, 2) integrating categories and their properties, and 3) delimiting and selective coding. These phases are more commonly referred to by contemporary grounded theory researchers as open coding, axial coding and selective coding, and each of these stages of data analysis is outlined in turn below.

**Open Coding**

Open coding represents the first phase of data analysis. In any research methodology, codes “serve as shorthand devices for labelling, separating … and organising data” (Charmaz, 1994, p. 97). Grounded theory coding involves linking instances in the data and categorising them into semantic units of meaning – with each unit of meaning assigned a nominal label or code (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). My coding process focussed initially on small units of meaning (e.g., words) and gradually focussed on larger units of meaning (e.g., phrases). The initial focus was on line-by-line coding, followed by incident-to-incident comparison (Charmaz, 2006). Lines are useful segments of analysis because they do not contain the standard, taken-for-granted meanings normally generated by a complete sentence. This subtle change of focus assists a researcher to
avoid biases that may be associated with reading more standard constructions of text. For example, in searching for salient group- and role-based identities, each line of data was examined to identify explicit or implicit references to groups and roles. While participants across both studies mentioned a diverse array of groups and roles, the initial process of open coding analysis captured every reference to a group or role that emerged from the data. The focus of later stages centred on the particular groups and roles that participants mentioned in relation to their perceptions of communication about change, and their actions in response to communication about change. Open coding is thus an inclusive process in which all relevant data that may be germane to the research question is captured.

The core process underpinning open coding is ‘constant comparison’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparison “of incidents and groups draws attention to similarities and differences, thereby shedding light on the generalities within, and the boundaries between, emerging categories in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). While Glaser and Strauss (1967) include the concept of a group in their coding families, they do not clearly define what characterises a group. In contrast, this thesis project is informed by social identity theory, which offers a definition of the properties of a group. However, a primary reason for choosing the grounded theory method was to allow social identities that existed in the data to emerge naturally rather than impose my own conceptions of what might constitute a social identity or group. Accordingly, I determined that the minimal definition of an ‘incident’ represented any instance in the data in which a participant made a direct or indirect reference to at least one other person. In the majority of instances, social identity and ingroup-outgroup references were readily observable during line-by-line coding. For example, a participant might clearly mention or refer to a particular group by name, or use explicit social identity referents (words such as ‘group’, ‘role’, or ‘identify’) as well as implicit referents (words such as ‘we’, ‘they’, ‘us’, ‘them’, ‘our’ ,‘their’ and ‘belong’).
In most instances, incidents were coded using in vivo codes (i.e., the actual word/s used by the participants). However, other instances emerged where participant references were less explicit and these required researcher generated codes designed to capture the shared and consensual meanings that were evident in the data. It is generally preferred that in vivo codes are applied to units of meaning within the data, however, when an implicit or consensual theme emerges that participants speak about regularly, but do not refer to using a shared label, these themes may be labelled by the researcher. In the event of such a pattern emerging, the researcher may attach a nominal code to the data, which signifies what the participants’ words suggest are the core and defining features of that set of data. The main aim is to select the most meaningful and representative labels for each unit of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Categories develop as the next level of grounded theory analysis because a category comprises a set of units of meaning that have something in common. For example, apples are a category of fruit, and fruit is a category of food. A category thus captures a set of common features in the data and helps to refine the wide array of units of meaning initially generated during the open coding process. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55) suggests that line-by-line coding helps “to see the familiar in a new light” while comparing incident to incident helps “discover patterns and contrasts”. Charmaz explains that data analysis therefore evolves through a process of comparing similar and dissimilar instances in the data. This process of comparing and contrasting data to identify similarities and differences assists in generating higher level categories of data.

Another feature of constant comparison is that it begins to illuminate the theoretical properties of each category. A property is a quality, characteristic or attribute of a category that helps to describe the category and give it meaning (Dey, 1999). For example, an apple’s properties include its colour, taste and shape. A category’s properties can include the conditions under which it occurs,
the context in which it occurs, the causes that led to its occurrence, and its consequences. Properties like these are illuminated in the “why, where, how come, and when questions” that a researcher asks during interviews and during analysis of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 128). Conditions may include structural, cultural, political, historical, relational and temporal elements, and reflect the circumstances that appear to facilitate or moderate participants' actions (Strauss, 1987). Properties like these form part of a list of eighteen coding families originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which were designed to enhance the sensitivity of grounded theorists to relationships in their data. The properties above are from the ‘Six Cs’ coding family, argued by Glaser (1978) to be the ‘bread and butter’ coding family because most sociological studies are undertaken to expose the causes, conditions and consequences of social phenomena. The remaining two codes in the Six Cs coding family are contingencies (prerequisites) and covariances (connected variables).

Other examples of grounded theory coding families include ‘Interaction’ – which reminds the researcher to be sensitive to information about intervening variables, relationships between variables, and reciprocal effects; and ‘Degree’ – which focusses attention on the intensity or range of a variable. Given that there are eighteen theoretical coding families, and each one further lists a subset of potential properties to look out for, it would be impossible to be mindful of all in a single study. This thesis project therefore focussed mainly on four codes from the Six Cs coding family – causes, context, conditions and consequences. For example, the coding family of ‘Degree’ was less relevant to my exploration of social identification because I was concerned primarily with the salience of individuals' identifications in the organisation though not necessarily the intensity with which individuals identified with a particular group or role.

The choice of theoretical codes assists a researcher to focus on particular properties in the data deemed relevant to the phenomenon of interest. As noted
by Glaser and Strauss (1971) during presentation of their formal theory of ‘status passages’, the more explicitly that certain properties are kept in focus, the more systematic the analysis of a given phenomenon, which helps the researcher to better understand the behaviours of those affected by the phenomenon. It is important to note, however, that while the use of theoretical codes may help to sensitise a researcher to particular dimensions within the data, they can also limit the researcher’s focus so that other important dimensions may be overlooked or ignored.

In the open coding stage of analysis, codes represent categories that are relatively simple and concrete. As such, they initially represent more of a typology. In the next stage, axial coding, the codes become more abstract and conceptual. Thus, it is the next stage of coding that commonly represents the beginning of a substantive theory.

**Axial Coding**

Axial coding represents the second phase of data analysis. In this phase, the focus moves from developing emergent categories and their properties, to exploring the properties of each category, and the relationships between categories (Strauss, 1987). Where open coding opens up the data to illuminate the full array of codes, axial coding is the process by which a researcher begins to integrate and make sense of the emergent codes and categories. This stage of coding involves intensive analysis of each category, in terms of properties, conditions, and consequences etc, by asking when, where, how and why questions about the categories and the relationships between them. Thus, while the initial phase of analysis involves pulling the raw data apart, the second phase involves putting it back together “to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 109).
Selective Coding

Selective coding is the third and final phase of data analysis. This process involves selecting each provisional category and systematically comparing it to all other categories. Throughout this process, the categories, and the relationships between categories, continue to be elaborated through axial coding. This refines the categories and their properties, and establishes core higher order categories around which the main theoretical story line develops (Charmaz, 2006). It involves elevating categories to another level of abstraction – for example, several similar categories may become subsumed under one or more higher order categories. The core categories that become central to explaining the underlying processes occurring within the research context, link most of the other categories together in a parsimonious, explanatory framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend the strategy of theoretical sampling to aid the integration process. This refers to the collection of additional data to develop an emerging conceptual framework. For example, additional data can be sourced from interview transcripts, field notes, theoretical memos, and the extant literature. Comparing the findings to the literature brings scholarly structure to the analysis in order to make a contribution to existing knowledge about the phenomena of interest. This reflects a key aim of this thesis project, which was to compare the findings (i.e., social identities that were salient for employees in response to change messages) to established knowledge about the social identities known to matter to organisational members as they perceive and respond to communication about change. Eisenhardt (1989) argues that “tying the emergent theory to existing literature enhances the internal validity, generalisability, and theoretical level of the theory building from case study research” (p. 545). Eisenhardt explains that comparison with supporting and
conflicting literature refines the conceptual definitions, enhances insight and increases confidence in the findings. Theoretical comparison with the literature is also considered to enhance objectivity by assisting the researcher to maintain distance from the data (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that analysis of the data may conclude once theoretical saturation is achieved. Theoretical saturation occurs when no additional data are being found that either elaborate or refine the categories and their properties (Charmaz, 2006). The data reach a point of convergence where similarities show recurring regularities, differences among the categories are clear, and the data fits together in a meaningful way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dey (1999, p. 258), on the other hand, recommends a “systematic approach” that involves full, rather than partial, coding of the complete data set. To ensure that all categories were fully developed, full coding of all interview data was employed in this thesis project.

Overall, the process of grounded theory analysis is iterative, with broad themes coming to light early on, from which low-level categories and their properties emerge, followed by higher order categories as a more parsimonious explanation develops. A wide range of low-level categories emerge quickly during the open coding process, while higher order categories emerge during axial and selective coding as “integrating concepts” that subsume some of the initial categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 35). Selective coding represents the final stage of analysis where core categories are elevated to theoretical concepts because they “carry substantial analytic weight and contain crucial properties that make the data meaningful” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 139).

Presenting the Findings

The findings of a grounded theory analysis may be reported as “a well-codified set of propositions” or a “theoretical discussion” that draws on direct
quotes from participants who participated in the research to exemplify common themes identified in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 31). Grounded theory researchers generally present the findings as a ‘story’ based around the core categories and concepts found within the data, accompanied by graphic illustration in the form of a model or conceptual framework (Lempert, 2007; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). This was the approach taken in this thesis project. The result is an account of the findings that attempts to weave together participants’ perceptions and memories to describe the social identities that emerged as salient for organisational members, and explain the influence of those identities on their perceptions and responses to organisational change.

The findings presented in the chapters that follow are a combination of description and interpretation (Janesick, 1994; Locke, 2002). The first sections are primarily descriptive because they contain descriptions of the salient identities found in the data, including their properties and characteristics, and information about the influence of these identities on individuals’ perceptions and responses to communication about change. The latter sections are interpretive, drawing on the literature to make sense of the findings, offer explanations, and draw conclusions and inferences (Patton, 2002). The interpretations remain tentative, including information regarding the causes and conditions relevant to the establishment and maintenance of salient identities, and the consequences for individuals and the organisation. In keeping with the interpretive qualitative research paradigm, the thesis project attempts to make explicit the tacit rules and meanings that were influencing employees in one organisation undergoing large-scale organisational change (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). The chapters that follow describe the core features of the data and illuminate aspects of social identification during organisational change that may otherwise have remained unseen.
Veracity and Credibility

Across all research methods, it is important to utilise processes that optimise the accuracy of the findings. In interpretive qualitative research, it is particularly useful to articulate processes that enable the reader to evaluate the legitimacy of the research in terms of its claims to truth and relevance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This section describes the various techniques that were used to enhance the credibility of this thesis project.

A number of strategies were relevant to the process of data generation. First, I approached the research as a case study, by focussing on one organisation undergoing large-scale change (Yin, 2009). A case study involves comprehensive study of an actual context in which phenomena occur, which allowed for rich data and deep insight into employees’ social identifications during communication about change, and avoided potential confounding with other contexts (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). A second strategy was the use of two phases of data collection to add breadth and depth to the investigation. This choice was made because it is possible that if different participants were to be interviewed at different times or stages of a change process, different identities could emerge as salient at each time point. Thus, in order to capture the patterns and differences in salient identities, two phases of data collection were conducted, approximately one year apart. Different interview methods were also utilised for each phase of data collection. For example, the first phase used oral history interviews, and adopted a macro perspective, in which questions focussed on the broader context of change in the organisation, thereby allowing for a broader sociohistorical exploration of participants' experiences of change in the organisation. In contrast, the second phase utilised unstructured interviews, and adopted a micro perspective, to explore participants' perceptions of one single and discrete change that was being implemented as part of the broader change
process. Thus, two phases of data collection (Phase 1, Phase 2) were conducted at two different time points (Time 1, Time 2), from two different perspectives (macro, micro), with two samples of employees (Sample 1, Sample 2).

The same sampling method was used for both studies. The grounded theory method advocates theoretical sampling whereby sampling decisions are determined by the theoretical purpose of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The sampling method for this thesis project was purposeful and stratified, and the key sampling criterion was diversity (Patton, 2002). The primary aim was to recruit two diverse samples of participants, who represented as wide a variety of formal and informal work groups, roles and identity categories as possible. Stratified sampling aims to sample from all known groups (or strata) in the organisation and ensure the numbers in the sample reflect the proportions of each known group in the larger population. Examples of formal groups represented in the samples include work unit, occupation and organisational level. Examples of readily identifiable informal group memberships represented in the samples include age, gender, ethnicity and tenure. Both samples included participants from all levels of seniority and all functional areas within the organisation. Following comparisons with organisational data, sampling ceased when the composition of each sample was proportional to the number of employees in major employee (e.g., management versus general staff) and occupational (e.g., medical, nursing, operational) categories within the organisation.

As noted earlier, data collection methods for the two phases were oral history interviews and unstructured interviews respectively. Both of these methods of data collection allow participants some control in leading the direction and flow of information (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). In the first phase, oral history interviews were used to tap sociohistorical data and social identities that participants’ associated with the communication of current and past changes within the organisation. In the second phase, unstructured interviews were
conducted. Unstructured interviewing is commonly used in grounded theory research because it allows participants to talk about what matters to them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Several validation strategies are relevant to the process of data analysis. The first strategy was to focus the analysis closely on the core research goals (Dey, 1999). The clarity of the research goal is important because it provides a well-defined focus to guide data collection and analysis (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Focussing on the research goals can also help minimise researcher bias. Researcher bias refers to all of the prior knowledge and preconceptions that a researcher may use to influence their research choices and decisions (Coyle, 2007). The research process can be constrained by a researcher’s inherent biases, beliefs and perceptual filters. For example, a researcher may be selective in sampling, observations, interpretation, and attending to or reporting particular events (Morse & Field, 1995). Regular discussions with my research supervisors, and other experienced researchers, helped me to become more aware of underlying assumptions that could act as potential biases. This is particularly relevant given that my own social identifications and group memberships could influence my perceptions and evaluations of participants (Alderfer, 1987).

Qualitative researchers recommend a number of strategies to address researcher bias. For example, Patton (2002, p. 49) suggests that the researcher adopt an “empathic neutrality” whenever communicating with research participants. Similarly, the qualitative researcher is encouraged to aim for a ‘neutral’ stance when listening to participants (Tolman & Brydon-Miller, 2001). Other suggestions are to ‘bracket out’ or set aside preconceptions and be aware of the ‘distance’ between the researcher and researched (Mays & Pope, 2000). Bracketing is a process that involves being more aware of, and even reporting, one’s preconceptions (Minichiello, Sullivan, Greenwood, & Axford, 1999). Reflexivity is a related strategy, which involves developing a ‘mindfulness’ of the
influence of one’s background, including one’s discipline, practical and theoretical orientation, organisational experiences, and any other filters or biases that may have developed through life experience (Mruck & Mey, 2007). These can include personal biases (based on one’s age, gender or social status), professional biases (based on one’s occupation and work experience), and the researcher’s own personal and social identities (Hodgkinson, 2013). As noted by Silverman (2000, p. 825), “every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing”. It is important to minimise the latter and utilise measures to try to reduce or ‘bracket out’ any known biases. Ultimately, just as the research is situated within an organisational context, which limits generalisability, analysis is situated within the researcher, which by definition is inherently subjective and limits objectivity (LaRossa, 2005).

While methods can be employed to minimise bias, some researchers consider it “impossible for grounded theory not to be influenced by the prior knowledge and conceptual filters of the researcher” (Dey, 1999, p. 255). Lincoln and Guba (1985) similarly express the view that research can never be fully value free, in terms of how questions are asked and results interpreted.

Negative case analysis also represented a validation strategy during data analysis, which involved examining instances in the data that did not fit an emerging theme, seeking disconfirming evidence for each of the findings, and exploring alternative or competing interpretations (Mays & Pope, 2000). While some analytic methods eliminate outliers from a data set, qualitative methods treat these cases as helpful to gain a deeper understanding of categories and their boundaries. Negative case analysis can help to elaborate and refine an evolving theory and can guard against “premature closure of theorising” (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 271).

As recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967), memos and field notes were also recorded throughout the collection and analysis of data to reflect on and resolve conflicts in the data, and capture emerging categories and ideas.
Memos provide a link between the raw data, interpretations, emergent categories, theoretical concepts and the literature. I used memos and field notes throughout the entire research process to document my thoughts and impressions, comment on emerging themes, elaborate and clarify my assumptions, and record unanswered questions. These can assist a grounded theory researcher in the conceptual analysis of initial categories, to raise simple and concrete codes to more abstract and conceptual codes, and aid the link between description and interpretation (Charmaz, 2006).

Theoretical sensitivity is another important concept in a discussion of validity in grounded theory research, and refers to the extent to which relevant literature is reviewed before or after entering the field setting (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Glaser (1992) maintains that the grounded theory researcher should be objective so that theory is 'discovered' in the data. The researcher should maintain a 'naive' position with regard to the phenomena of interest prior to entering the field. Strauss, on the other hand, argues for theoretical sensitivity, whereby the researcher reads widely enough to develop a readiness to recognise patterns and concepts in the data, which are important elements in developing conceptual categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In selecting an area of research, most researchers will have done some preliminary research in the field and have at least some knowledge and understanding of the area, all of which help guide initial research choices, such as sampling. There are advantages in engaging with the literature prior to entering the field. For example, it can provide an orienting theoretical perspective that gives the researcher enough understanding to ask relevant questions, choose appropriate methods, conduct effective theoretical sampling, and recognise related incidents in the data. Moreover, the researcher is less likely to investigate, describe and explain what is already known. On the other hand, one obvious disadvantage to engaging extensively with the literature before entering the field is the risk of ‘forcing’ the data to fit
existing knowledge and theory, rather than allowing the results to be emergent and data-driven (Glaser, 1992). It may also increase researcher bias by enhancing preconceptions about what the researcher expects to see in the data.

In applying these concerns to this thesis project, I was looking explicitly for participants' social identities so I needed to have some knowledge (and inherently had some knowledge) of what constitutes a social identity and the ways in which people talk about and identify with social groups and roles. At the same time, I did not want my knowledge of the literature to interfere unduly with my capacity to identify what was actually going on for participants, nor unwittingly force the data to fit my expectations or existing theoretical concepts.

A logical conclusion is that timing and depth of engagement with the literature matter. Some engagement with the literature early in the research process facilitates more effective research design choices, whilst deeper engagement should be suspended until after the open and axial coding phases of data analysis have been conducted (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Deep engagement with the literature after the initial categories and their properties are established can sensitise the researcher to ways of making sense of the findings. This can include comparing categories to existing concepts that may be useful or relevant, and using the literature "as a source of questions and comparisons" for further analysing and making sense of the data (Charmaz, 1994, p. 106). Perhaps somewhat serendipitously, my analysis of the data and presentation of the findings were delayed by an extended period of personal illness, so that my recall of earlier reading became limited. This widened the gap between data collection (and initial engagement with the literature) and data analysis and interpretation, which initially seemed a disadvantage. The irony, however, is that these unforeseen circumstances actually helped to distance me from any early preconceptions during the final stages of data analysis.
Veracity and credibility are particularly important when presenting the findings of grounded theory research. Credibility is sought in grounded theory research by weaving a story around participants' direct quotes, so that the findings are 'grounded' in participants' own words, and allow readers to critically evaluate whether the researcher's interpretations are supported by the data (Gibbs, 2002). Qualitative researchers assert that the core categories and storyline should 'fit' the data and the research context (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). This necessitates a dense description of the context and thorough explanation of the core categories, to aid the critical evaluation of the reader (Johns, 2001). In this thesis project, the context was considered particularly important as it serves as a critical factor in the salience of individuals' social identities.

Other key concepts that are used to describe rigorous qualitative research include comprehensiveness (Whetten, 1989), transparency and coherence (Coyle, 2007), trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), resonance (Charmaz, 2006) and persuasiveness (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). These terms suggest that the account should be plausible, insightful and compelling for the reader. Qualitative research should also demonstrate utility and relevance. Whetten (1989) suggests asking the 'so what?' question of any research. For example, what does this thesis project add to our understanding of the phenomenon? Others remind us that the findings should contribute usefully to practice and knowledge (Mays & Pope, 2000).

The credibility of the findings is addressed to some extent via member checking (Janesick, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is a form of participant validation in which the researcher's account of the phenomenon “should be readily recognisable to the participants” (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997, p. 271). Member checking offers a form of semantic validity in which participants are provided with the opportunity to view and comment on the researchers' interpretation of the data (Stake, 2008). Credibility is enhanced when participants
recognise, understand and endorse the meaning (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To assist in establishing the trustworthiness of the analysis, participants across both phases of data collection were given the opportunity to read and critique the initial research findings, and were asked to offer comment on how closely the findings fit their experience. Though not all participants responded to this request, those who did provide feedback indicated that the core identity groups that emerged were consistent with their perceptions and experience of the organisation.

Summary

The guiding methodology for this thesis project is interpretive qualitative research. The project, which comprised two phases of data collection, represents an indepth case study of social identities in one organisation undergoing large-scale change. The first phase adopted a macro perspective to illuminate the social identities that were salient for participants within the broader organisational and change context, using an oral history approach. The second phase adopted a micro perspective, utilising unstructured interviews to explore participants’ perceptions of communication about one single, discrete change that was being implemented in the organisation as part of the larger change process. Both phases of data collection sought to unearth the social identities that were salient for participants as they reflected on their experiences of change in the organisation.

Within the guiding methodology of interpretive qualitative research, the grounded theory method was utilised to analyse both sets of data. These approaches foreground communication and enable exploration of the regularities in perceptions and beliefs that are transmitted through participants' language. My role was one of ‘sensemaker’ in which I attempted to define what was implicit in the data by describing what appeared to be shared, yet unspoken, by participants (Charmaz, 1994). Mindfulness of my own subjectivity is a key element in this
process. The findings are my construction, based on my view of the organisation and the individuals within it. What I offer is my interpretation of the patterns observed from my perspective as a student of organisational psychology and a novice qualitative researcher (Hayes, 1997). The grounded theory researcher is encouraged to regard all interpretations as provisional not fact. Its ultimate persuasiveness and utility may be judged by the reader, and reflects the underlying epistemology for this thesis project, which holds that reality is inherently subjective, as people perceive and decode symbols in the social world to impose meaning on events and situations. My findings are thus presented not as an objective ‘truth’ but as illustrations of my interpretation of the origins and effects of employees' salient social identities in one organisation undergoing large-scale change.
CHAPTER SIX: DISCOVERY OF THE CORE IDENTITIES

This chapter introduces the core identities that emerged during the data analysis process. The chapter begins with a description of the data collection process, including the recruitment of participants and interview procedure. The next section describes the data analysis process, which culminated in the emergence of three core identity categories that were most salient in participants’ responses, as they reflected on their perceptions and experiences of the changes that were occurring in the organisation. The ensuing sections describe each of the emergent identities, in turn, including information about their origins and distinguishing features. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the core identities.

Data Collection

While the change process was deemed by senior managers, at the time data was collected, to be in its early stages, organisational members had potentially already been exposed to an extensive amount of communication about the changes. One of the implications of this timing issue was on sampling. First, there had already been a substantial change in membership of the senior management team. Second, because staff had been advised that the organisation would be downsizing, some employees (including senior managers) had left the organisation to seek employment elsewhere. An initial concern was that individuals from these groups of staff would not be available to participate in the thesis project. However, the research team was given access to employees who had left the organisation, and several of these (including ex-senior managers and individuals who had redeployed to other health facilities) agreed to participate in the research.
Participants

A total of eighty-two individuals participated in the thesis project, across the two phases of data collection. Thirty-four participants participated in the first phase of data collection, and forty-eight participants participated in the second phase of data collection. Participants were recruited through newsletters and flyers posted within the organisation, and word of mouth. Stratified and proportional sampling was employed to ensure that each sample included a diverse cross-section of individuals from across the organisation, and included members of formal organisational groups (e.g., work unit, occupation, organisational level, full- and part-time) and informal groups (e.g., tenure, age, gender). A key aim was to seek maximum diversity in the sample. The adequacy of grounded theory sampling depends on the breadth and diversity of the participants, in order to saturate emergent categories as data are analysed. This strategy was also critical to cast a wide net that would allow participants' salient identities to emerge naturally.

Characteristics of the two samples are displayed in Table 1. The sample for the first phase of data collection contained 23 current employees and eight employees who were deployed to community mental health facilities shortly after the change process commenced, who are therefore identified as past employees. The organisational tenure of past and current employees ranged from one to 38 years. Three external stakeholders were also included in the sample. While these participants were not members of the organisation, they were each involved with aspects of the broader change processes occurring in the mental health sector. These stakeholders contributed to the research by shedding light on the external drivers of change and their effects on the organisation. Thus, while they were not direct employees, they each possessed knowledge of the organisation and were closely involved with the changes that were impacting on the organisation. Not
included in the sample are two state government ministers who did not agree to formal interviews, but agreed to speak informally about their memories of the organisation and their experiences of the change process.

Table 1: Characteristics of Research Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Employees</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Employees</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Managers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Managers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Stakeholders</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied Health</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample for the second phase of data collection contained 47 current organisational members, plus one ex-employee who had recently transferred out of the organisation to take up a new role in the state health department. The organisational tenure of participants in this sample ranged between three months and 37 years, and the sample did not include any external stakeholders.

**Phase One**

In total, the two phases of data collection extended over a period of more than two years. In the first phase of data collection, thirty-four oral history interviews were conducted over an eight-month period. Each interview varied in length from approximately 30 minutes to three hours. I personally interviewed 11
participants. A further nine and 14 participants respectively were interviewed by
two members of the larger research team. Most interviews with current
employees took place inside the organisation at a time convenient to the
participant, and were conducted in private meeting rooms. In some instances,
participants requested that the interview be held outside the organisation (either
for convenience or to protect anonymity). These interviews were held either in a
private office or meeting room, or the person’s home. All interviews with past
employees were held away from the organisation, either in the person’s home or
a meeting room at their new workplace. Interviews with the three non-
organisational members were held at participants’ workplaces.

Each interview commenced with casual conversation designed to relax
the participant and the interviewer, and establish rapport. The interviewer
informed the participant that the purpose of the interview was to learn about their
experience of the change process, including how the change was communicated,
and to seek their perceptions of factors associated with communication of past
and current changes in the organisation. The participant was advised that the
interview formed part of a broader research project examining the perceptions of
employees about organisational change, and the social context of change in the
mental health sector. Each participant was advised that their involvement was
completely voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time and
request that any information they provided be discarded.

After being advised of the purpose of the study, each participant was
given an information sheet (see Appendix A). Once the participant had read, and
understood, the information sheet, he or she signed a consent form to confirm
their agreement to participate in the study, and nominated a personal code to
label their data (see Appendix B). The interviewer then requested permission to
tape-record the interview. No objections were received in response to this
request and tape recordings were stored using the personal codes supplied. The
interview commenced formally by asking the participant to talk about his or her background and work history in the organisation. This question served a dual purpose. First, it helped ease the participant into the questioning process by asking them to share non-threatening information. Second, the answers provided information about the participant's organisational level and experience, tenure, occupation, and membership of organisational groups (e.g., occupation, work unit). Participant responses ranged from very brief to very detailed summaries that were interspersed with salient memories of the organisation.

Following this, each participant was asked the same question, ‘When did the change process at Bayview Hospital begin for you?’. Rather than answer briefly with a date, as might be expected, most participants chose to talk at length about what was relevant for them when they first learned about, or became aware of, the changes. The initial direction of the interviews varied depending on participants’ responses to this question and minimal encouragers were used as required to seek further disclosure on particular comments of interest. When participants had no more to add, they were asked to describe their personal milestones throughout the change process. Some participants chose to describe their perceived milestones in a chronological manner, whereas other participants moved back and forth between related topics and themes. A benefit of this approach was that it enabled participants to direct their responses to events that had relevance for them, and to intersperse their responses with personal memories and reflections regarding anything that stood out or was important to them in relation to the organisation and change (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynksi, 1999).

Most participants commented on key topics of interest without being prompted. As each interview progressed, and in cases where this did not occur naturally, open questions were used to elicit information about key areas of interest – including perceptions of communication and change, how individuals
responded to the changes, contextual factors, and the relations between any
groups, roles or identities mentioned explicitly by the participant. Probe questions
were used when participants raised particular topics of interest. For example,
when a participant spoke about a particular change message that stood out for
them, the interviewer might ask, ‘Who communicated that to you’ or ‘How did you
respond?’ Advantages included that the same questioning approach was utilised
for all interviews, and the interview format required minimal modification to cater
for participants from different levels, occupations and work areas. Before
concluding an interview, the interviewer asked the participant if there was
anything more that he or she might like to add. The majority of participants
elected to provide additional comments in response to this invitation.

Each audiotape was transcribed verbatim by the interviewer as soon as
practicable after the interview. To enhance my familiarity with all of the data, I
listened to all 34 taped interviews and checked the corresponding transcripts for
accuracy. When I deemed each transcript to be an accurate representation of the
audiotape, I forwarded a copy of the transcript to the participant, and requested
that the individual read it and determine whether what was written reflected what
he or she had intended to say. The participant was invited to make any changes
– including additions, deletions or alterations – if desired. Despite follow-up
contact to check whether participants required more time, no transcripts were
returned and no requests were received to alter the content of the transcripts.
Each interview transcript was then allocated the participant’s unique code to
disguise identifying information and protect confidentiality.

Phase Two

The second phase of data collection also took eight months to complete,
and commenced nearly a year after completion of the first phase of data
collection. Participant interviews followed an unstructured format and varied in
length from 45 minutes to three hours. I interviewed all 48 participants. All interviews, except one, were conducted inside the organisation. The exception was a participant who had recently relocated to a position in the state health department. In all instances, interviews were held at a time and place convenient to the participant. Wherever possible, the interviews were conducted in the employee’s office or a private meeting room.

Each interview commenced with casual conversation designed to relax the participant and the interviewer, and establish rapport. Each participant was advised that the purpose of the interview was to learn about their experience of communication within the organisation, with a particular focus on communication associated with the implementation of individual professional development plans. The same process used to advise participants of the purpose of the research, gain written consent prior to the commencement of each interview, and create personal codes to label each participant’s data, was replicated from the first phase (see Appendices C and D).

Two objections were received to my request to tape-record the interview, however, both participants permitted the recording of handwritten notes. Three further interviews were recorded using handwritten notes. Of these, two were nurses who were interviewed together at a nursing station in the presence of a senior nurse. The third was an administration officer who was unable to leave her work station. In all three cases, it was mutually agreed that it would be easier to take notes rather than tape the interview. All interview tapes and handwritten notes were stored using the personal codes supplied by the participant.

Each interview commenced formally by asking the participant to indicate their job classification, tenure in the organisation, and highest education level reached. The education levels of participants ranged from Year 9 to a Masters level university degree. Participants were then asked about their experience of communication about the professional development plans, with the initial
question, ‘When did you first hear about the individual professional development plans?’ Participants were encouraged to talk about anything that was relevant for them in response to this question. Some participants spoke at length with minimal encouragement or prompting. For others, probe questions were used to encourage further disclosure about their perceptions of, and responses to, communication about the individual professional development plans, such as ‘What do you think you are being asked to do?’ or ‘Now that you have received this communication, what action will you take?’. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there was anything else that they wished to add. The majority of participants elected to provide additional comments in response to this invitation.

Each audiotaped interview was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after it had been conducted. One person’s responses were found to be partially obscured by a taping malfunction and, after being advised of the mishap, the participant provided a further written response to supplement their taped interview responses. As in the first phase of data collection, each transcript was checked to ensure that it was an accurate representation of the audiotape. A copy was then forwarded to the participant, who was asked to read the transcript and determine whether it reflected what they had intended to say. Participants were invited to make any changes – including additions, deletions or alterations – if desired. Despite follow-up contact to check whether participants required more time, no transcripts were returned and no requests were received to alter the content of the transcripts. Each interview transcript was then allocated the participant’s unique code to disguise identifying information and protect confidentiality.
Data Analysis

The transcribed oral history interview data comprised more than 15,800 lines of text, and the transcribed unstructured interview data included over 14,200 lines of text, yielding a combined data set of more than 30,000 lines of text. Prior knowledge informed me that certain social groups and roles might be expected to exist within this type of organisation (e.g., doctors, nurses) and many of these were mentioned explicitly by participants. However, while many identity categories mentioned by participants were familiar, a core aim was to identify the identities that were most salient for participants, and to bracket out my preconceptions about any identity categories that might emerge as important to participants in their experience of change in the organisation.

Data analysis commenced with an exhaustive open coding process, in which the complete data set was first examined – word by word, and line by line – to extract explicit identity referents. This involved looking for any group, role or social identity referents in the text (Harding, 2008). NVivo software was used to capture all of the initial codes and themes that emerged. This generated an extensive list of categories that indicated participant awareness of a variety of work groups, non-work groups, organisational roles, social roles and other identity categories, a small sample of which is presented in Table 2.

While a core focus was on identifying individuals' salient identities, other references were also coded, including references to communication, change and contextual features. These yielded important information about the senders and recipients of change communication, the content of change communication, how participants perceived and responded to change communication, and the various sociocontextual features that were associated with salient identities. These categories assisted in later stages of analysis to more fully understand the unique and distinct features of all of the emergent identity categories.
Table 2: Sample of Initial Open Coding Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Related Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>younger, older, male, female, men, women, children, european</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>executive, senior manager, middle manager, management, staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>years, time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>mother, father, dad, mum, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, parents, grandfather, generations, dynasties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>politicians, minister, federal, state, policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health department</td>
<td>district, region, corporate office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>senior manager, middle manager, supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal groups</td>
<td>outsiders, locals, others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>psychiatric, bin nurse(^2), general nurse, nurse assistant, student, enrolled nurse, registered nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>medical, nursing, allied health, professional, administrative, operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>asylum, hospital, institution, facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients</td>
<td>patients, consumers, lowlifes, family, prisoners, criminals, dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>family, educated, uneducated, professional, unprofessional, on-the-job, skills, study, personal development, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>community, stigma, human rights, town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work unit</td>
<td>ward, closed, locked, open, chronic, acute, jail, rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the data set had been thoroughly examined for explicit referents, the same exhaustive analysis process was repeated, this time to search for *implicit* social identity referents. This involved identifying words or phrases in the data that revealed any latent, rather than manifest, reference to a group, role or social identity category (e.g., we, they, us, them, our, their, others). While word-by-word coding revealed most of the explicit identity referents (perhaps because these were more familiar and readily identifiable), line-by-line coding revealed more of the implicit social identity referents, particularly when participants used words or phrases to refer to 'other' individuals whose identities were not readily apparent, such as the following examples.

*‘He seems to sit on the other side of the culture.’* (Operations Officer)

\(^2\) This no doubt derived from the term 'looney bin' – which was commonly used as a slang term for psychiatric institutions.
"I think we've got professionals and others." (Registered Nurse)

"With staff, there was a hard core staff that were in there for years and entrenched, but there was also a lot of other staff there that were very good and capable and basically, um, very good practitioners who gave the clients very good care". (Senior Nurse)

When no new categories or identity referents were coming to light, the grounded theory process of constant comparison commenced. This involved selecting each of the emergent categories, in turn, and exploring their content to determine their distinct and unique properties. This was achieved through constant comparison of the words, phrases and sentences captured within each category, to identify the commonalities in, and differences between, the comments and perceptions contained in each category. For example, management and staff emerged strongly as salient identity groups in the early stages of analysis, and reflected one of the most salient intergroup divisions for participants in response to questions about the communication of change. Through constant comparison of the management category, two further subcategories emerged – Change Managers and Pre-change Managers – each of which was spoken about differently by participants and contained unique characteristics. The Pre-change Managers category comprised employees who occupied senior management positions prior to the current change process (pre-1990), while Change Managers comprised senior managers who joined the organisation during the 1990s with a brief to implement change (post-1990). Analysis of participant references to the management category thus revealed unique prototypical features and demographics within these two subgroups.

As constant comparison of the codes and categories progressed, it became clear that most participants were implicitly identifying themselves and others as members of two core identity categories. The two identity categories were latent because neither was referred to by participants using formal
organisational labels, and participant phrases that denoted identification were largely implicit rather than explicit. For example, as noted in the examples used earlier, participant descriptions of ‘other’ organisational members were a major contributor to the recognition of prototypical ingroup identity features, and outgroup stereotypes, that were being expressed by two unique subsets of participants.

As these two identity categories became clearer, they subsumed all other group, identity and role categories within the data set – including formal identity categories (e.g., work unit, occupation), informal categories (e.g., organisational level), and demographic identity categories (e.g., gender, age), with one exception. The exception was Change Managers, who accounted for all remaining participants in the data set, and were therefore identified as the third salient identity category. Thus, by the conclusion of the open coding phase of data analysis, the constant comparison process yielded three core identity categories, which were identified as the most salient identities for participants as they reflected on, and spoke about, their experiences of change-related communication in the organisation.

The three core identities emerged as superordinate categories because they accounted for all of the organisational members who participated in the thesis project. The Change Manager category represented the primary senders of communication about change, while the remaining two categories represented the main receivers of change-related communication in the organisation. The emergence of the three core identities signalled the end of open coding, and the commencement of axial coding. This involved a transition from recognising identity-based references in the data set, to exploring the three identity categories in depth and illuminating the unique features and attributes of each category. This involved returning to the transcripts and using the analytic process of constant
comparison to ask what, when, where, how and why questions of the data, such as

- How did this identity category become established in the organisation?
- What features of the broader organisational and social context are associated with this identity category?

The Four Cs from Glaser & Strauss' (1967) coding categories – causes, conditions, context, and consequences – were utilised during this stage of analysis to examine the unique characteristics of each identity category, the relations between them, and the consequences for individuals and the organisation. New codes emerged during this process, such as context codes (capturing information about contextual information relevant to each identity) and process codes (capturing information about the formation and development of the identities). The process was iterative and involved repeated analysis of the raw data to further elaborate the core categories and their properties, and the relationships between them, so that a clear framework began to emerge, illuminating the commonalities within each category and the differences between them (Klag & Langley, 2012). For example, each of the three identity categories demonstrated unique perspectives on the purpose and function of the organisation, on what it meant to be a member of the organisation, and on the perceived nature of the changes that were occurring within the organisation.

Negative case analysis was particularly useful during this stage of analysis to define and illuminate the key features of, and boundaries between, each of the three identity categories. This involved exploring particular cases that appeared to sit at the boundaries of each identity category, or that contained unique features that appeared to set them apart from other cases within the same category. Unlike outliers that are traditionally removed from a quantitative data set, these negative cases proved particularly informative to isolate the
prototypical characteristics of each identity category and clearly delineate the differences between them.

At the conclusion of axial coding, what was explicit and latent in the data had become explicit and recognisable, enabling the main characteristics of each of the three core identity categories to be described in rich detail. The process allowed all participants to be readily identified as members of one of the core identity categories, through how they spoke about the organisation and their role within it, and how they spoke about patients and other members of the organisation. Despite the absence of overt identification, it became evident that tacit knowledge, shared meaning and implicit understanding existed, which shaped individual behaviour and perceptions of the organisation. Thus, while participants may not have talked openly about, or formally labelled, the identities, they were nonetheless part of the organisation, and influenced people's perceptions and experiences in the workplace. The final stage of axial coding thus produced three well-defined explanatory identity categories.

This signalled the transition to the final stage of data analysis, selective coding, which involves elevating the codes and categories to a higher level of abstraction, with the aim of integrating the core categories and their properties into a coherent theoretical framework (Dey, 1999). The analytic process of constant comparison continued during this stage, this time between the codes and categories that had been revealed during open and axial coding, and empirical knowledge contained in the extant literature. The aim is to subsume process and context codes under higher order categories that are more abstract and theoretical. It is essentially a process of data reduction, with the purpose of identifying the core and central categories that can best explain the underlying processes that are occurring in the data. As such, the number of final categories in a data set may decrease, however their explanatory power should increase as they are informed by existing knowledge and brought together to form a
parsimonious framework. Selective coding thus concluded the data analysis process, generating a substantive grounded theory model in which the underlying processes through which the three core identity categories were established and maintained were articulated, including the consequences for individuals and the organisation (this is presented in more detail in Chapter 7).

The next section introduces each of the three core identity categories that emerged: Warders, Carers and Change Managers.

Description of Core Identities

This section describes the three core identity categories that appeared most salient for participants as they reflected on their experiences of change. Each identity category is presented, in turn, including the origins of the identity, defining features, and how members of each category perceived the organisation and their role within it. The findings are summarised in Table 3.

Warders

The Warder identity category incorporated individuals from all organisational levels, including senior managers and lower level staff, and individuals in this category could be of any age, gender or ethnic background. They could be distinguished from Carers and Change Managers in that they were more likely to live in the neighbouring township, to have little formal education and longer tenure in the organisation, and were less likely to have worked previously in any other organisation. Warders were also more likely to work in closed and locked wards, which housed long-term patients with serious or chronic mental health disorders, some of whom had committed violent crimes.
Table 3: Core Identity Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE IDENTITY CATEGORIES</th>
<th>WARDERS</th>
<th>CARERS</th>
<th>CHANGE MANAGERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When formed</strong></td>
<td>1860s</td>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origins</strong></td>
<td>Created when founders established the organisation in a remote location next to a township and drew on the town's residents to supply the workforce</td>
<td>Created when the organisation introduced acute care wards and externally trained health professionals began entering the organisation</td>
<td>Created when a new management team was recruited to remodel the organisation in line with global changes in mental health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work area</strong></td>
<td>Worked mainly in closed and locked wards</td>
<td>Worked mainly in open and unlocked wards</td>
<td>Worked mainly in administration buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patient acuity</strong></td>
<td>Worked mainly with long term patients with chronic or severe mental health issues</td>
<td>Worked mainly with short term patients with acute or mild mental health issues</td>
<td>Limited contact with patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived purpose of the organisation</strong></td>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>State of the art mental health facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patients referred to as</strong></td>
<td>Lowlifes, prisoners, criminals</td>
<td>Patients</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived job role</strong></td>
<td>Custodial</td>
<td>Caring for patients</td>
<td>Changing the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishing features</td>
<td>WARDERS</td>
<td>CARERS</td>
<td>CHANGE MANAGERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty, homogeneity, protect jobs,</td>
<td>Caring, professional work ethic, worked</td>
<td>Future focussed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>closed to new ideas, worked mainly</td>
<td>previously in other organisations</td>
<td>cohesive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in this organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Allied health professionals comprised the only formal organisational group that was not represented within the Warder identity category.

The Warder identity was as old as the organisation itself, because it originated when the founders first established the organisation in an isolated location, immediately adjacent to a small township, and drew on the town's residents to supply almost the entire workforce. The exception was a small number of medical staff, with as few as five medical staff employed within the hospital even at its peak during the 1950s.

For the first 100 years, the organisation operated on an institutional model of incarcerating people with mental disorders. The earliest patients were transferred from prison and housed in locked wards. The organisation functioned as an asylum and offered little in the way of treatment. Warders described a custodial job role, which required employees to watch over patients to ensure they did not leave the facility.

“Asylum care is really what we do.” (Registered Nurse)

“It's custodial – we just look after the patients, feed them well and keep them locked up.” (Nurse Assistant)

From its inception, the organisation established an interdependent relationship with the township, in which the organisation relied on the town to provide workers, and the town’s residents developed a reliance on the organisation for a job. This forged a longstanding bond between the town and organisation that was perpetuated for many years by their mutual isolation. A recruitment culture developed that sustained and reinforced the employment of local workers, so that securing a job in the organisation became based primarily on ‘family’ credentials, and a job was virtually impossible to obtain for anyone who did not reside in the township. The prominent theme of staff securing jobs for family members demonstrated that local residents were not only more likely to
obtain jobs within the organisation, but acquired significant power over the recruitment of other employees.

"It used to be come in and apply for a job on the Friday and start work on Monday. I lived in Woodstone. That’s pretty much how it was."
(Nurse Assistant)

“It used to be that, unless you knew someone that worked at Bayview Hospital you wouldn’t get a job there. It had to be family.” (Nurse Assistant)

The policy of recruiting workers from the local township appeared to be well supported by local politicians. Those who were interviewed, both formally and informally as part of the thesis project, all agreed that the organisation had long been actively promoted, particularly during election campaigns, as a major employer for local residents. As a consequence, Warders' perceptions about the organisation centred more on the organisation functioning as a secure place of employment for local residents, than as a hospital for people with mental illness. This perception was widely known, as captured in the following quote by a consulting psychiatrist.

"It was seen as a facility whose job it was to provide employment for people rather than a hospital to provide treatment for patients."
(Psychiatrist)

The strong connection between the town and organisation was further reinforced by residents' regular use of the organisation’s grounds for school, town and sporting events, and various community activities, as recalled by one local resident.

"Our school plays would be held here, and our school balls. You’d have the Catholic school ball here one week and then the state school ball..."
the next week, and everybody in the community went to both." (Senior Manager)

It was evident from participants' recollections that local children spent substantial time in and around the organisation while growing up, attending family, school and community events, and anticipating that they would follow their siblings, parents and grandparents to obtain work in the organisation.

"Everybody just came here when they were young, they trained here, they stayed here, they grew up with their parents, and their mates’ parents, and it just went on and on from there." (Senior Manager)

"You would have three generations of the same family work at Bayview Hospital, whole families worked here in different work areas. So Bayview Hospital was this whole of life experience." (Allied Health Professional)

In addition to providing jobs for the town's residents, many aspects of the organisation became structured to suit the staff. For example, rosters were arranged so that family members could work similar shifts.

"If you were rostered in the same group as your partner you could have the same days off." (Registered Nurse)

"It was unionised, the shifts were set to suit the staff rather than the patients." (Senior Manager)

Warders also recalled the buildings and facilities being used more by staff than patients.

"I very rarely ever saw patients play on the tennis court. Like it always amazed me, but I’d say they did over the years and I’m very cynical, I suppose. They’d have BBQs down at Riverside. But when I think of all these facilities, I’m thinking ‘How come we have a recreation hall and a riverside ballroom hall and an auditorium hall and all these facilities?’ I hadn’t thought of that before. I’d just accepted them. Why did we have
all these things? There were 3000 patients here, but I can’t ever recall seeing them … (silence)” (Operational Officer)

Consequently, Warders were known to have long tenure in the organisation, with a strong sense of a job for life, and described the organisation as having a family orientation.

"It was very much a family, a job for life, it ran in the families, whole dynasties had jobs there." (Nurse Assistant)

"Family orientated, it was a family atmosphere, like everybody looked after each other, it was more like a family atmosphere than a place to work." (Registered Nurse)

The town's residents were hired initially as attendants – a role that minimised the skills required to carry out the work, and enabled members of the township to be employed without minimum qualifications or competencies.

“Always before in (closed ward), it was the next bricklayer in line or your next mate or whoever. Nobody has been qualified in there for years." (Nurse Assistant)

"We’d had for a long period people who’d come to be truck drivers and just walked in and started as nurses." (Senior Manager)

The organisation subsequently created a nurse assistant position, which required no education or qualifications, and this position continued to account for the largest proportion of workers up until the 1990s. Many of those interviewed indicated that it was common for a registered nurse to be outnumbered by nurse assistants on a ward shift by 5:1. Participants also advised that it was common for nurse assistants to perform the same duties as a registered nurse.

"They had a rather large population of nurse assistants here because they didn’t have a large population of registered nurses. We were doing a lot of the basic work that registered nurses might have done. Up until
the late 70s some nurse assistants who'd worked here for 30 years were even administering medication." (Nurse Assistant)

Given the absence of skill requirements, and the certainty of a job in the organisation, many local residents opted not to obtain even a basic education (Fryga, McGhee, & Greenhill, 1995). After approximately fifty years of operation, the organisation introduced a basic training course that offered staff rudimentary nursing skills, and this was later updated to three years of on-the-job training for staff who wished to acquire formal accreditation as a psychiatric nurse.

Despite descriptions by Warders of a family oriented culture within the organisation, their descriptions of patients were less benevolent, with references to the patient group including terms such as "lowlifes", "prisoners" and "criminals".

"We're here to keep these lowlifes locked up." (Enrolled Nurse)

"Half of these people are prisoners for Jesus' sake. Heinous crimes. That speaks for itself, doesn't it?" (Enrolled Nurse)

Non-Warder participants recalled Warders using similar terms and descriptions openly around other organisational members.

"One of my new staff was here less than a day and a nurse told her that working with these patients was like working with sewerage."

(Allied Health Professional)

In accordance with the organisation's primary function as a custodial asylum, all patient wards remained closed and locked until the introduction of acute care wards in the 1970s, and were described as more like a prison than a hospital ward.

"(Closed wards) were definitely more entrenched than others because it was a more hostile situation, because the clients were so volatile and it was very much a custodial setting." (Registered Nurse)
Closed wards were described as extremely demanding work environments, attributed to patient behaviour that could be violent and unpredictable. One participant described being on "constant alert", stating that it was common to experience up to six duress alarms during each ward shift. Participant quotes highlighted that this led workers to rely on each other for protection when working in closed wards.

"As a nurse on the coalface, particularly say in a place like (closed ward), which had over nine nurses a shift, it was very acute and you relied on each other, it was sometimes dangerous because of the type of patients." (Registered Nurse)

"The duress responses were to every end of the hospital, everybody relied on everybody else to come for support when they needed it." (Registered Nurse)

Before the advent of duress alarms, a loud siren had been used to summon workers from the township who were not on duty, to provide assistance whenever needed (Fryga et al., 1995). Warders spoke about the need to maintain rigorous control of closed wards and to remain vigilant, for their own and other’s safety. This is consistent with the once traditional view that patients in mental institutions should be 'controlled', by keeping them passive and compliant in order to minimise unpredictability, and protect other patients and staff (Whitaker & Deikman, 2009).

"The intense atmosphere of (name of ward), because it was a closed ward, it was very stressful, you had to be on the ball all the time, and patient management wasn't restrictive, but it was a lot more autocratic. There was a lot more rule and regulation to running the ward, because that was deemed to be keeping a stable place and a stable environment." (Registered Nurse)
Before the introduction of acute care wards, medications for mental disorders were virtually non-existent, so staff relied mainly on physical strength to deal with patients' unpredictable and aggressive behaviours. Warders' patient management techniques thus evolved through a combination of ‘instinct and experience’ (Fryga et al., 1995). There was little evidence that formal standards of behaviour existed, and Warders spoke of an employment contract that was largely devoid of performance expectations.

"With regard to (closed ward) in particular, staff used to sit and watch the patients doing whatever they did. There was very little interaction with the patients as I recall from like 1988 to when it closed in ‘94 or ‘95. Very, very little interaction. And I recall on many occasions the conversation being that we really should do some work, and the (senior nurses) would say, ‘Why? It’s not like management’s ever going to come here and annoy us. They’re happy down in the administration building. They don’t care what’s going on up here.’ And that was the truth of it. So if there was brutality, it was not so much that it was necessarily sanctioned by management, but if management knew about it, they did not want to come and address it. And we did have a number of (senior nurses) who were quite nasty individuals. Their induction of patients to the area was less than pleasant." (Registered Nurse)

Participants described a status quo that persisted without change because of a perceived lack of management action within the organisation, as noted in the following quotes.

"(Name of senior manager) was a typical public servant, withdrew totally from grassroots contact and the hospital ran itself, never saw him, he never did anything." (Allied Health Professional)
"They found it hard to sort of, um, get rid of staff, I suppose you could say. I mean, there’s no such thing as diminished performance at Bayview Hospital. You would never have heard of someone going on diminished performance at Bayview Hospital." (Enrolled Nurse)

The status quo was further supported by a lack of external governance from outside the organisation. One participant explained that, until regionalisation of the state health department in 1990, the hospital was governed by members of the state health department, so that most organisational decisions were made externally by administrative staff rather than qualified mental health professionals.

“For a long time, until 1990, Bayview Hospital was managed from State Health. It was not managed by a board or a health service, it was only after the regionalisation in 1990 that Bayview Hospital became part of normal health services. So when you get a large bureaucratic organisation like State Health – which is not patient-oriented, they have nothing to do with patients really – managing a patient area, it is completely isolated.” (Senior Manager)

Another participant suggested that the organisation was known for being utilised as a "dumping ground for delinquents".

“Bayview Hospital's been there for a hundred years, so in State Health, for a hundred years, you know, often, if you had a problem employee, or whatever, they would distil down to places like Bayview Hospital. And there were a number of people that went to Bayview Hospital because they were allowed to behave … (pause). Working at Bayview Hospital has never been a particularly attractive option because it was long-term institutional care, not rehabilitative care." (Senior Manager)

Carers recalled unpleasant memories of working alongside Warders in closed wards.
“And there was all these, people, like, nude and they were just sshhhh, a big fire hose, and that was their, they weren’t clothed or anything, you know? That sticks in my mind. This was their daily showering routine. Just hosing them all off like animals down in the paddock.” (Registered Nurse)

“Working in (closed ward) had quite a few challenges and one of those was an air of latent violence within the ward that was promoted by some of the nursing staff who had fairly backward views about some of the client population, and some of their ideas and practice.” (Allied Health Professional)

In addition to gaining control over recruitment, Warders also controlled other organisational resources.

“We had nurse assistants who built little empires for themselves. I mean, I couldn’t believe it, you know, some of the things that people had organised for themselves in this place and, you know, when they saw some sort of threat towards it, it was like it was a major invasion, you know, one country invading another, sort of thing.” (Nurse Assistant)

Activities like these were protected by a shared code of loyalty, which was a core attribute of Warders. Loyalty was associated with protecting jobs, protecting each other from aggressive patients in closed wards, and protecting each other by not “dobbing” on coworkers who engaged in inappropriate behaviours.

“My (family member) would say things like, ‘he only stole this’ and yet she was an honest catholic, a well brought up, lovely woman. She would talk totally different from me and she’d die if she knew I was talking to you about this, because she said you just don’t do that. You don’t talk about Woodstone people. You don’t talk about people in the
town that did this. What happened at Bayview Hospital was sacrosanct, because you protected each other. The feel was, ‘Oh no, I’m supposed to look after my (family member) and make sure s/he gets a job, no matter what.’” (Operational Officer)

This quote reflects a core premise of social identity theory, whereby individuals can experience cognitive and behavioural changes when a preferred group membership is salient, so that they act normatively as a group member. This involves a depersonalisation of the self-concept, in which individuals can speak or behave in ways that contradict their personal identity, because their social identity leads them to behave as a group member rather than an individual (Hogg & Reid, 2006). The example above also reflects findings in laboratory studies, which show that personal identities can become redundant when the context makes a social identity salient, so that individuals will respond in line with the salient social identity, even if this is inconsistent with their personal self-schema (Onorato & Turner, 2004).

Participants recounted memories of a range of intimidation tactics used by Warders to sanction individuals who threatened a fellow worker’s job, ranging from alienation to physical threats.

“(Name withheld) tells the story of a man who was here that worked as a baker. He dobbed somebody in and the person got the sack. I don’t remember exactly what for, but they hung an effigy of him at the front entrance to the hospital and burnt it, the people here, because he was a dobber on his mates.” (Operational Officer)

Warders frequently used the term "outsiders" to refer to any person who entered the organisation from outside the local township.

"My (family member) worked here for 40 years, and used to say, ‘Well you can get rid of all those social workers you know. They’re there to get rid of all our jobs. You don’t need social workers, because they’re
outsiders. You don’t need those others. They’ve come here to get rid of all our jobs. The professional people, they brought in to get rid of our jobs." (Senior Manager)

For many years, the township and organisation existed as an isolated and interdependent social system, so that the organisation came to be known locally as “an extension of Woodstone”, and “the family firm”.

“This hospital was a town, everybody knew everybody, the staff knew all the other staff.” (Nurse Assistant)

“It was all so interlinked that Bayview Hospital felt as if it was part of the community.” (Operational Officer)

Warders viewed the organisation with a sense of permanence and stability.

“Like the patients, you felt you were part of the place, not that it was a home away from home, but because things never changed a lot there was a secure, comfortable sort of feeling, changes didn’t happen all that often.” (Registered Nurse)

“There was no great force for change inside this hospital, from either the staff or the patients for that matter, except from probably staff who’d come from down south where they’d already been through a change process and coming in with a lot of these ideas that a lot of people didn’t like. Cos everybody was a local.” (Nurse Assistant)

A notable consequence of the organisation’s isolation and recruitment culture was a shared view held by Carers that Warders reflected a homogeneous group.

“A lot of people had been there for many years, and as far as work, they hadn’t had the opportunities to kind of experience other things in life, and it was such a big place, but they were such a family, that after a while they all shared very similar thoughts and ideas because they
worked with the same ... like you could go on to a ward and you could find staff who’d worked together for 10 years! You know, I was fascinated by that. And pretty much the same shifts, I mean some people had been there 20 years and said they’d virtually been in the same group! So you work with the same people. I just think that when that happens, the danger is that you don’t see fresh and new and different things that you can do, or you don’t have other people coming in that you can learn from.” (Registered Nurse)

Warders were perceived by Carers as a group of staff who were closed to new ideas, and preferred to maintain the organisation as they had always known it. Carers recounted many experiences of trying to introduce new ward practices or approaches.

“In a place like Bayview Hospital, people have been used to doing things for so long, that at times I wondered if they ever saw a problem with that. And at times when you tried to make changes, people looked at you as if you were an alien from another planet, because things have always been done the same way for so long and methods of achieving things have never changed for so long.” (Senior Nurse)

There was evidence that pre-change managers had tried to effect changes during the organisation’s recent history, and their inability to do so was attributed to strong union links that made changing the status quo impossible. Senior managers recalled the difficulties experienced if they attempted to introduce changes or manage inappropriate behaviour in the workplace, with one pre-change manager suggesting the staff “had management over a barrel”.

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3 The township was unique in that it was home to a local branch of a major workers’ union, whose members were predominantly employees of the hospital. Several participants provided substantial insights into the political power that this particular group wielded to maintain the status quo within the organisation.
“The unions were industrially powerful in one way except, well, it more worked on that no one actually tested it, and managers were more frightened of that industrial power. I’m not sure how real it was, but it was certainly that management didn’t act on that, and they certainly didn’t push the buttons too much. So we just never took on the local agreements, and it wasn’t that important. Because you decide, well, maybe you could get around it by moving people, because you’ve got a large amount of staff. So I suppose it was a psychological power plus the fact that you could find other ways to go around it.” (Senior Manager)

Discussion

The Warder identity originated when the organisation was founded as an asylum for people with mental disorders, for whom there was little expectation of recovery. The earliest patients came from prisons, and Warders viewed the organisation as an asylum in which they, as custodians, were responsible for watching over dangerous inmates in closed and locked wards to protect the welfare of the broader community.

Warders lived in the local township and, like previous generations of family members, developed lifelong connections with the organisation. As a consequence, Warders could be characterised by their strong sense of belonging within the organisation and entitlement to a job. The longstanding interdependent relationship between the town and organisation not only provided opportunities for strong individual and family connections with the organisation, but also informed Warders' beliefs about why the organisation existed and the nature of their job role – which was similar to that of a prison warder.

Working mainly in closed and locked wards, Warders developed a strong sense of loyalty to protect each other from the threat of violence from unpredictable patients, as well as from 'outsiders' who posed a threat to the
protection of jobs. For Warders, the organisation had both situational relevance and subjective importance (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). The self-organisation relationship was characterised by an almost absolute reliance on the organisation for a job, with local workers foregoing an education and further skills development because the job role had never required these. Their perceived legitimacy and fit was further strengthened by the permanence and stability of their tenure in the organisation, and the ongoing support of external stakeholders.

While organisations generally have a life span that extends beyond the membership of their employees, this organisation was unique in that the membership of local families, and the Warder identity, was equivalent to the life span of the organisation itself (Sofer, 1972). The longstanding recruitment of local families and the challenging nature of the work led to strong cohesiveness, insularity and homogeneity, and facilitated a common identity among the workers that reinforced the status quo and restricted their openness to new ideas (Scott & Lane, 2000).

Warders acquired substantial control over hiring other employees, which was endorsed by internal and external powerholders and afforded this identity group a great deal of power to determine who was admitted to or excluded from the organisation (Reynolds et al., 2004). Warders not only believed they best represented the organisation as 'insiders', but assumed the role of gatekeepers to determine who could join the organisation, and to exclude unwanted members (Gilpin & Miller, 2013; Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006a). For much of the organisation's history, this essentially empowered Warders to control the organisation's boundary, if not the organisation itself (Paulsen, 2003).

The power that was wielded by Warders in the organisation has parallels to a study of US steelworkers, in which the dangerous and demanding nature of the work was observed to manifest in 'close cooperation' among workers (Bruno, 1998). Bruno highlighted that this produced close bonds and loyalty between
workers, however, it also led workers to disregard the organisation's formal structures and directives, and develop their own unified social order and normative practices. In a similar fashion to Warders, steelworkers forged a common identity that was attributed, in part, to the long tenure of workers who lived in the neighbouring town and relied on the steel factory for jobs.

The status quo may also have been supported by the social stigma attached to individuals with mental illness. Stigma is defined by Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) as "having an attribute that conveys a devalued social identity in a particular context" (p. 506). Goffman (1968) describes several forms of stigma, including stigma based on physical attributes (e.g., a physical disability), personal attributes (e.g., a mental disorder) or social attributes (e.g., ethnicity), any of which may deviate from what others in society perceive as normal, and can become perceived as socially undesirable. The social stigma attached to mental illness extended to the township, perhaps in part because the organisation formally adopted the name of the township at one stage in its history. Despite the organisation undergoing subsequent name changes, the name of the township continued to be used widely by the broader community to refer to the organisation, with historic accounts suggesting that, together, the organisation and town became synonymous with the concept of 'madness'. The external image of the organisation became associated with a negative stereotype that extended to members of the township, so that the stigma associated with mental illness tainted local workers by association (Schneider, 2004). Thus, while patients may have been stigmatised on the basis of personal attributes (i.e., having a mental illness), local workers were stigmatised by social attributes, due to their close association with the organisation and its occupants. As a consequence, local workers became socially isolated and potentially socially disadvantaged with regard to their employability (Corrigan & O'Shaughnessy, 2007), as noted by one senior manager.
"Not only were psychiatric hospitals geographically isolated but they were professionally, socially and culturally isolated as well." (Senior Manager)

Stigma was not only associated with broader community perceptions, but also featured in participants’ comments about the differences between psychiatric and general nurses, as captured in the following quote.

"Because it’s very isolated, what other exposure did you have to any other nursing identity anywhere other than Bayview Hospital if you worked there? You never even saw yourself as part of the collective nursing force, and I mean psych nurses in these institutions never did, did they? Like you read about nurses and what was happening in hospitals, but that wasn’t you. And if you worked in another hospital, then that was also the view of the other collective nursing group to you. I mean if I took a patient on escort to a hospital for any particular reason, I mean you weren’t seen as a real nurse. You often weren’t treated as a real nurse, and your patient wasn’t treated as a real person. So, you know, I mean you shared a lot of the stigma of the people you looked after, didn’t you? Really, you did. I mean, the first time I went on escort, and I took someone to (name of hospital), they treated the person like dirt. Really, I mean, it wasn’t a deliberate thing, but the stigmatisation of someone who has a mental illness is – mad! You know? So you really weren’t thought of as a great deal better than that as a professional person. And often they’d be quite stunned when you’d say, ‘Well I can do the blood pressure for you if you like.’ ‘Oh, you can do a blood pressure?’ I mean, of course I can do a blood pressure!” (Registered Nurse)

During those occasions when Warders visited general hospitals, and general nurses became salient, Warders were thus likely to perceive themselves as lower in status and prestige. According to the social identity approach, this can
lead to an individual developing even stronger identification with their ingroup. However, when Warders were in Bayview Hospital, general nurses were not salient, and Warders no doubt experienced enhanced perceptions of status because of their control over recruitment, and their access to jobs and resources, which provided ways to achieve higher status and self-esteem. Thus, any comparisons to general nurses that suggested feelings of inferiority and low status may have increased Warders’ strength of identification with their ingroup.

This is supported by identity researchers, who suggest that while isolation and stigma may reduce social status, they may actually enhance people's strength of identification with each other. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) argue that this tends to operate at a group, rather than individual or organisational level, because the shared threat and common fate foster cohesiveness and a strong occupational subculture. They suggest that this can lead to a group versus society ‘us and them’ so that a psychological boundary is drawn around the group. They further suggest a range of group formation conditions that can contribute to the formation of such a strong work group culture, including “collective socialisation, high task interdependence, physical proximity, clear physical boundaries and isolation, and group longevity” (p. 419). Ashforth and Kreiner identify factors specific to certain kinds of ‘dirty work’ – which refers to job roles that are stigmatised by society – that may assist in the formation of a strong work group culture, such as inherent danger, shift work, a reliance on kin-based recruitment, and demographic clustering, all of which could serve to increase ingroup insularity and bonds. They argue that individuals who engage in dirty work do so on behalf of society, but are then stigmatised by society as 'dirty workers', reflecting a socially constructed stereotype that defines the worker, rather than the attributes of the job, as ‘dirty’. Thus, the social segregation of people who are seen as socially deviant can set intergroup forces in motion, so that individuals who are perceived as deviant (such as psychiatric nurses) can
become polarised from society, establishing conditions for these workers to assume the common status of an ingroup (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995).

The resulting social stigma can lead the workers to collectively foster a strong and cohesive workplace identity that protects the group from the impacts of social stigma on their self-esteem (Kreiner et al., 2006a). The workers may use social creativity strategies to enhance their identity, by reframing the work in positive terms, such as keeping tainted people locked up to protect the community, in order to see themselves in a more favourable light (Grandy, 2008). Kreiner et al. explain that the workers can therefore perceive patients as a tainted group, and may promote their value to society as protecting the community from those patients.

The experience of stigma in dirty work occupations can lead to an increased strength of identification with a work group, and can also be associated with seeing the broader community as an outgroup. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) explain that 'outsiders' reflect a core theme in dirty work subcultures, stemming from a need to enhance self-esteem and bestow a positive identity by criticising the perceived source of stigma (i.e., outsiders' derogatory perceptions), leading to polarisation between the workers and outsiders.

The tenure and stability that the organisation offered to members of the local township contributed to a strong and coherent identity that became dependent on organisational support for its status and continuity. The social stigma attached to mental illness, combined with the absence of any real professional development or training, particularly for those workers who elected to remain in the nurse assistant role, would have made it extremely difficult for Warders to seek work anywhere else, making it even more important for them to retain their job within the organisation. This did not present a problem while Warders maintained control over the recruitment of local families. However, as more and more workers began joining the organisation from outside the local
township, Warders' power over securing and protecting jobs was being increasingly threatened. This reality culminated in the entry of Change Managers during the 1990s, who represented the most significant threat yet to Warder's previously stable and dominant status in the organisation.

The second identity category – Carers – is introduced next.

Carers

The Carer identity category incorporated individuals from all organisational levels, including managers and lower level staff, and individuals within this category could be of any age, gender or ethnic background. Carers could be distinguished from Warders in that they were more likely to have medium tenure in the organisation, and be relatively well-educated. Carers could also be distinguished from Warders in that they were more likely to have worked previously in other organisations. Carers were more likely than Warders to work in open and unlocked wards, which housed short-term patients with acute, rather than chronic, mental health conditions.

The origins of the Carer identity appeared to date back to the 1970s, when the first cohort of externally trained health professionals entered the organisation, from outside the local township.

"When I came as a (allied health professional), there was a group of us, a big influx, and in the 60s there weren’t any. So the early 70s, we were called paramedics at the time, there was a big group of us. There was occupational therapists and social workers and psychologists and recreational officers." (Allied Health Professional)

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, workers continued to enter the organisation from outside the local township, comprising mainly accredited psychiatric nurses and allied health professionals, most of whom had worked
previously in other psychiatric facilities in which similar large-scale changes had already occurred.

"I started at Bayview Hospital as a registered nurse and basically worked in (name of ward) where everyone was sent because they weren’t born in Woodstone (laughed). So I went there and thought, ‘Oh my god, I’ve gone back 20 years’. Cos having come from New Zealand, New Zealand was always so much more advanced, and England obviously was so much more advanced in mental health, what they did. So I came here and thought, ‘Oh, what’s hit me?’" (Senior Nurse)

Domestic staff were also introduced during the 1970s to enable professional staff to focus on direct patient care. The entry of experienced health professionals also coincided with newly available psychiatric medications, which were substantially improving treatment approaches and outcomes for individuals with mental illness.

"It really was brought about by the development of the antipsychotic medications, which allowed for the psychotic symptoms to be controlled. So we then had a huge hospital, and we had what was called a comprehensive psychiatric hospital, and by that, we had people with mental illness, people with intellectual disability, people with alcohol and drug dependence, as well as people with just behaviour disorders. They were all in this facility. So what happened once the medications were introduced was that we had a whole group of people whose symptoms were controlled, but who had lost a lot of social skills and contact with the community because of long periods of hospitalisation.” (Allied Health Professional)

A key role of this new group of staff was to assist in preparing patients for eventual release from the hospital.
“Our job was to reskill these people for transfer into the community.”

(Allied Health Professional)

Patients who were eligible for rehabilitation were relocated from closed and locked wards into newly established acute care wards, which were open and unlocked. The focus of these wards was short-term treatment and rehabilitation, designed to enable patients to leave the hospital and return to their homes or community of origin following brief periods of acute care.

“(Acute care ward) was established in programs and it was fully discharge-orientated to getting people out of hospital. The whole thing about the ward was discharge-orientated. Patients were cooking their own food. They were shopping. They were doing all that stuff on their own. So it was very, very focussed to get people out.” (Senior Nurse)

While Carers worked with all patient types in both closed and open wards, several expressed a preference for working in acute care wards.

“There was particular areas I didn’t like working in but that was just a personal sort of thing, you know. I didn’t like dealing with the real chronic sort of people because I sort of thought, when you got in some of the wards there, being such a large institution, the chronic areas, I found really depressing myself, because you knew these people had been there like 20 or 30 years of their life and this was the only home they basically knew. Not that it was a bad memory as such. It was just that I didn’t enjoy working in those particular areas. You couldn’t make any difference really. I mean, other than making sure, you know, people had their shower and had something to eat and whatever else. There was no sort of counselling or stuff you could do to fix any of their problems because they were long-term, sort of chronic things that couldn’t be fixed.” (Registered Nurse)
While the Carer identity may have originated with the entry of trained health professionals, a variety of participants, including those without formal training, were identified as members of the Carer identity category – including nurse assistants, operational staff and administrative staff. Participants without formal qualifications or training talked about knowing someone with mental illness as a motivating factor to work in the organisation.

“My (family member) got a mental illness and spent some time here. So it gives me great passion for the mentally ill … so I have a strong will to change, to make things better. If every person here gave a little bit of kindness and put themselves in the patients’ shoes it would make a hell of a difference … I come from a history of mental illness, you see. I can empathise with them.” (Senior Manager)

The features that most differentiated Carers from Warders included the way that participants spoke about the organisation and their job role within it. For example, while Warders described the organisation as an asylum, and their job role as custodial, Carers referred to the organisation as a hospital, in which their job role centred around caring for patients. The quote below exemplifies this for one Carer, who recalled attending a mental health seminar in the organisation with other staff.

“And the opening question for the group was, there must have been 30 or 40 people in the room, ‘Why are you here?’ Why are you here? Very simple question. And there was 3 or 4 of us in the audience who cried and mentioned the patients. But 80% were here for the money. It was amazing to see. You know, I could say that I have family, my family members have suffered from mental illness and I’m passionate and I believe that through my skills and my background as a (job role), I can make things better for the patients so they have some pleasure enjoying their life. But probably 80% of the room said, ‘Well 20 years
ago when I was starting out in the workforce it was a really good job
and my dad worked here and my grandfather worked here or my uncle
worked here and they got me the job and I have been here for 20 years
and the money is still good and that’s why I will stay till I retire.”

(Operational Officer)

While Warders spoke frequently about the organisation's connection with
the township, and the importance of protecting jobs for local families, Carers
spoke frequently about caring for patients, describing a therapeutic orientation to
their job role that involved treating patients with dignity and respect, and assisting
patients to live as normal a life as possible. For example, several Carers spoke of
a desire to ensure that wards felt like home for patients.

"I think my best memories are all the nice things you could do for
people there … like being part of organising their christmas parties, or
being involved with them when they did things for the fete, or just doing
things on the ward that made it sort of more homely.” (Registered
Nurse)

Whether or not Carers possessed formal qualifications, or worked in direct
clinical roles, a shared attribute for Carers was that they viewed themselves as
having a professional work ethic. They spoke about the importance of adhering to
professional standards in the workplace, particularly when working directly with
patients. Professional attitudes and behaviours were perceived by Carers as an
intrinsic quality of any individual who occupied the job role, rather than a
competency that could only be obtained from completing formal training, as noted
by one Carer.

“I've worked with people that might have trained 20 years ago and one
person is more than professional and appropriate, and another person
is quite punitive and negative. And then I've worked with staff with
similar qualifications from recent times, and yet you’ve got the same thing.” (Senior Nurse)

A prominent and recurring theme in Carers’ perceptions about professional behaviours in the organisation involved frequent interpersonal and intergroup comparisons to members of the Warder identity category. Many workplace behaviours that had become legitimate and normative for Warders, were perceived by Carers as punitive and unprofessional. Carers made frequent references to ‘other’ workers, whom Carers perceived as unprofessional in their treatment of patients, with the implication that Carers perceived themselves as professional and caring. These perceptions are demonstrated in the following quotes from Carers.

“I think we’ve got professionals and others. And I don’t see professionalism as being a function of the job you do, I think it’s a function of the way you apply yourself to the job you do. I think if you’re ethically centred and if you are introspective, if you are reflective, if you challenge your practice, if you try to be responsive to your customers’ needs, then I think you’re eligible for qualification as a professional. We have an awful lot of people who don’t fit that criteria.” (Registered Nurse)

“I identified more with people who I felt had a good attitude and approach to their work and had some real empathy, rather than perhaps other staff who saw it differently. You know, you always feel drawn to people because you feel you share things. Some areas it was harder than others. And of course it just depended, it always depends on the makeup of a shift. As soon as you turn up for work and it’s handover time, you look around the room and you see who you’re going to work with and you know immediately whether it’s going to be a good shift, or a bad shift, whether the patients will have a more comfortable time.” (Registered Nurse)
While Carers tended to perceive members of the Warder identity category as less professional, Carers themselves belonged to the group of workers referred to by Warders as 'outsiders'. This is because the majority of Carers came from outside the local township and represented a threat to Warders' jobs. It was evident that Warders ensured that individuals who joined the organisation from outside the local township were acutely aware of their outsider status, as demonstrated in the following quote from a non-local employee who entered the organisation during the 1980s.

"I always remember being told by one of the (senior nurses) that I would never ever get any further than a registered nurse because I wasn't part of the Woodstone set-up. Because it was a very, sort of, closed sort of group, when I first started. Because it was a very close-knit society, staff wise. Because I was an outsider. I was very much an outsider when I first went there. And you felt very much an outsider."

(Senior Nurse)

While analysing Carers' distinguishing features, a small number of negative cases came to light, which helped to delineate the core attributes of a Warder versus Carer. These cases involved the accounts of participants who had grown up in the local township, beside family members whom I identified as Warders, yet these participants presented as Carers. These 'local Carers' were unique, because they described perceptions of the organisation, their job role, and patients, that were congruent with the core attributes of a Carer, but conflicted strongly with perceptions of the organisation held by their family members. Local Carers described how their beliefs about placing patient care before jobs not only put them at odds with their families, but in some cases led to extreme conflict, and even alienation, with one local Carer being described by family members as a "traitor". The accounts of local Carers were illuminating in a number of ways. For example, their accounts suggested that, despite being
exposed to the same pre-entry socialisation as other family members, and despite the chronic accessibility of the Warder identity for members of the township, local Carers opted initially not to join the organisation, as described by one local Carer.

"My (family member) really wanted me to come here and work as a nurse. The next generation felt a bit differently, my generation, we were a bit wary and heard all the rumours about sex in the cupboards, there was people caught for theft, there was all sorts of things that occurred that I heard, stories that scared me a little bit, so we had a strong feeling about not coming here … it was the start of the era not to stay here. Internally in Woodstone, they’d know about everybody else’s business and who did everything, but they would never ever put them down to an outsider. They would always protect their own. Then, it was an expectation really that most people, like my year of school, most of them came here to nurse. I didn’t … and I thank heavens often because it saved me I believe." (Operational Officer)

These cases suggest the possibility that defining oneself with the qualities of a Carer, combined with disidentifying oneself with the attributes of a Warder, were conscious choices for local Carers, made in the knowledge that these could risk the loss of the love and support of their family. This, in turn, suggests that some individuals may not just make sense of the context they are in, but may actively choose to frame or interpret the context in a way that better accords with their personal sense of self (Gendron & Spira, 2010).

The participation of local Carers in this study confirms that these individuals did eventually choose to join the organisation, after working in other roles in other organisations. Because all Carers in the study had worked in other organisations before entering this organisation, it is possible that Carers were exposed to other work experiences and organisational influences that may have
informed their perceptions of this organisation, the notion of employment, and expectations of their job role, as noted by the following quote from one Carer.

“I suppose I was lucky in that I came into it late in life. I mean I was 36 before I sort of decided to train in psych, so I came in after having a family, working at other jobs for many years and I, you know, I felt it was something new and challenging for me. And at times I found it very hard that other people didn’t want that life, you know, and they’d worked there for 20 odd years, same age as me, but had been there since the day they left school, and that’s all that had ever happened for them. But I just felt that in a place like Bayview Hospital, a lot of people had been there for many years, and as far as work, they hadn’t had the opportunities to kind of experience other things in life.” (Registered Nurse)

In summary, the Carer identity category appeared to originate in the 1970s, when the organisation first introduced acute care wards, which reflected improvements in medications and treatment approaches, and an increasing social acceptance of individuals with mental illness. Carers perceived the organisation as a hospital, and described their job role as caring for patients, which involved treating patients with respect through a therapeutic approach and professional work ethic.

It seems likely that the introduction of formally qualified health professionals during the 1970s and 1980s, for whom empathy and caring behaviours were perhaps an integral part of their professional training, may have been a factor in formation of the Carer identity, and in perpetuating the identity through socialisation processes in acute care wards. It is also likely that externally trained health professionals may have been largely immune to the socialisation tactics of Warders, given that a professional occupational identity is
more likely to be trans-organisational, and less likely to be ‘organization-specific’ (He & Brown, 2013).

While the Carer identity may have originated with the entry of trained health professionals, participants without tertiary education and professional qualifications were also identified as members of the Carer identity category. Similarly, the Warder identity category included participants with professional qualifications, such as registered nurses, who might normally be expected to identify more strongly with a caring and professional, rather than custodial, work role.

The accounts of several Carers, including local Carers, suggested that some individuals identified strongly with Carer attributes before they joined the organisation. For example, some Carers attributed their passion for caring for patients to having personal connections with a friend or family member with a mental illness, while others described an attraction to acute care wards in which they could actively assist patients to recover. For Carers who grew up in the local township, strong identification with Carer attributes also developed despite being exposed to the same pre-entry socialisation processes as Warders. One distinguishing feature was that all Carers had worked elsewhere before joining the organisation, which may have assisted these workers to develop an occupational identity that was less contingent on this organisation, and the bond it had developed with the local township, to retain a sense of value and distinctiveness.

The third and final identity category – Change Managers – is introduced next.

**Change Managers**

Change Managers represented the third core identity category. Because these participants were all relatively new to the organisation, they had no real
tenure nor prior history in the organisation. The category comprised senior managers, all of whom entered the organisation during the 1990s, with a specific brief to implement large-scale change within the organisation. Almost all Change Managers advised that they had been involved in external changes occurring across the mental health sector before entering the organisation. These changes included development of the national and state mental health policies and plans, and the regionalisation of the state health department, all of which served as precursors to the large-scale program of change occurring within the organisation.

During the 1990s, the senior management team that previously existed in the organisation was completely replaced by Change Managers, all of whom joined the organisation from outside the local township. They were well educated, with most possessing advanced tertiary qualifications in psychiatry, nursing, mental health or organisational management. Though Change Managers had not worked previously in this organisation, they brought with them substantial experience from working in other psychiatric and general hospitals, and senior management roles.

Change Managers expressed clear perceptions about their reasons for being in the organisation, as noted in the following quotes.

“Our job was to manage the change as effectively as we could.” (Change Manager)

“We were very clearly given the brief to undertake major reform within the organisation.” (Change Manager)

“We were expected to manage and work in the change.” (Change Manager)

For several Change Managers, their first impressions of the organisation appear to have formed before formally entering the organisation. For example,
Change Managers described prior visits to the organisation that assisted them to gain "insight into the place". One Change Manager recalled the following experience.

"I couldn’t tell you exactly which year I first became aware of mental health reform, but it was fairly early on. I actually visited Bayview Hospital in about, I think it would’ve been 1989, yes, it was pre-regionalisation. I do remember talking to the leadership here about changes that were proposed … the first thing I recall is that there were patients everywhere and literally sitting under trees, and sitting on seats, and milling around … so quite a few people about, not apparently doing anything at all. So obviously that fits well with that description of that model that’s been fairly, almost custodial, certainly asylum-like. People were just put here to while their time away … I met with the senior management at the time, and I found that less than impressive. It was fairly, how shall I put it, lacked energy. They certainly fitted with the model that they weren’t doing much either." (Change Manager)

Change Managers were focussed on creating a new and different organisation, and they rarely spoke about the past or current organisation. The views they did express about the organisation’s history and culture were largely negative, describing an organisation that they perceived was very much in need of change.

"I was astounded at the extent of the problems this place had.“
(Change Manager)

"The history of this place, that everybody had endured for so long, had reached a point where it couldn’t be allowed to continue." (Change Manager)

Like the management teams before them, Change Managers worked in administration buildings and, apart from their attendance at information forums to
communicate to large groups of staff, tended to have little day-to-day contact with
patients and staff at the ward level. They spoke frequently about their job role as
leading the change and building a new organisation.

"My role is to lead the change, to ensure the new model of service
delivery is embraced by staff, that they understand it, that they know
why we’re doing this." (Change Manager)

"My job was to downsize and rebuild Bayview Hospital." (Change
Manager)

Change Managers described themselves as a cohesive group, as
observed by one Change Manager.

"I think we’re somewhere in the middle of getting to where we want to
be. But I think the interesting thing about it is that we all know where
we’re going and that might be (laughed) the good thing. We’ve recently
done our cultural analysis and it was fascinating to see that as a group
… that we all thought similarly …so either we’re all wrong (laughed) or
we all have some idea of what it is that we’re trying to achieve."
(Change Manager)

Given that Change Managers were very new to the organisation, and their
primary focus was on implementing and communicating change, further
description of the perceptions and attributes of this identity category continues in
the next chapter, which focusses on how members of each of the three core
identity categories perceived and responded to the large-scale changes that were
occurring in the organisation.

Summary

Analysis of the data revealed three unique identity categories, each
reflecting three divergent perspectives regarding the essence of the organisation,
and what it meant to be an organisational member. Members of each of the three
identity categories could be discerned by the way in which they spoke about the organisation, their perceived role in it, and the patient group. Warders perceived the organisation as an asylum that housed dangerous patients in closed and locked wards, and their perceived role as protecting the community by watching over patients to ensure they did not leave the facility. Carers perceived the organisation as a hospital for patients with mental illness, for whom their perceived role was to provide a professional style of care. Change Managers perceived a future envisioned organisation, and their core focus was on the changes that needed to be made to the organisation, in order to achieve that vision.

The history of the organisation differed for each identity group. The history described by Warders revealed a rich tapestry of memories that incorporated the township, families, childhood, school and community events. In contrast, the history described by Carers centred on memories of time spent in the organisation caring for, and developing close relationships with, patients. Change Managers did not have a history within the organisation, and the perceptions they shared about the current organisation were based largely on stories they had heard, or brief observations gained from prior visits to the organisation. Together, the three identity categories reflected the organisation's complete history and future potential – representing the past, present and future envisioned organisations.

Other key differences between the three identity groups included the areas in which they worked and patient acuity. Warders were found mainly in closed and locked wards that housed patients with severe and chronic mental illness who were unlikely to leave the organisation. In contrast, Carers were found mainly in acute care wards. Patients in these wards had less severe mental illness, and were more likely to rehabilitate. Change Managers were all new to the organisation, and worked mainly in administrative buildings with minimal
patient contact. Since the 1970s, when acute care wards were first introduced, closed and open wards had functioned as separate and distinct work units, so that Warders and Carers may have existed as relatively autonomous identity groups within the organisation, with their own unique socialisation processes (Moreland & Levine, 2001). The organisation may therefore have been described as a hybrid or ideographic organisation (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Despite some tensions that were apparent between members of the Carer and Warder identity groups, it seems evident that intergroup relations between the two groups remained relatively stable, without any overt conflict, suggesting that the Warder identity group may have maintained dominant status in the organisation until the entry of Change Managers in the 1990s.

Warders and Carers display similarities to the identities described in a study of two domestic organisations by Salzinger (1991). Salzinger found that the nature of the work conducted by employees in both organisations was similar, but produced two different identities. The first organisation provided no training and the workers defined their work as unimportant. In the second organisation, training was provided to assist employees to achieve minimum work standards, and the workers defined their work as skilled and professional. A study of psychiatric attendants in the US also found two identity groups among workers (Simpson & Simpson, 1959). The researchers found that most workers developed a positive "occupational self-image" by building it around one core and valued element of their work, which was caring for the patient. However, they also found a portion of attendants (46.5%) who gave extrinsic reasons for their jobs that did not involve patient care.

Despite the disparities between the three core identities, all participants spoke about their individual connection with the organisation in positive terms, conveying a sense of belonging, and a commitment to their perceived role in the organisation. Participants across the three identity categories also indicated
support for their perception of the organisation's core function, and referred negatively to 'others' in the organisation who were perceived to hold incorrect views about the organisation and their associated job role. The narratives demonstrated the perception by all participants that they were doing the right thing by the organisation, as they understood it to be, and that their perceived role behaviours were being enacted in the best interests of the organisation, patients, and the broader community.

This chapter has introduced and described the three core identity categories that emerged – including information about their origins, history, distinguishing features and attributes, and how members of each identity group perceived the purpose of the organisation and their role within it. The next chapter focusses on how members of the three identity groups perceived and responded to communication about change in the organisation.
CHAPTER SEVEN: PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES TO CHANGE

'Today's problems come from yesterday's solutions.'

Peter Senge

This chapter explores how members of the three core identity groups perceived and responded to changes in the organisation. While Warders and Carers accounted primarily for the receivers of communication about change, Change Managers were the main senders of change-related communication. The first section explores how members of each of the three core identity groups perceived the drivers of the change process. The ensuing sections detail how Change Managers approached the design and communication of the changes. The sections that follow describe how Warders and Carers perceived and interpreted messages about change, how they responded to the changes, and how they responded to communication from Change Managers. These are followed by a section that explores how Change Managers tended to react to the perceptions and responses that were displayed by the staff group to change-related communication. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the major themes and findings. The key findings are summarised in Table 4.

Drivers of Change

The major drivers for change were all external to the organisation. As detailed in Chapter 3, a United Nations resolution drew global attention to the rights of people with mental illness, which led to development of a national mental health policy that, in turn, generated a statewide process of reform to restructure and redevelop mental health services at all levels across the state. The organisation was, therefore, just one part of a broader program of change, as explained by one Change Manager.

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Table 4: Perceptions and Responses to Change by Identity Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE IDENTITY CATEGORIES</th>
<th>WARDERS</th>
<th>CARERS</th>
<th>CHANGE MANAGERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of change drivers</td>
<td>No awareness of external drivers for change – believed that managers could choose to avoid or block change</td>
<td>Good awareness of external drivers for change – heard about changes before they were communicated inside the organisation</td>
<td>Substantial awareness – involved in external changes across the mental health sector before entering the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication focus and preferences</td>
<td>Concrete information; present oriented</td>
<td>Concrete and abstract information; present and future oriented</td>
<td>Abstract information; strategic focus; future oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of change messages</td>
<td>Outsiders are threatening to take our jobs and let dangerous patients out</td>
<td>The changes are a continuation of the type of work we have already been doing</td>
<td>We are changing the organisation from a place that met the needs of staff, to a place that empowers patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Management are using a performance management strategy to remove employees from jobs</td>
<td>Management are using a performance development strategy to help employees care for patients</td>
<td>Employees are unskilled and require training so they may enact the new model of service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to change communication</td>
<td>Unreceptive, negative, avoidant</td>
<td>Engaged, responsive</td>
<td>Direct, repetitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Identity Categories (cont)</td>
<td>Warders</td>
<td>Carers</td>
<td>Change Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial responses to change process</td>
<td>Denial, disbelief</td>
<td>Open to change, readiness, acceptance</td>
<td>Positive, enthusiastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional responses during change</td>
<td>Shock, fear, anger</td>
<td>Grief and loss, ambivalence</td>
<td>Annoyance, frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived scale of change</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Incremental</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“There were national and state political drivers … the nature of the change here was driven by what was happening at the national and state level.” (Change Manager)

Carers accurately perceived the drivers of change as external and demonstrated prior awareness of the influence that external changes in the mental health sector would have on work practices inside the organisation.

“I think once I started studying, I sort of got a gist that things were going to change and there was a lot of um, a lot more um, what word would you call them, human rights involvement in a lot of the stuff.” (Registered Nurse)

“I knew it was going to happen for a long time. Just the way everything’s been going in the community outside, the downsizing of hospitals in other states and overseas. I knew that this sort of thing was coming, was sweeping through and it would come eventually.” (Senior Nurse)

In contrast, Warders indicated no knowledge or awareness of external changes that were occurring across the mental health sector. One Change Manager recalled communicating with this group of employees, who believed that managers could choose to block unwanted changes.

“They saw it as being driven by me. I think the vast majority of people think managers are bringing in these ideas. They have some conception that these ideas come from outside, but I get the feeling that they believe you have far greater control over things, and you could stop them if you wanted. You could choose not to reduce to 200 staff if you wanted to. You could say, ‘We’re not going to do this’.” (Change Manager)

Despite the number of external drivers for change – including the United Nations Resolution 98B, the National Mental Health Policy, National Mental
Health Plan and State Mental Health Plan – Change Managers found that their initial efforts to implement change in the organisation were blocked by external powerholders.

"A significant milestone was the identified need to gain corporate and political support. We were confronted with that very directly one day when we were summoned to corporate office to explain why we were engaging in change without appropriate authority, and we were basically told to stop what we were doing." (Change Manager)

Thus, while external drivers had gained momentum from international to national, state and regional levels, the change came to a halt, leading Change Managers to realise that, in order to progress the desired changes, support would need to be obtained from certain political and corporate powerholders outside the organisation.

"So it became very clear to us then that we needed strong corporate support." (Change Manager)

"It was very clear to us that without a clear corporately and politically endorsed future we were always going to struggle to make some of the changes we wanted to." (Change Manager)

When Change Managers obtained the political and corporate support needed to progress the changes, they described events at the time as "serendipitous".

“A lot of things occurred coincidentally around that time. The implementation strategy for the State Mental Health Plan needed to be developed so we, I guess, tried to stimulate its development and offered to help with it. So its release in 1996 was a key milestone that gave us the framework for the future and guaranteed political and corporate support. It was signed off by both sides of government … and that was more by accident than design, it just happened that
governments were changing around that time. The allocation of the capital works budget was another significant milestone. So, the assignment of resources to get the job done. That quickly galvanised people to action the expenditure of that money, because once the funds were assigned, they had to be expended. And so, it meant that the plans had a reality." (Change Manager)

Thus, acquiring the support of political and corporate powerholders was needed before Change Managers were able to continue with their plans to effect change within the organisation.

Design of the Change Plan

Change Managers spoke frequently about their desire to design a change plan for the organisation that would prioritise the needs of patients, or consumers, over the needs of staff.

"One of the things that came out of the national human rights approach to mental illness was to re- emphasise the rights of the patient and that, combined with the growing consumerism of mental health consumers and their carers, came together to make the hardliners reluctantly think about 'We need to provide a service to someone with an illness' as opposed to 'These patients are here to provide me with a job'." (Change Manager)

“We are not building this new hospital for the staff, we are building it for the patients.” (Change Manager)

External powerholders who had previously supported the organisation as a place of employment for local families were now supporting the organisation's new mission, as described by one politician.

“You know, I've been there and looked at some of the different, they call wards, you know, to an outsider, quite frightening or horrific, you
know. And I think it was time to have a real change … so people have their own private rooms, they have their own bathroom facilities, they’ve got domestic style accommodation rather than institutional style accommodation. In these facilities, people do their own washing, their own cooking, those sort of things, maintain their own life skills. I think it’s become, I think there’s an opportunity there for people involved in mental health for it to become more enlightening, more exciting, professional. Um, you know, you’re not just locking and unlocking a door, like a, almost like a jail warder. They’re actually becoming involved in the treatment and care and seeing the change in people when they’re on their treatment. And helping people that can get well handle the transition from an institution to being outside.” (Politician)

Change Managers also wanted to design a change plan that was practical and "logical”.

“Rather than being driven by the ideology of deinstitutionalisation we were very keen to be driven by logic and evidence. The National Mental Health Plan drew some pictures of how services could be restructured based on some of the current thinking, some of the ideologies like deinstitutionalisation. We needed to reinterpret those plans in a very practical sense taking into account models of service delivery which had recently been shown to be more effective than others, and it meant that we were able to kick start the document that said, ‘Here is your future, this is what this place will be, this is the programs it will deliver, this is how big it will be, this is the jobs that will be here’.” (Change Manager)

Change Managers developed a comprehensive written model of service delivery, based largely on the principles underlying the national and state mental health plans, which provided a structured and abstract outline of the future
envisioned organisation. The model subsequently served as a blueprint for changes to the organisation, as described by Change Managers.

"The endorsement of the model of service delivery was important in terms of managing the change, and getting us started, getting involved in the change, a very clear vision of where we were going. And I think, philosophically, that's been the impetus for the change management approaches." (Change Manager)

"We developed a model of service delivery and then we developed a staffing profile to support the model of service delivery, and then we've delivered a building environment in which to house the staffing profile, which is consistent with the model, so that that particular model of care can be delivered in that way. We sought to have a very rational progression and a very strategic progression." (Change Manager)

The new model of service delivery informed the restructure of the hospital, as well as the number of staff that would be employed within the organisation, and ultimately served as Change Managers' ‘authoritative’, abstract and ‘textual representation’ of the future envisioned organisation (Koschmann, 2012).

Communication of the Changes by Change Managers

Change Managers' communication was future-oriented. They spoke about the importance of change messages that would describe the future envisioned organisation and convey the benefits of the changes to staff.

"We believed that change here may be effected if we could very clearly articulate what the future would be." (Change Manager)

"To make this work is to get people to see the benefits of why we're doing it." (Change Manager)
Change-related communication described how the organisation would change from an institution that provided asylum-based care in closed and locked wards, to a more progressive mental health facility that would feature residential accommodation offering patients freedom, autonomy and the opportunity to rehabilitate, as described by one Change Manager.

“One of the radical things is that each of the living areas was previously a ward which would have had a nursing station and a nursing presence 24 hours a day. And we said, well, we’ll treat them as residences and we’ll put the nursing presence in another building. I think there are a lot of patients who will benefit from getting access to, really, their own space, and the opportunities to do more things for themselves, less being pushed around by the system to suit the system.” (Change Manager)

A major feature of the change was the decision by Change Managers to eliminate the nurse assistant position, a role occupied mainly by Warders, which had previously accounted for a large proportion of nursing staff. One Change Manager recounted how this was communicated to staff.

“I called a general meeting of nursing staff. I thought definitely the nursing staff, particularly the nurse assistants, we made a decision that we shouldn’t employ nurse assistants. My view was it wasn’t fair to them, it wasn’t fair to their colleagues, it wasn’t fair to their patients to have untrained staff working in the most intensive mental hospital in the state. It was an accident of history that we had to fix. So I pulled that group together, most of them turned up because I made a point of saying to them ‘This is about your future employment’ to try to get people to come. I had a very large group there and I said, ‘I want to be very clear with you that there is no future employment within this organisation. This place will change in a number of ways.’ And I talked about the ways I thought it might change, but I said, ‘One thing I am
sure of is that, in the longer term, we won’t be employing nurse assistants. And from this day forward, we won’t be employing any new nurse assistants." (Change Manager)

Change Managers communicated the requirement for all staff who retained a job in the organisation to have an individual professional development plan. The rationale is explained in the following quote from a senior manager.

“There are professional development issues to do with a lot of the staff here. Some of the staff we have here have been working here for many, many, many years and have not always taken opportunities for training and development. So, because of that their skill base isn’t that high in some cases. And in some cases it is quite inadequate to fulfill their roles.” (Senior Manager)

Change Managers were keen to ensure that staff interpreted the individual professional development plans as professional development rather than performance management.

“We wanted it to not say performance appraisal, we wanted it to emphasise that it’s about professional development.” (Change Manager)

An organisational definition for the term ‘professional development’ was found within the organisation’s strategic planning documents, and referred to “helping … all staff develop to their full potential, as … professional self-actualisation results in greater job satisfaction and better customer service”.

The rationale for the individual professional development plans was described, as follows, by one Change Manager.

“We wanted to develop a system that helped people talk to their line managers or supervisors about their work, and we wanted to provide a
structure which supported that. Our responsibilities as managers and leaders are to give people opportunities to grow professionally and personally in their work. And this provides a system to give people the opportunity to resolve problems, identify things that they thought they could do better, and be assisted to be happier in their work."

The next section explores how Warders and Carers tended to perceive the changes that were occurring within the organisation.

Perceptions of Change Communication

As noted in the following quotes, Warders tended to perceive the scale of change in the organisation as major.

"It’s been the biggest change process and also the fastest. I guess none of us really believed it would happen until we started seeing the hospital being built." (Registered Nurse)

"That’s what I believe was the difference here from other changes, this was the most serious that anybody had ever seen, this was major, every single person in the hospital was affected, this was bigger than anything they’d been through." (Senior Nurse)

Warders were not receptive to change messages, perceiving them largely as a threat to their jobs, as noted in the following quotes from Warders.

"I was quite fearful of major changes cos I saw it as a threat to my employment here." (Nurse Assistant)

"Individuals at Bayview Hospital are not necessarily motivated to pick up information because it’s a very comfortable environment to be in, in real terms. You’ve got job security. We’ve been doing the same job the same way for the last 140 years and nobody’s in any great hurry to change the way they do business." (Registered Nurse)
Warders viewed their job role as custodial, keeping patients in closed and locked wards to protect the community, and the idea of patient empowerment was a concern because patients were believed to be dangerous, with little hope of rehabilitation. Many Warders expressed the view that the new model of service delivery did not cater for these patients.

"We've got a building infrastructure that is consistent with the model of service delivery. The problem is the model of service delivery does not describe the client demographic that we're actually working with." (Registered Nurse)

"My understanding is that they tried to deal with (closed ward) by comparing it to an acute psychiatric ward which it's not, it's a high secure ward. They're not there because of their good looks, or their mental illness, it's their criminal record first of all." (Senior Nurse)

"We know who is dangerous, and they're OK here in a secure, safe environment. But on the other side (pointing to the security gate) it could be a different matter." (Registered Nurse)

One local Carer, whose attitude toward patients, and acceptance of the changes, was in direct conflict with the views of Warder family members, described how family members believed that patients were better off remaining in confinement.

"(My family members) say things like, 'Because we're protecting them. Nice safe place for them to live. People here know the best way to treat them. People who come from outside don't. People who were part of it, you fit in. If you don't make waves, and you fit in, it's okay. But if you challenge new ideas? Don't change anything, keep things the way they are.'" (Local Carer)
One Change Manager similarly described how members of the Warder identity group responded when he visited a closed ward to communicate information about the changes.

"And they made all these sorts of arguments, arguments that it was just a smokescreen, there wasn’t really any redevelopment of the hospital, that this was all part of some broader agenda to release dangerous patients onto the street." (Change Manager)

It was clear that Warders preferred communication that was present-rather than future-oriented, as captured in the following quote.

"We didn’t really want to hear about it, we had other things to do, we’ve got a job to do and we were busy with other things. They did give us the information, it just wasn’t really up there in our priorities, it wasn’t going to happen tomorrow so who cares … until you’re using it, you don’t need it." (Registered Nurse)

Warders thus attended mainly to here-and-now information that had immediate utility for their current shift. A Change Manager made a similar observation of Warders’ present-oriented focus.

"Some people start changing attitudes once their behaviour and the world around them starts changing, rather than conceptualising it. People in management have to conceptualise and look ahead and say this is where we’re going, whereas I think people at other levels of the organisation have got so many things to contend with in the here and now that they don’t have the luxury of sitting back and looking, and their prime concern is managing the shift today … what I’m saying is that a lot of people at that level aren’t theoretical or looking at models in the same way … their priority is day to day things rather than thinking ahead." (Change Manager)
Warders also responded better to communication that was concrete rather than abstract, as observed by several managers.

"It wasn’t easy to communicate with people who tend to be very concrete." (Senior Nurse)

"Unfortunately, there are a large number of people who want everything in black and white." (Operational Manager)

Consistent with the origins of the Warder identity group – where a job was acquired without qualifications or the need for an education, and professional development was virtually non-existent – there was little evidence that Warders could conceptualise the future envisioned organisation that Change Managers were describing. For some, a lack of education and low levels of literacy may also have influenced their comprehension of, and receptiveness to, change-related information, as noted by one participant.

"It’s like when we re-applied for our jobs here, through that computer, they didn’t ask me anything about what I did in the (work area), you know? It seemed very strange, and I had friends that worked here and they didn’t get a job, maybe cos they filled out the wrong thing but they done their job terrifically, you know? It confuses me. There was a lot of older people in the (work area) that wouldn’t understand any of it. You know, a couple of them couldn’t even read properly." (Operational Officer)

Literacy issues were also observed by several managers.

"A lot of the staff that were there were very, really, semi-literate, unskilled." (Change Manager)

"I have people that have been here for a long period of time and the job is very familiar. So they understand and can perform their duties because they’re familiar. They have been here for a long period of time, they’ve usually got the job through a family member before selection
processes were even interviews. So like 20 years ago, 'Oh, I have got a cousin that can come and work for us, or a brother or a father or a son' sort of thing. I think you will find that that had a lot to do with why there is some reading and writing difficulties." (Operational Manager)

With regard to Change Managers' communication about the requirement for all staff to have an individual professional development plan, Warders shared the view that the plans were not designed to assist staff, but to monitor and assess performance, which would pose a threat to jobs, as noted in the following quote from a Warder.

"I take it more bad than good. My view is that they say it's personal development, but the other side of it is that it's also a performance criteria. That if you don't keep to that performance criteria, if you don't make that performance criteria, can that be held against you to lose your position? And I don't think that's right. People have been able to do a task that doesn't necessarily have to have a skill or a qualification, but just life experience to get that job. As far as I'm concerned the people in this hospital have shown a history of commitment and loyalty, and now they're turning around and saying, 'Fill out a professional development plan.'" (Operational Officer)

A senior manager observed a similar perception when communicating to members of the Warder identity group about the professional development plans.

"The fear that I got from the staff, and this was genuine, they felt that what this professional development plan was looking at was the lack of work that they did, and was to cut down staff numbers. That was the message I got very clearly from my staff was that they were not going to be involved, or chose not to or, didn't embrace it in any way, because they honestly felt, and I had it verbalised to me by staff in staff meetings, was that this professional development plan is just, is time management and looking at if we don't do enough work, and it won't be
appreciated on paper, the effort and work that we put into it, and this is just an exercise to gather information to cut down our staff numbers so we won’t have so many of us, so that’s really the message they got. They didn’t get the message that this is about personal development, this is about looking at training, and other initiatives to help you, about mentoring. They missed all of that.” (Senior Manager)

In contrast, Carers were open and receptive to communication about change, which included listening to and reading change messages, attending information forums, and actively seeking out information, as noted by one Carer.

"There’s nothing that I can’t find out. I never have to be told. I can find out anything. I never feel as if I’m lacking in any knowledge because I can always find it out. I have a mouth, a tongue and an ability to get it." (Operational Officer)

Carers responded well to future-oriented communication, including information that was abstract and conceptual. The majority were able to conceptualise the future envisioned organisation that Change Managers were describing, and demonstrated awareness and understanding of the guiding principles underpinning the new model of service delivery. Carers were not overwhelmed by the changes, and spoke about them as a continuation of the work they were already performing in the organisation.

"It isn’t asking anyone to do anything that’s really all that out there. They’re just asking them to treat others with respect, to think about the practices they are engaging in and to involve clients. I don’t see it as any big deal. But some people do. Maybe they see it as encroaching on what they do and causing them to change. But it should be what they’re doing already. I think the people that have trouble with that are maybe in the wrong area." (Registered Nurse)
Carers spoke about the requirement to have an individual professional development plan as an integral part of their role to maintain a high standard of professional behaviour, as demonstrated in the following quotes from Carers.

“It's to improve on our professional skills and to maintain high levels of professional conduct, thus improving our knowledge base.” (Registered Nurse)

“I think it’s a tool to identify professional development needs of the staff member and to identify some objectives and some tasks that need to be achieved over a period of time to ensure that the staff member’s professional development standards rise.” (Allied Health Professional)

“Professionally I think, we who are in the belief that we are professionals, and who want to further our cause as professionals, I think it’s the only real professional way to undertake continued education.” (Enrolled Nurse)

This section has focussed mainly on how Warders and Carers perceived change-related communication in the organisation. The next section turns the focus to their responses to the changes that were occurring in the organisation. Warders demonstrated a more complex series of responses, and these are presented first, followed by Carers’ responses.

Responses to Change

Warders

Warders responded to the changes with a series of intense negative emotions. Their initial responses involved mainly denial, which was reflected in their perception that the changes proposed by Change Managers simply would not occur.
“There was a denial, a denial, a denial, a denial, a continual denial that it wouldn't happen, and then when it did happen, it was ‘Wow, we have to apply for our job, it's really going to happen.’” (Operational Officer)

"There was a lot of denial, no-one really thought that it was going to happen." (Registered Nurse)

One Change Manager recalled encountering this denial during a visit to a closed ward.

"After the (information session) a few of the nursing staff called me aside. These are people all of whom are now known to me as people who have opposed the change all the way along. And basically put to me with a great deal of confidence that the physical redevelopment would never happen. They were clearly convinced that it simply wouldn’t happen. I’m not sure there was much logic attached to it. I mean I think their rationale at the time was that it was too big a project relocating prisoners. Sorry, I shouldn’t say prisoners, but they would, this group in particular. Relocating the patients from (closed wards) would simply be too risky and frightening, and politically, there'd be a lack of will to achieve it, and industrially, it would never be permitted to happen. The arguments weren’t dreadfully coherent, but it was put to me very bluntly that it simply wasn’t going to happen, that no building had ever been knocked down at Bayview Hospital.” (Change Manager)

Expressions of denial reflected the long and stable tenure of the Warder identity, which had manifested in the development of stable beliefs about the organisation's purpose, so that Warders genuinely believed the organisation would continue to function as it always had, and the proposed changes would not eventuate. The degree to which Warders believed the organisation would continue as it always had was observed by non-Warder participants.
“There’s not 3000 patients here anymore, and someone made to me once the point of saying, ‘The problem with Bayview Hospital is that it still behaves like it’s got 3000 patients and x number of staff’ in the sense that, according to this person, that Bayview Hospital, you know, the myth is bigger than the creators. In the sense that Bayview Hospital still feels like this huge mother starship enterprise, some big type of entity.” (Allied Health Professional)

“Part of the issues with Bayview Hospital would be that many people have worked here for a long time, and their family before them, and their family before them, and that people thought it would always just be here as it is.” (Senior Manager)

It was the occurrence of several major change events – including the demolition of longstanding physical structures within the grounds of the organisation, and the implementation of the organisation-wide recruitment process – that first signalled the realisation for many Warders that the proposed changes were actually proceeding, as noted in the following quotes from Warders.

“The water tower coming down was major. I thought ‘Ok, we really are building a hospital’.” (Regular Nurse)

“I don’t think anyone realised that the changes were really going to come down. It really hit the crunch when the wards started to downsize and you could see the movement.” (Operational Officer)

“So we sort of knew what they’d been talking about and what they’d been thinking about, but I don’t think anyone really fully understood the concept of it all and how it would fall into place until it hit us … they brought in this company to assess everybody, that’s when we really started to take it seriously … that’s where it basically started to sink in that we’re on the move, because your job was on the line.” (Registered Nurse)
Several Change Managers observed the connection between physical changes to the organisation’s structures, and Warders’ realisation that the changes were really happening.

“The commencement of demolition, was a significant milestone … for its psychological impact on the workforce and for its capacity to disempower the doubters and the anti-change people. That was a significant milestone in terms of confirming that it’s all very real and it’s going to happen … because it was a sign that things really were changing. And really, for the first time, you had this new model actually happening. People could see that it was actually happening.” (Change Manager)

“Until we actually started construction and bulldozers moved on site there was a lot of people who were, there was a lot of rumours circulating in the hospital that the construction wasn’t going to happen, and you’ll know through talking to other people that, until the concrete almost was being poured, that there’s a sense that it was a myth, that it was, this was, change would never eventuate.” (Change Manager)

These events were a turning point for Warders, signalling a change in their responses from denial to disbelief, shock and fear, as they began to realise that the organisation they knew, which had endured for over 130 years, was disappearing. Other participants recounted their observations of Warders’ shock and fear.

“I think a lot of people were in shock. I don’t think they fully realised the effect it had on people. It was more than just the hospital being rebuilt. The whole fabric of Bayview Hospital changed. Like for generations people have worked here. My husband’s mother had worked here. Her husband worked here. My husband’s brother worked here. His brother’s wife worked here. Generations of people worked here, and they all envisaged they’d be here until they died.” (Registered Nurse)
“People were absolutely shell-shocked, the nursing staff were just
stunned, people walked around like they’d heard their relatives had
cancer, it was that sort of shock. People were grey.” (Change Manager)

“You could see it with others, they were traumatised.” (Administrative
Officer)

“The clear thing that stands out was this feeling of fear and anxiety …
the changes started to become more rapid and closer, and more
ongoing, and I think people just felt very threatened.” (Registered
Nurse)

As the changes increased in intensity, Warders began to show an
avoidance to change-related communication, as noted by one Change Manager.

“People had stopped listening after a while. They just didn’t want to
know. I don’t know if it was more to do with how much we were giving
them or the fact that if they closed their eyes, it would go away.”
(Change Manager)

Warders’ tactics to avoid engaging with communication about change
elevated to threats and intimidation, as observed by the following participants.

"We’ve had people who rung (the change team) up and threatened
them, and said, ‘If you send me any more information about what’s
happening with my job’. They’ve made personal threats against them,
abused them, and threatened them personally. ‘I don’t want my family
to know anything about this and I don’t want to know any more about
it.’” (Change Manager)

The tenure and stability of the Warder identity manifested, for members of
this identity group, in a strong sense of belonging in the organisation, and
entitlement to a job. This was observed by several participants.

“I found that most of the people at Bayview Hospital, especially the old
cronies like my (family member), were saying, you know, ‘I’m entitled

to, you have to find me a job that I like and it has to be within, you know, half an hour of travelling, and it has to be this and it has to be that.’ I don’t know, they just (sigh), for the life of me I still can’t understand why they felt so entitled. I thought, why can’t you get off your butt and find your own job. You know, I just found a lot of them very self-entitled, like, you know, 'We’re doing this wonderful job here and we should be looked after.’” (Local Carer)

“I think that’s part of the problem with Bayview Hospital, is that people were there for years and years and years, and were doing the same things over and over again, and never had any difference. They own the job. That was the problem, they owned the job.” (Registered Nurse)

Warders had not worked in other organisations, were relatively uneducated, and had never participated in a formal recruitment process to obtain a job. As a consequence, they lacked confidence in their employability.

“I didn’t think I had a hope in hell of getting another job, because I regarded myself as a dinosaur, too long in the one job and unemployable in the new world.” (Registered Nurse)

“I felt that I should have got out years ago. I felt that I’d never get another job anywhere else because I just felt so institutionalised.” (Registered Nurse)

Carers demonstrated an awareness of the impact that the changes were having on Warders, and empathised with their situation, as demonstrated by the following observations from Carers.

“Some of them were just shocked when they passed an exam. You know, they couldn’t believe they could pass an exam. I don’t think they thought they had a brain, some of them. It’s just an indication of where they felt themselves in terms of work all those years. All those ‘shit kickers’. That was the expression, you know, all the nurse assistants
were just ‘shit-kickers’. And I think they really thought of themselves realistically in that way.” (Registered Nurse)

“But you know, I think in some ways, you kind of took on part of what the world thought of the patient, it kind of applied to you. And I think then when they had to make a change at the end, they didn’t see themselves as worthwhile practitioners, you see. They might’ve thought of themselves as good people or whatever, but I think as practitioners, they didn’t see themselves as anything other than a custodian.” (Registered Nurse)

“I remember having that feeling listening to people talking, and thinking to myself, you’ll fall apart if things really change dramatically. I suppose that it really hit me, how much of a culture there is. It wasn’t just, it was everything. People had known nothing else in their working life, and they thought that they could do nothing else. And I said, but you’re a psychiatric nurse. I mean, look at the skills you’ve got. ‘But I’ve always worked here, I won’t be able to get a job doing this somewhere else’. Why not? You know, it just struck me that so many people couldn’t see that they had skills that you could use anywhere else. It amazed me! I suppose I’d never thought about it before. I mean, I was just struck by that. It just never dawned on me that people, cos some of them were well skilled people, but they had no confidence in their ability at all … they never thought they could do anything else, that once they left Bayview Hospital it was like their life was finished.” (Registered Nurse)

Warders’ responses to the changes were of a nature that might readily be perceived by Change Managers as resistance to change. For example, resistance can be perceived as active (e.g., opposing and obstructing) as well as passive (e.g., ignoring or avoiding communication) (Bovey & Hede, 2001).
However, Warders’ perceptions and responses seemed logical for members of such a longstanding and stable identity group, which had endured in one organisation for over three generations of local families. Moreover, given that they had never worked elsewhere, this was the only organisation that had ever informed their experience and expectations about organisations, employment and change.

The next section explores how Carers responded to the changes.

**Carers**

Carers perceived the changes as an opportunity to improve patient care. During their moderate tenure, Carers had observed the introduction of acute care wards, and had worked in other organisations, so they were perhaps more likely to perceive the scale of change in the organisation as ‘incremental’, involving only ‘fine-tuning’ of their existing occupational identity (Reger et al., 1994b), as suggested by the following quotes from Carers.

“In 12 years there’s been lots of changes happening in all that time, it’s not something new that clients are moving out.” (Allied Health Professional)

“From our perspective, we see nothing different from how we operate as professionals, and it’s quite interesting that these other groups have suddenly discovered that you involve clients in your work.” (Allied Health Professional)

Carers’ responses to the change were characterised by their strong patient focus. Even when Carers were asked how the changes were affecting them personally, responses centred around how they were assisting patients to cope with the changes, as noted by one Carer.

“People were sort of wrapped up in, well not wrapped up, but trying to sort of facilitate the ease for patients and forgetting about themselves.”
Sort of, they were, I felt a lot of people said that to me and I did the same. I thought, my first thought was for the patients, you know? These people have been here for 20 odd years you know, and now they’re going to have to move into these communities, and I was involved I suppose in a lot of committees on how we were going to make it easier for the clientele to make the transition." (Registered Nurse)

Carers expressed frequent concerns about how the changes were impacting on patients.

“A lot of patients were hurt because this was their home and they were taken away from their home to other places. They may well have settled in when they got there but it was just a sad thing for both staff and patients to have them separated from a place they always knew as home.” (Registered Nurse)

“Once these changes started happening to them and, you know, you see people going, and a lot of them didn’t want to go, but the decision was made up above, you know, what do you do, you can’t, no, the last I heard they were just shipped all over.” (Operational Officer)

It was evident that Carers became extremely close to patients, and this resulted in intense emotional responses from Carers as they watched patients being moved out of the hospital to community facilities as part of the statewide change process. One participant noted the impact that this was having on Carers.

“There was a, a certain amount of loss amongst the staff, because a lot of the staff, especially a lot of the women felt, you know, as close to those patients as some of their, well, probably closer to some of the patients than their own mothers did … and looking back on it, it was a, it was a trauma. I mean, people were going through, it was like they were having multiple deaths in the family, like whole sections of their family had been wiped out.” (Operational Officer)
As the changes progressed, Carers' responses became increasingly ambivalent. On the one hand, they were accepting of the need for change, and supported the concept of patient empowerment. On the other hand, they expressed concerns that the changes were compromising, rather than improving, patient care, as observed in the following quotes from Carers.

“I think we’ve gone too far. Too far, too fast. We’ve let the apron strings go too fast and too completely. What actually happened was, our patient population in (name of ward) basically had 12 foot fences around them 24 hours a day and when they went to (new ward), they had no fences, no doors, no gates. They all stayed in a little 12-foot square concrete area. They were so institutionalised. And that was heart-breaking. It was actually heart-breaking. You could not coax them out of that concrete, bloody area. And I thought, you know, they don’t know they can go. They’re so conditioned. I guess the administration here believes that shiny new buildings and a new model of service delivery equal better care, but a building is just a place that you are – it’s the quality of the input that’s important.” (Registered Nurse)

"It’s hard to say that this is better treatment and we’ve providing better care, and essentially that’s what we feel we should be about. I know that’s tied in with patient rights, which are also important, it’s hard to mesh those two worlds where you’ve got to juggle the rights of the human as opposed to their needs for basic care, and where do we step in and take over, are we just to pull back and watch them live in squalor and think that we’re doing a good job?” (Registered Nurse)

Carers’ ambivalence reflected the ‘mixed feelings’ that have been identified by change researchers, in which individuals may respond to organisational changes with a mixture of positive and negative perceptions (e.g., Piderit, 2000; Pratt & Doucet, 2000).
The next section explores how Change Managers reacted to the perceptions and responses that were displayed by Warders and Carers.

**Change Managers**

Change Managers described the scale of change in the organisation as moderate.

"This place is not new to change, some changes here have been very significant. This is just one of a series of changes." (Change Manager)

Given their involvement in external changes prior to entering the organisation, it seems likely that Change Managers may have been referring, in part, to changes occurring across the broader mental health sector, rather than to changes occurring within the organisation, as suggested by the following quote.

"Mental health has been through a lot of change in the last 20 years."

(Change Manager)

Change Managers referred to all receivers of organisational communication primarily as 'staff', and there was no recognition that the staff group comprised two unique subgroups that were displaying different reactions to the changes. Carers belonged to a subgroup of staff who were receptive to change, but were ambivalent, in that they were open to patient empowerment but concerned about the negative impacts on patient care. In contrast, Warders belonged to a subgroup of staff who were not receptive to change, and were struggling to come to terms with the realisation that the organisation they knew, which had remained relatively unchanged for over 130 years, was rapidly being dismantled.

Change Managers did not appear to recognise that Carers existed as a subgroup of organisational members who were engaging with change communication, and supportive of change. One Change Manager explained that
a key focus was the group of employees who were leaving the organisation (through the implementation of vocational and outplacement support strategies) while less focus was placed on those employees who would continue to work in the organisation.

“There were two groups of people. Those who had jobs and those who didn’t. We had directed our attention to those who didn’t, quite reasonably I thought, I guess, in terms of managing the change. But in retrospect I think we probably should have done the same for the people who did get jobs. We tended to then expect that they would just come aboard.” (Change Manager)

While Change Managers seemed unaware of the true nature and origins of the two identity subgroups, they were very aware that there was one group of staff who did not appear to be listening to change communication.

“We tried our best to flood people with information. I think to a degree that was successful but I think that what we didn’t do was think seriously about why some people didn’t want to hear what we had to say. There are still some people who are so angry about the change that they will refuse to read anything associated with it and distrust anything that is associated with it. I have no doubt that even while the bulldozers were here demolishing things there were still some people here who did not believe in the change. So, I think one of the things we could have done differently was assertively identify individuals, or groups of people who we knew weren’t, didn’t want to hear the message, and think about how we got them to listen. Now I’m not sure how you do that. There’s a large group of people who, despite our best efforts, haven’t heard, or don’t understand, or don’t want to understand what’s being said. There’s still a lot of, like I say, the really interesting question is ‘Why didn’t no-one hear?’ You can tell people as
much as you like sometimes, but how do you make them listen?"  
(Change Manager)

Change Managers expressed annoyance and frustration with this group of employees, because they strongly believed this was “a positive change” that was offering substantial opportunities to both staff and patients.

“I was talking to a group of people recently and they were particularly negative about what’s happening, and I spoke to one of them after the meeting and I said, ‘Look, I have trouble relating to people who continually say this is very negative because from where I’m sitting, and I’ve worked in mental health for 25 years, it’s one of the most positive things I’ve ever seen.’” (Change Manager)

One senior manager described how changing the organisation’s purpose was resulting in positive enhancements to the organisation’s image and reputation.

“Even aside from the obvious benefits to the consumers, there’s benefits for us as an organisation to move forward. It’s gone from that awful place where awful people worked and awful patients went, to this place that is considered to be some form of leader in mental health. To see the change in Bayview Hospital’s reputation and people now being pleased to say ‘I work at Bayview Hospital’ rather than scared to say ‘I work at Bayview Hospital’. I mean there is obvious benefits for the consumers but I think that there’s subsidiary benefits for the rest of us as well, that we need to just recognise at some point along the way.” (Senior Manager)

Despite the organisation halving its previous workforce, Change Managers expressed the view that all staff should be able to put aside negative emotions and communicate rationally about the change.
“I understand why people might feel pain associated with the change, and seeing their workmates leave, and that sort of stuff, but I think people should be able to discuss it, discuss the change, at another level.” (Change Manager)

The final section in this chapter compares and contrasts the perceptions and responses of the three identity groups.

Discussion

The notion of change was at the centre of Change Managers' perceptions of the organisation and their job role, and was thus the central focus of their communication. Their communication was projective, as they articulated a future envisioned organisation that was abstract, existing initially in the form of text-based plans until organisational structures and practices to reflect the new model of service delivery could be established (Hsu & Elsbach, 2013; Oswick et al., 2005). Change Managers were “thinking and talking in the future tense” and their orientation toward the organisation was almost entirely future focussed (Gioia & Thomas, 1996, p. 398). This accords with Riantoputra (2010), who interviewed top managers in four organisations and found that they regularly activated organisational identity concepts during communication that were associated with the desired future image of the organisation. Riantoputra also found that the more frequently managers shared information, the more it cognitively activated their preferred organisational identity. Change Managers' communication also focussed exclusively on the positive opportunities and perceived benefits of the changes, with little mention or discussion of the negative consequences of the change for individuals. For example, in communicating to employees that they would no longer have a job in the organisation, Change Managers tended to focus on the opportunities that the organisation was providing for individuals to obtain new job roles and training. Accordingly, Change Managers' framing of
communication and change was itself more optimistic and idealistic, than rational and realistic.

While Change Managers were developing a sound understanding of the future organisation they were trying to create, they lacked a similar understanding of the current organisation they were trying to move away from. With their focus fixed firmly on the benefits of moving toward the future envisioned organisation, they found it difficult to fathom how and why existing organisational members might perceive the changes differently. Change Managers showed little awareness of the Warder and Carer identity subgroups, despite Carers, in particular, representing a relatively close fit for the type of staff that would be required to enact the new model of service delivery. Change Managers also seemed unaware that they were making change decisions that would result in the organisation completely abandoning the previously stable and dominant Warder identity. Sonenshein (2010) describes meanings of change as people's definitions of organisational reality, with organisational communication about change signalling change leaders' "preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (p. 477).

Warders' and Carers' interpretations of change-related communication, however, remained grounded in their fundamental beliefs about why the organisation existed, and their perceived role within it. Warders responded consistently with their perception of the organisation as an asylum, and their perceived job role as custodians to watch over dangerous patients in closed and locked wards. Warders did not agree with the concept of patient empowerment due to the perceived risks of allowing dangerous patients the freedom to move beyond locked doors and fences. Warders were also unreceptive to any changes that might threaten jobs for local families, and perceived individual professional development plans as a further risk to their job security.
Carers, on the other hand, responded consistently with their perception of the organisation as a hospital, and their perceived job role to care for patients. Carers were open to the organisation changing in ways that could benefit the patients, and perceived individual professional development plans as an organisational strategy that could support employees to maintain their skills and provide professional levels of care. Carers were, however, demonstrating ambivalence about the changes, expressing concern that the changes were reducing, rather than increasing, levels of patient care.

The three identity groups thus reflected three very different orientations to the same organisation, with each meaning reflecting a different way of perceiving and enacting the organisation (Gergen et al., 2004). Warders described an organisation that was consistent with the asylum originally set up by the organisation's founders, when the Warder identity was first established. Carers described an organisation that was congruent with the concept of acute patient care, which was the hallmark of open wards that were introduced at the time their identity group first became established. With their clear brief to establish a new and different organisation, Change Managers described a future envisioned organisation that they were responsible for designing and building. Thus, Warders and Carers demonstrated attachments to two different organisational realities, both of which had their roots in the organisation's past, while Change Managers were attached to a prospective organisation that was being established to replace the existing organisation.

Change Managers’ displayed a rational approach to change that was consistent with a wealth of literature that suggests change leaders generally focus on the rational and strategic aspects of change, and avoid the human and emotional aspects of change (Saka, 2003). The result is that change leaders lack understanding of the receivers of change-based communication, and their communication matches their own needs, rather than the needs of other
organisational members (Quirke, 1995). As a consequence, while grief and fear responses are normal and adaptive reactions to change, particularly when individuals are losing things they value, emotional responses are ignored, and are perceived by change leaders as illogical and irrational (Marks, 2007).

According to Palmer and Dunford (2008), reactions to change can involve four psychological stages that are normal and predictable for employees. Warders’ responses reflected the first two stages, which include an initial stage of ‘shock’ that can include ‘immobilization’ on the part of the individual. As a consequence, individuals may feel a ‘perceived threat’ that can involve ‘anger’ and ‘defensive retreat’ in order to hold on to what feels ‘safe’ (Jick & Peiperl, 2003). In contrast, Carers’ reactions to the changes were reflected in Palmer and Dunford’s latter two psychological stages. These include an ‘acknowledgement’ of change that includes ‘mourning’ as individuals ‘let go’ of valued aspects of the organisation.

Warders’ and Carers’ emotional responses to the changes were congruent with their respective attachments to, and beliefs about, the organisation. For example, Carers’ emotions were entirely patient focussed. They demonstrated a grief response as patients were relocated out of the organisation, and their ambivalence was directly associated with concerns about reductions to patient care. In contrast, Warders displayed intense negative emotional reactions that signalled the strength of their history in, and long association with, the organisation. Warders experienced perhaps the most intense emotions of any identity group in the organisation, and may have needed more time than others to process the events that triggered these, and deal with the impact. Their avoidance of communication occurred from the point at which they began experiencing intense emotions, associated with seeing longstanding physical structures being dismantled.
Stryker (2004) suggests that emotions tend to amplify the trigger and individuals' subsequent behaviour, so that emotions may play a role in strengthening the effects of change. He further argues that emotions tend to occur as an acute and spontaneous experience, that then cue a cognitive realisation for the individual about the meaning of an event for self. This accords with Warders' experience, in that the destruction of physical structures signalled the cognitive realisation that the changes were really happening, and that their job security was no longer assured. Several researchers argue that emotional reactions are context-sensitive and tend to be specific to individuals' beliefs and expectations about a particular environment (Klarner et al., 2011; Smith & Kirby, 2000).

With their long and stable tenure, Warders were more likely than any other identity category in the organisation to perceive the changes as ‘revolutionary’ (Reger et al., 1994b). The Warder identity group had maintained legitimate tenure in the organisation for over 130 years, which was supported and reinforced by external powerholders who promoted the organisation as a place of employment for members of the local township, and the proposed changes posed a real and significant threat to this long-held status quo. Before the changes commenced, Warders perceived their job in the organisation as a job for life, and few imagined themselves leaving the organisation to work anywhere else. Most had not extended their education, nor developed their skills beyond their perceived job role expectations, and there was no organisational requirement for them to do so. For Warders, being a member of the township was synonymous with membership of the organisation so their evaluative and emotional attachment to the organisation may have been extremely high (de Moura, Abrams, Retter, Gunnarsdottir, & Ando, 2009).

Warders' absence of experience working in other organisations, and their lack of confidence in their employability, combined with the social stigma
associated with the township and their job role, may have contributed to a reliance on this organisation to meet fundamental needs for security and survival (Pratt, 1998). Indeed, Warders perhaps overidentified with the organisation, given that many had invested their entire employment, if not their entire lives, within it (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Elsbach (1999) found higher identification for groups who were isolated from outside contact and had limited alternative options available to meet their affiliation and safety needs. The threats faced by Warders were substantial because the changes were not only challenging their fundamental beliefs about the organisation, but were threatening the organisation's legacy of providing secure jobs to future generations of local families. They had no previous experience of large-scale organisational change, and most had not participated in a formal organisational recruitment process to apply for jobs. For Warders, their responses of denial, shock, disbelief and fear reflected the perceived magnitude of the change, as their long and stable attachment to the organisation faced a massive reappraisal.

For Carers, the organisation may have been subjectively important, though not as situationally relevant as Warders (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Carers' commitment centred on patients rather than the organisation itself, so they could perhaps more easily transfer their commitment to another organisation, whereas Warders had developed a strong sense of reliance on this organisation. From this perspective, Warders and Carers have parallels to two latent social roles – locals and cosmopolitans – described by Gouldner (1957, 1958). Locals are organisationally oriented and cosmopolitans are professionally oriented (Glaser, 1963). Gouldner explains that locals are 'company men', committed to the organisation's distinctive values, or the town in which the organisation is located, and demonstrate a high commitment to the organisation, while cosmopolitans are committed to professional values, and demonstrate higher commitment to external reference groups than to the organisation itself.
Cosmopolitans perceive their job roles as acquiring new knowledge, dealing with abstract concepts, and engaging in professional development activities to maintain specialised skills, while locals perceive their job roles in more practical and applied ways, and prefer internal peer-based evaluation (Fuller et al., 2009).

Notably, Change Managers also demonstrated emotional reactions during the change process. Traditionally, change literature has privileged the perspective of change leaders, with a dominant focus on undesirable employee responses that do not conform to change leaders' expectations, such as the notion of individual resistance (Kezar, 2001). As a consequence, models of employee reactions to change account mainly for the negative responses of employees who maintain attachments to the 'old' organisation, but do not account for the emotional reactions of individuals, such as change managers, who immediately attach themselves to a 'new' organisation. However, by not privileging any of the identity categories that emerged during data analysis, it became evident that Change Managers were also displaying negative emotions – comprising mainly annoyance and frustration – that were directed at employees whom they perceived had not "come on board" and accepted the "logic" of the changes.

Previous research has shown that perceived employee resistance can threaten change leaders' work-based identity because it may reflect negatively on their capability and performance (Schwarz & Watson, 2005; van Dijk & van Dick, 2009). Thus, any perception of employee resistance could represent an identity threat for Change Managers, who are motivated to affirm their own identity. If Warders were thus engaged in 'defensive retreat' to hold on to what felt familiar and safe, then Change Managers may have been engaging in advancing tactics that enabled them to press forward toward their future envisioned organisation (Jick & Peiperl, 2003). It makes sense that employee resistance may threaten a positive identity for Change Managers, because their organisationally-based
identity can only be fully achieved once the future envisioned organisation is realised. Thus, while Warders were reacting negatively to changes to their longstanding organisational reality, Change Managers may have reacted equally negatively to any perceived obstacles to development of their desired organisational reality. This is consistent with Thomas et al. (2011), who suggest that change leaders engage in 'resistance' to the perceived resistance of employees. They suggest that "by resisting (perceived) resistance from subordinates, [Change Managers] help to bring that resistance into being" (p. 35). As such, change leaders may contribute to change failure by being resistant to employees' counterclaims about the organisation.

Thus, while the threat for Warders may have been the prospect of losing the organisation that had nurtured and sustained their identity, the threat for Change Managers was that they might fail to achieve the organisational changes required to support their identity. Given that they pre-identified with an abstract future organisation that did not yet exist in reality, Change Managers may have experienced substantial discomfort in the current organisation, and in order to reduce that discomfort, perhaps needed employees who were attached to the current organisation to let go of the past, in order to facilitate realisation of the future organisation. Warders and Carers would experience increasing dissonance as they moved further away from the organisational structures that affirmed and supported their identities, while Change Managers would improve their sense of comfort and fit as they moved toward the future envisioned organisation (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996).

Given that a key focus of Change Managers' communication was on empowering patients, Carers' acceptance of the changes had the potential to improve their legitimacy and fit in the organisation (van Dick et al., 2005). However, for Warders, key sources of their identity were being removed or changing, thereby challenging their fundamental meaning for the organisation,
and reducing their legitimacy and fit in the context. This would not only generate uncertainty regarding job security, but could also trigger identity dissonance, which occurs when individuals experience a threat to 'identity continuity' between their past and future selves (Jetten & Hutchison, 2011). McCall and Simmons (1966) suggest the threat is greater if the identity is a 'prominent' one for the individual, and involves a greater sense of loss when there is a loss of 'role support' for the identity. Stets and Burke (2000) argue that individuals use role behaviours to affirm their beliefs about the social world, so that when they behave in accord with the expectations they associate with a particular role or identity, they are "acting in the context of, referring to, and reaffirming" their beliefs about the immediate social structure (p. 232). Stets and Burke refer to these as 'identity verification' processes, which enable individuals to maintain a stable sense of identity in a particular social context. From this premise, Warders would therefore reaffirm their identity and promote self-continuity if they continued to behave in accord with their existing expectations as custodians in the organisation (Paulsen, 2003). Thus, change may motivate individuals to engage in self-verification strategies that assist them to re-evaluate their sense of fit and affirm existing identities (Ethier & Deaux, 1994).

Nonetheless, the comparative fit of the Warder identity was declining as organisational structures and role supports associated with their identity were being removed, while the Carer and Change Manager identity groups were, in contrast, becoming more secure and legitimate, as new structures and practices were being established to support their fundamental beliefs about the organisation. Participant quotes provide some evidence for this. For example, while Change Managers did not recognise that Carers and Warders existed as two distinct identity subgroups, they did observe a shift in status relations between the two groups, as demonstrated in the following quote from a Change Manager.
“The other dynamic that I believe occurred was that after that selection [referring to the organisation-wide recruitment process] there seemed to be a shift in the power balance, if you like. So that some people who’d been cultural leaders prior to the selection process, and weren’t particularly good cultural leaders from a change process’s perspective because they were anti-change basically, they lost power at that point. Back then the people who would seek me out and talk to me were the people who thought that the change was bad. They were the vocal people who didn’t feel shy about putting their views forward to me or anyone else. Whereas today, they’re the quiet people. And the people who come to me now are people who are much more directly supportive of what’s in the model of service delivery.” (Change Manager)

This supports the idea that members of the Carer identity group were perceiving a greater sense of legitimacy and fit in the organisation. Where their beliefs about patient care were previously obscured by the dominant Warders group, Carers were now showing greater confidence in expressing and enacting their views about patient care. However, the structures were also changing for Carers, whose patient care philosophy was no longer entirely in keeping with the new residential accommodation that would offer patients a high degree of autonomy by placing nursing stations in separate buildings. This was articulated by one Change Manager, who described how the role of nurses was expected to change in the future envisioned organisation.

“One of the radical things is that each of the living areas was previously a ward which would have had a nursing station and a nursing presence 24 hours a day. And we said, well, we’ll treat them as residences and we’ll put the nursing presence in another building.” (Change Manager)

Acute care wards were therefore undergoing changes that would result in reductions to direct care practices. Carers’ primary focus was on direct patient
care, which they had enacted in the past by establishing homely ward environments, and doing things for patients, while the current changes were about empowering patients, through changing organisational structures and practices to allow patients the freedom and autonomy to do things for themselves. Thus, while communication about the changes affirmed Carers because it centred on patients, the new model of service delivery was, in effect, demanding reductions in patient care by requiring Carers to step back and do less for patients. As a consequence, although Carers' empathy and professional approach would be assets for the new organisation, their attachment to patients meant they were not an ideal fit for the requirements of the future envisioned organisation. Thus, even Carers were facing some degree of identity dissonance as role support for their direct patient care role was diminishing, and this was reflected in their growing ambivalence about the potential of the changes to reduce patient care.

The findings suggest that organisational structures may serve as symbols for employees' identities. For example, the organisation's buildings had existed without change for many years and, for Warders, symbolised the permanence and stability of their attachment to the organisation. Warders confidently maintained a sense of denial about the possibility of change until they began to see physical structures changing, with the demolition of the water tower signalling their realisation that change was really occurring, and triggering intense emotional reactions. Isabella (1990) refers to these moments as 'interpretive shifts', which occur when major change events trigger major shifts in individuals' interpretations about the change. However, while Carers demonstrated empathy for Warders as the water tower was being demolished, they did not display the same deep ties as Warders with physical structures in the organisation.

Research has demonstrated that different identity groups may emerge in association with organisational symbols in the same context (Pratt & Rafaeli,
Pratt and Rafaeli’s study of a hospital ward illuminated unique differences in the identity-based meanings that nurses attached to symbols in the ward, reflecting two subgroup identities linked to ward routines and the clothing worn by patients and staff. For example, while nurses treated the same patients, day nurses wore street clothes and described the ward as having a rehabilitation identity, while nurses on the night shift wore scrubs and described the ward as having an acute care identity. Thus, differences in nurses’ perceptions of ward symbols, and perceptions of their job roles with patients, led to development of two distinct work unit identities. Pratt and Rafaeli described the various organisational symbols as ‘object symbols’, which informed nurses’ core and distinctive beliefs regarding their work unit identity. Importantly, Pratt and Rafaeli’s conclusion was that the findings “challenge the assumption of a ‘monolithic identity’ that suggests that a symbol represents one core set of organisational values” (p. 887). Thus, the same organisational structures and symbols may have more than one meaning, depending on the perspective of the perceiver (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

At the centre of the final analysis were three core identity categories, which are ultimately conceptualised – not as social identities, group memberships or social roles – but as organisation-based identities. This is because neither of the identities existed on the organisation chart, though all three were specific to the organisation, enacted by members of the organisation, and comprised features that describe and explain how individuals made sense of their relationship with the organisation, and perceived and responded to change. All three organisation-based identities emerged as common themes in the data, with each theme revealing a particular way of viewing the organisation and one’s place within it that was shared consensually among three underlying subgroups of employees.
Together, the findings support the notion that individuals have an inherent need to develop a self-organisation identity that renders the context meaningful, and provides the individual with a sense of meaning, fit and security (Hogg et al., 2005; Puusa et al., 2013). The more disruptive the change to a context that supports a valued identity, the more it can create intense emotional reactions as individuals’ previously stable beliefs are challenged, which can, in turn, hinder their ability to attend to change communication (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Mackie, Smith, & Ray, 2008). If negative emotions serve as indicators of the degree of identity dissonance for both Warders and Carers, then they also reflect the achievements of Change Managers in successfully breaking down the symbols and supports that sustained these identities in the existing organisation. Importantly, however, Change Managers also displayed negative emotions, which revealed their need for existing employees to release their ties to the current organisation and embrace new organisational roles and structures that reflected Change Managers’ preferred organisational reality. Participant emotions provided vital information about employee responses, which helped to clarify the meaning and importance of each of the core identities for participants (Cascon-Pereira & Hallier, 2013). This suggests that emotions can provide important clues in the expression of identities in organisations (Puusa et al., 2013).

From a change leader's perspective, employee responses may be perceived as disobedience, however, the findings suggest that responses may be less about resistance to change, and more about individuals attempting to verify and maintain the identities that reflect their fundamental beliefs about the organisation (Swann, 1987). For example, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) observed an increase in negative emotional expressions by Port Authority employees when they perceived that management were engaging in actions that compromised their beliefs about the organisation's identity, suggesting that “individuals have a stake in directing organisational action in ways that are consistent with what they
believe is the essence of their organization" (p. 550). For employees whose identity ties are attached to the existing organisation, this could well result in those individuals resisting changes to the organisational structures and symbols that support and sustain that identity. However, for employees whose identity ties are attached to the new organisation, such as Change Managers, there may be a strong need to modify existing organisational structures to support their beliefs about the organisation and affirm their own identity.

This chapter has further elucidated the three core identity categories and explored their perceptions of, and responses to, the changes that were occurring in the organisation. The next chapter represents the final stage of the grounded theory analysis, in which the similarities within, and differences between, the three identity categories were identified and compared to research findings and concepts within the extant literature. The result is a substantive grounded theory model of identity development, which outlines the core identity processes and dynamics that were observed in this organisation, and their consequences for individuals and the organisation.
CHAPTER EIGHT: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT – PROCESSES AND CONSEQUENCES

‘An organization … quite literally does impose the environment that imposes on it.’

Karl E Weick

This chapter presents a substantive grounded theory model of identity development, which illuminates how individuals’ organisation-based identities were established and maintained in the organisation. The chapter begins by delineating the concept of an organisation-based identity, and differentiating it from related identity constructs in the literature. The ensuing sections describe the factors involved in two core processes of identity development – identity formation and identity maintenance. These are followed by discussion of the consequences of organisation-based identities for individuals and the organisation. The model of identity development is presented in Table 5.

Conceptualising Organisation-based Identities

The three core identities that emerged from the grounded theory analysis are conceptualised as organisation-based identities. This section outlines the concept of an organisation-based identity, and distinguishes the concept from other identity constructs. An organisation-based identity is conceptualised as that part of an individual’s self-concept that articulates the meaning the individual gives to his or her relationship with the organisation. This meaning includes the individual’s perception of the organisation's purpose ('Why does this organisation exist?') and the individual's perceived role in the organisation ('What is it that I do here?'). The concept thus defines an individual's personal sense of meaning for their connection with the organisation. This conceptualisation accords with
Table 5: Substantive Model of Identity Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE ENTRY / TIME OF ENTRY</th>
<th>AFTER ENTRY</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Level</td>
<td>Individual Level</td>
<td>Individual Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived purpose of organisation</td>
<td>importance of identity</td>
<td>behaviours are identity congruent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perceived role in organisation</td>
<td>dependence on organisation</td>
<td>perceptions of change messages are identity congruent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anticipatory identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>responses to change are identity congruent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Level</td>
<td>Group Level</td>
<td>Organisation Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large-scale organisational change</td>
<td>development of informal identity groups</td>
<td>perceived legitimacy and fit in organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation's espoused identity</td>
<td>links to formal groups</td>
<td>sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process of recruitment</td>
<td></td>
<td>attachment to identity and organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisational socialisation</td>
<td>Organisation Level</td>
<td>Organisation Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td>design of job role</td>
<td>presence of informal identity groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social change</td>
<td>work unit socialisation</td>
<td>employee behaviours reflect underlying identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construed external image of organisation</td>
<td>identity markers</td>
<td>readiness for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external powerholder influence</td>
<td>tenure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td>Social Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construed external image of organisation</td>
<td>stability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external powerholder influence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Organisation-based identities form through processes that occur as individuals establish a connection with the organisation. The development and maintenance of organisation-based identities have consequences for individuals and the organisation.

FORMING THE IDENTITY

MAINTAINING THE IDENTITY

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANISATION-BASED IDENTITY (OBI)
Cartwright and Holmes (2006), who assert that the essence of meaning in the workplace is the 'connection' between an individual and the organisation, and that the particular job or role that the individual occupies is a central source of this meaning. Similarly, Ashforth et al. (2008) suggest that "identity situates the person in a given context" by capturing the essence of who the individual is, and what they do in that context (p. 334). An organisation-based identity thus embodies the meaning that an individual ascribes to 'self-in-context' because it situates the self in, and defines one's relationship with, the organisation. The concept of an organisation-based identity is consistent with Ashforth and Mael's (1996, p. 21) suggestion that "the meaning of an object is so central to our experience of it", and with Ashforth et al.'s (2008) view that the individual-organisation relationship can be about understanding the self in relation to the organisation, as opposed to understanding the organisation in relation to the self.

The concept of an organisation-based identity accords with identity theories that suggest individuals develop a psychological connection with entities in the immediate social environment. However, participants in this thesis project did not appear to be answering identity-based questions traditionally associated with the social identity approach – such as 'Who am I?' (a personal identity question that defines an individual's unique sense of self) or 'Who are we?' (a social identity question that defines an individual's membership of social groups, including membership of a work group or organisation). Rather, an organisation-based identity involves an individual defining the self-organisation connection by deriving an answer to the fundamental identity-based question, 'Who am I … in this organisation?'.

Identity has long been considered a relational construct (Pratt, 2003). For example, social identity involves an individual developing a sense of self via social comparison of salient group-based categories in the immediate environment, and determining to which ingroup and outgroup members one is
similar versus different. In contrast, an organisation-based identity reflects an individual's assessment of their relationship with a social object (i.e., an organisation). Social identity is also theorised to have its basis largely in self-categorisation, however, the organisation-based identities that emerged in this thesis project did not involve overt or explicit statements of identification by participants, and instead reflected latent and implicit expressions of what appeared to be central for individuals in their perceived relationship with the organisation. This is perhaps more similar to organisational identification, which involves organisational members integrating consensual beliefs about an organisation into their sense of self. However, the traditional view of organisational identification has been that organisations have one overarching identity that is shared and understood by the majority of organisational members. The findings of this thesis project accord better with the outcomes of more recent research, which observes identification in organisations as a more subjective process, as demonstrated in studies that have found subgroups of employees who identify with different aspects of the same organisation (e.g., Glynn, 2000; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Sonenshein, 2010).

The three organisation-based identities that emerged in this thesis project represent three contrasting perspectives regarding what individuals perceived as central and enduring about the organisation – suggesting that the organisation ultimately comprised three very different organisational identities. While the concept of organisational identification is commonly linked to the shared meaning that individuals ascribe to an organisation's mission, an organisation-based identity reflects an individual employee's perception of that meaning, which, given the three unique perspectives that emerged, may or may not reflect the views that other organisational members hold regarding what is central to the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Dutton et al., 1994). On this basis, an organisation-based identity is considered to be conceptually different to
organisational identification and more closely accords with individual sensemaking, which involves individuals attributing meaning to a particular social target (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). The key point is that organisational identification centres primarily on the objective identity of the organisation itself (with an individual ascribing to the shared beliefs that others hold about the organisation), while an organisation-based identity is inherently more subjective, and centres primarily on the self-organisation relationship (whereby an individual develops a personal sense of meaning for his or her association with the organisation). Importantly, an organisation-based identity includes processes that may be in play before the individual even enters the organisation, or meets other organisational members. Hence, the motive of meaning making appears to be operating at the beginning of the identity development process in place of, or in addition to, the individual's perceptions of the benefits they may accrue from identifying with the organisation itself or the shared beliefs of existing members.

Importantly, this is not to say that organisational identification does not occur for individuals in organisations. However, the results revealed three disparate sets of beliefs about the organisation, suggesting that an organisation's identity may be multidimensional, and what individuals perceive it to be, as opposed to one overarching set of beliefs about the organisation's core and distinctive elements. That said, it is likely that the Warder identity did reflect a unidimensional organisational identity for at least 100 years until the Carer identity became established during the 1970s. Moreover, each organisation-based identity appears to reflect the organisational identity that would have been espoused by the organisation's founders or senior management at the time that each identity category was initially established.

The idea that the same organisational context may mean different things to different people at different times is not unique to organisational research. For example, in an essay discussing the contextualisation of organisational research,
Rousseau and Fried (2001) offer multiple examples of organisational phenomena that can have different meanings – depending on factors such as time, setting, culture, and the role or frame of reference of the observer. This was particularly well demonstrated with the concept of bureaucracy, which the authors explain was originally conceptualised in positive terms because it offered organisations greater efficiency, though later became conceptualised in negative terms because it constrained organisational efficiency.

Another key difference between organisational identification and organisation-based identity is in how employees behave in support of their perceived organisation. For example, the assumption underlying organisational identification is that individuals who identify strongly with the organisation will behave in ways that are pro-organisational. However, in the case of an organisation-based identity, one organisation may comprise three (or more) unique subgroups of organisational behaviour – each of which reflects different views regarding the particular behaviours that are in the best interests of the organisation. Thus, while employee behaviours may be congruent with their beliefs about what the organisation expects from them, these behaviours may not actually match senior managers' views regarding what will benefit the organisation.

Organisation-based identity is also differentiated from organisational identity, which is generally regarded as a statement of identity that comprises members' collective beliefs about the central, distinctive and enduring aspects of the organisation. Organisational identity represents a form of collective identity, in which an organisation develops its own identity via the shared perceptions that internal and external stakeholders hold regarding the organisation's core purpose and mission, and reflects a property of the organisation itself (Pratt, 2003). In contrast, an organisation-based identity is conceptualised as an identity that is enacted within an organisation, but is a product of the individual-organisation
connection, reflecting the individual's perceptions of the organisation's purpose and their perceived role in it. An organisation-based identity thus refers to an individual's psychological connection with the organisation and resides at the meso level between the individual and the organisation.

The findings of this thesis project suggest that individuals' organisation-based identities develop through two main processes. These processes are explored, in turn, in the sections that follow.

Developing an Organisation-based Identity

Comparisons of the three identity categories revealed two main processes of identity development, each comprising multilevel factors. The first process comprises factors involved in the formation of individuals' organisation-based identities. These serve as formative factors because they are present as individuals establish their initial connection with the organisation. The second process comprises perpetuating factors that assist in maintaining a particular organisation-based identity, which act to affirm and verify the identity, thereby reinforcing individuals' perceptions about the organisation and enhancing their attachment to the organisation. The section that follows explores the first of these processes – establishing a connection with the organisation.

Establishing a Connection with the Organisation

This section describes the factors that appear to have been present for individuals when they first established their connections with the organisation. These include individual, organisational and social factors experienced by individuals before entry, and at the time of entry, which would influence how individuals made sense of their relationship with the organisation.
**Individual Level**

The findings suggest that individuals began to acquire their organisation-based identities as they established their initial connections with the organisation, which can occur at the time of entry, or before the individual actually enters the organisation. The process of acquiring an organisation-based identity revolves around the individual deriving personal meaning for their relationship with the organisation – which includes the organisation's perceived purpose – 'Why does this organisation exist?' – and the individual's perceived role in the organisation – 'What is that I (will) do here?'. Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) identified similar questions in their study of nurse identities in a rehabilitation ward – including a question relating to the perceived function of the ward ('What is our mission?') and another relating to the perceived job role ('What are our roles?).

Parkes (2008) refers to an organisation's purpose as the meaning that organisational stakeholders give to 'why the organisation exists', and research has shown that perceptions of an organisation's identity are often associated with the organisation's perceived mission or function in society (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Ashforth and Mael also suggest that "an individual's identity in a given social context is largely tied to his or her role in that context", whereby the role reflects individuals' understanding of what it is they do in the organisation (p. 23). Roles are thus considered to serve as a key device that links individuals and social structures in the identity construction process (Simpson & Carroll, 2008).

It is important to note that most references to social or organisational roles generally refer to role categories that are "well established as a category in daily life with a role term and stereotyped image", for which rules have been established about the nature and expectations of the role (Goffman, 1961, p. 94). However, Turner (2001) argues that individuals often develop informal occupational roles that differ substantially from the formal roles advocated by
management. Moreover, Turner asserts that, while roles serve as "clear sets of identity-related expectations", these expectations can vary across individuals in terms of their "concreteness and consistency" (p. 234). The concept of an individual's *perceived role* is therefore distinguished from the formal roles that are defined by the organisation in the form of a job description. Formal job roles and descriptions are created by senior managers to articulate the formal rules and requirements for an individual's job role, while a *perceived role* defines what individuals believe they do, or are meant to do, in their job role. Thus, the question, 'What is it that I (will) do here?', provides the individual with a guide for behaviour that may differ to what senior management actually expects the individual to do. While an individual's *perceived role* is not the same as a formal job description, it may nonetheless reflect some, if not all, of the content of a formal job description, and the individual may well believe that the formal job description closely reflects their beliefs about the role.

Anticipatory identification also appeared to be a key formative factor for individuals in the early development of their organisation-based identities. For example, Warders were exposed to anticipatory socialisation from a very young age as they grew up beside family members who worked in the organisation. The notion of anticipatory socialisation refers to the expectations and beliefs that individuals develop about an organisation prior to entering the work setting (Chao, 2012). These beliefs can be influenced through formal and informal sources, including family and friends, the media and educational experiences. These findings are consistent with Russo (1998), who found that both anticipatory and vocational socialisation were factors in journalists' expectations of their workplace. For example, some journalists described extensive anticipatory socialisation that began in childhood, such as family connections with a newspaper. Other journalists described a personal interest in a journalism career that was reinforced by subsequent professional training, mirroring the experience
of several Carers in this thesis project. Dutton et al. (1994) suggest that individuals may also be drawn to particular organisations in which they are able to express valued parts of self, which accords with those Carers who reported pre-existing empathy for patients, attributed to having a friend or family member with mental illness.

Previous experiences with other organisations can also form part of anticipatory socialisation, and may influence an individual’s expectations about the nature of work and enhance their adaptability to change (Palmer & Dunford, 2008). For example, Change Managers’ perceptions of the current organisation appeared to be informed by their prior exposure to changes occurring in the mental health sector, as well as informal visits to the organisation before they formally entered it. Carers similarly noted prior organisational experience as a key factor in their openness to, and acceptance of, the changes.

A study by Gibson and Papa (2000) found a similar dynamic to the Warder identity category, among blue collar workers in a US factory, whose identification with the organisation was forged long before entering the organisation, due to the influence of family members in the local community. The authors noted that the workers had grown up to expect a job in the organisation due to pre-entry interactions with family and neighbours and, as a result of "a lifetime of indoctrination", had completely "constructed their identity and career" around the organisation (p. 79). The authors observed that this pre-socialisation not only reinforced a common identity among the workers, but reduced the need for organisational training and control mechanisms because local employees were already well rehearsed in job role and cultural expectations at the time of entry, and were less likely to violate organisational and work group norms.

Morgan et al. (2004) also identified family as a key source of anticipatory identification. In their study of an agribusiness firm, they asked employees to describe their relationship with the organisation. Three generations of the same
family had worked in the organisation and many employees indicated that their identification process began in early childhood. Like members of the Warder identity category, these employees spoke of ‘outsiders’ who were perceived to represent a threat to the organisation's identity, with the authors suggesting that this created an 'identity clash' between the organisation's past (organisation as family) and future (organisation as a business) identities.

The idea that individuals may begin to establish their connection with the organisation before they formally enter an organisation is consistent with a study of army recruits, who were found to identify strongly with the army at the time of entry, as well as identification studies that show that non-organisational members, who have never entered an organisation, may still identify with that organisation (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Pratt (1998) coined the terms 'affinity' and 'emulation' to refer to people who feel a sense of congruence with an organisation's identity, including those who identify with an organisation without having actually enacted the identity or interacted with organisational members.

Using the term 'anticipatory identification', Ashforth et al. (2008) suggest that individuals may engage in affinity and emulation prior to entry, which involves adapting their own identity to include the central and enduring facets of the organisation. They refer to a 'prospective narrative', in which individuals may know prior to entry what their organisational role will be. Similarly, in exploring processes of group membership in organisations, Moreland and Levine (2001) incorporate an 'investigation' process, which they suggest involves pre-entry 'reconnaissance' by 'prospective members'. These examples lend support for the idea that individuals may begin to construct their organisation-based identity prior to entry, as opposed to the organisation constructing it for them via socialisation processes that occur after entry. While Ashforth et al. express concern that such processes may "overstate the agency of the individual", they acknowledge that they imply "a degree of individual choice" in the identification process (p. 344).
Organisational Level

The origins of the three identity categories suggest that they were each originally established at critical points of change within the organisation. The Warder identity appears to have formed at the same time that the organisation was first established. The Carer identity appears to have formed when acute care wards were first established during the 1970s. The third identity category, Change Managers, comprised individuals who entered the organisation during the 1990s with the purpose of facilitating major changes in line with external changes in the mental health sector.

The espoused identity of the organisation was very different at each of these time points. This accords with Albert and Whetten's (1985) exploration of temporal effects on identity development in organisations, in which the potential was observed for individuals to assume different identities based on “the kinds of roles or identities currently available” and “the historical forces operating at the time” (p. 273). The authors describe particular "life cycle events" and "critical transition points" at which an organisation's identity becomes particularly salient, including "the formation of the organisation" and "the accomplishment of an organization's raison d'etre", or the organisation's "reason for existing" and "central focus". It therefore seems probable that as an organisation forms, and reforms during large-scale change, organisation-based identities may also form, each of which reflects the key elements of the organisation's identity that were espoused by senior managers as being central to the organisation's mission at that particular point in time.

The views of members of the Warder identity, in particular, regarding the perceived purpose of the organisation, remained anchored in the identity that would have been espoused by the organisation's founders when members of the local township were first recruited to work in the organisation in the 1860s. This is
consistent with Albert and Whetten’s (1985) statement that founders may be the first to articulate an organisation’s identity. It also reflects Brickson’s (2005) statement that “organizations choose their immediate environments and interaction partners” (p. 600). This also highlights the importance of an organisation’s context, in that the location of an organisation can inform organisational behaviour, and mould the organisation’s identity as well as the identities of the individuals who work in them (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005).

Recruitment is a core component of the organisational socialisation processes that commence as individuals enter an organisation. Organisational socialisation comprises the formal and informal processes through which newcomers come to learn the appropriate behaviours, values and expectations required to perform their job role and be accepted as a member of the organisation (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). For example, Warders were recruited primarily as attendants then nurse assistants – both of which were job roles that required no formal skills or education, and involved mainly watching over patients in closed and locked wards. Warders were also traditionally recruited informally by family and friends who already held a job in the organisation. In contrast, most Carers were recruited through formal selection processes into roles that required advanced nursing and allied health skills to provide professional treatment and care to patients. Finally, Change Managers were formally recruited into change management roles, to reconstruct the organisation to reflect the notion of patient empowerment. The particular process of recruitment that individuals experienced at the time of entry therefore differed for members of each of the three identity groups, and would no doubt play a contributing role in their beliefs about the organisation and their perceived role within it.
Social Level

Large-scale organisational change can also reflect social change. For example, the organisation in which the Warder identity was first established would have reflected prevailing political and social views of the time, when society preferred to seclude individuals with mental illness in remote locations and locked wards. In contrast, the organisation that Carers joined during the 1970s reflected more progressive community attitudes toward individuals with mental illness, as well as medical improvements in the treatment of mental illness, which were affording people greater opportunity for rehabilitation following short-term care. Finally, the future envisioned organisation that was being created by Change Managers reflected shifting political and social views, which were changing to endorse a human rights approach to the treatment of individuals with mental illness. Thus, the organisation had always provided a community service in accordance with social and political values of the day, suggesting that organisations, and the identities within them, reflect and are influenced by regulatory and attitudinal changes in the broader social context (Grandy & Mavin, 2011).

In the process of determining the organisation's purpose and their role within it, individuals are also no doubt influenced by the construed external images of the organisation, which refers to the beliefs that individuals have about how outsiders view the purpose of the organisation. For example, social opinions of an organisation that exist at the individual's time of entry are likely to validate or dispute an individual's beliefs about the core features of the organisation (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Each time of entry thus offers a distinct vantage point for individuals joining the organisation, who may be influenced by various outside sources at that point in time (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006). One study showed that organisational members actively sought
social validation from external stakeholders to approve their identity claims during organisational identity construction in a new college (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010). The study demonstrated that individuals drew on a range of social factors as resources in the identity construction process, lending support for the view that construed external images may also shape identity development, by validating individuals' perceptions about the organisation and their job role.

External powerholders are also considered to influence the development of individuals' organisation-based identities. External actors can possess the power to reinforce or constrain behaviour in organisations, and can influence members of organisations by defining appropriate beliefs and behaviours (Fiol, 2002). These may include politicians, senior health department members, and members of the broader community. For example, when the Warder identity was first established, community attitudes centred on the belief that individuals with mental illness were dangerous and should be locked away in order to protect society, and the organisation's founders were supported by political powerholders at that time to establish the organisation in a remote location to provide this community service. In contrast, the Carer identity, established over 100 years later, reflected new understandings of mental illness, including increased social acceptance for people affected by it, and changing political support for the introduction of open ward structures within the organisation.

Political powerholders, in particular, are known to play a key role in the governance of organisations by determining regulatory conditions (Maguire & Hardy, 2009). Illia and Lurati (2006) refer to these as primary stakeholders because they have power over critical resources organisations need to survive. Change Managers learned this when the change process stalled, and they were unable to continue until they had successfully lobbied for the external support of corporate and political powerholders. This demonstrates that organisational members need social support for their construal of the organisation's purpose
and their role within it, so that identity beliefs or claims "need to be socially validated or affirmed through the responses of others" (Ashforth, 2009, p. 177, italics in original). Put another way, "social validation is usually necessary for new identities to take root and grow" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 343). Accordingly, it would seem difficult, if not impossible, for any individual to hold an organisation-based identity that did not have at least some degree of social validation from external stakeholders (Brickson, 2013).

Discussion

Central to identity theory is the idea that roles provide individuals with key information about behavioural expectations in relation to work and serve as an important organising framework within the self-concept (Pratt et al., 2006; Turner, 2001). Goffman (1961) defines a role as "the activity the encumbent would engage in were he to act solely in terms of the normative demands upon someone in his position" (p. 85). In the case of an organisation-based identity, an individual's perceived role reflects the individual's beliefs about the nature of the work, and about how he or she contributes to the organisation's purpose. Individuals' perceptions of the organisation's purpose, and their perceived role in the organisation, thus anchor the self within the organisational context as a basis for behaviour (Williams & Connaughton, 2012). Once established, role conceptions are considered to be extremely stable mental constructs that are highly resistant to change (Turner, 2001).

Perceptions of purpose and role were also found to be central in a study by Brown and Humphreys (2006), during their examination of a UK college merger. Employees in the study self-identified as members of one of three organisational groups – SMT (the senior management team of the newly merged organisation), ex-Beta staff and ex-Gamma staff (each of which comprised members of the pre-merger colleges). Members of the SMT group described the
organisation as being "in the business of education" and articulated a role that
they perceived this sense of purpose required of them in the organisation. In
contrast, ex-Beta and ex-Gamma staff spoke about their role as teachers, in an
organisation that they perceived existed fundamentally for "training and learning".

Brown and Humphreys (2006) found that employees' identity accounts
were also linked strongly to 'place'. For example, ex-Beta and ex-Gamma staff
were observed to focus on contextual aspects of the organisation when they
spoke about the organisation's identity, such as particular buildings that had
previously been part of their respective colleges before the merger. This led the
authors to conclude that members of the three identity groups "drew on their
understandings of place to construct and promote different versions of their, and
the organization's, identities" (p. 248). Brown and Humphreys concluded that the
identity accounts offered by individuals across the three groups "were not merely
attempts to define their organization's identity, but to 'enact' versions of
themselves" which, in turn, affected how individuals behaved within the
organisation, and interacted with each other, during and after the change (p.
251).

Bartunek (1984) also found links to perceptions of purpose and role in
their case study of a religious order, in which members became disoriented by
second-order change because it challenged their existing beliefs about the
organisation's purpose, and their role within it. For example, members referred to
beliefs such as "total dedication to living a christian life" and "to labor for the
sanctification of others", which provided them with a sense of stability and
certainty, and governed their day-to-day behaviour, until the changes occurred.

Identification processes reflecting purpose and role were also identified in
a study of a US symphony orchestra, in which Glynn (2000) found that the issue
of identity was central to a musician's strike. Glynn found two identity claims
within the organisation – one comprising mainly musicians who perceived the
organisation as an artistic endeavour, and a second comprising mainly administrators who perceived the organisation as a business. Glynn suggested that individuals' identity claims appeared to be shaped by professional identity questions (e.g., What kind of role do I play in this organisation?) and organisational identity questions (e.g., What kind of organisation is this?). Glynn argued that it was through answers to these questions that musicians and administrators came to identify with different elements of the organisation, which corresponded to their perceived roles within it. Accordingly, she argued that "leaders need to carefully attend to the rhetoric of claims made on the institution's identity" by its members (p. 296).

Social validation from internal and external stakeholders also appears to be a vital resource for the establishment of an organisation-based identity (Scott & Lane, 2000). Indeed, organisations would be unable to exist without external validation of their purpose in society (Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2007). For example, governments can constrain or enable the construction of organisational and professional identities (Chreim, 2007).

This section has described factors involved in the initial formation of individuals' organisation-based identities. The next section describes the factors involved in maintaining and perpetuating these identities within the organisation.

Developing an Attachment to the Organisation

This section explores the factors that may act to affirm, verify, support and reinforce individuals' organisation-based identities, thereby enhancing individuals' attachment to the organisation that supports the identity.

Individual Level

At the individual level, two key factors appear to be important in the maintenance of an organisation-based identity within an organisation – these are
the importance of the identity to the individual, and the individual's dependence on the organisation to sustain the identity. According to the social identity approach, individuals maintain attachments to identities that meet a variety of needs (e.g., status, self-esteem, affiliation), particularly when there are limited available alternatives in a given context (Hogg, 2003). Similarly, identity theory posits that the centrality and prominence of an identity is highly contextual, and can enhance an individual's attachment to the identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

For members of the Warder identity category, the identity was an extremely prominent one, particularly given that members of the Warder identity group had established limited, if any, alternatives due to the strong bond that developed between the township and organisation. This bond was a core feature of the Warder identity, with their sense of belonging within the organisation expressed regularly in terms such as 'locals' and 'outsiders'.

This bond, in turn, may have led members of the Warder identity category to become highly dependent on the organisation in order to maintain the identity. This is because members of this identity group appear to have constructed a psychological boundary around the organisation and township that strengthened their sense of identity and deepened their attachment to the organisation (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Paulsen, 2003). This was demonstrated in Warders' storytelling about their long history in the organisation, and their strong emotional attachments to the organisation's buildings and physical structures.

The Warder identity was therefore firmly bound to both the past and current organisation, which had long supported the organisation's purpose as an asylum, and their perceived job role as custodial, over three generations of local families. In contrast, the Change Manager identity centred around changing the current organisation, and was more tightly bound to the future envisioned organisation. Thus, the long duration and stability of the Warder identity, and the absence of alternatives, resulted in Warders becoming highly dependent on the
current organisation to ensure continuity of their organisation-based identity, while Change Managers held no attachment to the organisation in its present form, and were dependent on realisation of a future envisioned organisation to sustain their identity.

Carers did not seem tightly bound to either the past or future organisation. Carers perceived the changes as a continuation of the work they were already doing in acute care wards, and patients, rather than structural aspects of the organisation, were more central to the Carer identity. Thus, while the identity seemed important to Carers, they were not as reliant as Warders on the organisation itself to maintain the identity. This is because Carers could continue to care for patients within the future envisioned organisation, or in other hospitals or community mental health centres, and were therefore less dependent than Warders on the stability of the current organisation to facilitate continuity of their identity.

Group Level

The development of informal identity groups was a key factor in affirming and maintaining individual's organisation-based identities. The assumption of existing theories is that individuals join groups, or occupy roles, most of which are largely pre-defined. Thus, most research has tended to focus on formal identities in organisations, which overlook how individuals who share similar perceptions of the organisation's purpose, and their role, may develop as informal identity groups. While the findings revealed three distinct subgroups of meaning among employees, participants did not make explicit identity claims through verbal expressions of 'we-ness'. Nonetheless, there appeared to be an implicit awareness among participants that similar others existed within the organisation – such as Warders whose references to 'outsiders' demonstrated awareness of a group of local workers who were loyal to the protection of each other's jobs, and
Change Managers who referred to themselves as a 'cohesive' group who felt similarly about the organisation and the need for change.

The concept of an informal group is not new. For example, Goffman (1961) suggests that a shared consensus can develop between individuals around role-based norms. He explains that "something organic emerges" involving "a meshing together of activity" and "a mutual orientation" of role participants that leads to "a well developed situated role" and "a situated self" so that individuals come to know what behaviours to perform in a particular role and situation. These, in turn, can develop into "aggregate affiliations" that begin as individual activity and develop into an informal sense of groupness. Similarly, identity theory posits that individuals develop shared social meanings about the social roles that they occupy, many of which (e.g., mother) are not necessarily written or formalised but nonetheless develop into sets of expectations that are shared with others who occupy similar roles (Glynn, 2008).

Others argue that collectives develop identities of their own based on consensual patterns of behaviour, and the shared attributes of their members. For example, members holding shared views is a prerequisite for group-based properties, such as task and role-based norms, to emerge (Ellemers & Rink, 2005; Whetten, 2007). House et al. (1995, p. 93) refer to the concept of "collective sense making" in which "groups of individuals collectively construct shared interpretations and definitions of reality", and Gioia and Sims (1986) refer to a "cognitive consensuality" that develops to reflect a group's "dominant logic or dominant reality". Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that a shared social reality is constructed once there is enough of a shared language among social actors, which others are then able to observe as a social reality.

Furnham (2005) suggests that a group develops when three or more individuals influence each other's beliefs and behaviours through social interaction, share common goals, and have common role expectations that
remain stable over time. Furnham argues that identity groups (particularly in organisations that are role-based) may have these characteristics as well, even though they may not be formalised in the organisational structure. Informal groups can therefore develop that reflect different views of reality, and become “routinised”, “institutionalised” and “taken for granted”, particularly when they have “longer histories, stable and homogenous memberships” and “frequent interaction” (Brown & Humphreys, 2006, p. 234; House et al., 1995, p. 93).

An individual's contact with similar others can thus serve to affirm an identity, and work units feature strongly in this regard (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004). For example, Warders and Carers worked mainly in closed versus open wards, which involved different practices for working with chronic versus acute patients. Brickson (2000) refers to the boundaries between work areas as ‘structural barriers' that encourage sub-organisational categorisation of workers due to the high frequency of contact with similar others, combined with the low frequency of contact with dissimilar others. Similarly, Pratt et al. (2006) argue that "newly constructed identities are … validated by others with similar social positions" (p. 256). Turner (1991) suggests that individuals test their perceptions of social reality by seeking the agreement of others which offers a form of consensual validation for an identity. In his discussion of the uncertainty reduction hypothesis, Hogg (1996) asserts that social agreement with others is necessary for individuals to confirm that the meaning they ascribe to their immediate environment is accurate, and suggests that the more homogenous the group, the more agreement exists about the social order.

As shared consensus develops, the groupness that develops is reinforced through individuals' conformity to consensual beliefs and behaviours (such as Warders' loyalty to the protection of jobs) and awareness of similar and dissimilar others (such as Carers' frequent references to 'other staff' whom they perceived were uncaring toward patients) (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). As a consequence,
informal identity groups develop as bounded and normative sub-organisational structures that are separate from formal groups in organisations (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Scott et al., 1998). Tajfel (1981) refers to this as a 'social cognitive consensus', in which individuals develop shared perceptions about their membership of particular social groups which, in turn, provides the basis for mutual social influence and coordinated behaviour (Haslam et al., 2012). All three organisation-based identities were therefore likely to be affirmed and verified by similar-minded others in individuals' respective work units. Ashforth and Mael (1996, p. 38) describe work peers as "credible social referents" who help to instil confidence in the validity of individuals' perceptions.

Whether a group is formal or informal, the same factors can maintain and strengthen an individual's identity, such as common history, proximity, similarity, cohesion, cooperation, loyalty, homogeneity and shared threat (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Reid, 2006). These factors can lead individuals to develop perceptions of group entitativity, whereby individuals come to categorise each other as psychologically equivalent (Reynolds et al., 2004). As a result, shared perceptions and beliefs develop into collaborative actions that become coordinated and group-based (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). Researchers suggest that consensual understanding between individuals can develop into a collective identity that 'transcends' the individuals, so that it takes on the characteristics of a social structure (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011). This social construction can come to be perceived as a social actor in its own right (Gioia et al., 2010). As individuals continue to embody and enact the distinctive beliefs and values of the collective, both individual and collective identities are affirmed, so that the process is mutually reinforcing.

The findings suggest that all three organisation-based identity categories also developed links with formal groups that helped to preserve and maintain the identities. For example, Warders maintained strong connections with local union
groups, which afforded formal and legitimate power in their efforts to protect jobs; while Carers, particularly those with professional training, maintained strong links with external professional groups. Change Managers, in turn, maintained strong links with the senior management group and with external corporate stakeholders, both of which enabled Change Managers to assume control of recruitment, and acquire the legitimate authority needed to transform the organisation. All of these formal group links were identity consistent, in that the particular connections offered unique formal support for all three identity groups, and affirmed members’ perceptions of the organisation's purpose and their perceived job role. This accords with Pratt and Kraatz (2009) who suggest that individuals choose the communities that help to verify their identities.

**Organisation Level**

The first factor that may assist in maintaining individuals' organisation-based identities is the design of their job role. The formal design of a job role can both establish and affirm an individual's organisation-based identity. For example, the organisation created a nurse assistant role that required no education, qualifications or skills, which would have continued to serve as a major factor to affirm and perpetuate the Warder identity, until Change Managers discontinued the job role during the change process. Many members of the Warder identity category occupied a nurse assistant role, and it was evident from their reactions to the introduction of individual professional development plans that they did not believe the job role required participation in professional development. It is noted that some Warder participants had previously elected to undertake internal training to reach the status of an enrolled or registered nurse, however, their job focus remained custodial and their views about professional development remained congruent with coworkers in nurse assistant roles. Similarly, while the majority of Carers occupied formal professional roles, for which they acquired
advanced training that demanded continuing professional development, several Carer participants did not occupy formal professional job roles, yet their views regarding the benefits of professional development concurred with those Carers who were formally trained.

Work unit socialisation is another factor that can help to affirm individuals' organisation-based identities in the organisation. All three identity categories comprised members who worked predominately in different work areas within the organisation. Warders worked mainly in closed wards, Carers were found mainly in open wards, and Change Managers worked primarily in administration buildings. Saks and Ashforth (1997) differentiate between organisational and work group socialisation, suggesting the work group is more influential because it is "the focal point for the transmission of an organization's culture" (p. 250). Work unit norms reflect an organisational subset of individuals who perceive the organisation similarly, and behave in similar ways, so that particular behaviours and beliefs become embedded as organisational routines (Pratt, 2003). These norms not only affirm individuals' work-based identities, but can also influence new members via role modelling and work unit socialisation. Work units thus provide a supportive domain for individuals to affirm their work-based identities with similar others (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004).

Identity markers within organisations may also serve as cues for the maintenance of organisation-based identities. Identity markers can include cultural practices and artefacts (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), organisational structures (Stuart, 2012); corporate architecture (Berg & Kreiner, 1990), dress (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997) and stories that portray a collective identity (Yiannis, 1995). Research suggests that many aspects of an organisation can serve as symbols to reinforce an individual's identity – including buildings, furnishings, material objects, the design of work spaces, and ambient surroundings (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007).
Warders' identity markers included structural elements of the organisation. These structures linked the Warder identity to the extended history between the local township and organisation, and offered Warders a sense of permanence. In contrast, Carers' identity markers were patient-based, including the patients themselves, and ward practices, such as decorating wards to make them feel like "home" for patients. Change Managers' identity markers were future-oriented, reflected in the building of new structures and symbols, and a new name for the organisation. For example, in Gioia et al.'s (2010) college study, top managers established symbols to represent and 'institutionalise' the desired organisational identity, including distinctive majors and coursework.

Identity theorists argue that identity behaviours and meanings are dependent on support from the social structures in which they are based (Burke & Stets, 2009). Identity markers help individuals to define the fundamental attributes of the organisation, and come to be perceived as central to the organisation (Ravasi & Canato, 2010). Elsbach (2004) conducted research into 'physical identity markers' that individuals use to symbolise their ownership of particular workspaces, such as the personal belongings individuals place on and around their work spaces. Similarly, Glynn (2008) refers to 'identity markers (or symbols)' that provide individuals with information about who they are in a given context, and serve to anchor and affirm their identities in that context. Elsbach (2003) also refers to these as 'affirmation markers' because of their contribution to identity verification. Dutton et al. (1994, p. 248) note that individuals in organisations are increasingly exposed to organisational symbols throughout their tenure "that remind them of their union with the organisation" and enhance their perceptions of inclusiveness and identification.

The Warder identity lends support to the idea that an organisation may be perceived by identity claimants as having different boundaries (Paulsen, 2003). For example, the organisation's bond with the township was a core feature of the
Warder identity. Their shared history fused the two entities together and helped embed the Warder identity in the organisation. In contrast, the Carer and Change Manager identities were far less attached to the organisation and immediate context. As noted previously, Carers were more attached to patient markers than to structural aspects of the organisation, so that maintenance of their identity was not contingent on the organisation or township. Similarly, Change Managers attached themselves immediately to a future envisioned organisation, thereby demonstrating no real attachment with the existing organisation. This is supported in the following quote from a Change Manager, who indicated that some thought was given to demolishing the existing organisation to completely rebuild a new organisation.

"It was certainly an option simply to raze Bayview Hospital and to resurrect the service elsewhere. I think a significant argument for that, apart from the economic benefits, is that the culture of Bayview Hospital would be smashed basically. That old custodial, all the bad aspects of that culture would be dealt with completely by not having a Bayview Hospital." (Change Manager)

The degree to which organisational structures, and organisation-based identities, continue to exist without change would also serve to validate and perpetuate an identity. For example, the Warder identity enjoyed a long and stable tenure in the organisation, and participant quotes suggest that little change occurred in closed wards, with individuals remaining in the same work group for many years (Fuller et al., 2009). Not only did this tenure and stability contribute to maintaining the Warder identity, but it would affirm Warders' strong sense of belonging in the organisation, as demonstrated in participant quotes that highlighted their perceived entitlement to jobs in the organisation.
Social Level

Social identities, by their very nature, require support from the external social environment in order to acquire legitimacy and be maintained over time (Gioia et al., 2010). Thus, the same construed external images, and external stakeholder groups, that influence the formation of individuals' organisation-based identities would no doubt continue to provide social validation for individuals' early beliefs about the self-organisation relationship (Price & Gioia, 2008). For example, Humphreys and Brown (2002) note that individuals' "identity narratives are not solely private concerns" but are governed in part by "the salient images they associate with their work organisation" including the "construed external image" held by external stakeholder groups (p. 423). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) use the term 'social affirmation' to refer to the external factors that affirm an individual's work-based identity. Similarly, Pratt and Kraatz (2009) use the term 'social approval' to refer to society's approval of an organisation, which can enhance members' perceptions of belonging and fit. External social factors may therefore continue to play a key role in 'validating' and 'perpetuating' an organisation-based identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

Individuals may draw on a range of external reference groups to affirm and validate their organisation-based identity (Shen & Dumani, 2013). For example, the beliefs that families within the local township held about the organisation would have continued to serve as a maintaining factor for the Warder identity, but would have less influence on maintenance of the Carer or Change Manager identities, even for local Carers who grew up in the township. Similarly, Warders' attachment to their identity may have been strengthened by their awareness of being negatively stereotyped by nurses in general hospitals, and the broader community stigma associated with mental illness. Political powerholders also served as a reference group in the social validation of more
than one organisation-based identity. For example, as noted earlier, Change Managers recalled that their initial attempts at change stalled, which required them to lobby corporate and political powerholders, who were still supporting the organisation as a custodial institution that played an important social role in providing employment to local workers. It was only when those powerholders agreed to transfer their support to Change Managers’ envisioned organisation that the changes were able to proceed. Thus, the same external powerholders that had affirmed and supported the organisation that maintained the Warder identity, were now supporting a new organisational identity (Scott & Lane, 2000).

**Summary**

In summary, organisation-based identities may be affirmed and verified through multilevel factors that can enhance an individual’s attachment to the identity, and to the organisation that supports it. Just as an organisation could not function as a social actor without the existence of individuals who enact the organisation’s core functions, individuals within organisations would be unable to enact perceived job roles without some degree of organisational support and social validation (Ashforth et al., 2011). This can be provided through a range of factors that reinforce and validate an individual’s identity, without which the individual would find it difficult to maintain a stable or continuous organisation-based self. Any identity and role-based behaviours and practices that are sanctioned by the organisation and external stakeholders can therefore serve to legitimate individuals’ beliefs about the organisation and their perceived role within it (Glynn, 2008). Over time, all of these factors affirm the identity and enhance individuals’ perceived legitimacy and fit in the organisation (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005). In their studies of dirty work, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) suggest that the meaning individuals give to their jobs reflects "occupational ideologies", which are "systems of beliefs that provide a means for interpreting..."
and understanding what the occupation does and why it matters" (p. 420). Using the concept of internal legitimacy, they explain that this meaning "becomes shared among members, thus fostering confidence in its validity" so that, over time, "consensus creates conviction".

This section has explored factors that serve to maintain individuals' organisation-based identities, and enhance individuals' attachment to the organisation. The next section describes the consequences of these processes for individuals and the organisation.

Consequences for Individuals and the Organisation

This section describes the consequences that the development and maintenance of organisation-based identities can have for individuals and the organisation.

Individual Consequences

Given that an organisation-based identity captures key information for individuals about the perceived purpose of the organisation, and their perceived role within it, a key consequence is that individuals' behaviour in the organisation will be congruent with the content of their respective identities. Thus, individuals' perceptions of the organisation's purpose and their perceived job role will continue to guide behaviour – including how they interact with patients, the meaning they give to organisational symbols, and how they respond to other members' identity beliefs within the organisation. For example, Warders were continuing to enact beliefs about the organisation that were established when the Warder identity first formed. Similarly, Carers' perceptions remained in accord with the beliefs associated with development of their identity during the 1970s, which reflected progressive social and therapeutic views advocating caring for
individuals with mental illness, as well as the availability of medications and treatment that made the introduction of open wards possible.

An important consequence is that individuals’ perceptions of change messages, and their behaviours in response to change, may also remain congruent with their respective organisation-based identities. For example, Warders perceived the content of macro and micro change messages as threats to jobs, and to maintaining patients in confinement. Carers interpreted change messages in ways that were consistent with their patient care focus, and Change Managers perceived employees who were not listening to change communication as a barrier to enacting the change. Thus, the meanings that individuals established for their particular self-organisation connections formed the basis for their perceptions of, and responses to, communication about change, and participants expressed beliefs, and engaged in behaviours, that remained consistent with these meanings (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010).

Similar findings were observed by McClellan (2011) in a study of change in an art college. McClellan discovered four discourses reflecting different understandings of the organisation, and suggested that each understanding offered "a predefined means for knowing the organization and the self in relation to the organization" (p. 474). The four understandings included a place for art, a place for education, a close-knit family community, and a business. He suggested that these meanings "served as the background to the conversations of change" because they provided employees "with an understanding of how to act in relationship with the organization".

Identity-congruent responses to change also include individuals' emotions, with members of all three identity groups displaying emotions that were unique to, and congruent with, their respective organisation-based identities. Warders belonged to the oldest identity category in the organisation, and expressed profound emotions. These included shock, fear and anger, as the
change dismantled not only organisational structures, but Warders’ previously unwavering beliefs regarding the permanence of their organisational membership. In contrast, Carers expressed ambivalent emotions, which included positive reactions to patients as the beneficiaries of change, and negative concerns in relation to perceived reductions in patient care. Change Managers, in turn, expressed annoyance and frustration toward employees whom they perceived were not listening, nor responding favourably, to change messages.

Another important consequence is that organisation-based identities may offer individuals a sense of legitimacy and fit within the context that can manifest, as it did for the Warder identity, in a deep sense of belonging in the organisation. Scott et al. (1998) suggest that because the identification process links self and social, it enhances meaning and certainty, but correspondingly reduces an individual's 'range of vision'. This seems true for the Warder identity, which was influenced by a variety of factors – including the close bond between the organisation and township, the geographic isolation for so many years, the practice of recruiting mainly local workers, and social stigma – all of which helped prime deep attachments to both the identity and organisation. The more a particular identity is validated and affirmed, the greater the attachment to the identity, and to the social context that supports the identity.

A number of researchers believe that emotions, and responses to change, have place-related implications (e.g., Manzo, 2003; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). While this area of research has been conducted mainly in residential environments, Warders were unique in that their home and work environments were strongly enmeshed. After its initial formation, the Warder identity remained relatively stable for approximately 100 years as individuals from outside the local township continued to be denied entry into the organisation, which no doubt fuelled the perceived legitimacy of Warders' status and belonging, and increased the threat associated with outsiders and change. There are similarities between
Warders and factory employees in a UK study of large-scale change (Ezzamel, Willmott, & Worthington, 2001). The researchers found substantial resistance to change, which they attributed not to concerns about job security, but to "the strength of employee identification with the established working arrangements and practices" (p. 1054, italics in original), which was associated with "an emotionally charged concern to preserve conditions of employment that workers at the plant considered to be more commensurate with an established sense of self-identity". The researchers suggested that the factory employees' identification was established at an earlier time in the organisation's life cycle "when management were content to indulge self-managing patterns of work in return for securing required levels of output" (p. 1053). Thus, the identity of the workers was established and reinforced by the organisation and this, combined with its tenure and stability, meant the identity became highly resistant to change.

While Warders drew on their history and tenure to justify their sense of belonging in the organisation, Carers and Change Managers used different organisational symbols to justify their perceived legitimacy and fit. For example, Carers emphasised their professional work with the patient group, and Change Managers emphasised their formal authority to implement changes across the organisation. There were also temporal differences across the attachments of each identity group. For example, the Warder identity was associated with a past organisation that resonated generations of family history. The consequence for Warders was a strong attachment to the organisational context, commensurate with the history and interdependence that had developed between the township and organisation. In contrast, the Carer identity was more present-oriented, with its focus on the patient group moreso than the organisation itself, and Change Managers were firmly attached to a future envisioned organisation that was yet to be fully established.
The Warder identity reflected deep, as well as situated, identification. Deep identification is a consequence of attachment factors that serve to enhance identification with an organisation over time, as individuals develop an increasing sense of oneness with the organisation (Ashforth et al., 2008). The Warder identity was highly context specific because members of this identity group were reliant on the organisation to maintain a sense of self-continuity. Edwards (2005) suggests that deep structure identification occurs when “the individual has created such a link with the organization that an enduring cognitive schema exists whereby the employment relationship has in some way altered the mental model that the individual has of him or herself” (p. 213).

An important consequence is that identity maintenance processes help to determine the extent to which individuals' identifications are situated or deeply embedded in the organisation – such that deep structure identification involves stronger identification with the organisation itself, while situated identification is associated with weaker identification with the organisation (Hameed et al., 2013). This refers to the extent to which the self-continuity of an individual's identity can only be satisfied by this organisation. The more that symbols associated with the identity are exclusive to the organisation, the more strongly individuals will attach themselves to the organisation that supports the identity. This also suggests that it may not just be an individual's tenure in an organisation, but the extent to which identity symbols and markers are intrinsic to the organisation, and do not exist in any other organisation, that can lead to a psychological merging between oneself and the organisation.

Tyler (1999) conceptualises loyalty to an organisation as choosing not to leave it. While Warders demonstrated a strong commitment to remain in the organisation, their loyalty was not just to the organisation, but to jobs for families. Moreover, Warders who had never worked elsewhere were not just choosing to stay, they were afraid to leave, as observed in participant quotes that
demonstrated Warders lacked confidence in their job skills, and their ability to obtain work elsewhere. Warders' identification was therefore higher due to their reliance on the organisation for jobs and limited alternative sources of identity. One consequence of this attachment is that individuals can eventually become entrapped by the identity, because it has become so central to self-definition that it is virtually impossible for an individual to leave the organisation or adopt another role (Ashforth, 2000).

The literature on territoriality suggests that the longer people occupy a particular place, the more they may attach themselves to it and act to protect it. Territoriality is essentially a social construction that involves "the behavioural expression of psychological ownership" (Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005, p. 579). Psychological ownership in organisations involves feelings of possessiveness that develop from an individual's psychological attachment to organisational roles, spaces and resources, which can include asserting greater claims to the organisation and its resources. Brown et al. suggest that a sense of belonging becomes a territorial issue when individuals express claims of ownership on a space, try to protect the space from outsiders, and display profound negative emotions when others attempt to occupy or change the space.

Chattopadhyay et al. (2004, p. 186) suggest that people "tend to erect mental fences around geographical areas", and maintaining the territory allows them to continue to express their identity. Proponents of place identity theory argue that when people call themselves 'locals' they are essentially demonstrating a sign of place identification (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). The bond that developed between the township and organisation was integral to the formation and maintenance of the Warders' identity. For example, the town was home for Warders before it became associated with both home and work. Moreover, Warders did not choose the organisation, the organisation chose them. The Warder identity was essentially a gift to members of the township,
bestowed by the organisation’s founders, which continued to be reinforced by
e external powerholders who promoted the organisation as a place of employment
for the local community (Howard, 2000).

Given that an organisation-based identity provides individuals with a
sense of meaning for their relationship with the organisation, organisational
members may be motivated to affirm their existing identities during change. For
example, the strike by musicians in Glynn's (2000) study represented an identity-
-preserving strategy, in which the musicians attempted to highlight the importance
of music quality, over the financial concerns that were pivotal to administrators’
perceptions of the organisation's identity as a business. In a similar fashion,
Warders used their formal links with union groups to strike in response to the
changes and, in one instance, carried a coffin to symbolise the 'death' of their
perceived organisation. Proponents of the social identity approach, and identity
theory, agree that the motive for self-consistency can be so strong that whatever
threatens one's ability to enact a valued identity or role will be resisted (Ashforth
assert that when individuals identify strongly with the organisation, "their sense of
survival is tied to the organisation's survival" (p. 254).

In summary, individuals' organisation-based identities can lead to beliefs,
behaviour and emotions that remain congruent with individuals’ perceptions of
the organisation's purpose and their perceived job role. The more that aspects of
the organisation are incorporated into the identity, and the longer the identity has
been supported by the organisation and external stakeholders, the more
embedded the individual may become within the organisational context. As a
consequence, any large-scale changes that threaten the individual's beliefs may
trigger some degree of identity threat that motivates the individual to engage in
identity preserving strategies designed to affirm the identity, and ensure a sense
of self-continuity.
Organisational Consequences

The assumption underlying early organisational identity research is that organisations have one overarching identity, which can be changed. A consequence of organisation-based identities, however, is that organisational behaviour may reflect the content of multiple organisational realities, which may or may not reflect the image and values that senior managers ascribe to the organisation. Organisation-based identities will influence how employees perceive the organisation, how they behave at work, and how they interpret and respond to communication about change. These identities do not belong to the organisation, but belong to individual employees. Nonetheless, they are part of the organisation, affect organisational behaviour, and can enhance or constrain the organisation’s capacity to change. These identities may reflect informal subgroups that are not part of the organisation's formal structures, so that they are largely invisible, and extremely difficult to manage.

A consequence for the organisation is, therefore, the existence of informal identity groups within the organisation, and the resulting intergroup dynamics that manifest between underlying identity groups and the management group. The findings suggest that identity groups develop normative behaviours that help to maintain each identity, and support individuals to remain in the organisation. Members of each identity group will display beliefs and behaviours that reflect the prototypical attributes of their respective identities. This includes individuals’ attitudes to members of other identity groups. For example, Warders referred to local Carers as “traitors”, reflecting the core belief that members of the township should remain loyal to the protection of jobs for local families. In contrast, a core attribute for Carers was caring for patients, and their attitudes toward members of the Warder identity group focussed on individuals’ punitive treatment of patients. Similarly, Change Managers derogated staff whom they believed were not
listening to change communication. Consistent with social identity theory, participants' interpretations of the behaviours of other organisational members consistently reflected positive ingroup prototypes and negative outgroup stereotypes. Hogg and Reid (2006) suggest that, because ingroup prototypes become self-defining, individuals tend to pay close attention to behaviours that fail to support the prototype, with non-normative behaviours labelled by ingroup members as deviant.

The stronger the organisation-based identity, the more likely that individuals will engage in 'purposeful behaviour' within the organisation that closely reflects their perceptions of the organisation's purpose (Brickson, 2013). When individuals behave in ways that reflect their established beliefs about the organisation's purpose, and their role in contributing to it, they are faithfully enacting what they perceive to be the organisation's true mission (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Several researchers have suggested that when this occurs, individuals are essentially enacting an "organizational agent role" (e.g., Brickson, 2013; King et al., 2010). However, the findings revealed three disparate identity categories, each of which comprised organisational members who perceived that they were faithfully representing the organisation. Participants embodied three distinct and unique subsets of beliefs about the essence of the organisation, and all appeared invested in what they perceived to be the core values of the organisation. For example, individuals across all three identity categories held positive views about their perceived organisation, and continued to engage in behaviours that they believed supported the organisation's core mission. This suggests that individuals act in the interests of their perceived organisation rather than 'the organisation' per se. Organisational members may therefore identify, and cooperate with, their perceived organisation which, given the findings of this thesis project, can result in subgroups within the organisation comprising employees who are loyal and committed to vastly different organisational
realities. An important consequence for an organisation is that an individual's identification with the organisation may not actually foster the positive and prosocial behaviours that management perceive are beneficial for the organisation, or that are compatible with the organisation's goals (Dutton et al., 1994; Haslam, 2014).

While Carers and Change Managers perhaps perceived Warders' beliefs about the organisation as outdated, it is important to note that Warders' behaviours would have been viewed as prosocial at earlier stages in the organisation's history. This is because they were consistent with organisational and social expectations that people with mental illness should be confined in locked wards away from the broader community. Warders in the current organisation were therefore continuing to demonstrate loyalty to a former organisational reality, by holding firmly to the belief that their job role was to protect the community by ensuring that patients remained in locked wards. This is supported by Warders' reactions to an incident that occurred during the change process, in which the organisation was exposed to intense media scrutiny when a patient who was considered dangerous was believed to have escaped. The media portrayed the incident adversely, with the suggestion that the organisation was failing in its mission to protect the community. After three days, the patient was located in a gazebo within the grounds of the organisation, and several Warder participants expressed pride that they had not failed the organisation, because they had fulfilled their job role by ensuring the patient did not leave the facility.

Perhaps the ultimate consequence of organisation-based identities is an organisation's readiness for change. The same identities that were established by the organisation, that were previously supported and reinforced by internal and external powerholders, may now become a barrier to changing the organisation's mission and purpose (Ybema, 2010). For an organisation to change, existing
employees must be prepared to change the meaning they have given to their relationship with the organisation (Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005). The presence of multiple organisation-based identities, the existence of informal and formal groups that support them, and the continuation of organisational structures and symbols that sustain them, may all need to be taken into account when an organisation attempts to transform itself in order to change its own identity.

Discussion

The findings of this thesis project suggest that organisational members develop an organisation-based identity that reflects their psychological connection with the organisation, and articulates the individual's perceptions of the organisation's purpose and their perceived role within it – essentially answering the identity-based question, 'Who am I … in this organisation?'. The notion of organisation-based identity as defining the relationship between the individual and the organisation (as opposed to defining the individual, or the organisation) fits with the view that identity reflects the nexus between the psychology of individuals and the social structures they inhabit (Tomkins & Eatough, 2012; Ybema et al., 2009).

The model of identity development presented in this chapter incorporates two core processes – identity formation and identity maintenance. The first process demonstrates that an individual's organisation-based identity can begin to form before the individual enters the organisation, influenced by multilevel factors that inform the meaning the individual gives to the organisation's core purpose and function, and provide information about the individual's job role within the organisation. The second process includes all of the factors that reinforce, support and validate the individual's self-organisation connection over time, including those that affirm and verify the legitimacy of the identity, and help embed it within the organisation's normative structures and routines.
Multilevel factors may also be reciprocal (House et al., 1995). For example, informal groups can develop out of individuals' shared conceptions of the organisation that may, in turn, reinforce and maintain organisation-based identities through informal group norms such as loyalty to jobs for family and empathy for patients. These can become routinised as organisational norms and, combined with other organisational structures and artefacts, may serve as identity symbols and markers that support and affirm the identities over time. An organisation-based identity may thus become embedded within the organisation, reinforced by support structures at group, organisational and social levels, thereby hindering the capacity of managers to modify the beliefs of existing members that may be critical to organisational change.

The consequences for individuals include identity congruent behaviours and interpretations of organisational events, including change, and an enhanced sense of belonging and fit within the organisation. Consequences for the organisation include the existence of one or more underlying informal identity groups within the organisation, each of which may reflect vastly different organisational realities. These may involve strong attachments by group members to those perceived realities, which may impact negatively on the organisation's readiness for change.

All three organisation-based identities reflect situated identification, in that the identities were organisation-based, but represented very different conceptions regarding the organisation's perceived purpose, and individuals' perceived job roles (Ashforth et al., 2008). The three identities also reflect unique temporal references, linked to different construals of organisational and social constituents regarding the organisation's identity and image, which would have been dominant at the time that each identity category first formed (Schultz & Hernes, 2013). Following the dominance of the Warder identity for over 100 years, the organisation became a hybrid, or dual identity, organisation with the introduction
of the Carer identity during the 1970s. Similarly, given that Change Managers' communication centred on creating a future envisioned organisation, yet another organisation-based identity was under construction, with which newcomers would be more likely to identify than existing employees (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005).

The findings both support and challenge the belief that top managers have exclusive control over creating and managing an organisation's identity. While the organisation's founders and top managers were integral to the formation of all three organisation-based identities at critical points of change during the organisation's history, it was clear that individuals were active participants in the identity development process. Individuals no doubt drew on the organisational identity espoused by management at the time of entry, as well as construals of the organisation by external reference groups, to inform their beliefs about the organisation and perceived job role (Roberts & Creary, 2013; Tanis & Beukeboom, 2011). Individuals were thus influenced by organisational and social factors that helped them to establish their initial connections with the organisation, and which continued to reinforce their attachment to both the identity and organisation over time. This accords with the view held by many scholars that identity formation and development processes are a mix of individual and social factors. For example, Brown, Kirpal, and Rauner (2007, p. 21) argue that "the development of an identity is constrained, circumscribed and shaped by existing social structures and processes" but at the same time "implies an element of active engagement and self-definition on the part of the individual", thereby reflecting the importance of both social structure and agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Hodgkinson, 2013). While senior managers may have substantial control over an organisation's structure, individuals will therefore have some degree of agency in the identity-based meaning they ascribe to the self-organisation relationship (Watson, 2008).
The role of the individual in this process is articulated well by Vough (2012), who states that individual actors "construct identification based on their own interpretations of identity-relevant information" (p. 779). Individuals draw on a range of internal and external representations of the organisation, before and after they enter the organisation, to both shape and maintain the construction of their identity as an organisational member (Roberts & Creary, 2013). All of the factors that help to affirm and validate the identity, contribute to increasingly embedding the identity over time in the organisation. The more embedded the identity is in the organisation itself, and the more attached the individual is to the identity, the more the individual may also become attached to the organisation, and other organisations, in which the identity can be enacted.
CHAPTER NINE: FINAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis project was to conduct a qualitative interpretive study of employee identities in one organisation undergoing change, with the aim of identifying the particular identities that were salient for participants, as they talked about their experiences of the changes that were occurring in the organisation. A core goal was to conduct in-depth exploration of the identities that emerged, to illuminate their core features and attributes, and understand why they were evoked during change. A second goal was to explore the relationships between the salient identities that emerged, and participants’ perceptions of, and responses to, change. Finally, a key aim was to illuminate features of the organisational and social context that were related to the presence, development and effects of salient identities.

This final chapter explores the implications of the findings of this thesis project for individuals who are responsible for communicating and implementing large-scale change in organisations. While an in-depth case study is unable to offer generalisations for practitioners or managers, there are a number of insights, and implications for change, that can be derived from the findings, which are presented below. These are followed by a summary of the contributions of this thesis project to existing research. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the limitations of the thesis project and directions for future research.

Implications for Communicating and Implementing Change

This section explores the implications of organisation-based identities for managers and practitioners who may be responsible for the communication and implementation of large-scale change in organisations.
Informal identity groups exist in organisations that can influence how organisational members perceive and respond to change.

The findings of this thesis project suggest that individuals develop unique organisation-based identities that inform how they perceive the purpose of the organisation and their job role, how they orient toward other organisational members – including patients, managers and coworkers – and how they perceive and respond to organisational events, including large-scale change. For example, Carers’ organisation-based identity centred around caring for patients – so the change was viewed as an opportunity to improve conditions for patients. In contrast, Warders’ organisation-based identity revolved around securing jobs for family, and protecting the community from dangerous patients – and the changes were viewed as a threat to both of these. Perceptions of, and responses to, change were therefore a continuation of the personal sense of meaning that individuals had derived for their relationship with the organisation.

Change Managers were themselves members of a third identity group, who communicated change-related messages that were congruent with their beliefs about the organisation. Change Managers held no attachments to the current organisation, and their communication was largely one-way, future-oriented, and described a "logical", abstract and ideal vision of a future envisioned organisation. Humphreys and Brown (2002, p. 439) note that

"... one reason why organizations cannot simply be constituted monologically is that the identity-constitutive stories told about organizations also directly impinge on the social identities of their participants. People author narratives not just to account for their organizations …, but to 'enact' versions of themselves and their relationships to other social categories … to make sense of their work, their organisation, and themselves."
With their emphasis on the future, Change Managers focussed their concerns on staff who did not appear to be listening nor responding positively to change communication, describing these responses as illogical. Change Managers in this organisation followed the trend, seen often in change management literature, for change leaders to view individuals in organisations as one large group of staff who, if they do not respond positively and immediately to change communication, are viewed as resistors to change. Change Managers did not seem to be aware that the staff group comprised members of two underlying identity groups – Warders and Carers. Carers were aware of the external drivers for change, were accepting of the need for change, and attended to all change communication, including external communication. They were, however, ambivalent – in that they were positive about the benefits for patients, but were concerned that the proposed changes could reduce, rather than increase, patient care. Warders, on the other hand, were unaware of the external drivers for change, and were far less open to new ideas. Their tenure and sense of permanence in the organisation resulted in a denial that the organisation could possibly change, following which profound emotional reactions were experienced – including shock, anger and fear – as Warders began to realise that the organisation they had long known was being dismantled. Their avoidance of change-related communication was directly linked to this realisation, as they began to comprehend the impact that the changes would have on their sense of belonging within the organisation. The communication and responses of all participants were therefore congruent with their identity-based attachments to, and beliefs about, the organisation.

Importantly, Warders' reactions were more complex than mere resistance. Warders were a product of organisational and social forces that had established and reinforced their identity, providing them with long-term, stable employment that did not require any particular education or skills. The result was that they had
no experience in selection processes, and lacked confidence in their ability to gain a job elsewhere. The Warder identity group included employees with low literacy levels, and Warders generally indicated a preference for concrete, here-and-now information. These attributes developed, in part, because education, job qualifications and professional development had never been a requirement of their employment. As a result, there were multiple challenges for Warders in being able to attend to, and accurately understand, change-related communication, and to visualise the abstract organisation that Change Managers were envisioning. For some of these employees, the computerised recruitment process was beyond their experience and abilities, given that they had never worked elsewhere and had secured their job role without participating in any assessment processes. In contrast, Carers were more likely to possess an education and job qualifications, to have previous experience with organisational recruitment and assessment processes, and were comfortable with future-oriented and abstract information.

While it is accurate that Warders were not embracing change, any perception that Warders were merely resistant would reflect a naive view of employee behaviour, built on a lack of understanding of the history of the organisation, and the long-term employment relationship that the organisation itself had been directly involved in forming and maintaining. Thus, while Warders' beliefs were indeed outdated, they were, in part, a product of an organisation that not only created the identity for local workers, but offered little to prepare them for the realities of change. One of the key implications for managers is, therefore, to be aware that when they establish or change an organisation, they may also establish a new employee identity. This identity may become reinforced and embedded within the environment over time, as the changes are integrated into organisational routines, and may become increasingly resistant to future change if steps are not taken earlier to build employees' adaptability and readiness.
It is imperative that change leaders understand the organisation they are trying to change.

Change leaders may be unable to ensure continuity between an organisation's past and future if they ignore fundamental features that have helped to create the present organisation (Puusa et al., 2013). A key implication for change leaders is that they need to understand the organisation they are trying to change, including the organisation's social, political and historical context. Karp and Helgo (2009) argue that change leaders therefore need to develop a better understanding “of what people in organisations are already, and have always been, doing” (p. 87).

Ashforth and Mael (1996) suggest that employees' identity claims during change “frequently include references to the history and traditions of the organization” (p. 36). This was particularly true of Warders, whose identity had a rich history in the organisation, and whose claims involved continual references to the past, and to the organisation's links with the local township. While the Carer identity had a shorter history in the organisation, Carers' claims were similarly anchored in the origins of this identity, which formed around caring for patients in acute care wards. Understanding the origins and nature of the organisation's existing identities and meaning systems therefore seems important to help change leaders better understand the individuals they are trying to change (Danisman, 2010). Fiol (2002) notes that unless change leaders understand the nature of employee attachments to the organisation, they may fail to appreciate the true origins and nature of employee reactions to change, both positive and negative.

Several researchers recommend that change leaders engage in the type of communication that reveals the current understandings and meanings of the organisation (e.g., Ford & Ford, 1995; McClellan, 2011; Woodman, 2008).
McClellan argues that communication works best as a 'strategic tool' when it involves a two-way dialogue, rather than a one-way information transfer process that attempts to impose change leaders' preferred meaning. For example, while Change Managers in the current thesis project focussed on the need for employees to listen to their own change discourse, it is possible that if they themselves listened to existing organisational members, they may have recognised that employees represented two core subsets of meaning for the organisation. For example, the findings show that existing employees revealed a lot about their identities within the organisation by the way they talked about the organisation's purpose, their job roles, the patient group, and other members of the organisation. A key implication for managers, is that in order to understand the underlying identity beliefs within the organisation they are trying to change, it may be important to ask employees questions such as, 'What is the purpose of this organisation?' 'Why do you think it was established?' and 'What is your role in it?' and allow individuals' responses to illuminate the meanings the organisation has for them (Armenakis et al., 1999). Although they are legitimate agents for the organisation, change leaders may also need to manage their own emotions, and adopt a neutral role during communication, rather than defend their own sense of meaning for the organisation, which may encourage inter-identity conflict.

Senior managers who claim sovereignty over the organisation should therefore not just impose their preferred organisational reality, but should acknowledge the organisation's contribution to establishing employees' existing realities, and to maintaining the bonds that have attached those employees so tightly to the organisation. Warders in particular could not have remained in the organisation for over 130 years without substantial organisational support and external validation. Treating existing employees like barriers to change would mean failing to understand their perceived organisational reality, not to mention
their legitimate contributions to the organisation's historic social functions, even if aspects of the organisation's history may now seem unpalatable to today's change leaders. A range of organisational factors – such as establishing the organisation next to the township, creating the nurse assistant role, and providing inadequate professional development – contributed to Warders' legitimacy and fit in the organisation, and helped to explain their dependence on the organisation and their strong emotional reactions to change. In the case of the Warder identity, the organisation had, at a previous time, been just as attached to local workers who were prepared to work in unskilled roles in a stigmatised job role, as local workers were attached to the jobs the organisation provided.

While Change Managers may therefore be privileged in being able to communicate a new organisational reality, if they fail to understand the organisation they are trying to change they will fail to appreciate the existing organisation-based identities that are tied to the organisation. Bryson (2008) argues that changing normative behaviour in organisations is problematic because employees develop their own definitions of organisational reality and their own unique meanings of the social environment in which they work. From this perspective, it may not be employee resistance that serves as a major barrier to change, but change leaders who fail to understand why those employees became attached to the organisation in the first place.

**Change management requires both identity construction and identity reconstruction**

During large-scale change, change leaders are empowered to define the entire organisational context – including its location, structure, work units, roles, procedures and staffing. They establish the symbols and rules that invoke particular identity constructions, and that serve as major sources and influences on members' identities within the organisation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).
Thomas et al. (2011, p. 32) argue that organisational change essentially involves managers using their legitimate authority to "promote, justify and reiterate their preferred meaning", which is achieved largely through "coercive communication practices" that aim to destroy members' existing meanings for the organisation. Change leaders also have greater power to influence external stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation's image, and to legitimise sub-organisational identities (Scott & Lane, 2000). King et al. (2010) refer to this as a sovereignty over the self-consistency of identity expression in organisations. Thus, change leaders engage in a form of "identity regulation" that involves intentional actions by change leaders in the processes of both identity construction and reconstruction (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Isabella, 1990).

Change leaders and senior managers are therefore afforded legitimate power to represent the organisation and speak as the 'organisational we' (Pratt & Kraatz, 2009). They are seen as 'bona fide identity claimants' because they have the formal authority to make claims about what is central, distinctive and enduring about the organisation, and the power to put organisational structures and practices in place to support those claims (Whetten, 2007). Change Managers were privileged in being able to mould the organisation, and construct the supports for their preferred organisational reality, because they were communicating the dominant identity discourse (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007; Manuti & Mininni, 2013; Watson, 2008). As the primary agents for 'organizational sovereignty', Change Managers were empowered to impose their sense of the organisation's meaning, or their interpretation of the organisation, on other organisational members, and the identity of the organisation itself would be likely to evolve as a reflection of their own identity (Brickson, 2013; Scott & Lane, 2000).

When change leaders communicate their preferred organisational reality, this can trigger the salience of existing members' current identities, which can
generate identity dissonance as existing members experience a threat to identity continuity between their past and future organisation-based selves (Whetten, 2007). Change Managers in this thesis project elected to communicate the same change messages repetitively, which would only serve to increase the identity dissonance for existing organisational members.

However, while Change Managers may have had the power to articulate a new organisational purpose and job roles, this may do little to remove existing organisation-based identities. This is because an organisation-based identity reflects an individual's psychological connection with the organisation. As such, it does not belong to the organisation, so that Change Managers who are articulating their own identity beliefs, or describing a new organisational reality, will not necessarily change existing members' psychological relationship with the organisation. It is therefore possible that organisation-based identities will endure through and beyond change and that, while change may create a new organisation-based identity, it may not significantly alter the self-organisation relationships that already exist in the organisation. This idea is supported by participant quotes that showed Warders were continuing to behave in the organisation as they always had, such as the following quote by a Change Manager.

"I hear that some people haven’t embraced the new model and are therefore conducting themselves in their own clinical duties as though nothing had changed." (Change Manager)

Similarly, despite their openness to changes that could benefit patients, the concerns expressed by Carers that the changes were reducing, rather than increasing, patient care demonstrated that Carers were also not embracing the notion of patient empowerment, but were continuing to enact their existing organisational reality, which centred on a job role that provided direct patient
care. Thus, while change leaders may be able to create an identity – by articulating the organisation's new purpose and the expectations of employees in their future job roles, and building the organisational structures to support these – it may be much harder to 'delete' an existing identity (Pratt & Kraatz, 2009).

Because organisational change involves a reinterpretation of the organisation's purpose and job roles, change leaders are requiring existing employees to adopt new identity constructions, and to change the normative behaviours that have become embedded in the organisation as cultural norms (Tsoukas, 2005). From this perspective, a change leader can declare that an organisation's identity has changed, but effective change is essentially the success at being able to reshape the behaviour of existing employees so that it becomes institutionalised in the form of new meanings and roles (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Thus, while the organisation's history would suggest that new hires may identify more readily with a new organisational reality described by Change Managers, it may be more difficult to remove or change the self-organisation connections of those employees whose organisation-based identities are already embedded in the organisation (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005). While it may be relatively easy to change formal roles on the organisation chart, existing employees' identities may not be so easily removed, which is perhaps why Ashforth and Mael (1996) suggest, "it is often necessary to change personnel to change an organizational identity" (p. 52).

One of the key implications for managers implementing change, is to be aware that they may not be the first managers to enter the organisation with the authority to establish a new organisational reality. The organisation's founders were integral to construction of the Warder identity, and senior managers who were involved in the introduction of acute care wards in the 1970s would have been key contributors to construction of the Carer identity. Importantly, the organisation's founders would also have helped to construct an identity for
individuals with mental illness, when they established the organisation in a secluded location and placed bars and high fences around locked wards. Similarly, a new patient identity would have been constructed with the development of acute care wards. Change Managers were now helping to create a third patient identity that would involve a combination of self-empowerment and organisational requirements. Importantly, therefore, and potentially overlooked, is that changing the identity of the organisation in which this thesis project was conducted would also require that patients learn to act very differently. If organisations are a function of their members' actions, then both employees and patients would be required to adopt new identities within the organisation in order for the changes to succeed (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Klein et al., 1999; Tsoukas, 2005). Accordingly, it is likely that change leaders may require two communication strategies during change – one to construct a new identity for newcomers to the organisation, and another to reconstruct the identities of existing employees (and patients), some of which may be deeply embedded within the organisation.

Large-scale change creates an identity gap for existing organisational members

Research has shown that identity recategorisation and reidentification attempts have a tendency to fail unless there is some degree of compatibility between current and envisioned identities (Brickson, 2013; Fox-Wolfgramm et al., 1998). Change Managers' communication described a future envisioned organisation and job roles to fit the organisation's new purpose of patient empowerment. From a social identity perspective, Change Managers were essentially attempting to recategorise employees by outlining the new employee identities that were required to enact the future organisation. This involved Change Managers imparting their perceived meaning for the organisation, which centred on creating a new organisation around the principles of patient
empowerment (Mumby, 1988). This construction of the organisation was moderately congruent with Carers' perceptions of the organisation as a hospital in which staff cared for patients, though completely incongruent with Warders' perceptions of the organisation as an asylum in which staff enacted a custodial role. The changes were therefore creating an identity gap for employees between their current organisation-based identity and the identity required to fulfil the organisation's new purpose and job roles.

The term 'identity gap' was coined by Reger et al. (1994b) to refer to the discrepancy between an organisation's current and ideal identities. They describe organisational identities as "self-concept schemas" that are held by members, with an ideal organisational identity representing employees' shared "future-oriented beliefs" about "who we want to be" as an organisation (p. 574). Given that an organisation-based identity is conceptualised as a property of the individual, rather than a property of the organisation, an identity gap is used here to refer to the discrepancy between an individual's current organisation-based identity (i.e., the individual's perceptions of the organisation's purpose and their perceived job role) and the future employee identity required by Change Managers (i.e., the identity required to enact the organisation's new purpose and job roles). Thus, an identity gap represents the gap between the relationship an existing employee has with the current organisation, and the relationship the employee is required to have in order to remain a member of the future organisation.

For Warders, the identity gap was substantial, as reflected by their shock when they realised the long-held status quo was under threat, and their strong emotional responses as they began to comprehend the magnitude of the change. Where Warders represented a good person-role fit in the past organisation, their identity no longer had normative fit in the new organisation (van Dick et al., 2005). Indeed, they were now facing being disenfranchised as the 'black sheep'.
of the organisation (Ellemers & Rink, 2005). Their perceived job role was no
longer receiving normative support for the required organisational behaviours,
and their identity no longer compared favourably with other identity groups in the
organisation. Many of the organisational structures and practices that had
reinforced and maintained their identity were reducing or disappearing. Letting go
of the status quo would therefore require Warders to give up a lifelong identity
and undergo a complete change of self-concept in order to remain in the
organisation.

While the change may have led to a major identity crisis for Warders,
however, it may have had little impact on motivating Warders to release their
identity, particularly when the vision that was being communicated by Change
Managers was abstract, future-oriented and radically different to Warders' beliefs
about the organisation. For example, the identity theory concept of commitment
refers to "the social and personal costs entailed in no longer fulfilling a role" that
has been central to one's identity (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 19). The more
embedded an identity is in a particular social setting or network, or the more time
an individual has spent in the role, the more difficult it may be for the individual to
abandon the identity. The same would be true for long-term patients in the
organisation. For example, while new patients might find it easier to embrace a
different organisational context, long term patients would no doubt experience
similar identity dissonance to Warders in response to radical changes to their
care.

For Carers, the identity gap was smaller because they already displayed a
patient focus, and would perhaps find it easier to assimilate the new organisation
into their self-concept. Carers had shorter tenure in the organisation and their
sense of the organisation's purpose was closer to the future envisioned
organisation being described by Change Managers. However, Carers' beliefs
were still not an ideal fit for the new organisation because their perceived job role
centred around the idea of providing direct care for patients. This involved doing things for patients, while the future envisioned organisation would require staff to step back and allow patients to do things for themselves in the new context of patient empowerment. Nevertheless, it could be expected that Carers might find it easier to make the required shift over time.

Similar to Warders and Carers, there was also an identity gap for Change Managers, which was equal to the distance between the current organisation and the future envisioned organisation. The difference for Change Managers, however, is that they were moving toward, rather than away from, their preferred organisational reality. Thus, while Warders and Carers may have been reluctant to let go of the organisation they knew, Change Managers would be reluctant to remain in the existing organisation, which represented an undesirable organisational state. This was reflected in Change Managers' communication, which centred almost exclusively on the benefits of the future envisioned organisation, featuring descriptions that were enthusiastic and positive.

Thus, while Warders and Carers' identity gaps were widening as they moved further away from their organisational reality, Change Managers' identity gap was closing as they established new structures and practices to reflect their perceived organisation. The tight deadlines associated with the change process favoured Change Managers, because they were allowing Change Managers to reduce their dissonance by bringing them closer to an organisational reality that better supports their identity, but were giving Warders and Carers limited time to adjust to the identity dissonance caused by the changes (Bridges, 1991).

Warders and Carers were required to reconstruct a previously valued organisation-based identity, which could require extensive identity work and identity repair on the part of the individual. Organisational change can therefore present an identity crisis for individuals, particularly if it leads to a "profound sense of disorientation" when structures and markers that previously validated an
identity, and made sense of the individual's relationship with the organisation, are removed (Whetten, 2006, p. 229).

There are some similarities between the processes described here and the concepts of sensegiving and sensebreaking. Sensegiving refers to managers' attempts to guide the "meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442), and sensebreaking "involves a fundamental questioning of who one is when one's sense of self is challenged" (Pratt, 2000, p. 464). As the authoritative voice for the organisation, change leaders generally have the strongest influence over organisational identities because they have the power to tell others what the organisation will versus will not be (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Ashforth et al. (2008) argue that sensebreaking accentuates 'knowledge gaps' and motivates identity exploration in order to fill the identity gap. However, some of the studies that have applied these concepts to identity exploration, such as Pratt's (2000) study of Amway distributors, involved individuals moving toward a new and desired identity, rather than to individuals such as Warders and Carers, who were being required to give up a preferred or long-held identity.

A key implication for change leaders is that sensegiving takes on new meaning when considered in light of the three organisation-based identities that emerged in this thesis project, in that Change Managers' communication was based entirely on the 'sense' they derived for the organisation, which overlooked how other organisational members made sense of the same organisation (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). The findings also suggest that identity is an important and common resource used by individuals as a sensemaking tool to interpret and comprehend organisational communication and events (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).
Identity dissonance motivates individuals to affirm their organisation-based identities.

The model of identity development, presented in the previous chapter, incorporated an identity maintenance process that involves an organisation-based identity being affirmed and verified over time through a variety of individual, group, organisational and social factors, all of which serve to enhance the individual's attachment to both the identity and the organisation. All of these factors validate individuals' beliefs about the organisation and enhance their perceived legitimacy and fit in the organisation (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Glynn, 2008). The findings suggest that when change occurs to the organisational context, existing employees may be motivated to reaffirm their current organisation-based identities, and restore identity consonance, whereby they perceive that the identity continues to fit and make sense of the organisational context.

In the first instance, a sense of identity continuity may be achieved by continuing to enact the normative behaviours that reflect individuals' current understanding of the organisation. Warders' identity would therefore be affirmed by continuing to ensure that dangerous patients do not escape the confines of the organisation; Carers' identity would be affirmed by continuing to care for patients; and Change Managers would affirm their identity by continuing to change the organisation to support patient empowerment. As a consequence, Warders would be resistant to open ward environments that allow patients greater mobility and freedom, Carers would be resistant to patients receiving less direct care, and Change Managers would be resistant to obstacles that may hinder the organisation from changing. Thus, when an employee maintains their existing role performance, this may be better understood as an identity affirming tactic, to
confirm that their existing sensemaking in relation to the organisation is still valid (Stryker, 2004).

The notion of resistance commonly refers to the perception that employees are either for or against change, so that change leaders tend to perceive individuals as either ‘with us or against us’ (Thomas & Hardy, 2011). This construction of resistance privileges change leaders, whose preferred organisational reality is used as the point of reference from which employee responses are measured (Gilpin & Miller, 2013). The further away other employees are from this reference point, the more resistant to change they are perceived to be. However, while resistance is commonly framed as a power dynamic, it may be helpful for change leaders to view resistance in identity-based terms. For example, van Dijk and van Dick (2009) refer to identity-based resistance, which they define as occurring when individuals resist the impact of a salient group’s loss of status on their work-based identity. From an identity perspective, it would seem natural for individuals to want to affirm and verify their existing identity, so that any threats to the stability and continuity of an existing identity are likely to be resisted – and this applies to all organisational members, including existing employees, patients and change leaders (Karp & Helgo, 2009).

The degree of identity-based resistance would reflect the degree of identity threat and dissonance being experienced by the individual. For example, Warders were facing substantial threat because their long and stable tenure in the organisation had received substantial validation from internal and external powerholders, and led many Warders to perceive themselves as unemployable elsewhere. As noted in participant quotes, this led to an incapacity to embrace new ideas and change (Moreland & Levine, 2003). Warders had long been the dominant employee group in the organisation, perceiving themselves as 'insiders', and they now faced becoming 'outsiders'. This reality may have generated high threat and insecurity. As a consequence, their need to reaffirm
their identity would be greater than other identity groups in the organisation, and they would require more time than others to let go of their strong attachments to the organisation and adapt to the changes. Carers, in contrast, were less attached to physical and structural elements of the organisation and would require less time than Warders to make the necessary transition. Their attachment to patients also meant they were less dependent on structural markers to verify their identity, so their existing identity could be enacted and verified in other organisations to which some patients were being relocated.

The idea that different timelines may be needed for people to unattach themselves from the 'old' organisation is not new. For example, Woodman and Dewett (2004) argue for a 'hierarchy of changeability', such that those characteristics that are deeply rooted in an individual's sense of self are more difficult to change, and require events of long duration in order for people to change. This would suggest that identity attachments that have been stable and continuous, and characterised by long tenure, would require more time for individuals to disengage from the current sense of meaning they have for the organisation, before they can re-engage with a new organisational reality (Grunberg et al., 2008).

Because Change Managers were changing the way that existing employees would be required to relate to the organisation, adapting to large-scale organisational change would require Warders and Carers to re-evaluate their self-organisation relationship. Thus, while new hires might be more likely to connect psychologically with a new organisational reality, the identity dissonance experienced by existing employees is likely to motivate them to engage in identity preservation strategies to reaffirm the organisational and social supports that previously sustained their identity. It may only be when the identity verification process fails that existing employees will seek to explore alternatives, such as
adopting a new identity, or changing their current identity, to seek legitimacy and fit in the new, or another, organisational context.

Emotions highlight the identity symbols and markers that affirm and maintain individuals' organisation-based identities.

The findings regarding participants' emotional responses to the changes provide support for the view that emotions serve as an indicator of the importance and significance of individuals' work-based identities, as well as the impact of change for survival of those identities (Stryker, 2004). Participants' emotions were not only identity-consistent, in that they were congruent with individuals' perceptions of the organisation's purpose and their perceived job role; they also highlighted the structures and symbols that supported and sustained those identities, particularly those that were exclusive to the organisation (Stryker, 2004). For example, with such a long and stable tenure in the organisation, and the close bond that developed between the organisation and township, the Warder identity was reinforced by the organisation's longstanding physical structures, and the proximity of the township, both of which were relatively permanent fixtures and symbolised Warders' strong sense of belonging in the organisation. In contrast, Carers' responses centred almost entirely around patients and patient care, and, unlike Warders, Carers did not respond emotionally to the dismantling of the organisation's physical structures. The emotions displayed by Warders and Carers were therefore not just identity-consistent, but the targets of their emotions reflected particular aspects of the organisation that were integral to each identity.

The findings also revealed that emotions were not just associated with identity loss, but with identity development (Hodgkinson, 2013). This is because Change Managers demonstrated emotions that were not directed toward familiar aspects of the organisation that were being removed, but to aspects of the
organisation that were not changing, such as employees who were not responding positively to change communication. Change Managers' emotions were therefore linked to identity development, rather than identity loss, with their emotions illuminating key aspects that were integral to supporting the development of their future-based identity.

According to the social identity approach, the more significant an identity is to an individual, or the more the individual values the identity, the more any threats to that identity are likely to increase affect (Ashforth et al., 2008; Major & O'Brien, 2005; Tajfel, 1978). The findings of this thesis project are consistent with research that highlights the affective component of identification, and lend support for the view that organisations should pay greater attention to organisational members' emotions during change (e.g., Bartunek et al., 2006a; Boros, 2008; Chung, Su, & Su, 2012; Hodgkinson, 2013; Kirsch, Parry, & Peake, 2010; van Dick et al., 2006). Not only did Change Managers in the current study overlook the importance of employees' emotions, but they expressed the view that individuals should be able to put aside their emotions in order to communicate rationally about change. This expectation was unrealistic given that emotions are natural and normal reactions for individuals experiencing any form of identity threat – including threats to development of an identity and threats to loss of an identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Buono & Bowditch, 1989). The implication for change leaders is that members' emotions can highlight the organisational markers and symbols that carry and convey shared meanings about identities in organisations (Burke & Stets, 2009). If change leaders want to regulate the meaning that individuals give to an organisation, they therefore need to understand those identity markers and symbols.
Changing the structures and symbols that serve as identity markers may be key to motivating individual identity change.

The identity development processes described in the previous chapter suggest that organisation-based identities require internal organisational support and external social validation to be sustained over time. This suggests that both individual and organisational change readiness may depend on the degree to which senior managers are able to influence, if not control, the factors that support and maintain work-based identities. A key implication for change leaders is that in order to create the conditions in which employees are motivated to reconstruct their identities, change leaders need to determine which aspects of the organisation itself need to change in order for the identities within it to change (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002).

Change Managers did remove some of the identity markers that sustained the Warder and Carer identities. For example, Change Managers removed the nurse assistant role, which had long served as a cornerstone for the Warder identity. The removal of the water tower also reflected a critical turning point in the change process, because it signalled the reality of the change for Warders, and triggered a significant shift in Warders' responses to the change process. Importantly, however, even after these changes occurred, some of the social and organisational supports that helped establish and maintain these organisation-based identities continued to exist (Corley, 2004). Any retention of existing identity markers will help employees to preserve their existing organisation-based identities. While Warders were losing major identity resources, such as the power they previously wielded over the recruitment of local families, many day-to-day identity markers in their work areas were not changing – including locked wards, the high level of patient acuity and the presence of similar-minded coworkers. Thus, despite the organisation placing new symbols and structures in place to
support patient empowerment, closed wards in particular were retaining many structures and symbols to which Warders had long been accustomed. For example, duress alarms reflected a continuation of the siren that had once alerted off duty workers in the township to assist in times of emergency, and locked doors continued to serve as reminders of the unpredictability of "dangerous" patients.

It is not surprising that the Warder identity, given its stability and tenure, accrued a substantial number of supports that would need to be dismantled in order for Warders to release their current identity. Other identity markers that remained present for Warders included the physical proximity of the township to the organisation; the buildings and grounds that had been used for family, school and community events; work practices in closed wards (such as the rigid routines used to control patients); and the links to formal groups (such as unions).

It is likely that, during change, managers place most of their attention on the symbols and structures that support their desired organisational reality. For example, the new model of service delivery written by Change Managers represented a key marker for the development of organisational structures and practices that would support their vision for the organisation. As such, it served as an organisational artefact that would assist Change Managers to embed their identity claims in the organisation (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). While the new model of service delivery did not remove existing identities, it did trigger identity dissonance and threat for employees. For example, while some Warders did not (or could not) read the written model, most did attend to the attached staffing profile, which detailed the staff numbers that would be required for the new facility, thereby informing them of the number of staff that would be required to leave the organisation.

For an organisation to enhance its readiness to change, therefore, it may not be about persuading existing organisational members to embrace a future
vision, but being able to recognise and influence the bonds that tie individuals to
the existing organisation, and the particular organisational symbols and
structures that reinforce and maintain those ties (Fiol, 2002). Removal of these
support structures will lead to individual identity dissonance, which motivates self-
verification strategies. While these strategies lead individuals to engage in
actions designed to reaffirm their existing identity, these would only be effective
to the extent that they succeed in maintaining the identity. When their actions fail
to neutralise the dissonance, individuals would be required to re-evaluate their
sense of fit and renegotiate their self-organisation relationship (Stets & Burke,
2000). For example, individuals may then be compelled to consider alternative
identity maintenance strategies, including a change of identity to remain in the
organisation, or leaving the organisation altogether.

Summary

The findings of this thesis project suggest that it may be difficult, if not
impossible, to directly change how existing employees relate with an organisation
through repetitive, future-oriented communication. Organisation-based identities
represent latent identifications that influence employee behaviour largely through
implicit means, sustained by organisational and social support structures that
may not be immediately obvious to managers. To succeed during large-scale
change, change leaders may therefore need to engage in dual identity regulation
strategies. Identity construction strategies involve moulding the organisation to
reflect the new organisational reality, by routinising a new work-based identity in
organisational structures and work processes, which may work best for
newcomers to the organisation. Identity reconstruction strategies, on the other
hand, are required for existing organisational members, because they involve
removing or altering the support structures that previously validated identities that
no longer ‘fit’ the organisation (Ashforth et al., 2008; Karreman & Alvesson, 2004; Sonenshein, 2010).

The next section outlines the main contributions of this thesis project.

Contributions to Existing Research

The findings of this thesis project offer a number of insights into identity processes, and individual identification, in organisations. First, it adds to our understanding about the identities that matter to individuals in organisations, by offering an in-depth description of three latent identity groups, which informed how individuals perceived the organisation and responded to communication about change. The findings demonstrate that social identification in an organisation can be with identity targets that may not be immediately or intuitively evident to change leaders and researchers. The three organisation-based identities were all informal groups, thereby mirroring the Hawthorne studies, which highlighted that informal identity groups can become an integral part of the work context, and that how employees respond to management communication can be strongly associated with the norms and beliefs attached to informal groups.

The findings demonstrate that researchers should not necessarily focus on the more obvious groups that are predefined in an organisational hierarchy when trying to understand identities in organisations. For example, Change Managers, all of whom were new to the organisation, emerged as a core identity group, though change leaders are generally not recognised in research as a unique identity group in their own right. However, closer study of this identity group, and the dynamics between the three identity groups, generated a range of insights regarding individual identification in organisations, including the origins and nature of members' organisational realities, and the unique historical and temporal differences associated with their attachments to the organisation.
This thesis project also extends knowledge as to how identity groups actually become established in organisations. For example, the findings illuminated the formative origins of each of the three identity groups, and the factors that helped to affirm and sustain the identities over time. The findings also shed light on temporal features involved in identity expression – including how pre-entry factors influence individuals' acquisition of an identity; how the time in an organisation's life cycle at which an identity forms continues to influence how individuals perceive the essence of the organisation; and the extent to which individuals identify with a past, present versus future organisation. These findings lend support to existing research that suggests identities in organisations are best understood when temporal effects are taken into account (e.g., Puusa et al., 2013; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Ybema, 2010). These factors were captured in a model of identity development, which contributes new understandings regarding identity development processes in organisations, as well as the consequences of these for individuals and the organisation.

This thesis project also provides evidence to illustrate the importance of context in understanding identity dynamics in organisations. For example, the model of identity development presented in Chapter 8 includes contextual factors that influenced identity formation and identity maintenance processes in the organisation. These findings illustrate how organisational and social support structures can help to validate and perpetuate identities, and enhance individuals' perceived legitimacy and fit in the organisation. They also highlight that some identities can become deeply embedded in an organisational context, while others may be attached to identity markers that are less organisation-specific, so that some individuals may be less fused with the organisation itself.

This thesis project also provides empirical evidence for the relationship between employees' identities and their perceptions and responses to change, including the perceptions and responses of change leaders who are responsible
for communicating and implementing the changes. For example, concepts like resistance and readiness are generally perceived in the change literature as part of a continuum of individual responses en route toward the eventual acceptance of change. Because acceptance is perceived by change leaders as the only desirable outcome, employee responses tend to be gauged on their distance from this target, so that the further away the response, the more an individual is perceived as rejecting change, with these responses immediately discredited by change leaders as irrational (Chreim, 2006). The findings of this thesis project offer an identity-based explanation of responses to change that challenges this view. For example, the findings demonstrate that the identity-based meanings individuals develop regarding the self-organisation relationship strongly influence what they ‘hear’ when they listen to organisational communication. They also demonstrate how identity-based meanings continue to serve as anchoring points for individuals as they perceive and respond to change. The findings also suggest that identities may endure despite organisational change, with individuals continuing to identify with the formative identity that first defined their self-organisation relationship, particularly when that identity continues to be sustained by organisational identity markers, and legitimised by internal and external powerholders.

The findings of this thesis project also contribute to the study of emotion in organisations. While researchers have suggested that affect is an integral part of identity enactment, this thesis project demonstrates empirical links between identity and emotions, with participants across all three identity groups displaying emotions that were unique to, and congruent with, their respective organisation-based identities.

Finally, this thesis project points to the importance of understanding organisations as a social context in which multiple perceived organisational realities can exist, each of which may be linked to different contextual features.
and aspects of the organisation (Cian & Cervai, 2014). Each of which does, in effect, reveal a completely different organisational reality, with different historical and temporal qualities, rather than one shared set of organisational attributes (Gilpin & Miller, 2013). As such, it adds to the debate about identity in organisations versus the identity of organisations, and supports the existence of divergent interpretations of identity within one organisation (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Lok & Willmott, 2013; Puusa, 2009). For example, this thesis project generated conceptual insights that suggest organisation-based identities reside within individuals, reflecting a psychological property that gives meaning to an individual's connection with the organisation. Organisational studies that focus on one organisational identity, or explore shared conceptions of an organisation's identity, may therefore overlook underlying informal identity groups by viewing all identity features and claims as part of one composite organisational identity (Hsu & Elsbach, 2013; Ravasi & Canato, 2010).

The findings of this thesis project support the view that a particular organisation can mean different things to different people. It is therefore important that future research does not overlook the subjective meanings that may be given to organisational membership by individual members or latent subgroups (Huddy, 2001). This is important because individuals appear to develop different perceptions about what it means to be an organisational member, and their actions during change may be strongly influenced by these meanings.

The next section addresses the limitations of this thesis project and offers suggestions for future research.

Limitations

A number of factors need to be considered when interpreting the findings and applying them to other organisations. The thesis project represented an indepth qualitative case study of one organisation, using an exploratory and
interpretive methodology, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings to other organisational contexts. For example, while the findings did show similarities within, and differences between, salient identity groups, they do not prove that a particular identity is directly associated with a particular orientation to organisational communication or change.

A psychiatric hospital is also a unique setting, with job roles that are stigmatised, therefore it is possible that the conclusions and implications of this thesis project may not be readily transferable to employee identification in general hospitals or other organisations. Moreover, because this organisation employed so many members of the local township, it does not reflect an average organisation, although it is likely that there are similar organisations within Australia, particularly in regional and remote areas, which have long employed local workers and adopted similar recruitment strategies to this organisation.

It is also difficult to generalise studies of identity to other settings because the self-concept is context-sensitive, and is dependent to some degree on who individuals compare themselves to at the time of the study (Haslam et al., 2000). Nonetheless, studies like these do make important contributions to research by illuminating new identities, as well as the factors involved in the development and maintenance of identities in organisations. Salience is, therefore, an important element that helps to illuminate the particular identities that influence employee behaviour. Accordingly, it is possible that if employees had been interviewed at different stages of the change process, other identity groups may have emerged as salient. Similarly, although three core identities did emerge in the data, this does not mean these identities were always salient or that they were the primary influence on employees’ perceptions of, and responses to, change. While the thesis project did address this limitation by collecting data across two different time points, with two different samples of employees, it is nevertheless possible
that this thesis project may still have overlooked other important identity groups that mattered to participants in this organisation.

There are also inherent limitations in self-report data collection methods, including the oral history and unstructured interview approaches used in this thesis project (Briggs, 1986; Opie, 1988). For example, while oral histories aim to elicit information about past events, they rely on participants’ recall and reconstructions of the past. The questions that participants were asked also focussed on their experiences of communication about change, so it is possible that other identities may have become salient if participants had been asked questions about other aspects of organisational functioning (van Dick et al., 2006).

While no method can explain all aspects of a phenomenon, a researcher’s interpretation of qualitative data can only tell some of the story about a particular organisation or set of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The factors and processes identified in this thesis project are therefore unlikely to be exhaustive of the possible range of factors and processes that may influence identity dynamics in organisations. This thesis project offers a substantive conceptual framework only, constructed to describe and make sense of the identities that were salient for individuals in one organisational context, and the factors that influenced their development and expression.

The findings nonetheless demonstrate that identity does matter in organisations, and offer insight into the meaning of organisations for employees, identity development processes, and perceptions and responses to change.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis project describes identity-based behaviour within the context of one organisation undergoing large-scale change, and provides a platform for further investigation of identity dynamics and processes in other organisational
settings. It is hoped that further research will be conducted into the naturally occurring identities that form and develop within organisations, particularly those that are informal, latent and implicit, using methods that are context-sensitive, in order to continue adding to knowledge of the underlying identities that influence individual behaviour in organisations, and the inherent tensions between them, particularly during change.

This thesis project illuminated two core processes of identity development – identity formation and identity maintenance. Future research could investigate these two processes further, to examine exactly how contextual and temporal factors come to exert their influence on the acquisition and development of identities in organisations. Research could also be directed toward better understanding the structures and symbols that serve as identity markers in organisations, and how these act to sustain and reinforce individuals’ identities.

While the Warder identity was deeply embedded in the organisation, the Carer identity was characterised more by its links to the patient group, and was therefore less attached to the organisation itself. As a consequence, the change represented a significant identity threat to Warders who had become dependent on the organisation to sustain their identity. In contrast, the Carer identity could be enacted with patient groups in other organisations. The Carer identity was thus similar to professional identity, in which the individual identifies more with their professional role than with the organisation itself. These findings suggest that identities embed themselves in organisations in different ways. Future research could explore this further, as it is possible that similar dynamics may hold for individuals who identify with non-professional roles in organisations.

Future research could also re-examine an organisation’s core identity groups at various time points after large-scale change to determine how long identities that no longer ‘fit’ the organisation continue to persist, and whether they diminish after change. It may be important to illuminate the factors involved in
identity reconstruction – including the factors that assist individuals to bridge the identity gap, or to release their ties to an existing identity. For example, Change Managers indicated that they anticipated behavioural change within a year, however, it is likely that such a change timeline would allow insufficient time for identity reconstruction processes. It is well known that existing identities can persist for years, so it would be beneficial to learn more about what identity reconstruction actually involves. It would also be helpful to further explore how an organisation may unwittingly continue to support and reinforce an identity that no longer fits the organisation's new reality.

Finally, research is needed to identify the particular communication strategies that managers can use to encourage existing organisational members to change their relationships with the organisation. For example, most research focusses on communication strategies designed to enhance identity construction, which are largely one-way, repetitive and future-oriented. However, the findings of this thesis project suggest that another set of communication strategies may be needed to promote identity reconstruction, which may involve two-way communication aimed at understanding the bonds that tie existing employees to the current organisation, and encouraging those individuals to release them.

Conclusion

The findings of this thesis project support the notion that an organisation is a multifaceted projection of people's perceptions of what the organisation is (Clegg et al., 2007). One organisation may have multiple realities, each representing a social product of a subset of members’ shared beliefs and assumptions about the organisation's core function and essence. At any given time, there will be a group of organisational members (usually senior managers) who have the legitimate power to create the physical structures that best reflect and support their image of the organisation. The organisation may therefore have
one dominant ascribed identity, but how other individuals choose to perceive the
organisation may or may not reflect the meaning that this group gives to the
same organisation.

The aim of this thesis project was not to muddy the waters further on the
conceptualisation of identity in organisations. The findings offer new insights and
perspectives, and illuminate further complexities, that may be important to
consider in our efforts to understand identities, and identity processes, in
organisations. While the findings must be regarded as tentative, they support a
growing literature base that suggests to change an organisation, change leaders
may require greater understanding of the latent identities that exist within the
organisation, including how they support versus constrain change.

In their exploration of identity in organisations, Pratt and Kraatz (2009)
noted, "we do not know exactly who and what is involved in creating a ‘we’ in
organizations" (p. 406). They asked a series of questions that remain of interest
to organisational researchers, including 'How do we conceptualize organizational
(identify) change when we consider both self and identities?' and 'What role do
leaders, followers, and other constituents play in self formation, maintenance,
and change?'. The findings of this thesis project generated the concept of an
organisation-based identity in pursuit of answers to questions like these. This
concept is not intended to replace existing concepts such as organisational
identity and organisational identification, nor does it challenge the capacity for
employees to contribute to negotiation of an organisation's overarching identity. It
is hoped, however, that the concept of an organisation-based identity, and the
model of identity development presented in this thesis, may contribute to our
understanding of how individuals derive a sense of self within organisations, and
how amenable individuals self-organisation connections are to change.


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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Examining Communication and Identity in the Context of Organisational Change

Chief Investigators:
Dr Elizabeth Jones
Lorraine Stokes
PhD Supervisor
PhD Student
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Phone: 3267 6360
Email: L.Jones@mailbox.gu.edu.au
Email: L.Stokes@mailbox.gu.edu.au

1. Purpose of the research.
This study is being conducted by researchers at The University of Queensland and Griffith University. The aim of the study is to explore employee perceptions regarding the communication of change. The study is part of a broader research project examining employee perceptions of organisational change, and the impact of broader social changes occurring in the mental health sector. The information you provide will help us to identify factors that are impacting on the effectiveness of communication and change in your organisation.

2. Your involvement in the study.
Participation will involve taking part in a face-to-face interview with one of the researchers. The interview should take approximately one hour. The questions are designed to increase our understanding of how individuals are experiencing communication and change processes in your organisation.

It is important that you know that your participation is voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw, you have the right to request that we safely discard any information that you have provided to us. The information that you provide is confidential. The data gathered will only be viewed by members of the research team and will be securely stored at the University of Queensland.

3. Results of the study.
The results of the study will be provided to the organisation in the form of a report containing general themes, so that it is not possible to match responses to individuals. The researchers will also attend meetings across the organisation to share and discuss the results. The study is part of a broader research program so the data may be included as part of a thesis, journal articles or conference papers, however neither you nor your organisation will be identified.

4. What to do if you have any questions or concerns.
The study has been cleared by the The University of Queensland and Griffith University Ethics Committees in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s guidelines. Please feel free to contact Lorraine Stokes or Liz Jones (see contact details above) if you have any questions about the study. If you would prefer to contact someone in your organisation who knows about the research, please call Peter Lacey (Manager, Organisational Improvement) on 3271 8460. If you would prefer to contact an
independent person who is not involved in the study you may contact the Ethics Officer, Griffith University, on 3875 6618.

Thank you very much for your interest and participation in this study.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Examining Communication and Identity in the Context of Organisational Change

I have read the information sheet and I understand that this study is being conducted to find out about communication within my organisation. Participation will involve me taking part in a face-to-face interview with one of the researchers, in which I will be asked about my experiences and observations of communication about past and present changes in my organisation.

I understand that I am not required to participate in this research project if I do not wish to, and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without needing to explain my reasons for doing so. If I choose to withdraw, I can ask the researcher to safely discard any information that I have provided. The information I provide will not be viewed by anyone within my organisation and will be securely stored at the University of Queensland.

I understand that the results of the study will be provided to my employer in the form of general themes and that I will get the opportunity to hear the results and discuss them with the researcher.

I freely give my consent to participate in the study. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the participant information sheet, a copy of which I have retained. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

So that my name will not need to be written on any of the data that I provide, I will create the following unique personal code:

- The first two letters of my first name.  
- The last two letters of my surname.  
- The day of my birthday.

For example:  
MARY SMITH, 02/11/69  
CODE = M A T H 0 2

MY PERSONAL CODE IS:  

……………………………………………….. 

Participant Date 

……………………………………………….. 

Researcher Date
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Examining Communication During Organisational Change

Chief Investigators:
Dr Elizabeth Jones          Lorraine Stokes
PhD Supervisor              PhD Student
Phone: 3875 3365            Phone: 3267 6360
Email: L.Jones@mailbox.gu.edu.au Mobile: 0408 703 292

5. Purpose of the research.
This study is being conducted by a researcher at Griffith University to learn more about
the communication of change, which has been ranked by staff in Australian organisations
as a major area in need of improvement. The aim of this study is to assess how
staff at different levels of Wolston Park Hospital are experiencing communication about
changes within the organisation. To ensure consistency of responses, the study will
focus on communication associated with implementation of the Individual Professional
Development Plans.

6. Your involvement in the study.
Participation will involve taking part in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The
interview should take approximately one hour. The researcher will ask you about your
experiences and observations of communication relating to the Individual Professional
Development Plans. The questions are designed to increase our understanding of how
individuals are experiencing internal communication processes at Wolston Park Hospital.

It is important that you know that your participation is voluntary and that you have the
right to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw, you have the right to request that we
safely discard any information that you have provided to us. The information that you
provide is confidential. The data gathered will only be viewed by members of the
research team and will be securely stored at Griffith University.

7. Results of the study.
The results of the study will be provided to the organisation in the form of a report
containing group and general themes, so that it is not possible to match responses to
individuals. The report will include an evaluation of various aspects of communication,
and recommendations designed to improve communication in your organisation. The
researchers may also attend staff meetings across the organisation to share and discuss the
results. The study is part of a PhD research program so the data may be included as part
of a thesis, journal articles or conference papers, however neither you nor your
organisation will be identified.

8. What to do if you have any questions or concerns.
The study has been cleared by the Griffith University Ethics Committee in accordance
with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s guidelines. Please feel free to
contact Lorraine Stokes or Liz Jones (see contact details above) if you have any questions
about the study. If you would prefer to contact someone in your organisation who knows
about the research, please call Andrea Baldwin (Project Manager, Organisational
Improvement) on 3271 8459. If you would prefer to contact an independent person who is not involved in the study you may contact the Ethics Officer, Griffith University, on 3875 6618.

Thank you very much for your interest and participation in this study.
I have read the information sheet and I understand that this study is being conducted to find out about communication within my organisation. Participation will involve me taking part in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, in which I will be asked about my experiences and observations of communication associated with the Individual Professional Development Plans.

I understand that I am not required to participate in this research project if I do not wish to, and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without needing to explain my reasons for doing so. If I choose to withdraw, I can ask the researcher to safely discard any information that I have provided. The information I provide will not be viewed by anyone within my organisation and will be securely stored at Griffith University.

I understand that the results of the study will be provided to my employer in the form of general themes and that I will get the opportunity to hear the results and discuss them with the researcher.

I freely give my consent to participate in the study. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the participant information sheet, a copy of which I have retained. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

So that my name will not need to be written on any of the data that I provide, I will create the following unique personal code:

- The first two letters of my first name.
- The last two letters of my surname.
- The day of my birthday.

**For example:**
MARY SMITH, 02/11/69
CODE = MATH02

MY PERSONAL CODE IS: [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Participant .................................................. Date

Researcher .................................................. Date