



**BRITISH ACADEMY
OF MANAGEMENT**

BAM
CONFERENCE

3RD-5TH SEPTEMBER

ASTON UNIVERSITY BIRMINGHAM UNITED KINGDOM

This paper is from the BAM2019 Conference Proceedings

About BAM

The British Academy of Management (BAM) is the leading authority on the academic field of management in the UK, supporting and representing the community of scholars and engaging with international peers.

<http://www.bam.ac.uk/>

**Investigating Liminality to Understand the Implications of Organisational
Sensebreaking – Sensegiving Processes on Actors' Identity Construction in the**

Workplace

PROS-109

Jonathan Sims

Nottingham Business School
Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street
NG1 4FQ Nottingham UK
Email: jonathan.sims2017@my.ntu.ac.uk

Ofelia A. Palermo

Corresponding author

Nottingham Business School
Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street
NG1 4FQ Nottingham UK
Email: ofelia.palermo@ntu.ac.uk

Mumin Abubakre

Nottingham Business School
Nottingham Trent University,
50 Shakespeare Street
NG1 4FQ Nottingham UK
Email: mumin.abubakre@ntu.ac.uk

Abstract

In our study we focus on the complex state of ‘in-betweenness’ and ambiguity that occurs in the space of liminality. We aim to explore what are the implications of organisations’ superimposed sensebreaking and sensegiving dynamics on actors’ identity construction in times of change. Focusing on such dynamics allows us to take a closer look at what aspects might affect actors’ identity construction processes in times of uncertainty. We set our ethnographic case study in a large UK Mechanical and Electrical-contracting firm that we named NG. Our preliminary findings reveal three patterns tied, respectively, to the way actors recognised the occurrence of change; their interpretation of the organisation’s original values as being lost; and their negative feelings stirring from the uncertainty and change. To fill the identity void, two main reactions were observed in actors: gathering together and enduring, vs. disengaging and leaving. From the preliminary analysis of the data we suggest that magnifying individuals’ tensions between ‘hope’ and ‘defeat’ while surfing the space of liminality can reveal the potential for resistance hidden in identity (re)construction processes during uncertain times.

Keywords: identity, liminality, sensemaking, sensebreaking.

Introduction

In this study, we set to address a key question: what are the implications of organisations' superimposed sensebreaking-sensegiving dynamics on actors' construction of their identity in times of change?

Literature frames identity as an iterative process through which organisational actors interpret, modify and share their understanding of who they are in relation to the organisation they work in. Thus, individuals are not passive recipients of external identities (Ashforth, 1998; Collinson, 2003; Warburst, 2011). Rather, they actively shape internal ideas, wishes and evaluations (Ybema et al., 2009) in the enactment of the dynamic cycle through which identity unfolds (Miscenko & Day, 2015). Watson (2008: 129) argues that identity construction involves a process of sensemaking where actors "interpret or even modify the role given to them in the 'script' of any given identity".

Established literature suggests that people are free to (re)invent themselves periodically by actively experimenting with diverse roles and occupational identities (Ashforth, 2001). Nevertheless, there is scope to argue that individuals may experience conflicting demands in what Fraher and Gabriel (2014: 938) refer to as "the limbo land" of employment. Organisational contexts are often characterised by the binary opposition between a management that encourages the socialisation of selected values, attitudes and beliefs for the achievement of 'overarching' objectives, and a workforce that draws on rather different values, attitudes and beliefs that spring from their interpretation of their work and work-setting (Ashforth and Shinoff, 2016). The tensions emerging from such a dichotomised experience add complexity to the identity construction process whereby organisational sensebreaking and sensegiving cycles interact with actors' sensemaking ones. In this setting, the uncontrolled, dialogical spaces emerging from this interaction - which we refer to as liminality - acquire a primary role.

Our interest in addressing how actors construct their identity in liminal spaces has a twofold justification. First, from a theoretical point of view, focusing on such dynamics allows us to magnify the phases that affect actors' identity construction processes in the workplace. When explicit organisational sensegiving is being 'proposed' to actors in an attempt to create a preferred redefinition of identity, the dialogue that takes place in the liminal space becomes important for understanding how actors enact the identity work (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Literature suggests that liminality offers scope for shedding light on the dynamics of identity construction when actors experience a state of flux in the workplace (Beech, 2011).

Second, from an empirical point of view, there is scope for unpicking this research problem from an interpretivist stance, which provides an alternative to the more functionalist approaches less concerned with the impact that the context exerts on the phenomenon in question.

In our study we focus on the complex state of 'in-betweenness' and ambiguity during change using a case study design. We set our study in a large UK Mechanical and Electrical-contracting firm that we named NG. The UK Mechanical & Electrical sector is a very interesting landscape inextricably tied to the UK construction one. As identified by Shirazi, Langford & Rowlinson (1996), the organisational structures within the UK construction sector are complex and decentralized environments with significant delegated authority levels afforded to organisational actors. In this context, NG presents itself to the market as 'one' £500m turnover entity, constituted of five separate divisional businesses, with multiple regional business units within each division. At the time of the data collection, the company was undergoing significant organisational change, which clashed with the devolved and decentralised leadership that had characterised the company until that point. Within the case study framework, we collected data via semi-structured interviews, structured observations, and analysis of official documents. Fifteen interview participants were selected through convenience and snowball sampling.

Identity construction and liminal spaces

Theories of identity have become more significant within organisation and management studies as the notion of identity received increasing attention in the workplace (Clark, 2016). As suggested by Brown (2011, p.4) “the issue of identity is central to our understanding of how individuals relate to the groups and organisations in which they are participants”. Identity can be conceptualised in various ways using different theoretical and methodological frameworks (Miscenko and Day, 2015). It can range from a relatively ‘fixed and stable’ state of relating to an individual’s self-identification, through to a dynamic and fluid conceptualisation that makes identity subject to ongoing personal narrative and sensemaking in actors’ constant strive for consistency. Our study takes inspiration from contributions tied to the latter. From this perspective, the iterative, ongoing and constructed quality of identity (Ashforth, 1998) does not frame individuals as passive recipients of external social identities (Collinson, 2003; Warburst, 2011). Instead, it projects them in a process of sensemaking, where they can “interpret or even modify the role given to them in the ‘script’ of any given social identity” (Watson, 2008:129). Further exploration of the established work does however reveal that an actor’s identity construction within an organisation is far from autonomous. Individuals’ self-identities are also powerfully constrained by available social identities (Somers, 1994; Watson, 2008). Ybema et al. (2009:03) suggest “identity work involves a conversation between internal ideas, wishes and evaluations”. The dialogical analysis of this conversation has the potential for supporting a more nuanced understanding of the identity work process. As early literature on identity construction (Erikson, 1956) suggests, “a sense of identity is never gained nor maintained once and for all. Like a good conscience, it is constantly lost and regained” (Erikson, 1956:74), prompted by the conflicting demands individuals may experience in the workplace. The space between ‘lost’ and ‘regained’ identity offers interesting insights in the dynamic cycle of identity redefinition. When explicit organisational sensegiving is being ‘proposed’ to actors in an

attempt to create a preferred redefinition of identity, the dialogue that takes place in the space of liminality acquires particular importance in this respect. Such dialogue involves a process of sensemaking among individuals. Sensemaking (Dewey, 1922; James, 1890; Garfinkel, 1967; Weick, 1960) helps address the issue of how people appropriate and enact their realities (Brown et al., 2014). This notion plays a critical role in shaping actors' construction of their identity in the workplace (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Within the organisational literature, there is a rapidly growing body of research on sensemaking, examining how sense is made in organisations (Clark & Geppert, 2011; Cornelissen, 2012; Hernes & Glynn, 2011; Rudolph, Morrison & Carroll, 2009; Sonenschein, 2007; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011). This is coupled with understanding the impact of sensemaking on a variety of key organisational processes, including strategic change and decision making (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Rerup & Feldman, 2011; Sonenschein, 2010), innovation and creativity (Drazin, Glynn & Kazanjian, 1999; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995), and organisational learning (Christianson, Farkas, Sutcliffe & Weick, 2009; Catino & Patriotta, 2013; Gephart, 1993; Weick, 1988, 1990, 1993). Sensemaking is thus a dynamic activity in organisations, and one that lies at the very core of organising (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). As recognised by Brown et al. (2014:267) the sensemaking literature is far from homogeneous, and consists of disjuncture, disagreements and unresolved tensions. Wieck et al. (2005:417) observe that the "juxtaposition of sensemaking and institutionalisation has been rare". This reveals a seeming reluctance of theorists to engage with broader epistemic contexts, and hence, to account adequately for the role of culture, or indeed institutional/organisational structures and discourses in the micro-level processes of sensemaking (Brown et al., 2014). More recently, Maitlis and Christianson (2014:98) argue that "analysis that explores the constitutive effects of macro-level discourse on sensemaking within and across organisations would valuably add to the field". There is no consensus in the literature on whether sensemaking is best regarded primarily as sets of individual cognitive,

collective social or specifically discursive processes (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Wieck, 1995). Current research (Brown et al., 2014; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) on how sensemaking occurs focuses on three sets of interweaving processes: the perception of cues (noticing), making interpretations, and engaging in action. Brown and Duguid (1998) suggest that, at times of organisational sensemaking, individuals bond together in work teams or similar goal orientated groups, and share a similar consonant understanding. Brown et al. (2008) suggest that the ‘bond’ between individuals does not necessarily occur all the time, though, and that such sensemaking among group or team members is discrepant as it is shared.

Some scholars (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016) suggest that research on sensemaking has not kept pace with the conceptual development and popularity of liminality. Maitlis and Sonenshien (2010) highlight the need for scholars to attend more closely to the politics of sensemaking, and to its embodied nature. In the contemporary business landscape, a growing number of people inhabit “in between” spaces, betwixt and between conventional work roles, organisations and even career stages (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016:46). The actors’ dialogue in carrying out identity work informs the holistic understanding of sensebreaking – sensemaking interactions.

Sensebreaking and sensegiving dynamics play pivotal roles in how an organisation influences actors’ identity construction (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). If we consider sensebreaking firstly, it is argued that constructing a sense of self in organisations may entail, paradoxically, a certain amount of sensebreaking, defined by Pratt (2000:464) as “the destruction or breaking down of meaning”. Organisations utilise sensebreaking/divestiture when individuals hold values, beliefs and expectations that are thought to impair the assumption of an organisationally desired identity (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). This perspective is at odds with the established identity work literature which suggests that people are ‘free’ to (re)invent themselves periodically by experimenting actively with diverse roles and occupational identities (Ashforth, 2001).

Sensebreaking/divestiture creates space for liminality where one realises the sudden lack of a viable identity for in a specific setting, and is subsequently motivated to acquire one (Ashforth 2001, Beech 2011). As such, one could argue that deliberate organisational sensebreaking could have a more profound and immediate impact upon actors' construction of their identity in workplace than simply 'experimenting actively' as/when desired. The identity disruption and void created by organisational sensebreaking, offers organisations the opportunity to attempt to influence the "meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organisational reality" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991:442). As suggested by Park (2014) in his work "After Pain Comes Joy", the greater the sensebreaking, the greater the need for subsequent sensemaking to fill the void (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). One could argue that this linear roadmap or 'formula' underplays both liminality and the role and nature of organisational actors. We would argue that it is hard to believe that, when all this occurs, actors sit passively waiting for an 'equal measure' of sensegiving from their organisational 'masters'. The relationship between managers and employees has an antagonistic nature (at the point that in some cases it can feel a little cliché). Ashforth and Schinoff (2016:130) argue "identity construction begs the question of how the process might go awry". Ineffective identity construction is likely more than just the reverse of effective identity construction; it may have its own aetiology, with particular events, obstacles, and spirals that are not encountered when construction runs smoothly (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016).

The established interweaving processes of sensemaking lack consideration of the role of liminality within the sensemaking process, specifically in relation to how actors' voices discursively fill this space and interact with sensebreaking – sensegiving dynamics. The notion of liminality, meaning 'betwixt and between', has been developed in social anthropology (Turner, 1967) and then adopted in organisational research (Tempest and Starkey, 2004; Sturdy et al., 2006). Liminality is a highly complex space, one that can encourage innovation,

productivity, creativity, new structures and relationships, and provide a sense of freedom (Cunha et al., 2008; Shortt, 2015; Tempest et al., 2007; Thomson and Hassenhamp, 2008). However, it can also give rise to profound uncertainty. Gabriel et al. (2010:1702) provide a vivid image of what liminality can be for employees. Specifically, “walking on ice, when the water’s frozen and you know at some stage that ice could melt, and the thing about that is that you know you can swim but don’t know where the land is so it’s like a sense of drowning really”. This metaphor embodies the uncertainty and unpredictability of liminality. The ‘ice’ representing the unpredictability of sensebreaking, the ‘ability to swim’ relates to the actors’ identity and sense of self, whilst the ‘land’ references the need for direction and organisational sensegiving. As highlighted by Ibarra and Obodura (2016:47) “liminality is the hallmark of an increasingly precarious and fluctuating career landscape”. Tempest et al. (2007) note how the liminal condition is becoming more prevalent in organisations, with Czarniawska and Mazz (2003:269) labelling it as “the modern condition”. Beech (2011) looks at liminality as a temporary transition during which actors’ identity is reconstructed. Cunha et al. (2008:956-957) argue that organisations and individuals deliberately “create spaces of liminality.

The literature is greatly divided with regard to this notion. Recently, researchers have questioned whether liminality can be constructed as a permanent condition (Ellis and Ybema, 2008; Ybema et al., 2011) where life-spheres are “intermediate and ambiguous” (Johnsen and Sorensen, 2015:323) and states of temporality and transition have become institutionalised (Szokolczai, 2000; Thomassen, 2012). The extent of this conceptual division warrants further theoretical exploration, especially in light of how the world of work has and continues to evolve. Bamber et al. (2017) identify the need for such an exploration noting the conceptual confusion of some researchers conflating liminality with limbo. Limbo is distinct from transitional and more permanent states of liminality. The former relates to an individual shifting from one state to another, while the latter refers to an oscillation between states, either

out of necessity or out of choice. Limbo implies a fixed, 'trapped' state, to be changed only via profound intervention (Bamber et al., 2017).

Exploring how actors' interactions unfold in liminal spaces during times of organisational change can shed light on the multiplicity of identities and differences and their connections and articulations (Hall and Du Gay, 1996:90) emerging in the workplace. Undertaking such research into a politically complex and decentralised organisation can magnify how such dynamics unfold. The next section illustrates the context in which we explored our research problem.

Research context

The UK market for Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) contracting was estimated to be valued at around £16bn in 2014, following strong growth of around 7% during the year (UK Mechanical and Electrical Contractors Market Analysis Report 2015-2019). The market is forecast to continue to increase, albeit at a more modest rate, until the end of the forecast period. However, the market remains some 13% below its 2008 peak. NG operates within the UK's mechanical and electrical contracting sector, a sector that is inextricably linked to that of the wider UK construction industry; as such, any meaningful overview of the contextual setting must seek to capture the fundamental elements of both markets. Construction is one of the largest sectors of the UK economy. It contributes almost £90 billion to the UK economy (or 6.7%) in value added, it comprises over 280,000 businesses covering some 2.93 million jobs, which is equivalent to about 10% of total UK employment.

NG is one of the leading wholly family owned private businesses in the UK. The company began in 1921 with a capital share of just £100. A constant throughout their history has been the Bailey family ownership, and the strength and security that this is deemed to bring. Even though the company has grown from just a handful of employees in Yorkshire to a European

workforce of 2,500, NG's values of Passion, Integrity and Excellence have changed little since those early days in the 1920s. The company has a reputation for excellence which has seen them work on some very high-profile projects over the years, including the UK's first and most recent nuclear power stations and on the impressive Terminal 5 building at London Heathrow. NG has a network of offices throughout the UK and at some selective international locations. The business has a turnover of c£500m and a secured order book of c£1bn (2017). It operates in a variety of market sectors and is split in to five discreet divisions including engineering, IT, facilities services, offsite manufacture and rail.

As identified by Shirazi, Langford & Rowlinson (1996), the organisational structures within the UK construction sector are complex and decentralized environments with significant delegated authority levels afforded to organisational actors. The decentralisation of power and assumed authority can evolve and morph over time, often being informal and flexible. As a result, whilst the 'NG Group' business presents itself to the market as 'one' £500m turnover entity, it is actually constructed of five separate divisional businesses, with multiple regional business units within each division. These business units are responsible for their own profit and loss, and as such, their leaders are personally financially incentivised to deliver their individual targets. Personal incentive combined with devolved and decentralised leadership creates an interesting context for exploring identity work.

The company concluded a major acquisition. It acquired a £115 million turnover organisation employing more than 600 people. The company's business grew in the region of 20-30% overnight. In addition to the acquisition, NG embarked on a major review of its internal corporate communications strategy. To deliver this, the executive management team has engaged an external consultancy firm. This communications review is set to be a platform for a significant shift in how the corporate messages and values of the executive management team are formally communicated with the wider organisation, at all organisational levels. The

communication with senior management teams (SLTs) within NG was a key area of change, with formal monthly briefing packs being developed within the scope of the external consultancy review. NG has a very stable workforce with a high level of staff retention. Within the head office environment in particular, there are large numbers of employees that have been with the business for more than 16 years.

Methodology

In this study, we take an interpretivist stance. By using an inductive approach, we embrace discovery of unanticipated phenomena, trying to avoid assumptions. We frame our research in an ethnographic case study design. This enables us to fully understand the lived experiences of organisational actors, and the consumption of discourses, within their social and material context (Broadfoot et al., 2004; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Social behaviours, visual, verbal and vocal communication represent critical elements of social interaction (Argyle 1969, Schirato & Yell, 2000). With our chosen design, we can focus on language, discourse and non-verbal communication for shedding light on how organisational actors' versions of the world within which they are embedded (Parker 1998).

In terms of research methods, we collected our data via participant observation, semi-structured interviews and analysis of official documents. The first author, who covers the dual role of researcher and full-time employee at NG, collected data. Aspects of reflexivity (Mauthner et al., 2002:125-126) play a key role in this type of study given this role duality and the need to "hold together methodology, epistemology and ethics". The awareness of the first author's dual role and the potential biases was fundamental to be able to keep as much as possible an approach inspired by honesty, transparency and the overall validity of the research. During observations, the first author had access to conversations, initiatives, local discourses and

varied interpretations relating to how employees interpret and are impacted by the significant organisational changes affecting the company.

In this developmental phase, fifteen semi-structured interviews offered an invaluable platform to unlock topical trajectories in conversations that strayed from the expected, thus revealing discursive insights, resistance and hidden meaning (Cohen, 2006). Ten more interviews are planned to take place in the next two months. The interviewees ranged from non-managerial team members within central support services through to company directors. The interviewees came from both operational and non-operational areas of the business, and consisted of individuals with local, regional, divisional and national organisational perspectives. Participants ranged from individuals who had been with the NG business for less than one year, through to those who had been with the business for more than twenty years. In order to grant anonymity interviewees were assigned pseudonyms. During interviews that lasted from one hour to one and a half hours, the first author ensured confidentiality and talked participants through the ethical aspects characterising the research. All research participants signed a research ethics form, which indicated the aspects pertaining to the study, providing assurances regarding anonymity, and clearly outlining participants' right to withdraw.

Documentary analysis shed light on pertinent information that would have been difficult to obtain otherwise (e.g. communication style, values emerging from written communication). It also offered insight on how change has occurred within the organisation over time. The triangular data collection (e.g. interviews, observations and written documentation) enabled us to look at data from three different perspectives. The sampling method followed a mix between convenience and snowball sampling. No major access issues were encountered in the collection of data. Thematic analysis was effective in highlighting similarities and differences, whilst generating unanticipated insights. Meticulous record keeping coupled with verbatim transcriptions of participants' accounts supported helped control the potential for bias (Slevin,

2002). Clarity of the thought process during the data analysis stage and engagement with co-authors and other colleagues helped reduce potential bias. Informant validation was also adopted to ensure the final themes and concepts created adequately reflected the phenomena being investigated. The table below provides details of the first fifteen interviewees.

Table 1 – Interviewees

| Participant's role | Pseudonym |
|--|------------------|
| Head of department, central services with a national remit | Darren |
| Senior manager within central services team, national remit, head office based | Joanna |
| Middle-manager within operations, with a Divisional remit. | Nelson |
| Team member within an operational support function, head office based. | Cyndi |
| Company Director with a divisional remit, head office based. | Matt |
| Senior manager within central services team, national remit, regionally based. | Jonathan |
| Senior manager within operations, national remit, regionally based. | Marcus |
| Senior manager within central functions, national remit, head office based. | Stuart |
| Company Director, cross-divisional focus, regionally based | Mandy |
| Senior manager within operations, national remit, head office based | Martin |
| Team member within an operational support function, head office based. | Becky |
| Company Director, cross-divisional focus, regionally based | Nicola |
| Company Director, cross-divisional focus, regionally based | Mark |
| Head of department, central services with a national remit | Alan |
| Company Director, cross-divisional focus, regionally based | Damien |

Preliminary findings

Actors' engagement with the change affecting NG

Throughout the semi-structured interviews and observation data, the issues of organisational actors becoming disengaged within the change within the NG emerged across all key Departments of the business. An example of the extent of this disengagement emerges from Stuart's - senior manager for central functions – insightful account:

“My sub-groups are small, informal networks, only really a medium through which I transfer news and update one another on something that directly impacts you. If you have no power, leverage, you are not a decision maker in the business, it doesn't matter right? So, if you are not a decision taker, which the vast majority are, I can have a clandestine conversation with one of my peers to update him on something that may

affect him or me, and we can share news via informal routes. But really, it doesn't have any impact, there is not really much we can do other than manage expectations. If not a decision maker in the business, it's all rather irrelevant.”

During the uncertainty created within the preceding nine months of change and organisational evolution at NG, Stuart became disenfranchised with organisational life and resigned to the fact that he is unable to influence change or organisational direction. This quote reveals how Stuart's relationship with NG and his perception of 'decision makers' has evolved. Stuart acknowledges his withdrawal into small, informal, trusted friendship groups where he has engaged in dialogue. This dialogue has been subversive and clandestine in nature, but ultimately, it has had no impact upon influencing or directing the organisational changes encroaching on Stuart's relationship with NG.

As the conversation with Stuart develops, the extent to which he has compartmentalised 'non-decision makers' as helpless, stranded and inconsequential organisational spectators is explicit. Stuart paints rather a bleak picture of organisational reality for those actors that are not part of shaping or at least creating the organisational change. Their organisational reality is one being resigned to merely managing expectations and delivering core role requirements, essentially operating in a work-to-rule environment. Despite being a senior manager with a service tenure of 11-15 years, the extent of his disengagement and apathy is stark. He has resigned himself to a fate of being both insignificant and ineffectual, but more importantly he is totally uninvited in the change and future direction of the business. For Stuart, the extent of his disengagement with NG is not restricted to just the ongoing change programme. His apathy and cynicism extend to the whole organisation, to the very core of the business values and ultimately what the company stands for:

“All I have to concern myself with is meeting the requirements that my own line management sets me. Making sure I satisfy those and exceed those and do the job that’s asked for me by the company. The company values, the business culture, the big communications that go out are irrelevant. The company values, I just don’t care, they don’t matter to me. The communications set out from top-down, I’ll read those because actually they may provide an opportunity for me, but unless it directly impacts you, it just doesn’t matter. When we changed our values to passion, integrity and excellence, really, it means nothing, it’s what happens when you have change from the top in any organisations.”

From this quote, organisational life has evolved into a state of survival and self-interest. Satisfying short-term personal objectives and complying have become the currency in which Stuart trades within the business in order to survive. The company values have become meaningless symbols for Stuart. These values are hollow, irrelevant adjectives that are merely the expected rhetoric projected upon the organisations by senior managers.

During an interview with Alan - head of department within central services - he stated that:

“My line manager is invisible to the business. I don’t know what the hell is going on with him. He’s ignoring people, he’s even ignoring me now. So, I’m like, you know what, I’m going to stop speaking to you, I’m going to stop emailing you, because he’s just not coming back. So, I’m ignoring you because you’re ignoring me. I do ask myself, is my boss leaving, is he going?”

This account shows an example of relational dysfunctionality between Alan and his manager. Communication has broken down to the extent where the two parties are not communicating either verbally or via email. The disengagement is such that Alan is even questioning the

longevity of his line manager work within the business. Alan's line manager is an Executive Board Director. The account shows that a communication breakdown at a time of significant organisational change, runs through the most senior reporting lines within the organisation. Alan is not alone in feeling disengaged and isolated from his line management. Martin - regionally based senior operations manager – argued:

“My boss started giving me the cold shoulder back in July. Because he was ignoring me, I almost played a game with him, in that if you're ignoring me, I'll ignore you. We have not had any real interaction in two and a bit months.”

Martin's relationship with his line-manager has broken down to the extent that they have not engaged for over two months. The lack of clarity and ability to attribute meaning to the changes taking place within the organisation were leading to senior managers disengaging from their subordinates. The senior managers who were being looked upon to help actors navigate the new organisational landscape, were ill-equipped with coherent corporate message, and aware that the new values had limited credibility within the workplace. These aspects left subordinates feeling isolated and vulnerable. For Martin, this situation had a very profound impact upon his relationship with NG. The disengagement from his line management led him to decide to leave the company. In his words:

“In some ways it's a really sad situation for all of us. We all believed in what we were doing. But I cannot keep sleep walking through my working life. I am not engaged, I am not motivated, I am just taking a salary if I am honest with you, and I have been for six months.”

For Martin, the change has had a demoralising and demotivating impact. The drivers for work had become purely financial, and the passion and belief Martin clearly had for his work and his organisation when in its 'prior state', had diminished. This offers an insight in to the extent of

NG actors' powerlessness when facing the change. Martin is not alone in feeling that his psychological contract with the NG has fractured due to the length of the uncertainty created by a seemingly drawn out, unresolved and poorly managed organisational change programme. Becky - team member within an organisational support function based at head office - articulated that:

“It gets to the point, in an organisation like this, when you are waiting for something, when eventually, by the time it happens, or if it happens, or if it happens like you're told it would by the business, the whole process becomes cheapened by what you have had to go through. It has no positive impact on you as an individual by the time the change arrives.”

This quote captures the apathy and fatigue created with prolonged organisational change. For Becky, there was an expectation that clear organisational direction would follow. In the absence of this, Becky's initially positive expectations became jaded by the perpetual uncertainty created by a lack of managers' direction and engagement with subordinates.

Across the 15 semi-structured interviews undertaken within this study, actors' perceptions that the organisational change process at NG had been mismanaged were considerable. For Alan, the change management at NG was illustrated as:

“Change management, wow, easy for me to say poor isn't it. I could paint a real bad picture of NG here. The change I've seen in recent months has been appalling.”

This view was mirrored by Joanna - senior manager within a central service - who stated:

“I think in my experience, over the past few years, there is a very big difference between how change is sold and managed. It is now almost inevitable that when change comes under pressure at NG, change will go pear shaped.”

Marcus - regional senior manager in operations - also had a very negative perception of the change efforts within NG:

“The change at NG has been exhausting, open-ended, confused, political and totally demoralising. To be honest, I have totally disengaged with the business. I have been able to ignore boss and be ignored for six months.”

Across the accounts of Alan, Joanna and Marcus we capture how prolonged uncertainty, affected engagement, alignment, communication, employee retention and perceptions of organisational change. During the interviews, interviewees mentioned coping mechanisms to make sense of the ongoing and seemingly open-ended change. Some of these were not coping mechanisms at all as it emerges from Stuart’s account:

“The coping mechanism for misalignment, the most obvious and recently demonstrated one, has been to leave. That’s what my peers have done. They leave the business and that’s been obviously demonstrated. Interestingly, the ones that haven’t left the business are the ones dictating or mandating these significant changes to the business. We have had significant people leave, even the managers have moved on because they don’t see the vision, they don’t see the future. If you don’t have investment in your management change or the culture change you are trying to implement, then it’s not going to happen. If people cannot share your vision with you, then they are going to leave and that is what has happened.”

This quote reveals the impact of poorly perceived change within organisations. A consequence for the business, was that the executive leaders who initiated this change and seemingly failed to understand the importance of meaning, collaboration or even communication with their teams, were the actors remaining in post at NG. Stuart was not alone in recognising the negative

impact that poor management practices were having on staff. Matt - director, based at head office - stated:

“People who left didn’t explicitly say I am leaving because of the business culture. These manifest in other reasons, it’s things like poor engagement between line management and direct reports, or lack of engagement, that would be an element of business culture. It would be lack of opportunity for an individual to grow and develop, and develop their skill sets, take on more responsibility or advance through the company - that is another one. Inability to do business properly, because of internal resistance mechanisms that we saw a lot of within procurement. It’s a very difficult business culture, so there have been very unclear references to the way the new business operates, its values, its practices, and these have clearly led to people leaving.”

The extent of the disengagement and poor corporate messaging observed by Matt emerge clearly in his account. It was however the interview with Nelson - middle manager in operations - that shed light upon what he perceived to be the motives perpetuating this ineffective corporate culture:

“We have a top-tier of management that have a reputation for being much focussed on their own financial remuneration. It’s very much you are here to do a job, if you don’t like it then go, if you can earn more money elsewhere then go, there is not a sharing of long-term vision or goals that would create a harmonious culture. There are people leading us from failed businesses of the past, Carillion, Interserve... if they have been senior managers in other businesses that have failed, and they are bringing their culture and practices here, then that’s going to have an impact. And it does.

Is there going to be a NG in the future? It becomes very easy to see how you are just one of many.”

For Nelson the short-term financial incentives and motivations of the executive management team has contributed to the poor change management. When the Freedom business was integrated into NG, Nelson perceived that weaker managers from failed organisations were allowed to influence the NG culture. In Nelson’s opinion, the focus of the post-merger executive team was not on good business integration, effective change management or even well-thought-out and consistent sensegiving, it was about financial incentivisation and exploitation of the prevalent bonus culture. One of the most powerful quotes regarding disengagement came from Cyndi - head office-based team member with operational support function - who shared:

“At five past five the office is empty, relatively speaking, that’s not the way it used to be, there used to be drive, but now people leave shortly after five, they work from home on a Friday, or do they? It just seems to be short term. I am not sure what this company want to be.”

At a grass-roots level, working patterns have changed, presentisms within the office environment has eroded, questions and doubts are cast over productivity. Cyndi highlights the significant organisational risk created by such a change.

Actors’ interpretations of the values at NG

Interviewees voiced doubts and concerns about the core values of the business. Passion, integrity and excellence were the values on which the business was founded. Darren - head of department in the central services team - had very strong views on how the business had stopped living its values during the period of acquisition, integration and change:

“Surprisingly, one of the fundamental NG corporate values is Integrity! I don’t feel the business operates in this manner. This creates a contradiction with my own values and moral compass.”

Darren went on to state:

“The differences between what the business says it’s about at a corporate level, and what actually happens out on the ground is so different it’s unreal.”

Darren felt a deep and personal moral conflict regarding NG not behaving with integrity. Darren resigned from the business shortly after the interview as he no longer felt he could work for a business that operated so differently from the image it sought to portray. These views were echoed in an interview with Mandy – regional division director - who said:

“Honestly, if you look at the values of the group, the ones we say we stand for, I am aligned. There is nothing in the theoretical culture that I disagree with and it quite corresponds to my personal way of seeing things. Then the thing is, you don’t see in everybody’s daily job exactly those values. There is a major contradiction between what is being said and what happens on the field. Passion, integrity and excellence is not what I am living at the moment. What is explained as being the culture of the group is not fully there for everyone. There are contradictions everywhere.”

The picture painted here is one of stark contrast between what the organisational actors are living, and the values projected by the organisation. Questions of identity and reflection are where actors, such as Mandy, posed far more fundamental and philosophical questions than perhaps one would have initially expected. Whilst there are some actors who have articulated their reliance on short term goals and survival, others such as Mandy have found themselves more holistically reflecting on the contradictions and misalignment in the key principles and values of the organisation. At NG, it would appear these contradictions are wide spread,

creating a void between the great expectations of organisational actors and the hard times experienced within the spaces generated by change. The perceived contradictions in corporate vision and values and organisational reality extend to the very top of the organisation. As identified by Jonathan - regional senior manager in operations - who said:

“Commitments that our CEO made on stage in front of hundreds of people only 12 months ago have been forgotten. Never to be mentioned again. Strategy documents and commitments are so quickly wiped from memory at NG, so are the people who developed them. The business has aspirations and values but cannot live up to them.”

For Jonathan, the contradiction between the values and corporate commitments, and the lived reality and organisational actions is evident at the highest level within the organisation. It is evident to Jonathan that sensebreaking can be driven by rescinding on verbal statements, backtracking on strategy documents and even removing people from the business that led certain initiatives to avoid embarrassment. Whilst collecting data, the first author came across a strategy document entitled the “Customer of Choice”. This strategic supply chain strategy is the specific example that Jonathan is refereeing to within the above interview quote. This strategy was launched by the CEO to more than nine hundred supply chain organisations within the NG supply chain. The CEO invited more than one hundred of these organisations to a conference to launch the strategy and the commitments in October 2017. The strategy made significant commitments about the rules of engagement that NG would follow and the collaborative approach it would take to supply chain management moving forward. By July 2018, the strategy was withdrawn. There was no formal announcement within NG Bialy Ltd or across the supply chain, it just ceased to exist as a methodology and a strategy that was deployed. The rhetoric stopped being used in executive communications, the team involved in delivering the strategy left the business. Some did so through redundancy, some through stress-

related ill-health and otherwise through resignation. This line of conduct the executive management team took to redefining the strategic approach was seen as very disingenuous and unethical by a number of actors within the business. The lack of explanation to clarify the rationale created a lot of distrust within the business and the highest levels of management. This was one of the defining moments for a number of actors within the company, such as Jonathan, who realised that the glossy, high-level rhetoric and vision, evident with the strategy document, would never be delivered in reality.

Jonathan was not alone in singling the CEO of NG as a culpable figure head in mismanaging business change and failing to live by the projected business values. Stuart had fundamental questions as a result of the ongoing limbo state generated by the changing business landscape of the company:

“Which group of people determine what the business values are? How do they determine when those values are not being met? Or perhaps when they need to be changed? What if those in the position to set the values and drive the change are culpable for the problems themselves? Who watches the watches for example? If the CEO for example is not driving or delivering some of the aspects of business culture, it’s not particularly a virtuous circle.

In this context, how do you drive change?”

Stuart raised an interesting point here, by contesting that senior executives with flawed ability, who do not live the corporate values by their own actions, are highly unlikely to drive the desired behaviours across an organisation. Stuart did not limit his views to just the CEO, he went on to share similar views about other members of the executive team:

“We don’t share the same goals, we don’t necessarily share the same values.

Last year the CFO was recognising that senior members of the business were not driven by a one-team approach they were driven very much by their

financial remuneration based on their own business unit performance. This was not engendering the right type of behaviours across the business. This is an example to me of the wrong values being demonstrated by the people who are leading the company. This is not a surprise, this is symptomatic, you don't have to look too hard to find shocking examples of Exec team behaviour in the construction industry. It is however at odds with the three random adjectives that are meant to define our business [passion, integrity, excellence].”

Stuart highlights the extent to which the corporate values have become eroded and meaningless to staff. Values which should be the cornerstone of business practices and corporate culture, have become ‘random adjectives’ with little substance or impact upon actors’ lived experience or organisational culture in the company.

Darren, also shares similar views:

“How can we have an honest and pragmatic culture that creates the right type of behaviours, and is driven top-down if there are behaviours in the, I am not going to say leaders, in the managers of the company is misaligned? I am not saying the managers need to be paragons of the business values, but they need to be demonstrating it. When these people then have the power to say a change in business culture is required, there is a certain hypocrisy there.”

As does Cyndi, who comments:

“We don't use our three core values enough, they are not key pillars of our business. They are not a reference point or a moral compass for our leaders. I don't see examples of these behaviours on a day-to-day basis at a local level.”

The impact of this fundamental questioning of the core values and leadership is not restricted to actors' identity and engagement with the organisation. Damien, sees the financial impact of this uncertainty and open-ended change:

“We are very top-down heavy on the dictum around values and ethics, our responsible procurement strategy, our CSR policy, but who is looking at what matters for the viability of a company. Our business culture is a one-year cycle that just keeps repeating, driven by the Exec Directors remuneration and bonuses. Our cash position becomes worse and worse and worse, which displays to me that the leaders of this business do not have a long-term vision, that's the difference. It just not clear what the long-term goals of the company are. It seems the goal is just to persist.”

Damien explains how the short-term bonus driven culture of the executive team impacts the long-term vision setting. This has influenced the focus and management of change, as normally one would expect that long-term change management would require a long-term plan and commitment. Damien's account also highlights how the financial position of the business is deteriorating as a result of the endemic behaviours. A disengaged workforce, stagnant in the doldrums of uncertainty might not be in a position to drive strong business performance. It is insightful to hear this senior feedback regarding the bonus culture and the cyclical limited horizon it set for the senior leaders within the business. The fact that the business simply seeks to 'persist' gives a hint of the short-term orientation affecting the workplace.

Actors' perceptions of leadership

The interviews revealed an interesting insight into actors' perceptions of leadership during the change. Mandy shared her views on how she interpreted managers' ability to drive and deal with the change:

“From my experience, my personal functioning, you don’t decree change. I am very uncomfortable when you have change managers and you receive tons of messages about change change change. For me, change is not something that you decide, it’s not some people who do the change and the rest follow, everyone has to accept and be part of the change. It is counterproductive to broadcast change, it often has the opposite experience. I am not saying it’s bad to have change makers and people working on transformation, but actually change is a series of small steps and universal acceptance and engagement, not corporate communications force fed to teams from above. The people that the organisation feel need to change, should be included in the change process, because more often than not, they have a great deal of knowledge and understanding in what really happens within a given area, and often, how it could change and improve if allowed and a supportive environment created. Often consultants and managers don’t know where the real tensions are. Change cannot be declared and announced, it needs to be co-constructed. If you explain the why, and let people contribute to the how and the what, you will get a better result.”

Mandy highlights here that how the messages arriving from the top do not translate into a new, consistent and aligned view for actors to take as a reference point. Managers shared limited meaning with actors leaving a lot open to interpretation. Mandy sees the flaws in the way change is managed. In her view, the change messages are misaligned and too far removed from the real issues and perceptions at a grass-roots actors’ level. The attempts to decree change, appear to be largely unsuccessful.

Alan's views regarding the way managers led change had a negative connotation because of the prolonged period of uncertainty:

“Outside looking in with NG it looks like a very professional company doesn't it? Very corporate, very well organised and you imagine a real nice culture to work in. Having worked here for two and a half years, it isn't, it isn't what it seems from the outside looking in. How to explain that is difficult, it is a corporate company, but it's not as well run as you think. Over the last 2 years it feels like we have achieved nothing.”

Alan goes on to state:

“When I think about the efforts to change the procurement and supply chain function, and I think, was this a planned and thought out improvement programme, or are we making it up as we go along? I think we're making it up as we go along.”

During the change, Alan has reflected on the vision he had of NG as a prospective employee. The perceived gloss of a well-run corporate organisation with strong leadership and credible values, has become little more than a flaky veneer. Alan does not regard the leadership as having a clear vision or plan, rather an ill-equipped team that have achieved very little to speak of in terms of meaningful change over the duration of the programme.

Becky shares that perspective. In her words:

“At NG I have experienced managers deliberately and wilfully throw people under the bus to protect their own failings. Change has been a mechanism to buy their own position time, due to poor results and mismanagement. If change is driven by self-preservation, then buying time becomes the most important metric. Change becomes an ill-conceived, miss-managed, meandering trudge through organisational sludge and meaningless process.”

Becky's point is very interesting. She feels that poor change management is symptomatic of failed leaders buying themselves time, by creating a perception that they are 'managing' or 'fixing' the team or wider business to achieve a better result. For Becky, much of what is wrong is a result of poor leadership driving unnecessary change whilst motivated by self-preservation. Becky's point was also supported by Cyndi:

"There was a trigger for change, I'm not sure what that trigger was. I suspect a loss of confidence in the Commercial Director triggered a drastic reaction to prove himself. The lack of clarity regarding the motivation for change, and the fact the trigger was far too personal, led to the change programme simply being like blood in the water. It attracted sharks and led to a frenzied and chaotic set of behaviours and unexpected and unplanned casualties."

Cyndi perceives that much of the change in her department was stimulated by the Commercial Director feeling vulnerable and exposed. Change became the best form of defence but was grossly mismanaged and ill-conceived. People were exited from the NG business as a result of these changes, and the impact on the functional area was considerable.

Marcus had formed a similarly negative perception regarding the leadership during the change:

"When I look at my managers approach to change management, change management driven by a main board director, I regard it as an abject failure. In reality, change scares people, people implementing change feel scared, because they have no one else to blame if it does not go their way. We don't have strong enough business leaders to make meaningful, sustained change."

Marcus went on to say:

"There is a high priority given to big-bang change as a concept in this business. There is low priority given to effective management and clarity of change. From my recent experiences, change is a product of personal

preservation at the highest level. Change is a form of blame. From the leader in question, whilst emerged in making change, they are immune from blame.

Change is a shield, used to deflect personal accountability.”

Here Marcus mirrors the views of other actors within his workplace in relation to the motivations of management to make changes. It would appear that the managers engaged in change are more motivated by protecting themselves and their own position than leading effective, well planned programmes. This creates a distortion in the perception of those initiating change, and those being subject to it. Martin captures just how severe the consequences of these ill-conceived, self-motivated change programmes could be at NG:

“When my boss left the business, it was bizarre, no one knew what was going on. We all just got an email saying he was unwell and not to contact him. Rumours were rife, it went on for weeks and no one knew what was going on, or at least no one was prepared to let on. When it finally become official that he was going, we just got an email saying he had left and to speak with his boss regarding any of his responsibilities. That was after 7 years in the business.”

For Martin, this change programme led to the end of a seven-year line-management relationship with his manager, who was dismissed from the business. The rationale for the decision was never shared with the team or the business and communication came only via email from the executive director responsible. The level of uncertainty this created for Martin and the team was immense and led to numerous resignations and absences due to work related anxiety and stress.

Actors' feelings

One particular common thread weaved through the fabric of the interviews yielding some interesting insights. The between and betwixt doldrums of change had an emotional impact on many actors. This can be seen from the following quote from Nelson:

“To a degree, I hoped that something good would happen. From May [2018] there was a lot of talk in the business, particularly from an operational perspective, that change was coming. It was throw-away comments, leading questions, rumours, assumptions. It actually triggered uncertainty in my own personal life because I got overwhelmed with the whispers and assumptions. It affected me personally and professionally. My opinion and relationship with the business changed rapidly. I was overwhelmed with the extent of manipulation from managers and the speed in which people took sides for no real reason.”

The impact of the change had a profound impact on Nelson. It affected his personal life and health. In the months preceding the interview, Nelson had been on and off work due to anxiety related issues. Nelson’s confidence had been significantly influenced, and he felt unable to have any control over his working circumstances.

Martin had had a similar experience to Nelson, in his words:

“The business failed to understand the impact of uncertainty upon people and how personally they take things. After months of change, I became disengaged with the business and eventually was signed-off work with ill-health due to stress and anxiety. When I was cut off from the business, I felt much better, I could move on and do things. People have different experiences and drivers and motivations for staying around, but for me it’s not a business I want to be in long-term.”

Martin had been very negatively impacted by the prolonged period of uncertainty. He had been through a redundancy consultation process during the change, and this had fuelled his disengagement. Whilst off work due to ill-health Martin described feeling immediately better, clearer and less anxious.

Mandy had also shared insights into the emotional aspects the change had stirred in her:

“I have had a few moments where mentally I have collapsed here at work, the pressure of change led to me overcompensating at work. I tried to work myself through the problems, starting at 6am and working late. Trying to solve problems that I could not impact or influence. It was a very dark time for me and one that actually changed me as a person. It’s changed who I am, what I do and what I am here for.”

Joanna provided further insights in to the emotions she lived during the change:

“The plan was obviously to change the way procurement looks and feels. For whatever reason, certain people had decided that the senior team was failing. The guy in charge is criticised and without taking the time to understand the facts, or consult with his team, he decided the best action is to get rid of some key individuals. The problem is that things that look good on a piece of paper don’t always translate into reality. The people that were earmarked to stay had relationships with people that were being mismanaged and essentially bullied out of the business. The relationships in the team were stronger than the links people had with the business, definitely stronger than the affinity for the Director. So, the master plan unravelled. People went off sick, people started applying for jobs and leaving. One guy even left without a job to go to! The talent has gone and those that remain are here because they are unable to leave. But the motivation is non-existent. Sad really, but all from a desire to ‘fix’ the team.”

Joanna described the emotional bind between actors and NG being stronger than the bond they had for the business as an employer. The extent to which people had gravitated toward one

another in an effort to make sense of the change, actually led to them having a closer affinity with each other than with the business they were seeking so hard to better understand and identify with. It was a conversation with Stuart that really brought out how profound, deep an emotive actors' relationships with the organisation they work for are, and how emotional and traumatic change can be:

“I perhaps see myself as a member of a family from which I am now becoming more distant. The NG from five or six years ago is very different from the one today. There was a one-team approach, now in the services side of the business, I realise that you are just a contributor, there is nothing special or intimate about your relationship with the business. You do your job, you get paid, that's probably as far as it goes. There is not an after-work culture, an after-hours culture, where there used to be. But if you look at the people running the business, they don't have a reputation for being personable.”

During my interview with Mark, he captured just how fundamental the inter-relationship with the organisational actors at NG was:

“Under different leadership, the culture is very different. Almost aggressive at points in terms of culture. My networks of people where the culture is better is what keeps me going. This for me is a huge thing, the culture needs to be right otherwise I don't enjoy coming to work every day.”

Mark and Stuart both share insights into how their relationship and identity with the business has evolved over the change period. Stuart sees himself as an estranged member of a family he no longer identifies with. Whilst Mark's relationship with the business is restricted to

pockets of actors whom he trusts, where he has been able to establish a separate sub-culture, which exists in parallel, but is markedly different from the substantive culture of the senior leadership, a culture he does not identify with or wish to embrace.

Discussion

In this study we seek to address the question: what are the implications of organisations' superimposed sensebreaking-sensegiving dynamics on actors' construction of their identity in times of change? We focused on the complex state of 'in-betweenness' and ambiguity that occurs in the uncontrolled spaces generated by change dynamics driven from the top, in a specific organisational setting, NG, a large UK Mechanical and Electrical-contracting company. The sector is an interesting landscape - as identified by Shirazi, Langford & Rowlinson (1996) - given the complex and decentralized functions with significant delegated authority levels.

Some authors (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014: 938) suggest that individuals may experience conflicting demands in what is referred to as "the limbo land" of employment. The binary opposition between a management that encourages the socialisation of selected values, attitudes and beliefs for the achievement of 'overarching' objectives, and a workforce that draws on rather different values, attitudes and beliefs that spring from their interpretation of their work and work-setting can create an interesting context for investigation. In this context where the uncontrolled, dialogical spaces acquire a primary role, the tensions emerging from such a polarised experience add complexity to the identity construction process. From the preliminary analysis of the first set of interviews, observations and official documental evidence, we identified three key aspects: actors' recognition of the occurrence of change; actors' interpretation of the organisation's values as not being enacted any longer; and actors' negative feelings stirring from the uncertainty and change.

The occurrence of change represents the dynamic context that challenged the status quo characterising the workplace in which actors' were set. This led us to consider the limitation raised by Brown et al. (2014) with regard to the potential that organisational structures and discourses have in influencing the micro-level processes of sensemaking. Our data seem to indicate a significant impact exerted by the organisational discourse of change on actors' three interweaving micro-level processes, namely, noticing, making interpretations, and engaging in action.

Actors' awareness of the organisation's values not standing for what they used to signals a loss in the process of identification that, in the past, had tied them to their organisation. In this case, "the destruction or breaking down of meaning" (Pratt, 2000:464) was implemented by the top management with the effect of altering existing identities. As literature suggests (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016), in our data we observed that NG used sensebreaking to unhook individuals from holding values, beliefs and expectations that were thought to impair the assumption of an organisationally desired identity. Nevertheless, interviewees' accounts indicate that no specific new meaning was provided for actors to either embrace or reject. The lack of a viable identity created space for liminality which left actors into a state of flux.

Such a state emerged from the third type of pattern we identified in our data, namely, actors' negative feelings stirring from the uncertainty they were living. In this respect, we observed that actors reacted differently. Some were led to bond together by what Brown and Duguid (1998) defined the sharing of a similar, consonant understanding. Others' reactions were discrepant and driven by disengagement and withdrawal. Such reactions recall what scholars (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995) raised on the inconsistency in the way actors react to the need to enact sensemaking when a lack of a viable identity occurs.

At this developmental stage of the study, we would argue that liminality did not seem as if it were deliberately constructed by managers as a permanent condition (Ellis and Ybema, 2008;

Ybema et al., 2011). Additionally, actors' accounts seemed to suggest an oscillation between states rather than a trapped, permanent condition, as that of the limbo might be. So far, actors' attempts to fill their identity void seem to be tied to the wish to keep the relational trait of NG alive. The loss of meaning of the driving values has pushed actors to take charge of the survival of what those values represented, although it has done so in a diluted way; diluted by the uncertainty and the negative feelings drawing from it. The twofold reaction, gathering together and enduring, vs. disengaging and leaving show individuals' belief in the possibility of keeping the NG relational trait alive. Magnifying individuals' tensions between 'hope' and 'defeat' while surfing the space of liminality can reveal the potential for resistance hidden in identity (re)construction processes. Further analysis of our data in relation to the literature on identity and resistance can shed light on the extent to which this hinted pattern can reveal itself in a more striking way.

From an empirical perspective, this study aims to address the criticism of recent contributions (Giuliani, 2016; Beech, 2011) that have highlighted the limitation of both action research methodology (Middel et al, 2006) and the limited participant sample size used in those studies. Our research is framed in order to deliver an in-depth exploration of the issue across a broader and dynamic research sample. It does so by looking across teams, functions, regions, together with the unique historical moment (change) affecting the context in question.

References

- Ainsworth S, Hardy C. 2004. Discourse and identities. In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Discourse*, ed.
- Alexander CN Jr, Wiley MG. 1981. Situated activity and identity formation. In *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives*, ed. M Rosenberg, RH Turner, pp. 269–89. New York: Basic Books.
- Allen, R. F. & Kraft, C. (1987), *The Organizational Unconscious*, Morristown, NJ: Human Resources Institute.
- Alvesson M, Ashcraft KL, Thomas R. 2008. Identity matters: reflections on the construction of identity scholarship in organization studies. *Organization* 15(1):5–28.
- Alvesson M, Sveningsson S. 2003. Good visions, bad micro-management and ugly ambiguity: contradictions of (non-)leadership in a knowledge-intensive organization. *Organ. Stud.* 24(6):961–88.
- Alvesson M, Willmott H. 2002. Identity regulation as organizational control: producing the appropriate individual. *J. Manag. Stud.* 39(5):619–44.
- Alvesson, M. (1993), *Cultural Perspectives on Organisations*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP.
- Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. (2007). *Changing organizational culture: Cultural change work in progress*. New York: Routledge.
- Alvesson, M., & Karreman, D. (2000). *Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis*. *Human Relations*, 53(9), 1125—1149.
- Amiot CE, de la Sablonniere R, Terry DJ, Smith JR. 2007. Integration of social identities in the self: toward a cognitive-development model. *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Rev.* 11(4):364–88.
- Andrews, D. A. & Stalick, S. K. (1994), *Business Reengineering: The Survival Guide*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Anon (1993a), "Re-engineering Europe: The latest management fad is making slow progress in Europe", *The Economist Newspaper*, 26 February 1993.

Anon (1993b), "Structural alterations", *Marketing Week*, 12 November 1993.

Anon (1994), "Reengineering Europe", *The Economist*, 26 February 1994 pp81-82.

Anseel F, Beatty AS, Shen W, Lievens F, Sackett PR. 2015. How are we doing after 30 years? A meta-analytic review of the antecedents and outcomes of feedback-seeking behaviour. *J. Manag.* 41(1):318–48.

Argyris, C. & Schon, D.A. (1978), *Theory in Practice*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Aron A, Aron EN, Tudor M, Nelson G. 1991. Close relationships as including other in the self. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 60(2):241–53.

Ashford SJ, Black JS. 1996. Proactivity during organizational entry: the role of desire for control. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 81(2):199–214.

Ashford SJ, Blatt R, VandeWalle D. 2003. Reflections on the looking glass: a review of research on feedback seeking behaviour in organizations. *J. Manag.* 29(6):773–99.

Ashford SJ, Cummings LL. 1983. Feedback as an individual resource: personal strategies of creating information. *Organ. Behav. Hum. Perform.* 32(3):370–98.

Ashford SJ. 1989. Self-assessments in organizations: a literature review and integrative model. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 11:133–74.

Ashforth BE, Harrison SH, Corley KG. 2008. Identification in organizations: an examination of four fundamental questions. *J. Manag.* 34(3):325–74.

Ashforth BE, Harrison SH, Sluss DM. 2014. Becoming: the interaction of socialization and identity in organizations over time. In *Time and Work, Vol. 1: How Time Impacts Individuals*, ed. AJ Shipp, Y Fried, pp. 11–39. London: Psychology Press.

Ashforth BE, Rogers KM. 2012. Is the employee-organization relationship misspecified? The centrality of tribes in experiencing the organization. In *The Employee-Organization*

Relationship: Applications for the 21st Century, ed. LM Shore, JAM Coyle-Shapiro, LE Tetrick, pp. 23–53. New York: Routledge.

Ashforth BE. 2001. *Role Transitions in Organizational Life: An Identity-Based Perspective*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ashforth, B. E. & Schinoff, B. S. (2016), *Identity Under Construction: How Individuals Come to Define Themselves in Organisations*: Annual Review of Organisational Psychology, 111-137.

Bambarger, B. (1993), "Osram Sylvania's time-based continuous improvement approach to BPR", *Industrial Engineering*, 25(12) December 1993 pp14-18.

Bandura A 1986. *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1976), "Social learning theory" In: Spence, J. T., Carson, R. C. & Thibaut, J. W. (eds.), *Behavioural approaches to therapy*, Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, pp1-46.

Bandura, A. (1977), *Social Learning Theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Barley SR. 1989. Careers, identities, and institutions: the legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology. In *Handbook of Career Theory*, ed. MB Arthur, DT Hall, BS Lawrence, pp. 41–65. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Barrett, E. (1992), *The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Corporate Culture Analogy - "The Glue that Doesn't Stick"* (Working Paper 3/92), Henley-on-Thames, England: The Henley Management College.

Bashein, B. J., Markus, M L., Riley, P. (1994), "Preconditions for BPR success", *Information Systems Management*, 11(2) Spring 1994 pp7-13.

Baumeister RF, Leary MR. 1995. The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychol. Bull.* 117(3):497–529.

Baumeister RF, Tice DM. 1986. Four selves, two motives, and a substitute process self-regulation model. In *Public Self and Private Self*, ed. RF Baumeister, pp. 63–74. New York: Springer.

Baumeister RF. 1989. Motives and costs of self-presentation in organizations. In *Impression Management in the Organization*, ed. RA Giacalone, P Rosenfeld, pp. 57–71. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Baumeister RF. 1991. *Meanings of Life*. New York: Guilford Press.

Beckard, R. & Harris, R. T. (1987), *Organizational Transitions* (2 ed.), Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Becker M, Vignoles VL, Owe E, Brown R, Smith PB, et al. 2012. Culture and the distinctiveness motive: constructing identity in individualistic and collectivistic contexts. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 102(4):833–55.

Beech N. 2011. Liminality and the practices of identity reconstruction. *Hum. Relat.* 64(2):285–302.

Beer, M., Eisenstat, R. A., & Spector, B. (1993), "Why Change Programs Don't Produce Change", In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2nd ed), London: Paul Chapman, pp99-107.

Belmonte, R. W, Murray, R. J (1993), "Getting ready for strategic change: Surviving business process redesign", *Information Systems Management*, 10(3) Summer 1993 pp23-29.

Bem DJ. 1972. Self-perception theory. *Adv. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 6:1–62.

Benjamin, G. & Mabey, C. (1993), "Facilitating Radical Change", In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2nd ed), London: Paul Chapman, pp181-186.

Best, L. J., Forman, F. L. (1992), "A Dual Approach", *CIO*, 6(4) 15 November 1992 pp28, 30.

Beyer JM, Hannah DR. 2002. Building on the past: enacting established personal identities in a new work setting. *Organ. Sci.* 13(6):636–52.

Beyer, J.M. & Trice, H.M. (1988), '*The Communication of Power Relations in Organisations through Cultural Rites*', in: M.D. Jones, M.D. Moore & R.C. Sayder.

Bisignano, A.P. & Palermo, O.A. (2007), Understanding Team Creativity in Entrepreneurship Programmes, *National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship*, Working Paper 030/2007.

Blaka G, Filstad C. 2007. How does a newcomer construct identity? A socio-cultural approach to workplace learning. *Int. J. Lifelong Educ.* 26(1):59–73.

Brewer MB, Gardner W. 1996. Who is this “we”? Levels of collective identity and self-representations. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 71(1):83–93.

Brewer MB. 2012. Optimal distinctiveness theory: its history and development. In *The Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, ed. PAM Van Lange, AW Kruglanski, ET Higgins, pp. 81–98. London: Sage.

Brickson S. 2000. The impact of identity orientation on individual and organizational outcomes in demographically diverse settings. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 25(1):82–101.

Brickson SL. 2013. Athletes, best friends, and social activists: an integrative model accounting for the role of identity in organizational identification. *Organ. Sci.* 24(1):226–45.

Brickson SL. 2015. *Organizations as internal value creators: toward a typology of value and a process model of “doing” organizational identity*. Work. Pap., Dep. Manag. Studies, Univ. Ill. Chicago.

Broadfoot, K. Deetz, S, & Anderson, D. 2004. Multi-levelled, Multi-method Approaches to Organizational Discourse, in Grant, D., Hardy, C., Osrick, C., Putnam, L. (Eds), *Handbook of Organizational Discourse*, Sage, London.

Brown AD. 2015. Identities and identity work in organizations. *Int. J. Manag. Rev.* 17(1):20–40

Brown, A. (1995), *Organisational Culture*, Essex, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

Brown, A. D., & Humphreys, M. (2003). Epic and tragic tales: Making sense of change. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 39(2), 121—144.

Brown, A.D. & Starkey, K. (1994). 'The effect of organisational culture on communication and information'. *Journal of Management Studies*, 31 (6), 807-28.

Bryman, A. (2009), *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Burack, E. H. (1991), "Changing the Corporate Culture - The Role of Human Resource Development", *Long Range Planning*, 24(1) pp88-95.

Burke PJ. 1991. Identity processes and social stress. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* 56(6):836–49.

Cable DM, Gino F, Staats BR. 2013. Breaking them in or eliciting their best? Reframing socialization around newcomers' authentic self-expression. *Adm. Sci. Q.* 58(1):1–36.

Cable DM, Kay VS. 2012. Striving for self-verification during organizational entry. *Acad. Manag. J.* 55(2):360–80.

Capozza D, Brown R, Aharpour S, Falvo R. 2006. A comparison of motivational theories of identification. In *Social Identities: Motivational, Emotional and Cultural Influences*, ed. R Brown, D Capozza, pp. 51–72. Hove, UK: Psychology Press.

Carey, D. (1993), "Nine I.T. executives tell you how to get reengineering success", *I.T. Magazine*, 25(11) November 1993 pp12-20.

Casc ´on-Pereira R, Hallier J. 2012. Getting that certain feeling: the role of emotions in the meaning, construction and enactment of doctor managers' identities. *Br. J. Manag.* 23(1):130–44.

Caza BB, Wilson MG. 2009. Me, myself, and I: the benefits of work-identity complexity. See Roberts & Dutton 2009, pp. 99–123.

Chreim S, Williams BE, Hinings CR. 2007. Inter level influences on the reconstruction of professional role identity. *Acad. Manag. J.* 50(6):1515–39.

Clarke CA, Brown AD, Hailey VH. 2009. Working identities? Antagonistic discursive resources and managerial identity. *Hum. Relat.* 62(3):323–52.

Coghlan, D. (1993), "In Defence of Process Consultation", In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2nd ed), London: Paul Chapman, pp117-124.

Collinson DL. 2003. Identities and insecurities: selves at work. *Organization* 10(3):527–47.

Cooper D, Thatcher SMB. 2010. Identification in organizations: the role of self-concept orientations and identification motives. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 35(4):516–38.

Cooper, R. (1989) "Modernism, Post Modernism and Organizational Analysis 3: The Contribution of Jacques Derrida.", *Organization Studies*, 10 (4), pp479-502.

Cooper, R. and Burrell, G. (1988), "Modernism, Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis: An Introduction.", *Organization Studies*, (1), pp.91-112.

Cosco, J. (1993), "The Razor's Edge", *Journal of Business Strategy*, 14 (6) November/December 1993 pp58-61.

Curran GM. 1996. From “swinging hard” to “rocking out”: classification of style and the creation of identity in the world of drumming. *Symbolic Interact.* 19(1):37–60.

D Grant, C Hardy, C Oswick, L Putnam, pp. 153–73. London: Sage.

Darr A, Scarselletta M. 2002. Technicians, clients, and professional authority: structured interactions and identity formation in technical work. *N. Technol. Work Employ.* 17(1):61–73.

Davenport, T. H. (1993), *Process Innovation - Reengineering Work through Information Technology*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.

Deal T. and Kennedy, A. A. (1982), *Corporate Cultures*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

DeRue DS, Ashford SJ, Cotton NC. 2009. Assuming the mantle: unpacking the process by which individuals internalize a leader identity. See Roberts & Dutton 2009, pp. 217–36.

DeRue DS, Ashford SJ. 2010. Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 35(4):627–47.

Doolin, B. (2002). *Enterprise discourse, professional identity and the organizational control of hospital clinicians*. *Organization Studies*, 23(3), 369—390.

Driscoll, A., & Morris, J. (2001). Stepping out: Rhetorical devices and culture change management in the UK civil service. *Public Administration*, 79(4), 803—824.

Dubin R. 1992. *Central Life Interests: Creative Individualism in a Complex World*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Dukerich JM, Kramer R, McLean Parks J. 1998. The dark side of organizational identification. See Whetten & Godfrey 1998, pp. 245–56.

Dutton JE, Roberts LM, Bednar J. 2010. Pathways for positive identity construction at work: four types of positive identity and the building of social resources. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 35(2):265–93.

Elsbach KD, Flynn FJ. 2013. Creative collaboration and the self-concept: a study of toy designers. *J. Manag. Stud.* 50(4):515–44.

Elsbach KD. 2004. Interpreting workplace identities: the role of office décor. *J. Organ. Behav.* 25(1):99–128.

Ezzamel, M., & Willmott, H. (1998). Accounting for teamwork: A critical study of group-based systems of organizational control. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43(2), 358—397.

Ezzamel, M., & Willmott, H. (2008). Strategy as discourse in a global retailer: A supplement to rationalist and interpretive accounts. *Organization Studies*, 29(2), 191—217.

- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fairhurst, G. T. (1993). Echoes of the vision: When the rest of the organization talks total quality. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 6, 331—371.
- Fairhurst, G. T., & Wendt, R. F. (1993). The gap in total quality: A commentary. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 6, 441—451.
- Farmer SM, Van Dyne L. 2010. The idealized self and the situated self as predictors of employee work behaviours. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 95(3):503–16.
- Fernie, S. (2004). *Call centre HRM and performance outcomes: Does workplace governance matter?* In S. Deery & N. Kinnie (Eds.), *Call centres and human resource management: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 54—74). London: Palgrave.
- Fineman, S. (1993), "Organisations in Emotional Arenas", In: Fineman, S. (ed), *Emotions in Organisations*, London, Sage, pp9-35.
- Fleming P, Sturdy A. 2011. "Being yourself" in the electronic sweatshop: new forms of normative control. *Hum. Relat.* 64(2):177–200.
- Ford, J. D., Ford, L.W., & D'Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(2), 362—377.
- Fugate M, Kinicki AJ, Ashforth BE. 2004. Employability: a psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *J. Vocat. Behav.* 65(1):14–38.
- Gecas V. 1986. The motivational significance of self-concept for socialization theory. *Adv. Group Process.* 3:131–56.
- Gergen, K. J. (1992), "Organizational Theory in the Post-modern Era" In: Reed, M. & Hughes, M. (eds.), *Rethinking Organization*, London: Sage, pp207-226.
- Gibson DE. 2003. Developing the professional self-concept: role model construals in early, middle, and late career stages. *Organ. Sci.* 14(5):591–610.

Gioia DA, Chittipeddi K. 1991. Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strateg. Manag.J.* 12(6):433–48.

Glynn MA. 1998. Individuals' need for organizational identification (nOID): speculations on individual differences in the propensity to identify. See Whetten & Godfrey 1998, pp. 238–44.

Goodstein, L. D. & Burke, W. W. (1993), "Creating Successful Organizational Change" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp164-172.

Grant, D., & Hardy, C. (2003). Introduction: Struggles with organizational discourse. *Organization Studies*, 21(1), 5—13.

Grant, D., Hardy, C., Oswick, C., & Putnam, L. L. (2004). *Introduction: Organizational discourse: Exploring the field*. In D. Grant, C.

Greenberger DB, Strasser S. 1986. Development and application of a model of personal control in organizations. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 11(1):164–77.

Greene, R. (1993), "Revenge of the Nerds", *Journal of Business Strategy*, 14(6) November/ December 1993 pp46-47.

Gubler M, Arnold J, Coombs C. 2014. Reassessing the protean career concept: empirical findings, conceptual components, and measurement. *J. Organ. Behav.* 35(s1):s23–s40.

Hahn, D. (1991), "Strategic Management - Tasks and Challenges in the 1990s", *Long Range Planning*, 24(1) pp26-39.

Hammer, M. & Champy, J. (1993) *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*, New York: Harper Business.

Hampden-Turner, C. (1990), *Corporate Culture*, Hutchinson Business Books.

Handy, C. (1985), *Understanding Organizations*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hardy, C. (2001). Researching organizational discourse. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 31(3), 25—47.

Hardy, C., Harley, B., & Phillips, N. (2004). Discourse analysis and content analysis: Two solitudes? *Qualitative Methods*, 2(1), 19—27.

Hardy, C., Palmer, I., & Phillips, N. (2000). Discourse as a strategic resource. *Human Relations*, 53(9), 1227—1248.

Harquail CV. 1998. Organizational identification and the “whole person”: integrating affect, behaviour, and cognition. See Whetten & Godfrey 1998, pp. 223–31.

Harrison, R. (1972), *Understanding Your Organisations Character*, *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 1972.

Haslam SA, Ellemers N. 2005. Social identity in industrial and organizational psychology: concepts, controversies and contributions. *Int. Rev. Ind. Organ. Psychol.* 20:39–118.

Hatmaker DM. 2013. Engineering identity: gender and professional identity negotiation among women engineers. *Gender Work Organ.* 20(4):382–96.

Heise DR. 1977. Social action as the control of affect. *Behav. Sci.* 22(3):163–77.

Hendry, J. (2000). Strategic decision making, discourse, and strategy as social practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(7), 955—977.

Hendry, J., & Seidl, D. (2003). The structure and significance of strategic episodes: Social systems theory and the routines practices of strategic change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(1), 175—196.

Henley (1991), *Managing People - Creating Successful Organisations*, Henley-on-Thames, England: Henley Distance Learning Ltd.

Heracleous, L. (2006). A tale of three discourses: The dominant, the strategic and the marginalized. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(5), 1059—1087.

- Hickman, C. R. & Silva, M. A. (1985), *Creating Excellence*, New American Library.
- Hofstede G. 2001. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2nd ed.
- Hofstede, G. (1991), *Cultures and Organisations, Software of the Mind*, Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G., Neuijen, B., Ohayv, D. & Sanders, G. (1990), 'Measuring Organisational Cultures: A Qualitative Study Across Twenty Cases', *Administrative Sciences Quarterly*, 35, 286-316.
- Hogg MA, Terry DJ. 2000. Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *Acad. Manag. J.* 25(1):121–40.
- Hogg MA. 2007. Uncertainty-identity theory. *Adv. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 39(6):69–126.
- Ibarra H, Barbulescu R. 2010. Identity as narrative: prevalence, effectiveness, and consequences of narrative identity work in macro work role transitions. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 35(1):135–54.
- Ibarra H. 1999. Provisional selves: experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Adm. Sci. Q.* 44(4):764–91.
- Isabella, L.A. (1990), 'Evolving Interpretations as Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organisational Events', *Academy of management Journal*, 33 (1), 7-41.
- James, L R, Joyce, W F and Slocum, J W Jr. (1988). "Comment: Organizations do not cognize", *Academy of Management Review*, 13(1), pp129-132.
- James, L. R., James, L. A., and Ashe, D. K. (1990), "The Meaning of Organisations: The Role of Cognition and Values" In: Schneider, B. (ed.), *Organizational Climate and Culture*, Oxford: Jossey-Bass.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2003). Strategic practices: An activity theory perspective on continuity and change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(1), 23—55.

Johansson, H. J., McHugh, P., Pendlebury, A. J. & Wheeler III, W. A. (1993), *Business Process Reengineering: BreakPoint Strategies for Market Dominance*, Chichester, England: Wiley.

Johns G. 2006. The essential impact of context on organizational behaviour. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 31(2):386–408.

Jorgenson J. 2002. Engineering selves: negotiating gender and identity in technical work. *Manag. Commun.Q.* 15(3):350–80.

Katz R. 1980. Time and work: toward an integrative perspective. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 2:81–127.

Katz, D & Kahn, R L (1978), *The social psychology of organizations* (2nd ed.), New York: Wiley.

Kennedy, C. (1993), "Changing the Company Culture at Ciba-Geigy", *Long Range Planning*, 26(1) pp18-27.

Kessler T, Hollbach S. 2005. Group-based emotions as determinants of in-group identification. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* 41(6):677–85.

Kira M, Balkin DB. 2014. Interactions between work and identities: thriving, withering, or redefining the self? *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* 24(2):131–43.

Klemm, M., Sanderson, S. & Luffman, G. (1991), "Mission Statements: Selling Corporate Values to Employees", *Long Range Planning*, 24(3) pp73-78.

Knights, D., & McCabe, D. (2000). Bewitched, bothered and bewildered: The meaning and experience of team working for employees in an automobile company. *Human Relations*, 53(11), 1481—1518.

Kono, T. (1990), "Corporate Culture and Long Range Planning", *Long Range Planning*, 23(4) pp9-19.

Kotter, J. P., & Heskett, J. L. (1992). *Organizational culture and performance*. New York: Free Press.

Kramer MW. 2010. *Organizational Socialization: Joining and Leaving Organizations*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Kreiner GE, Hollensbe EC, Sheep ML. 2006. Where is the “me” among the “we”? Identity work and the search for optimal balance. *Acad. Manag. J.* 49(5):1031–57.

Laine, P.-M., & Vaara, E. (2007). Struggling over subjectivity: A discursive analysis of strategic development in an engineering group. *Human Relations*, 60(1), 29—58.

LaPointe K. 2010. Narrating career, positioning identity: career identity as a narrative practice. *J. Vocat. Behav.* 77(1):1–9.

Lawrence, P. R. & Lorsch, J. W. (1967), *Organization and Environment*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.

Lee ES, Park TY, Koo B. 2015. Identifying organizational identification as a basis for attitudes and behaviours: a meta-analytic review. *Psychol. Bull.* 141(5):1049–80.

Lewin K. 1951. *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*, ed. D Cartwright. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Lewin, K. (1947), "Frontiers in group dynamics", *Human Relations*, 1, 5-41.

Lewin, K. (1948), *Resolving Social Conflicts*, New York: Harper and Row.

Lewin, K. (1952), *Field Theory in Social Science*, London: Tavistock.

Linde C. 2009. *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press.

Loan-Clark, J. & Preston, D. (2002), Tensions and Benefits in Collaborative Research Involving a University and Another Organization, *Studies in Higher Education*, Volume 27, No. 2, 2002.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Loseke DR, Cahill SE. 1986. Actors in search of a character: student social workers' quest for professional identity. *Symbolic Interact.* 9(2):245–58.

Louis MR. 1980. Surprise and sense making: what newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. *Adm. Sci. Q.* 25(2):226–51.

Liotard, J. (1984), *The Post-modern Condition*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Macur J. 2014. *Cycle of Lies: The Fall of Lance Armstrong*. New York: HarperCollins.

Maitlis S, Christianson M. 2014. Sensemaking in organizations: taking stock and moving forward. *Acad. Manag. Ann.* 8:57–125.

Maitlis S. 2009. Who am I now? Sensemaking and identity in posttraumatic growth. See Roberts & Dutton 2009, pp. 47–76.

Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2008). On the problem of participation in strategy: A critical discursive perspective. *Organization Science*, 19(2), 341—358.

Marcia JE. 1966. Development and validation of ego-identity status. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 3(5):551–58.

Markus H, Nurius P. 1986. Possible selves. *Am. Psychol.* 41(9):954–69.

Martin, B. (ed) (1994), *Information Technology Review 1994/95*, London: Price Waterhouse.

Martin, J. (1992), *Cultures in Organizations - Three Perspectives*, Oxford: Oxford UP.

Massey, J. (1994), "Cultural Revolution", *Computing*, 15 December 1994.

Mayhew MG, Gardner J, Ashkanasy NM. 2010. Measuring individuals' need for identification: scale development and validation. *Pers. Individ. Differ.* 49(5):356–61.

Mayon-White, B. (1993), "Problem Solving in Small Groups: Team Members as Agents of Change" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp132-142.

McAuley, J., Duberley, J., & Cohen, L. (2000). The meanings scientists give to management and strategy. *Human Relations*, 53(1), 87—116.

McCall GJ, Simmons JL. 1978. *Identities and Interactions: An Examination of Human Associations in Everyday Life*. New York: Free Press. Rev. ed.

McLean KC, Pasupathi M. 2012. Processes of identity development: where I am and how I got there. *Identity: Int. J. Theory Res.* 12(1):8–28.

Mead GH. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press.

Meister A, Jehn KA, Thatcher SMB. 2014. Feeling misidentified: the consequences of internal identity asymmetries for individuals at work. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 39(4):488–512.

Meyer RD, Dalal RS, Hermida R. 2010. A review and synthesis of situational strength in the organizational sciences. *J. Manag.* 36(1):121–40.

Meyerson, D. & Martin, J. (1987), "Cultural Change: An Integration of Three Perspectives", *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(6) November 1987 pp623-647.

Milton LP, Westphal JD. 2005. Identity confirmation networks and cooperation in work groups. *Acad. Manag. J.* 48(2):191–212.

Moad, J. (1993), "Does reengineering really work?", *Datamation*, 39(15) August 1 1993 pp22-28.

Molinsky A. 2007. Cross-cultural code-switching: the psychological challenges of adapting behaviour in foreign cultural interactions. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 32(2):622–40.

Moore CD, Robinson DT. 2006. Selective identity preferences: choosing from among alternative occupational identities. *Adv. Group Process.* 23:253–81.

Morgan, G. (1993), "Organizations as Political Systems" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp212-217.

Morgeson FP, Mitchell TR, Liu D. 2015. Event system theory: an event-oriented approach to the organizational sciences. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 40(4):515–37.

Morrison EW. 1993. Newcomer information seeking: exploring types, modes, sources, and outcomes. *Acad. Manag. J.* 36(3):557–89.

Mueller, F., & Carter, C. (2005). The 'HRM Project' and managerialism: Or why some discourses are more equal than others. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 18(4), 369—382.

Mueller, F., Sillince, J., Harvey, C., & Howorth, C. (2004). 'A rounded picture is what we need': Rhetorical strategies, arguments and the negotiation of change in a U.K. hospital trust. *Organization Studies*, 25(1), 85—103.

Mumby, D. (2004). Discourse, power and ideology: Unpacking the critical approach. In D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Osrick, & L. Putnam (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of organizational discourse* (pp. 237—258). London: Sage.

Mumby, D. (2005). Theorizing resistance in organization studies: A dialectical approach. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 19(1), 19—44.

Nadler, D. A. (1993), "Concepts for the Management of Organizational Change", In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2nd ed), London: Paul Chapman, pp85-98.

Nelsen, B. J., & Barley, S. R. (1997). For love or money? Commodification and the construction of an occupational mandate. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42(4), 619—653.

Nicholson, N. (1993), "Organizational Change" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp207-211.

Nyberg, D. & Mueller, F. (2009), Strategic cultural change and local discourses: The importance of being different, *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (2009) 25, 146—156.

Obeng, E. & Crainer, S. (1994), *Making Reengineering Happen*, London: Pitman.

Obodaru O. 2012. The self not taken: how alternative selves develop and how they influence our professional lives. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 37(1):34–57.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1966), *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*, London: Heinemann.

Pacanowsky, M. & O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. (1983), "Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance", *Communications Monographs*, 50 pp126-47.

Pacanowsky, M.E. & O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. (1982), 'Communication and Organisational Culture', *The Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46 (spring), 115-30.

Pagonda (undated), *Process Management* (flyer), London: Pagoda Associates Ltd.

Palmer, I., & Dunford, R. (2002). Managing discursive tension: The coexistence of individualist and collaborative discourses in flight centre. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(8), 1045—1069.

Park JS. 2014. After pain comes joy: identity gaps in employees' minds. *Pers. Rev.* 43(3):419–37.

Parker, M. (2000). *Organizational culture and identity: Unity and division at work*. London: Sage.

Peters, T. and Austin, N. (1985), *A Passion for Excellence - The Leadership Difference*, US: Random House, England: William Collins.

Peters, T. and Waterman, R. H. Jr. (1982), *In Search of Excellence*, New York: Harper and Row.

Petriglieri JL. 2011. Under threat: responses to and the consequences of threats to individuals' identities. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 36(4):641–62.

Pettigrew, A. & Whipp, R. (1993), "Understanding the Environment" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp5-19.

Pettigrew, A. and Whipp, R. (1991), *Managing Change for Competitive Success*, Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1987), "Context and Action in the Transformation of the Firm", *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(6) Nov 1987 pp649-670.

Pfeffer, J. (1993), "Understanding Power in Organizations" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp201-206.

Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (1997). Managing multiple identities: Discourse, legitimacy and resources in the UK refugee system. *Organization*, 4, 159—185.

Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse analysis: Investigating processes of social construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pilarska A. 2014. Self-construal as a mediator between identity structure and subjective well-being. *Curr. Psychol.* 33(2):130–54.

Pratt MG, Rockmann KW, Kaufmann JB. 2006. Constructing professional identity: the role of work and identity learning cycles in the customization of identity among medical residents. *Acad. Manag. J.* 49(2):235–62.

Pratt MG. 2000. The good, the bad, and the ambivalent: managing identification among Amway distributors. *Adm. Sci. Q.* 45(3):456–93.

Pratt MG. 2012. Rethinking identity construction processes in organizations: three questions to consider. In *Constructing Identity in and around Organizations*, ed. M Schultz, S Maguire, A Langley, H Tsoukas, pp. 21–49. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press.

Quinn, R. E. & McGrath, M. R. (1985), "The Transformation of Organizational Cultures: A Competing Values Perspective" In: P. J. Frost et al (eds.), *Organizational Culture*, Newburk Park, California: Sage, pp315-334.

Ramarajan L. 2014. Past, present and future research on multiple identities: toward an intrapersonal network approach. *Acad. Manag. Ann.* 8:589–659.

Reed, M. (1992), "Introduction" In: Reed, M. & Hughes, M. (eds.), *Rethinking Organization*, London: Sage, pp1-16.

Reid E. 2015. Embracing, passing, revealing, and the ideal worker image: how people navigate expected and experienced professional identities. *Organ. Sci.* 26(4):997–1017.

Roberts LM, Dutton JE, eds. 2009. *Exploring Positive Identities and Organizations: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation*. New York: Routledge.

Roberts LM, Dutton JE, Spreitzer GM, Heaphy ED, Quinn RE. 2005. Composing the reflected best-self portrait: building pathways for becoming extraordinary in work organizations. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 30(4):712–36.

Roberts LM. 2005. Changing faces: professional image construction in diverse organizational settings. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 30(4):685–711.

Rohm, C. E. (1992), "The Principal insures a better future by reengineering its Individual Insurance Department", *National Productivity Review*, Winter 1992, 12(1) pp55-64.

Rose, N. (1990), *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, London: Routledge.

Rousseau, Denise M. (1990), "Assessing Organisational Culture: The Case for Multiple Methods" In: Schneider, B. (ed.), *Organisational Climate and Culture*, Oxford: Jossey-Bass, 1990, Chapter 5.

Saks AM, Gruman JA. 2012. Getting newcomers on board: a review of socialization practices and introduction to Socialization Resources Theory. In *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Socialization*, ed. CR Wanberg, pp. 27–55. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press.

Schein, E. H. (1985b), *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E.H. (1964), *'The Mechanism of Change'*, in Bennis, Schein, Steels and Berlew (eds), *Interpersonal Dynamics*, Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 199-213.

Schein, E.H. (1985a), *'How Culture Forms, Develops and Changes'*, in R.H. Kilmann, M.J. Saxton, R. Serpa & associates (eds), *Gaining Control of the Corporate Culture*, San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey Bass.

Scholz, C. (1987, 80), *'Corporate Culture and Strategy - the problem of strategic fit'*, *Long Range Planning*, 20 (4), 78-87.

Schultz, M (1992), "Post-modern pictures of culture. (Post-modern Management & Organization)", *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 22(2) Summer 1992 pp15-35.

Schwartz, H. & Davies, S.M. (1981, 33), *'Matching Corporate Culture and Business Strategy'*, *Organisational Dynamics*, 10, 30-48.

Schweingruber D, Berns N. 2005. Shaping the selves of young salespeople through emotion management. *J. Contemp. Ethnography* 34(6):679–706.

Shepperd J, Malone W, Sweeny K. 2008. Exploring causes of the self-serving bias. *Soc. Pers. Psychol. Compass* 2(2):895–908.

Shipp AJ, Jansen KJ. 2011. Reinterpreting time in fit theory: crafting and recrafting narratives of fit in medias res. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 36(1):76–101.

Smircich, L. (1985), "Is the Concept of Culture a Paradigm for Understanding Organizations and Ourselves" In: P. J. Frost et al (eds.), *Organizational Culture*, Newburk Park, California: Sage, pp55-72.

Smith LGE, Amiot CE, Smith JR, Callan VJ, Terry DJ. 2013. The social validation and coping model of organizational identity development: a longitudinal test. *J. Manag.* 39(7):1952–78.

Sonenshein S, Dutton JE, Grant AM, Spreitzer GM, Sutcliffe KM. 2013. Growing at work: employees' interpretations of progressive self-change in organizations. *Organ. Sci.* 24(2):552–70.

Sonnleitner TM. 1995. Yaqui voices: public schooling experiences of urban American Indian students. *Bilingual Res. J.* 19(2):317–36.

Stevens, M. (1994), "Getting the Process Right", *Marketing Business*, June 1994.

Strauss K, Griffin MA, Parker SK. 2012. Future work selves: how salient hoped-for identities motivate proactive career behaviours. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 97(3):580–98.

Sullivan HS. 1947. *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*. Washington, DC: WA White Psychiatr. Found.

Sveningsson, S., & Alvesson, M. (2003). Managing material identities: Organizational fragmentation, discourse and identity struggle. *Human Relations*, 56(10), 1163—1193.

Swann WB Jr, Johnson RE, Boson JK. 2009. Identity negotiation at work. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 29:81–109.

Swann WB Jr, Rentfrow PJ, Guinn JS. 2003. Self-verification: the search for coherence. In *Handbook of Self and Identity*, ed. MR Leary, JP Tangney, pp. 367–83. New York: Guilford Press.

Swann WB Jr. 1990. To be adored or to be known? The interplay of self-enhancement and self-verification. In *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition*, Vol. 2: *Foundations of Social Behaviour*, ed. ET Higgins, RM Sorrentino, pp. 408–48. New York: Guilford Press.

Tajfel H, Turner JC. 1986. The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. S Worchel, WG Austin, pp. 7–24. Chicago: Nelson-Hall. 2nd ed.

Taylor, P., & Bain, P. (1999). 'An assembly line in the head': Work and employees relations in the call centre. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 30(2), 101—117.

Taylor, P., Baldry, C., Bain, P., & Ellis, V. (2003). 'A unique working environment': Health, sickness and absence management in UK call centres. *Work Employment and Society*, 17(3), 435—458.

Taylor, S. (1994), "Patent & Trademark Office sets the standard for reengineering government. (business process reengineering)", *Industrial Engineering*, 26(4) April 1994 p36-39.

Thomas R. 2009. Critical management studies on identity: mapping the terrain. In *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Management Studies*, ed. M Alvesson, T Bridgman, H Willmott, pp. 166–85. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press.

Thompson , K. R. & Luthans, F. (1990), "Organizational Culture: A behavioural Perspective", In: Schneider, B. (ed.), *Organizational Climate and Culture*, Oxford: Jessey-Bass, Chapter 9.

Thornborrow T, Brown AD. 2009. "Being regimented": aspiration, discipline and identity work in the British Parachute Regiment. *Organ. Stud.* 30(4):355–76.

Thyssen, O. (1988) *Pafuglens ajne--after postmodernism [The eyes of the peacock--after postmodernism]*, Copenhagen: Rosinante.

Topping ME, Kimmel EB. 1985. The imposter phenomenon: feeling phony. *Acad. Psychol. Bull.* 7(2):213–26.

Tsui AS, Ashford SJ. 1994. Adaptive self-regulation: a process view of managerial effectiveness. *J. Manag.* 20(1):93–121.

Tunstall, W.B. (1983, 15), 'Cultural Transition at AT&T', *Sloan Management Review*, 25(1), 15-26.

Turner JC. 1982. Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. H Tajfel, pp. 15–40. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Turner JC. 1999. Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories. In *Social Identity: Context, Commitment, Content*, ed. N Ellemers, R Spears, B Doosje, pp. 6–34. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Vaara, E., Kleymann, B., & Seristo, H. (2004). Strategies as discursive constructions: The case of airline alliances. *Journal of Management Studies*, 41(1), 1–35.

Van den Broek, D. (2003). Recruitment strategies and union exclusion in two Australian call centres. *Relations Industrielles*, 58(3), 515–536.

Van Maanen J, Schein EH. 1979. Toward a theory of organizational socialization. *Res. Organ. Behav.* 1:209–64.

Van Maanen J. 2010. Identity work and control in occupational communities. In *Organizational Control*, ed. SB Sitkin, LB Cardinal, KM Bijlsma-Frankema, pp. 111–66. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Vidgen, R., Rose, J., Wood, B., Wood-Harper, T. (1994), "Business Process Reengineering: the Need for a Methodology to Revision the Organization", In: *TC8AUS IFIP Information Systems International Working Conference - Conference Pre-prints*, Queensland, Australia: Queensland Branch of The Australian Computer Society.

Vignoles VL, Manzi C, Regalia C, Jemmolo S, Scabini E. 2008. Identity motives underlying desired and feared possible future selves. *J. Pers.* 76(5):1165–200.

Vignoles VL, Regalia C, Manzi C, Golledge J, Scabini E. 2006. Beyond self-esteem: influence of multiple motives on identity construction. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 90(2):308–33.

Vignoles VL. 2011. Identity motives. In *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, Vol. 1: *Structures and Processes*, ed. SJ Schwartz, K Luyckx, VL Vignoles, pp. 403–32. New York: Springer.

Vitiello, J. (1993), "It's Totally Radical", *Journal of Business Strategy*, 14 (6) November/December 1993 pp44-47.

- Vroom, V. H. (1964), *Work and Motivation*, New York: Wiley.
- Wallace HM, Tice DM. 2012. Reflected appraisal through a 21st century looking glass. In *Handbook of Self and Identity*, ed MR Leary, JP Tangey, pp. 124–40. New York: Guilford Press. 2nd ed.
- Walsham, G. (1993), "*Management Science and Organizational Change: A Framework for Analysis*" In: Maybe, C. & Mayon-White, B. (eds.), *Managing Change* (2 ed.), London: Paul Chapman, pp187-196.
- Watson TJ. 2009. Narrative, life story and manager identity: a case study in autobiographical identity work. *Hum. Relat.* 62(3):425–52.
- Watson, T. J. (2003). Strategists and strategy-making: Strategic exchange and the shaping of individual lives and organizational futures. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(5), 1305—1324.
- Weick KE. 1979. *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. 2nd ed.
- Weick KE. 1995. *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Whetten DA, Godfrey PC, eds. 1998. *Identity in Organizations: Building Theory Through Conversations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Whittington, R. (1996). Strategy as practice. *Long Range Planning*, 29(5), 731—735.
- Wilderom, C. P. M., Glunk, U., & Maslowski, R. (2000). *Organizational culture as a predictor of organizational performance*. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. P. M. Wilderom, & M. F. Peterson (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational culture and climate* (pp. 193—210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Willcocks, L. & Smith, G. (1994), *IT-Enabled Business Process Reengineering: From Theory to Practice*, Oxford, England: Oxford Institute of Information Management, Templeton College.

Wille, E. (1989), *Triggers for Change*, Ashridge, England: Ashridge Management [College] Research Group.

Williams, A., Dobson, P., and Walters, M. (1989), *Changing Culture*, London: Institute of Personnel Management (IPM).

Wilson E, Deaney R. 2010. Changing career and changing identity: How do teacher career changers exercise agency in identity construction? *Soc. Psychol. Educ.* 13(2):169–83.

Wilson, I. (1992), "Realizing the Power of Strategic Vision", *Long Range Planning*, 25(5) pp18-28.

Winslow, C. D. (1993), "Setting a Course for Radical Change - The Human Touch", *Journal of Business Strategy*, 14 (6) November/December 1993 pp52-57.

Wrzesniewski A, Dutton JE. 2001. Crafting a job: revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Acad. Manag. Rev.* 26(2):179–201.

Ybema S, Keenoy T, Oswick C, Beverungen A, Ellis N, Sabelis I. 2009. Articulating identities. *Hum. Relat.* 62(3):299–322.

Zhang Y, Liao J, Yan Y, Guo Y. 2014. Newcomers' future work selves, perceived supervisor support, and proactive socialization in Chinese organizations. *Soc. Behav. Pers.* 42(9):1457–72.