

**Prioritising Identity: A grounded theory of employees' evaluation of the
work-life interface in multinational corporations**

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CONFERENCE PAPERS ARISING FROM THE THESIS

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Papers arising from Chapter 2

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ABSTRACT

Are we working to live or living to work? The interface between work and personal life is often viewed as a source of irreconcilable conflict and the predominant work-life metaphors of ‘balance’ and ‘conflict’ reinforce this view. Much research in this area assumes that time and resource allocation is at the heart of managing the work-life interface; faced with the ‘work-life conundrum’, many employers respond by implementing time and resource-focused initiatives such as flexible working hours and access to special leave provisions. Increasingly, organisations are devoting significant resources to establishing and promoting effective work-life balance policies. But are these responses based on valid assumptions that accurately reflect employees’ perceptions of the work-life interface? Anecdotal evidence suggests that, despite the many and varied work-life strategies being implemented in organisations, increasing numbers of employees are engaging with support services *outside* the workplace to help them manage the intersection between paid employment and family commitments. Many of those seeking support from organisations such as Relationships Australia are male, blue-collar employees in large organisations who have access to, but apparently find unsuitable, the proffered time and resource-oriented work-life initiatives. There appears then to be a ‘disconnect’ between employers’ work-life initiatives and employees’ experiences and perceptions of the work-life interface.

The aim of this study was to illuminate our understanding of employee perceptions of the work-life interface, in particular among male, blue collar employees in multinational corporations (MNCs). While there is a significant, indeed disproportionate, volume of research on the development of global organisational policy and management strategy around work-life balance, there is little qualitative research that illuminates non-managerial employee evaluations of work-life interaction in these multi-level corporations (De Cieri & Bardoel 2009; Poelmans 2005). Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1978) was employed to investigate this phenomenon in two MNC Australian subsidiaries, primarily because this approach allows the data to speak for itself, thus revealing the main concern of the participants and resulting in specific theoretical propositions grounded in the data. The first 20 interviews in this study identified 88 key points relating to employee experiences of work-life interaction. The research focus was then narrowed to delimit the emerging theory around four main categories in the data. In total, 28 interviews were conducted as part of the dynamic and fluid process of coding, theoretical sampling, literature review and interpretation that is Grounded Theory.

The study's central proposition is that individuals in multi-level organisations prioritise identification – as both process and outcome - in their subjective evaluation of the work-life interface; specifically, a two-stage process is identified. First, employees conceptualise 'work' in terms of an episode-centred process of organisational identification. Episodes of affinity and disidentification with the organisation have varying foci; the immediate workgroup, the national subsidiary

organisation and the global MC entity. Second, individuals locate themselves along a continuum of identification, where identification across organisational referents ranges from 'distinct' to 'nested'. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978) suggests that individuals construct a number of identities based on their interactions as members of, or exclusion from, specific social groups. Because the organisational environment is one of the most significant social groups that will influence an individual's personal identity formation, it is unsurprising that identity lies at the heart of the work-life issue. However, this study makes a unique contribution to the organisational identification literature by deconstructing the argument that 'nested' identities - identities that overlap across organisational foci - are positive (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008). In doing so, the substantive theory of Prioritising Identity recasts acknowledged antecedents to organisational identification as cues for specific episodes of affinity and disidentification. Further, the emergent theory reveals a relationship between the *process* of organisational identification and individuals' subjective evaluations of work-life interaction.

A number of implications for management practice are also suggested. Traditionally, work-life issues have been addressed within organisations as HRM issues; the strategies designed to address them, such as leave programs and flexible working hours, have focused on providing time and resources to help employees manage the work-life interface. A major problem with such responses is that they neglect the impact of significant psychological processes such as personal and organisational identity formation. Compounding this problem is a limited understanding of exactly

how individuals assess work-life interaction, particularly in multi-level organisations such as MNCs (Bardoel & De Cieri, 2008; De Cieri & Bardoel, 2009; Poelmans, 2005). Deconstructing the subjective process of evaluation affords an opportunity to shed light on MNC employees' perspectives on work-life interaction; it is hoped that as a consequence, organisational interventions can be better informed and more accurately directed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Understanding and effectively managing the various demands of work and non-work life domains present an ongoing challenge for both individuals in the workforce and the organisations that employ them. Australian research suggests that more than 70% of employees believe they do not have a healthy ‘balance’ between their work and personal lives (Healey, 2008). Approximately 90% of working adults believe they do not spend enough time with their families, despite this being the top-rated work-life priority of more than 80% of men and women (Healey, 2008). The depth and breadth of work-life issues facing employees and organisations presents both challenges and opportunities for theoretical and applied research. Traditionally, work-life issues have been addressed within organisations as human resource management issues and the strategies designed to address them, such as leave programs and flexible working hours, have focused on providing time and resources to employees. A major problem with such responses is that because they do not actually permeate the organisation’s culture, they rarely help the majority of employees achieve satisfactory outcomes (Friedman, Christensen & DeGroot, 1998). Compounding this problem is a limited understanding of exactly *how* individuals evaluate their work-life interaction, particularly in multi-level organisations such as multinational corporations (MNCs) (Bardoel & De Cieri, 2008; De Cieri & Bardoel, 2009; Poelmans, 2005).

Deconstructing the subjective process of evaluation affords an opportunity to shed

light on MNC employees' perspectives on work-life interaction; it is hoped that as a consequence, organisational interventions can be better informed and more accurately directed.

This chapter reviews the development of the academic work-life balance discourse to introduce the broad context of the research. Second, the dominant approaches to organisational strategy in this area are described. This is important because the research undertaken for this thesis arose specifically in response to apparent limitations of traditional organisational interventions in this area. Finally, the chapter details the rationale for this particular research project.

1.2 Conceptual overview

This research employed classic Grounded Theory methodology (Glaser, 1978, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop theoretical propositions about employee evaluations of work-life interaction. In keeping with the tenets of that methodology, the conceptual overview in this thesis is confined to background reading solely to situate the research topic. This differs from a positivist research approach, which would traditionally commence with a comprehensive 'review of the literature' in order to justify the development of testable hypotheses. Instead, this chapter provides a broad overview of contemporary literature in the key conceptual areas that informed the research, to 'obtain a feel for the issues at work in the subject area, and identify any gaps to be filled in using grounded theory' (Smith & Biley, 1997: 20). One of the originators of the grounded theory method (Glaser, 1992) stipulates that limiting *full*

exploration of the literature until after the concepts emerge from the data analysis prevents the emerging theory from being forced into preconceived categories. In this research, additional literature was sampled in the same way as all other forms of data; it was introduced at critical points in the analysis and became firmly embedded in the generation of new theoretical insights. Hence, a more detailed exploration of relevant literature and the contribution to extant theory is reported in Chapter 4.

1.2.1 Development of the work-life discourse

Pocock (2005a: 201) asserts that ‘several parties [have] an interest in work-life balance: individuals, enterprises and larger society’. Of these three perspectives, each has been dominant at various times in the developing work-life debate and reflecting contemporary structural social changes, particular national circumstances and specific organisational imperatives. The work-life ‘problem’ was initially considered a concern for women who sought to manage paid employment with raising children. Increasing numbers of women entering paid employment during the 1960s prompted a surge in academic research about the potential consequences for families and male workers. A corresponding shift in the contextualisation of the work-life debate saw dual earner families emerge as a key area of research focus in the late 1960s. At this time, traditional gender roles were redistributed and women became more vocal in their participation in labour market debates (Henwood, Rimmer & Wicks, 1987; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1965, 1969; Zweig, 1961). Political and social discussion about work-life interaction in the 1960s focused heavily on the consequences, for

men, of increased female participation in the labour market; work-life issues were considered a problem created by women and therefore something for women to solve.

In the 1970s, the interplay between work and family was more widely researched and there emerged a new debate about the long-term social and employment outcomes when women perform multiple life roles (Hoffman, 1979; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). The academic discourse of the 1970s was still heavily influenced by gender considerations, and the traditional separation of work and family roles was challenged (Hoffman & Nye, 1974; Pleck, 1977). However, reflecting the early developmental stage of the debate, there was little emphasis on structural or organisational issues:

[M]ost research on work and family, and especially dual-earner families, constructed the issues emerging, and especially women's issues, as *individual* rather than *organizational* problems (Lewis & Cooper, 1999: 382).

Lewis and Cooper (1999: 382) identified specific types of research questions being asked in the 1970s, suggesting that there was an 'underlying assumption that women were deviating from their expected roles, with possible negative consequences for all'. Conceptualising the issues as concerns for individuals effectively disengaged the world of paid employment from domestic life; research in the field consequently centred on strategies that individuals could employ in their private lives to alleviate pressures stemming from their work situation. Nonetheless, the myth of work and family as disconnected life spheres was effectively dispelled by the late 1970s (Crosby, 1987) and there was increased recognition that women's participation in the workforce presented exciting new directions and challenges for researchers examining the division of labour and gender role theory.

While the debate of 1970s was confined largely to academic circles, the 1980s and 1990s were marked by an increase in social and organisational commentary about workplace stress and burnout (Lewis & Cooper, 1999) and resultant forms of work-family 'conflict' (Lewis & Cooper, 1999; Perrewe, Hochwarter & Kiewitz, 1999). These decades saw a distinct shift in research focus towards the role of workplace flexibility in managing work-life balance, and the potential for organisational cultural and policy reform to minimise work-family conflict (e.g. Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Hall, 1990; Lewis, 1997). Some pioneering organisations such as Merck, (then) Deloitte & Touche and IBM did recognise the value and needs of their female employees and introduced family-friendly policies, procedures and benefits to attract and retain women workers. However these organisations were by far the exception and not the rule. During the 1980s men also began to push for improved benefits and more personalised working arrangements, leading to a more equitable approach to issues of gender within the broader work-life discourse. It was recognised that the debate had matured to encompass a variety of perspectives: individuals (both women and men), families, organisations and communities. Importantly, many researchers concluded that work-life 'balance' had been inaccurately portrayed as an individual concern, instead arguing that organisational culture and design was a critical factor in promoting balance between work and family obligations (Lewis & Cooper, 1987; Sekaran, 1986; Staines, 1980).

From the latter half of the 1980s, factors such as labour market changes, globalisation and demographic shifts created new strategic challenges for organisations. New

pressures emerged to develop strategies to increase employee satisfaction, firm productivity and competitive advantage (e.g. Brennan, 2007; Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This transition from individual (micro-level) to organisational/ political (macro-level) focus in the work-life discourse heralded a new era of research in the late 1990s and the pursuit of maximum productivity, capacity and flexibility has consequently characterised the work-life balance discourse into recent decades. Some argue that work-life balance systems have become reactive, responding to immediate challenges but lacking in strategic depth: ‘an ongoing series of tactical responses to major productivity issues facing the government and business sector leaders of the day’ (Wickham & Fishwick, 2008: 88). Similarly, they are described as a series of short-term and overtly gendered policy and organisational responses that oscillate between competing pressures, ‘reflecting ambivalence about... whether women should be supported as home-based carers, wage earners or both’ (Brennan, 2007: 33).

1.2.2 Macro and micro-level responses to work-life issues

There has undoubtedly been a shift towards reconciling the key interests in the work-life balance debate via social, political and organisational work-life strategies (Pocock, 2005a). The maturing of the debate is reflected in a now comprehensive body of literature analysing the many complex conceptual issues that are at the heart of the work-life question. Much of the literature originates in the EU, Canada and the US (e.g. Eikhof, Warhurst & Haunschild, 2007; Lewis, Gambles & Rapoport, 2007; Todd, 2004), where there has been increasing public debate and consequently the

development of ‘legislative and other measures that support broad social policy goals to help workers balance paid work with unpaid responsibilities’ (Todd, 2004: 6).

Lewis and Campbell observe that since the mid-1990s ‘the academic literature has tended to divide into work focusing either on state policies to “reconcile” work and family or on “family-friendly” working practices at the level of the firm’ (2007: 5). In other words, there have been different and often competing perspectives informing the work-life balance debate. On one hand are macro-level policy frameworks that seek to address fundamental social issues associated with balancing paid employment and family responsibilities; on the other hand are micro-, or enterprise-level work-life strategies, driven mainly by economic imperatives.

In the Scandinavian countries of Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, there is a strong focus on

...developing legislative and other measures that support broad social policy goals to help workers balance paid work with unpaid responsibilities. They primarily seek to improve work-life balance by redressing gender inequities in the labour force and in the division of unpaid work, particularly with reference to caregiving (Todd, 2004: 6).

In these countries, legislative intervention is underpinned by a broad social strategy that seeks to address macro-level concerns of gender roles and the division of domestic labour. Organisational work-life strategies consequently reflect, and further entrench, a ‘prevailing public responsibility model characterised by generous leave conditions and benefits’ (Brough, Holt, Bauld, Biggs & Ryan, 2008: 263). In other countries where work-life balance is also explicitly endorsed as a policy goal, such as

the UK, New Zealand and Australia, the practical focus conversely remains firmly on micro-level, or enterprise solutions to individual workers' concerns (Brough *et al.*, 2008; Skinner, Pocock & Williams, 2008). Governments in these countries have launched a range of promotional campaigns to encourage employers to voluntarily develop and implement work-life strategies in their organisations, but without a comprehensive social or employment policy framework at the macro-level (Todd, 2004). In Australia, Brennan (2007) and Pocock (2005a) identify that paid parental leave was, and indeed remains, the focus of government attention, with the bulk of work-life balance issues being addressed at the enterprise level. In 2003, the then Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations confirmed the conservative government's approach to work-life balance as non-legislative and employer-oriented:

We don't believe in one size fits all legislative or semi-legislative prescriptions. What we believe in is giving people freedom to come to the best arrangements they can between themselves (Tony Abbott, Work and Family website).

Support for individual choice and flexibility for employers also resonates in other public comments by conservative Australian political leaders, such as those on the issue of paid maternity leave. For example, in 2001 then Prime Minister John Howard indicated clearly the government's philosophy on compulsory paid maternity leave:

I don't think anybody argues against the desirability of... paid maternity leave, but if a firm can't afford it then it shouldn't be forced to provide it...people should look at the issue entirely on firm-by-firm, enterprise-by-enterprise basis (Howard, 2001).

In 2009 the Australian Labor government announced plans to introduce an 18-week paid parental leave scheme from 2011, for primary carers (predominantly women) earning less than \$150,000 per annum. Contrasting reactions among interest groups to the proposed parental leave scheme epitomise the fundamental divide in attitudes to work, family and gender roles in Australian society. The decision to establish a universal paid parental leave scheme has been acclaimed by trade unions and community organisations as a long-overdue and progressive social initiative, but also widely criticised by business groups who have expressed concerns about potential administrative and cash flow problems associated with managing the scheme. Since the 1960s Australian policy-makers of all political persuasions have subscribed to a neo-liberal economic and social agenda that ‘prefers to treat work/life balance issues as a matter for direct negotiation between workers and employers’ (Connell, 2005: 375). The paid parental leave scheme introduced by the current Australian Labor government is one example of the translation of policy rhetoric into legislation in Australia that is notable because it is exceptional. It represents a change in emphasis from consideration of work-life benefits as privileges to be ‘earned’ by employees and decided on business case imperatives by individual employers, to an acceptance of those benefits as citizenship rights to be enshrined in law (Wise, 2005; Zacharias, 2006).

In non-Western societies such as Japan, public and academic debates about social policy and the work-family interface only really began to develop after the 1970s, with much of the literature imposing Western frames of analysis on the Japanese

situation (Goodman & Peng, 1998). The most notable exception is a large research project on social welfare undertaken at the University of Tokyo's Institute of Social Science between 1979 and 1985, which was unique in its attempt to study the Japanese social welfare system in its own social and political context (University of Tokyo Institute of Social Science, 1985). In general, contemporary authors (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1997; Goodman & Peng, 1998; Miyamoto, 2003; Peng, 2002) agree that the approach to work-life balance in Japan has been characterised by two distinct features: 'a strong emphasis on the family and the importance of corporate or occupational welfare' (Peng, 2002: 33). Gottfried and O'Reilly suggest that Japan's approach to social welfare, and by extension work-life balance, were historically characterised by a 'corporate-family welfare system' that sought to balance the demands of capital, labour (unions) and the state:

Large companies in core economic sectors agreed to provide a family wage in exchange for cooperative relationships with enterprise-based trade unions...[There were] implications for the division of caring labor across institutional domains between public and private sectors (2002: 40).

Peng (2002: 34) concurs with this view, arguing that Japan's corporate family welfare system that developed in the late 1950s and 1960s encouraged 'family formation and personal home ownership, discouraged married women's labour force participation [and] increased workers' dependence on the company'. Work-life interaction in Japan has been influenced strongly by traditional cultural perspectives on the roles of family and state in managing employment and gender relations. More recently, however, government policy has overwhelmingly reflected changing social structures and fluctuating economic conditions, responding to new pressures with a growing

amalgamation of Western welfare policy and East-Asian Confucian values (Goodman & Peng, 2002).

At the heart of contemporary policy-making in Japan is concern about future population growth and the impact of an aging community of social and economic resources. By the early 1990s Japan's demography had shifted dramatically to reveal an aging trend so alarming that a declining population threatened to destabilise Japan's global political and economic dominance. In response, policy-makers were forced to adopt for the first time explicitly macro-level approaches to gender relations, employment and the associated issue of work-life balance (Peng, 2002).

Peng describes the shift in policy approach:

[S]tate policies since the early 1990s have begun to encourage childbirth. To this end, the Japanese welfare state has embarked on what appears to be the beginning of a "family-friendly/ woman-friendly" welfare expansion. This has led to a marked extension in public child care and reforms in parental and family care leave policies (2002: 32).

Contrasting the Scandinavian macro-level approach to social policy, the Japanese experience reflects strong notions of the role of the family in providing financial and care support (Kono, 2000). The family has long been designated as 'the centrepiece of welfare delivery' (Gottfried & O'Reilly, 2002: 41) and women have remained the flexible players in accommodating changing market conditions. Situated somewhere between the Scandinavian and Australian approaches on the macro-micro response continuum, Japan's approach to work-life balance has been to develop broad public policy programmes that realise macro-level objectives in the areas of population

growth, gender and employment, while also responding to the micro-level economic conditions of individual enterprises. In 2008 the Japanese Government introduced a 'Charter for Work-life Balance and Action Policy for Promoting Work-Life Balance' which signalled a rising consciousness of the myriad of economic and social issues associated with work-life reconciliation. The policy is aimed at preventing overwork and arresting the nation's declining fertility rate through public policy measures and numerical targets to measure success of the policy. The charter's objectives reinforce desirable attributes of Japanese society: people can provide themselves with jobs, have time to lead healthy, affluent lives, and can choose from a diversity of working and living styles. Clearly, the Japanese approach to work-life balance remains strongly influenced by Confucian tenets of familial piety and family responsibility for care-giving. Albeit informed by different historical and social conditions to those in Scandinavian countries, the Japanese government's adoption of work-life balance as a public policy priority nonetheless reflects a distinct shift towards a macro-level approach to reconciling issues of gender equality and the intersection of paid work and domestic life.

Providing a brief overview of various national policy approaches to work-life interaction is important here because the aim of this research was to illuminate employees' subjective evaluations in the specific context of multinational corporations (MNCs). Without imposing culture as a predetermined influence on the data analysis, a general understanding of the policy environment in which those organisations originate and operate justly acknowledges that the MNC context is

distinctive. Organisational work-life policies clearly do not exist in a vacuum, but ‘need to be adapted to different cultural, political, economic, and social conditions’ (Kalliath & Brough, 2008: 229). MNCs face the unique organisational challenge of ‘defining a global work/life strategy that establishes shared principles and guidelines and also allows for local initiatives and differences’ (Bardoel & De Cieri, 2008: 2). However, although work-life strategies are implicit in the areas being investigated by HRM researchers (De Cieri & Bardoel, 2009), there is a disproportionate volume of research on the development of international human resource management policy, and little research that involves qualitative case studies of work-life reconciliation in MNCs (De Cieri & Bardoel, 2009; Poelmans, 2005). The penultimate section of this chapter details the rationale for this particular research project.

1.3 Rationale for the study

This research arose from a real-world issue facing providers of family support programmes in Australia: the apparent ‘disconnect’ between work-life policy and programmes within organisations and the situational reality of employees attempting to effectively manage the competing demands of work and non-work domains. Specifically, support organisations report an increasing number of male, non-managerial – or ‘blue collar’ - employees requiring interventions to help them manage non-work responsibilities and obligations, particularly in terms of child care (Relationships Australia, 2010). Paradoxically, a large number of those seeking assistance are employed in larger, multi-level organisations where detailed and well-publicised work-life strategies are already in place (Relationship Australia, 2010).

The broad area of research interest was therefore the apparent disparity between multi-level organisations' intentions - provision of comprehensive work-life benefits and strategy - and the reality - increasing numbers of men who consider themselves unable to satisfactorily cope with family responsibilities. More specifically, this thesis aims to illuminate the central concern of these particular employees to explore *how* they subjectively evaluate the work-life interface. Responding to this knowledge, organisational responses might then be re-focused to more effectively address the work-life challenges faced by employees.

This study responds to the research opportunity in three ways. First, it uses an emergent qualitative methodology, grounded theory, in the field of international management research, a domain relatively underexposed to qualitative and theory-building research methods (Von Glinow, Drost and Teagarden, 2002). Second, it contributes the perspectives of male, non-managerial employees to the International Human Resource Management and work-life discourse. These are two understudied populations in the literature, which has to date focused largely on management practices and organisational policy (Bloom, Kretschmer & Van Reenen, 2006; Guest, 1997, 2002; McDonald, Burton & Chang, 2007; Newman & Nollen, 1996). Finally, the research develops theoretical propositions about the experiences and perspectives of MNC employees that may have relevance and meaning in a broader range of organisational settings.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured to reflect as much as possible the fluid and iterative nature of the grounded theory process. Chapter 2 introduces the methodology, its theoretical underpinnings, specific research methods and inherent challenges. In this chapter, selection of grounded theory for this particular project is justified.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are essentially the combined ‘write up’ of the emergent theory. Chapter 3 details open and selective coding processes (Glaser, 1978) where codes, concepts and categories in the data are identified. In this chapter, the use of theoretical coding families (Glaser, 1978) is explained, as they are central to reconstructing the fragmented data as a set of grounded theoretical propositions. The emergent theory of Prioritising Identity and its component parts, Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self, is introduced.

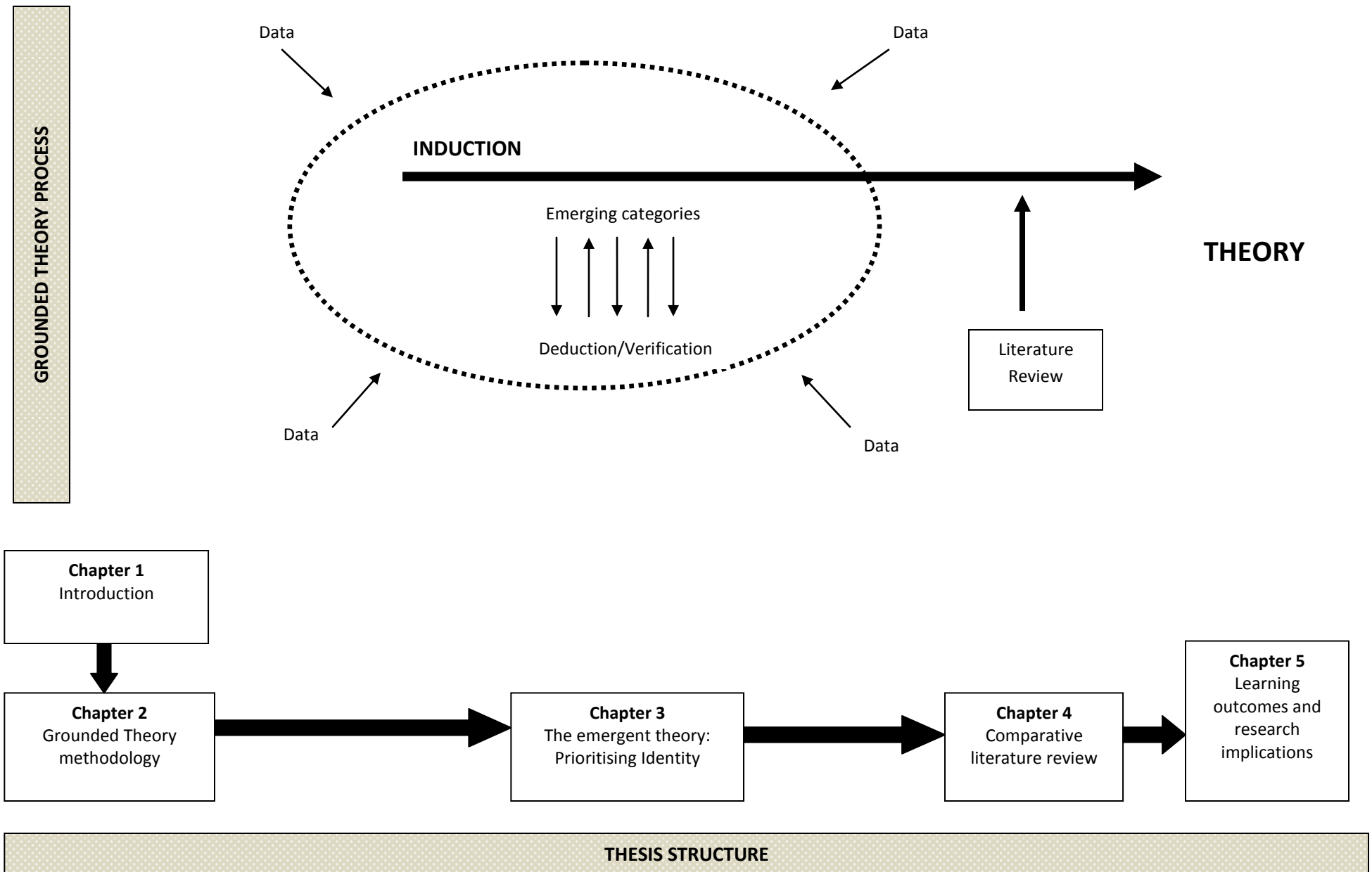
Chapter 4 is a comparative review of the extant literature in key areas. Unlike a ‘traditional’ PhD thesis, this chapter does not precede the data analysis. This is because when using grounded theory, the literature is sampled just as any other source of data, and the review of extant theory is totally directed by the emergent concepts and categories in the data. The researcher does in fact move back and forth between the literature and coding to delimit the emerging theory around key propositions, once the literature has been sampled. A particular challenge is to accurately convey the iterative nature the grounded theory process in a linear fashion. A central tenet of the methodology is that the research problem is allowed to emerge from the data unburdened by preconceived ideas or existing theoretical frameworks

(Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because of this, the coding processes drive the literature review and it is most logical to locate it in the thesis *after* the descriptions of the emergent categories and their properties.

Chapter 5 details the learning outcomes of the research, its major contributions to theory and practice, limitations and identified opportunities for future research.

Figure 1 illustrates the thesis structure and its relationship to the key stages of the grounded theory development process.

Figure 1: Diagram of grounded theory process (following Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and relationship to thesis structure



CHAPTER 2

GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to develop theoretical propositions about *how* employees evaluate the interaction between work and non-work life domains. Grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were used to analyse in-depth semi-structured interviews with non-managerial workers employed in the Australian subsidiaries of two MNCs. These organisations employ predominantly skilled blue-collar workforces and both have implemented global organisational initiatives to address work-life issues. Interviewees were asked to discuss their perceptions of work-life interaction, with the opportunity to identify any other related issues they considered to be relevant. The specific rationale for interviewee selection is explained later in this chapter, as are the techniques of in-depth interviewing and data analysis using grounded theory coding methods.

This chapter establishes the methodological framework that guided the data analysis. First, the epistemological and theoretical perspectives of grounded theory are explained. This research is concerned with revealing the meanings and interpretations that individuals ascribe to their experiences of a particular phenomenon, specifically the interaction between work and non-work life spheres. Acknowledging the symbolic interactionist underpinnings of grounded theory from the outset is necessary because it is through this specific theoretical lens that meaning and subjective experience are interpreted. Second, the

dominant perspectives on grounded theory are described, along with the distinctive analytical process associated with ‘doing’ grounded theory. While it can be argued that each of the divergent approaches to grounded theory research offers a structured and rigorous methodology, this research explicitly employed a classic, or Glaserian, approach. Justification for this decision is provided at the conclusion of the broader discussion on dominant approaches to grounded theory research. Third, the rationale for choosing grounded theory for an organisational and management-oriented research project is provided. Because this research employed an emergent research design to investigate work-life interaction in MNC subsidiaries, there is particular reference in this section of the chapter to the application of grounded theory in management and international research. Fourth, the chapter describes the specific research methods employed in this project, including case study selection, in-depth interviewing and participant sampling methods. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the methodological challenges associated with a theory-building approach, specifically the potential problem of generalisability.

2.2 Symbolic interactionism

A critical part of any research design is to acknowledge and describe the methodological and theoretical context of the research. Informing all research is the researcher’s guiding principles, or world view, which encompasses ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This study used grounded theory research methods to investigate employees’ perceptions and experiences of work-life interaction in multi-level organisations. The principal disciplinary tradition that is held to inform classic

grounded theory is symbolic interactionism (Byrne & Heyman, 1997, Elliott, 2005; Ezzy, 2002; Jeon, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is recognised that there are other theoretical perspectives that can inform a grounded theory research study, most notably the constructivist perspective which is used primarily in the disciplines of psychology, education and nursing (e.g. Annells, 1996; Charmaz, 2006, 2007; McCann & Clark, 2003; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006; Norton, 1999, Stratton, 1997). However, Anselm Strauss was one of the leading theorists of symbolic interactionism and it is from this philosophical perspective that he and fellow sociologist Barney Glaser developed grounded theory (Locke, 2001; Maines, 1991).

Symbolic interactionism has its foundations in the work of George Herbert Mead, one of a set of early 20th century American pragmatist philosophers (Jeon, 2004; Locke, 2001; Morris, 1977; Strauss, 2008). Pragmatists consider that humans' interaction with the world around them is 'mediated through processes of meaning making and interpretation' (Locke, 2001: 21). In other words, humans are continually adapting to a changing social world, and this adaptation is made possible because we have a sense of 'self' that we develop through interaction with others: 'it is through the sense of self that as humans we are able to construct the actions that we will take towards the objects in our world' (Mead, 1934, cited in Locke, 2001: 21). For symbolic interactionists, 'meaning' is one of the major elements in understanding human behaviour, interactions and social processes; the concern with the subjective experience is evident in the construction of meaning systems to explain the links between society and the individual (Layder, 1994; Locke, 2001).

The term 'symbolic interactionism' was coined by Herbert Blumer, a pupil of Mead's, who took philosophical ideas and shaped a distinct methodological approach. Blumer (1969, cited in Locke, 2001: 22) argued that symbolic interactionism has three premises on which it rests; first, that people interpret the meaning of objects in the world and then act on those interpretations; second, that meaning arises from social interaction; and third, that meaning is handled in and modified through, an ongoing interpretive process. Symbolic interactionists therefore believe that meanings inform and guide our actions toward objects (both physical and social, such as gestures and language), that communication is at the core of human interaction, and that meanings are not fixed or stable but open to revision depending on the circumstances.

In many respects, symbolic interactionists and grounded theory have much in common with phenomenologists, with a shared emphasis on the individual's lived experiences and the notion of participant-perceived meaning (e.g. Annells, 1995; Osborne, 1994). Grounded theory research, however, is done to 'produce abstract concepts and propositions about the relationships between them' (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986: 8). It is therefore both exploratory and theory-building, underpinned by the notions that our unique perspectives, our 'meanings' and sense of 'self', influence our interaction with society. Acknowledging the theoretical perspective of the study is important because it helps orient the researcher to the study. Locke asserts that

Grounded theory is entirely consistent with its symbolic interactionist heritage in terms of both research practice and research focus in its insistence on direct contact with the social world studied and its attention to symbols and behaviour, respectively (2001: 30- 34).

This research was similarly framed by a symbolic interactionist perspective because its primary concern was to investigate how and in what ways individuals perceive a phenomenon – work-life interaction.

2.3 Research methodology - grounded theory

Grounded theory is a methodology that provides for the systematic, inductive generation of theory from data acquired by a rigorous research method (Charmaz, 2006; Douglas, 2003; Elliott, 2005; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Patton, 1990). Glaser defines grounded theory as

A general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area (1992: 16).

Grounded theory differs from other qualitative methodologies in a number of ways. Its key characteristics are the ‘constant comparison method’ of data analysis; the role of the literature review as a supplementary data source; data verification through ‘theoretical sampling’; and the development or refinement of theory or concepts to explain behaviour and experiences (Glaser, 1978). With grounded theory, the results of the data analysis, not the research question, determine the boundaries of the study. Glaser (1992) emphasises that because the research focus is determined by the emergent themes from the data, the researcher should move into a general area of interest without a predetermined research question, but rather a sense of ‘abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled’ (MacDonald, 2001: 139). With this in mind, this study commenced with an area of interest, employee experiences of work-life balance in a MNC context, and from this the research problem was developed.

The research used grounded theory methods to identify key themes and sub-themes from the interview data, in the process of which central themes became evident. These themes were labelled categories and once they emerged, relationships between categories and subcategories were investigated. The analysis culminated in the development of a substantive theory about the participants' core concern; in this case, employees' conceptualisation of work in terms of organisational identity and the episode-centred process of developing that identity. Concurring with Strauss (1987), it is acknowledged that grounded theory can also be used to extend and develop existing theory, as much as it may be to develop new theory.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the explication of classic grounded theory's key features and justification for its use in this particular research setting. Essential to this are two preliminary discussions; first, of the development of grounded theory as an inductive research method; and second, of the use of grounded theory methods to elevate questions about work-life interaction from a narrow, management orientation to a broader sociological discourse.

2.3.1 Perspectives on grounded theory

One of the aims of Glaser and Strauss' development of grounded theory was to 'stimulate others to codify and publish their own methods for generating theory' (1967: 8). Embedded in this statement is the recurring question in grounded theory debate: the extent to which one should, or even could, formalise grounded theory approach procedurally. Clearly, describing an iterative, highly personal research approach as a formal research methodology presents significant

problems. For example, Glaser and Strauss (1967: 46) stress the importance of ‘theoretical sensitivity’ and insight in grounded theory research, both somewhat intangible and abstract concepts. Partington summarises the dilemma:

For Glaser and Strauss, [the] essential element in a sociologist’s armoury comes not from the following of procedures but from a combination of the sociologist’s innate ability to conceptualize and formulate theories, from his or her personality and temperament and from knowledge of his or her area of research (2000: 94).

Formalising grounded theory processes as a set of techniques later divided Glaser and Strauss. The two adopted markedly different approaches to the question, but both perspectives continue to influence contemporary research. Equally contested is the question of what constitutes legitimate data in a grounded theory study; this also emerged as a point of contention between Glaser and Strauss, specifically, the role and timing of a literature review.

In the 1990s Strauss collaborated with Juliet Corbin to introduce some fundamental modifications to grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At the heart of these modifications is a subdivided process of coding labelled open, axial and selective coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain these terms in great detail and they also describe how the ‘paradigm model’ (a systematised case-and-effect schema used to explicate relationships between categories) and the ‘conditional matrix’ (a set of levels corresponding to different aspects of the world pertaining to a phenomenon) might be applied. Explicitly based on the original Glaser and Strauss (1967) work, it is ‘an attempt to present that original approach in a straightforward, proceduralized form, but without losing any of its comprehensiveness and intellectual complexity’ (Partington, 2000: 95). It is

argued, however, that the good intent has resulted in a highly prescriptive method which ‘many find difficult to follow except in a loose, non-rigid, non-specifiable fashion which inevitably draws it back towards the original version’ (Partington, 2000: 95).

Further, Strauss and Corbin shifted the methodology to encompass a process of induction and deduction, allowing the researcher to consider all possible conditions influencing the phenomena and not just those emerging from the data. The effect of this was to recognise a broad range of information as legitimate data in the analysis. Glaser’s objection was vigorous:

Strauss’ book is without conscience, bordering on immorality... it produces simply what qualitative researchers had been doing for sixty years or more: forced, full, conceptual description (Glaser, 1992: 9).

Arguably an over-reaction on Glaser’s part, his response nonetheless encapsulates the fundamental dichotomy between the original foundation works of Glaser and Strauss (1967), and later works by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1997, 1998). Glaser (1978) eschews orthodoxy of approach. He promotes the view that grounded theory should encourage the researcher’s latent creativity and use a fluid process of constant comparison of the data and theory to lead to reconceptualisation of a phenomenon (Glaser, 1978; Isabella, 1990). Glaser proposes that theory is more likely to be grounded in the data if a comprehensive literature review is not undertaken prior to commencement of a study. He argues that any review of the literature should be conducted primarily as part of the data analysis process, where it is directed by the categories emerging from the data (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998) Conversely, Strauss (1987), and later Strauss and Corbin (1990), argue that following prescribed procedures is an important aspect of grounded theory; their

concern being to ‘spell out the procedures and techniques... in greatest detail and in step-by-step fashion’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 8). They also suggest that a background review that is not too close to the phenomena under study may help to clarify the researcher’s perspective and focus the research topic (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998); Strauss (1998) further argues that obtaining conceptual clarity prior to entering a study enhances the researcher’s theoretical sensitivity, or insights into the phenomenon of study.

This thesis adopted essential elements of the original Glaser & Strauss (1967), and later Glaser (1978, 1992), grounded theory approaches in its design. Despite ‘conflicting perceptions over methodological transgressions and implementation, there remain a set of fundamental nomothetic principles associated with the method’ (Goulding, 1999: 8). The original, less prescriptive approach was considered most suited to this particular research; as this thesis progressively articulates each phase of the data analysis, justification for selecting the ‘classic’ approach is emphasised. First, the data was analysed using Glaser’s (1978) substantive and theoretical coding techniques, which are less prescriptive than the Strauss and Corbin approach but which also ultimately seek a core variable or theme in the data. Initial categories were identified in the raw interview data, following which those categories were grouped theoretically to identify the dominant themes in the data. Although the process of coding was somewhat truncated due to the constraints of time and resources commonly confronting a PhD study (Partington, 2000), it remained sufficiently flexible to allow the boundaries of the phenomena to emerge from the data rather than forcing the data into preconceived categories. This is essentially the grounded theory approach

formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and vociferously supported by Glaser (1992, 1998) after he and Strauss split in their approach to grounded theory. The process focuses not on formalised procedures but on constant comparison of the data with extant theory throughout the analysis process; this ultimately results in ‘a reconceptualisation, often based on a creative leap... account[ing] for and encompass[ing] all nuances in the data’ (Isabella, 1990: 12).

Second, concerning the literature review, this thesis reflects Glaser’s (1978, 1998) position that a background literature review that remains sufficiently removed from the phenomenon under study can identify gaps in extant knowledge and define the research focus. An advance literature review identified only the broad conceptual frameworks within which employee attitudes to organisational work-life strategies would be analysed. These frameworks included contemporary academic and management work-life discourses and various macro and micro-level responses in different national contexts. The advance literature review assisted in formulating the initial interviews and in contextualising the data analysis. It is pertinent to note that Glaser (1978), Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) concur that the literature review should form an integral part of the ongoing data collection and analysis. The continual interaction between data and theory – constant comparison - and theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are two key components of the grounded theory method, to which this chapter now turns.

2.3.2 Constant comparative analysis

One of the foundations of grounded theory is the constant comparison method of joint coding and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Goulding, 1999). As discussed previously, Glaser and Strauss ultimately diverged in their approach to coding and categorising data. Glaser maintains that theories generated using grounded theory methods should be richly descriptive interpretations, presented ‘in a running theoretical discussion’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 31), while Strauss and Corbin (1990) favoured the ‘paradigm model’ of constant comparative analysis, which uses inductive and deductive thinking in the data analysis and moves between micro- and macro-levels to achieve theory that is presented as a well-codified set of propositions. Notwithstanding the differences in approach, grounded theorists from a range of disciplines consistently emphasise constant comparison between forms of data in a systematic and simultaneous process of analysis. This contrasts with other qualitative methods which pursue a series of linear steps in which the researcher gathers data and then proceeds to analyse it in a separate phase.

Using constant comparison, theoretical categories were first identified through *open coding*, a ‘process of tentative conceptualisation whereby categories are created and then theoretically sampled to see how they fit across new data’ (Connell & Lowe, 1997: 169). This process in turn generated *concepts*, which are the extension of basic categories created in open coding. Concepts explain the relationship between and across incidents. This is a more sophisticated, coding system known as *axial coding*, involving the process of abstraction onto a theoretical level (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1999; Partington, 2000; Charmaz, 2006). The ultimate aim was realised in *selective coding*, which

identified a core category that ‘pulls together all the strands in order to offer an explanation of the behaviour under study... it has theoretical significance and its development [is] traceable back through the data’ (Goulding, 1999: 9).

2.3.3 Theoretical sampling

In grounded theory research, sampling is directed by the emergent theory (Goulding, 2002). Coyne describes theoretical sampling as a purposeful selection of a sample guided by the by emerging theory:

Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection whereby the researcher simultaneously collects, codes and analyses the data in order to decide what data to collect next. Deciding where to sample next according to the emerging codes and categories is theoretical sampling’ (1997: 625).

Theoretical sampling appears to have emerged with Glaser and Strauss’s original publications on grounded theory methodology, continued in more detail by Glaser in subsequent studies (1967, 1978, 1992). Glaser proposes that in the early stages of a study, the researcher will initially ‘begin by talking to the most knowledgeable people to get a line on relevancies and leads to track down more data and where and how to locate oneself for a rich supply of data’ (1978: 45).

The first stage is therefore clearly envisaged as purposeful; the researcher needs to start with a specific group of informants likely to have firsthand knowledge of the phenomena, but without necessarily knowing what to look for. The researcher then proceeds to sample further sources of data, directed by the codes and categories that emerge from the data analysis. The use of multiple sources of data, both qualitative and quantitative, is a key characteristic of grounded theory (Geiger & Turley, 2003). For example, Macri, Tagliaventi and Bertolotti (2002) conducted a study of change in small organisations and supplemented participant

observation with documents relating to the region's economy, the organization's competitors, internal documents and consultants' reports. Pauleen, Corbitt and Yoong (2007) used in-depth interviews, participant notes, organisational documents and mail communication in their research study.

Becker (1993) proposes that the use of multiple data sources as part of theoretical sampling is central to the grounded theory method, a view supported by most practitioners of the methodology, irrespective of their disciplinary background (Charmaz, 2007; Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Ezzy, 2002; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Goulding, 1999, 2002; Isabella, 1990; Jeon, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1997, 1998). As themes or categories emerge from the data, the research is directed towards alternative sources of information and new ways of thinking about phenomena. Underpinning this process is the goal of maximum representativeness, or 'saturation' of categories:

Theoretical sampling is based on the need to collect more data to examine categories and their relationships and to assure that representativeness in the category exists. Simultaneous data collection and analysis are critical elements... Sampling to test, elaborate, and refine a category is done for verification or to test the validity of a category. Further sampling is done to develop the categories and their relationships and interrelationships (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986: 9).

Theoretical sampling consequently embeds flexibility in the research process (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For example, theoretical sampling may mean that as new sources of information are examined, research questions may be altered or new locations for study identified (Coyne, 1997). Theoretical sampling is a pivotal component of any grounded theory study because it is inherently linked to the interpretive and symbolic interactionist background of the method.

With theoretical sampling, the researcher assumes that people will differ in their understandings and interpretations of the phenomenon being studied.

In this study, theoretical sampling led to supplementary interviews with some participants, interviews with two senior managers at the national subsidiary level and the analysis of various organisational documents including work-life policies, staff information bulletins and marketing material.

2.3.4 Codes and concepts

The process of constant comparison involves the labelling, or coding, of data to help identify higher-level concepts (Goulding, 1999, Spiggle, 1994). In order to identify a ‘core category’ around which the generation of theory can occur (Glaser, 1978: 93), classic grounded theorists engage in an iterative process of coding, memoing, theoretical sampling and sorting (Ng & Hase, 2008). Coding is essentially

[T]he process of breaking down data into distinct units of meaning for analysis and thereafter systematically re-evaluating them for their inter-relationships, enabling the researcher to move the data to a higher level of abstraction (Ng & Hase, 2008: 159).

In this study, Glaser’s (1978) coding process was used to identify categories and their properties, continually comparing categories and other data sources to facilitate the unforced emergence of theoretical frameworks. Charmaz (2006: 71) identifies some of the advantages in grounded theory coding compared with traditional qualitative data analysis. For example, she suggests that ‘grounded theory coding is flexible; if we wish, we can return to the data and make a fresh coding...[Coding] enables you to make the leap from concrete events and

descriptions of them to theoretical insight and theoretical possibilities'. It is this latter prospect that largely determined the choice of Glaserian grounded theory for this study; Glaser's approach advances a less prescriptive coding process that remains committed to emergence as the key to theory development:

It must be emphasised that integration of the theory is best when it emerges, just like the concepts. The theory should never just be put together (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; 41).

Consequently, Glaser's method of 'open coding' and 'theoretical coding' were employed as data were gathered, analysed, theoretically sampled and coded again. In summary, the initial process of open coding aimed to identify a 'core category' (Glaser, 1978) which is a pattern of behaviour that is consistent across, and problematic for, all participants. Around the core category a set of conceptual hypotheses were developed to explain the phenomenon under study; this latter process is known as 'theoretical coding'.

The Strauss and Corbin (1990) model details three distinct stages of data coding instead of Glaser's (1978, 1992) two; although the procedural descriptions are similar (Heath & Cowley, 2003), there is a distinct difference in the emphasis on emergence. Heath and Cowley argue that this is a difference of deep methodological importance, claiming that Strauss and Corbin's (1990) detailed and dense analytical process

...increasingly forces the researcher towards this positivistic linearity... the theory becomes created rather than creative. Rules rather than interpretation take hold and the detailed structured explanation may be at the expense of heightened sensitivity and insight (Heath & Cowley, 2003: 146).

Using Glaser's (1978) approach, open coding was first used to identify exactly what was happening in the data at a most basic level. In respect of data collection, Glaser advises against tape recording interviews or taking notes, however others consider it both desirable and in some circumstances necessary (Dick, 1999; Partington, 2000). To ensure accuracy of the data analysis tape recordings were made of interviews in this study, however there was profound reliance on key-word notes taken during the interviews. Any gaps in the information were subsequently checked against the recordings. The interview notes provided a guide for theoretical memoing, discussed later in this chapter.

Each interview was analysed to identify key words and phrases that point to significant themes in the participant's experiences. Spiggle suggests that this is the first step in early concept development, 'identifying a chunk or unit of data... as belonging to, representing, or being an example of some more general phenomenon' (1994: 493). Open coding is important because it highlights substantive themes that the researcher then focuses on in further analysis; it is the necessary foundation for moving the analysis from simple description to theoretical insight (Lowe, 1996). Glaser (1992: 51) proposes that during open coding the researcher should continually ask questions of the data, including 'what is this data a study of?' 'what category or property is emerging?' and 'what is actually happening in the data?'. Through this process of repeatedly questioning the data, core categories are identified, the more abstract process of conceptualisation begins and theoretical frameworks are able to emerge (Goulding, 2002; Heath & Cowley, 2003; Ng & Hase, 2008).

The second stage of Glaser's (1978) data analysis process is 'theoretical coding'. This is the point at which the researcher stops analysing the key themes or detail in interviews and instead codes for a core category in the data. Glaser (1978: 61) suggested that coding selectively acts to delimit coding 'to only those variables that relate to the core category in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory'. Consequently, the coding becomes at once more focused and specific, while at the same time the analysis becomes more abstract and theoretical. At this point it was deemed appropriate to revisit some participants to ask specific questions to further saturate the key categories once they were identified. Moving through this stage relatively rapidly is encouraged by Glaser (1998), who stresses that the aim of selective coding is to remove the research focus from the minutiae of interview transcripts and to instead generate concepts that are abstract of time, place and people.

This stage of coding elevated the central categories identified in the data to a theoretical level. Glaser described it thus:

Conceptualis[ing] how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory. They, like the substantive codes, are emergent; they weave the fractured story back together again... Theoretical codes give integrative scope, broad pictures and a new perspective' (1978: 72).

Theoretical coding is therefore concerned with identifying a theoretical hypothesis that explains the main concern of the participants. As previously discussed, Glaserian grounded theory researchers remain particularly alert to the dangers of 'forcing' the theory at this stage, conscious of the need to allow the theoretical model to emerge from the data and analysis process. Hernandez (2009: 51) suggests that the 'identification of theoretical codes is essential to the

development of an integrated and explanatory substantive theory', stressing that these codes should emerge from, and be a simultaneous part of, the substantive data analysis process. It was therefore critical to develop substantive codes correctly (Glaser, 1978; Hernandez, 2009; Punch, 2005) to ensure that the codes genuinely fitted the data and were not contrived or predetermined by the researcher's bias or a detailed literature review.

A grounded theory's theoretical code is in essence the 'relational model through which all substantive codes/ categories are related to the core category' (Hernandez, 2009: 52). While open coding breaks apart the data to reveal discrete categories, theoretical coding 'puts the categories back together again, but in conceptually different ways' (Punch, 2005: 210). Glaser (1978) originally identified eighteen theoretical coding 'families' as relevant for grounded theory research (see Table 1). He states that most emergent theories fit either a casual, consequential or conditional model. The 'Six C's coding family' (Glaser, 1978) looks for possible causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, co-variances and conditions in the relationships between categories and their properties. It is considered the 'bread and butter' coding family and is recommended for beginning grounded theory researchers. The process of theoretical coding therefore commenced with this family of codes, but was later expanded to include other coding families such as Process, Cutting Point and Representation (see Table 3). This ultimately isolated the code that 'specifies the overall relationship between the core category and all other categories' (Hernandez, 2009: 54).

As well as considering the interrelationships between categories and their properties, the coding process also requires the researcher to make a ‘conceptual leap’, whereby the fundamental process occurring in the data, or the ‘basic psychological process’ (Glaser, 1978) is revealed. Four categories emerged from this study’s data: Events, Levels, Perceptions and Connectedness . It should be noted that perceptions and connectedness are considered basic psychological processes in their own right within Glaser’s (1978) coding model. However in this study, these four categories were initially conceptualised as groupings of concepts with similar themes; the application of various coding families ultimately revealed the basic psychological process of Identity Formation as the core concern in the data.

<u>Coding Family</u>	<u>Categories</u>
Dimension	dimensions, elements, division, piece of, properties of, facet, slice, sector, portion, segment, part, aspect, section
Type	type, form, kinds, styles, classes, genre
Theoretical	parsimony, scope, integration, density, conceptual level, relationship to data, relationship to other theory, clarity, fit, relevance, modifiability, utility, condensability, inductive-deductive balance and inter-feeding, degree of, multivariate structure, use of theoretical codes, interpretive, explanatory and predictive power, and so forth
Conceptual Ordering	achievement orientation, institutional goal, organisational value, personal motivation.

Table 1: Selected examples of coding families (Glaser, 1978)

2.3.5 Memoing

At all stages, grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006, 2007; Glaser, 1978, 1998; Goulding, 1999) recommend that memos are recorded to provide a ‘bank of ideas

which can be revisited in order to map out the emerging theory' (Goulding, 1999: 9). Memo writing is, however, more than a simple record of key interview data and basic ideas:

Memo writing is about capturing ideas in process and in progress. Successive memos on the same category trace its development as the researcher gathers more data to illuminate the category and probes deeper into its analysis... Writing memos gives one the opportunity to learn about the data rather than just summarizing material. Through this writing, the grounded theorist's ideas emerge as discoveries unfold (Hesse-Biber, 2008: 166).

Glaser (1998) suggests that researchers write a memo whenever and wherever they have an idea about the study, to ensure that creative thoughts and critical links between concepts are not lost. Memos in grounded theory are a key part of the analytic process; data interrogation moves beyond mere description and is firmly embedded in the constant comparison and theoretical sampling that characterises the method. Glaser (1992, 1998) does not distinguish between types of memos. He rejects the adoption of a typology of memos (e.g. code notes, theoretical notes, operational notes, diagrams, logical diagrams and integrative diagrams) such as developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), suggesting that this limits the abstraction of data beyond the descriptive level (Glaser, 1992). Glaser (1998: 178) argues instead that a theoretical memo simply captures the 'meaning and ideas for one's growing theory at the moment they occur'. In this research project, memos were hand-written and compiled at all stages of the data collection and analysis process; a selection of memos is incorporated into chapters three and four.

2.3.6 Generating substantive theory

As part of any social research design, it is necessary to look beyond the specific issues of sampling for the study to more theoretical questions. Clarifying the level of social reality with which the project deals is a key component of the study design, and has particular relevance in grounded theory research. Neuman suggests three broad groupings of social theory as a guide:

Micro-level theory deals with small slices of time, space, or numbers of people. The concepts are not usually very abstract...Macro-level theory concerns the operation of larger aggregates such as social institutions, entire cultural systems, and whole societies. It uses more concepts that are abstract...Meso-level theory is relatively rare. It attempts to link macro and micro levels or to operate at an intermediate level. Theories of organisations, social movements, or communities are often at this level (2000: 49).

Identifying the level of theory with which the project deals is particularly important in grounded theory research. Methodologists such as Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1967) propose that social theory deals with concepts on a range of levels; in developing grounded theory methods, they were concerned with distinguishing between the development of substantive and formal theory. Substantive theory is grounded in data from a specific substantive or empirical area of investigation (Hirose, 2005). It is therefore meso-, or middle-level, and sometimes facilitates formal grounded theory by developing a higher abstract level of theory from a collection of substantive theory studies about a particular phenomenon of interest (i.e. macro level). In this study, grounded theory's specific techniques and analytical procedures were utilised to develop substantive theory about male, non-managerial employees' experiences of work-life interaction in multi-level organisations. In work-family research also, there is recognition among scholars that the micro- and macro- levels of research have been well saturated in the

literature (Bardoel & Cieri, 2008; Korabik, Lero & Ayman, 2003). However there is a recognised need for more research at the meso-level that examines how organisations adapt their strategies to particular macro- (national) environments (Allen, 2001; Bardoel & De Cieri, 2008; Poelmans, 2003). This research aimed to develop theory about how non-managerial employees experience and interpret the work-life interface in a multi-level organisational context; it is ultimately research that fills a meso-level gap in the organisational identification and work-life literatures.

Finally, grounded theory presented as a logical methodological choice for this study, because, as Stern (1980: 20) argued, ‘the strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigations of relatively uncharted waters, or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation’. This research utilised contemporary and pragmatic methods of analysis to develop new, and also reconceptualise existing, substantive theory about the perceptions and interpretations employees bring to the question of work-life interaction.

This research was also intended to be useful in practice. A number of management researchers have identified this added dimension to the methodological debate.

They draw the distinction between the characteristics of, and designs for, theoretical research - knowledge for *understanding*- and applied research - knowledge for *action* (e.g. Gummesson, 1991; Hakim, 1989). In summary, Hakim identifies theoretical research as being

...concerned primarily with causal processes and explanation. The factors (or variables) considered are frequently abstract or purely theoretical constructs... [it] is essentially concerned with producing knowledge for understanding, usually within the framework of a single social science discipline (1989: 3).

In contrast, applied research is concerned with enhancing knowledge to bring about change, or influence action (Gummesson, 1991). This broader objective means that policy research necessarily involves not only theoretical research, but also descriptive research. The distinctive feature of applied research is that it focuses on ‘*actionable* [sic] factors’ or variables that are often defined operationally from the outset (Hakim, 1989: 4). It is usually multi-dimensional and multi-level in design (Majchrzak, 1984), providing a holistic and comprehensive picture of the study material. Consequently, applied research can best identify the size and strength of any theoretical associations and examine the impact of particular factors.

While differences between the two types of research clearly have implications for design, many agree with Hakim (1989: 4) that there is ‘no firm dividing line between theoretical and [applied] research’ (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989; Ragin, 2000; Ragin & Zaret, 1983; Rossi, 1980). Hakim (1989: 7) criticises the ‘cruder distinctions sometimes offered between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ research, based on superficial characteristics’, concurring with Gummesson (1991) and Rossi (1980) that well-designed applied research is useful from a practical management perspective as well as being of disciplinary interest. The theory-versus-applied research debate was significant in the process of choosing an appropriate methodology for this study. It is argued here that conceptualising the study as both

research for knowledge and research for action elevated the question of methodology from a simple choice of qualitative over quantitative research and reinforced the suitability of grounded theory methods. This study aimed to illuminate our understanding of work-life interaction in MNCs, with a view to contributing to improved business outcomes and a deeper understanding of how employees, as key stakeholders, experience work-life balance in a multinational subsidiary. This dual goal required a method that was at once theory-producing and practically useful, hence the selection of grounded theory.

2.4 Methodological rationale

Although its antecedents are in sociology, grounded theory has been applied in other research areas, notably in nursing and health research. Connell and Lowe (1997) discuss the use of grounded theory methods in tourism and hospitality management. Charmaz (1990) and Henwood and Pidgeon (1995) advocate the use of grounded theory in medical and psychological research, respectively. In organisation and business studies, grounded theory has also been applied. For example, Lowe (1998), Locke (2001) and Partington (2000) used grounded theory in innovation, management research and management action studies respectively. Hirschman and Thompson (1997) employed grounded theory in their study of consumer responses to advertising, and Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) demonstrated the effective use of grounded theory in organisational change research. However as noted in Chapter 1, management-oriented grounded theory theses and journal articles still exhibit a comparatively strong emphasis on explication of process. Compared with research in sociology, application of the

methodology in the management context remains in its relative infancy (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

As discussed, grounded theory was developed as a counterbalance to the inflexible preoccupation in sociology with the rigorous verification of logically derived theories, which Glaser and Strauss claimed had resulted in ‘an embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research’ (1967: vii). Bridging the gap between theory and practice has since become a central aim of transdisciplinary research; this reflects a fundamental shift in knowledge generation from established institutions and academics to a knowledge-production system that brings together universities and businesses (Gibbons, 1994). The value of grounded theory methodology in business research is therefore that ‘micro level concerns such as complexity and context... gravitates towards applying research methods that explicate interpretive understanding’ (Douglas, 2003: 54). Douglas suggests that, in broad terms, business epitomises dynamic and interactive processes and that grounded theory ‘has the inductive capacity to extrapolate, amongst other outcomes, such processes’ (2003: 54). It is argued that to be effective, knowledge-building must involve a rapid interplay between management theory and practice, an interdependence of theorists and practitioners (Tranfield & Starkey, 1998). Because the origins of grounded theory are in symbolic interactionism - the study of behaviour – the approach is well-suited to those areas where illuminating the nature of experiences is the objective (Goulding, 1998).

Notwithstanding the increase in application, and acceptance, of grounded theory in *general* management research, Roberts and Graham (1972, cited in Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004: 30) reviewed the existing literature and criticised *international* management research as lacking in theoretical substance and overly sampled for convenience rather than generalisability or usefulness in contrasting organisational situations. Criticism was mainly directed at the heavy reliance on data gathered from managers and university students, attempts to generalise beyond a very specific sample, and the fact that ‘little [was] said about how different political or economic systems may lead to cross-national differences’ (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004: 30). Guest (1997, 2002) concurred, arguing that for research to benefit organisations in practice, it must investigate explicitly the needs and perspectives of the employee. Further, the majority of studies published in major international journals were found to confine themselves largely to one research method, either surveys or questionnaires. This compounded the criticism that international management research was limited in scope and unable to analyse phenomena with any depth:

This means, in many cases, that they relied on surveys or research instruments to tell the story without collaboration by another method such as interviews, observation or quasi-experimental model, for instance (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004: 30).

The common positivist view of the ideal research method in management research sited organisational research in the 1990s firmly at the deductive end of the inductive-deductive continuum. At the opposite end is grounded theory, which, when operationalised, ‘shares all the fundamental characteristics of qualitative research but goes further than most qualitative methods in its potential to generate new theoretical insights’ (Connell & Lowe, 1997: 166). Marschan-Piekkari and

Welch (2004: 36) suggest seven strategies to improve the calibre of research contribution to the field of international management. Of these strategies, they identify the most important as the increased use of multiple methods. A review of the existing literature subsequently identified a clear need for

more, and different, methods to more thoroughly understand the phenomena of interest... there are a broad array of qualitative research methods to employ, including in-depth case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, simulations, event studies and interviews from which to choose' (2004: 38).

From an international management perspective, this research responds to the above recommendation by applying grounded theory, an emergent methodology, to intensively analyse interviews with non-managerial employees of two multi-level MNCs.

Jones and Noble (2007: 84) suggest that where grounded theory has been embraced in management research, it has been for three main reasons: 'it is useful for developing new theory or fresh insights into old theory; it generates theory of direct interest and relevance for practitioners; and it can uncover micro-management processes in complex and unfolding scenarios'. There is evidence, however, that the pursuit of new theory and innovative research designs has resulted in some serious misconceptions about grounded theory, and ignorance or deliberate violation of the core procedures and tenets of the method (Jones & Noble, 2007; Suddaby, 2006). Jones and Noble (2007) conducted a review of journal articles in three commonly used management and organisation literature databases. They ultimately identified 32 empirical grounded theory studies published since 1992. Their analysis revealed 'a number of important issues about the manner in which grounded theory [has] been employed in management

research over recent years' (2007: 85). Two key issues emerged: first, the prevalence of studies that did not proceed to generate substantive theory, or a core category. Second, the review identified a vast range of mixed usage of grounded theory procedures and techniques: 'cherry-picking of procedures is rife' (2007: 91). Jones and Noble (2007: 92) offer three suggestions for management researchers engaging in grounded theory, to 'introduce more discipline into the methodology by eliminating some of the laxity and disorder that currently prevails'.

First, researchers should clearly identify the grounded theory school to which they subscribe, and diligently apply the procedures of that school in the study.

Secondly, generating a core category should be the focus of the study. Finally, the 'set of fundamental nomothetic principles associated with the method' (Goulding, 1999: 8) should always be employed: joint collection and coding and analysis of data, theoretical sampling, constant comparison and systematic coding, memoing, saturation and sorting of data (Jones & Noble, 2007). These principles underpin both the Glaserian and Straussian approaches to grounded theory and it is argued their application will 'restore the integrity of grounded theory... [and] eliminate the current propensity of researchers to cherry-pick procedures' (Jones & Noble, 2007: 92).

To fulfil these objectives, this research is clearly identified as a grounded theory study in the Glaserian tradition, specifically adopting Glaser's (1978, 1998) approach to coding and literature review. The following chapters detail the data collection, coding and analysis procedures, theoretical sampling methods and

systematic application of the ‘foundational’ procedures of grounded theory in sorting the data and generating theory. This research project goes further than many other management studies that use the term grounded theory to ‘legitimise and sanctify what are invariably no more than generalised qualitative studies’ (Jones & Noble, 92). Classic grounded theory was selected for this research precisely because it offered a specific and focused set of procedures for the generation of theoretical insights into how employees in MNCs experience and interpret the work-life interface. Further, the foundations of grounded theory in the sociological disciplines was considered to be of particular relevance to this study because it investigated the intersection of paid work and domestic life in the context of global organisational management; it is research clearly crossing the management-sociology divide in terms of potential application and future research.

This thesis adopted Connell’s (2005) position that the very idea of work-life balance has as a central tenet the goal of redressing the structural social imbalance between public and private life spheres; it is inherently a sociological pursuit. Management-based work-life literature has undoubtedly provided many insights at an organisational level, however it has also been criticised for its narrow focus on workplaces and organisational responses to what should arguably be ‘understood as social problems, affecting women and men across organisations and even across countries’ (Zacharias, 2006: 34). A number of contemporary authors argue that conceptualising work-life issues as problems for individual workers in individual workplaces ultimately conceals the structural societal constraints that frame work-life choices (e.g. Connell, 2005; De Cieri, Holmes,

Abbott & Pettit, 2002; Kingston, 1990; Lewis, Rapoport & Gambles, 2003; Pocock, 2005; Poelmans, O'Driscoll & Beham, 2005). As discussed in Chapter 1, work-life researchers have increased their calls for research that incorporates issues such as cultural context (Gelfand & Knight, 2005; Poelmans, 2005), work-family policy development in international businesses (Poelmans, 2005) and intensive qualitative case studies to counterbalance much of the extant research that exhibits an 'almost total reliance on quantitative, cross sectional research designs' (Poelmans *et al.*, 2005: 29).

The application of grounded theory methods to illuminate work-life balance issues in MNCs therefore had a distinctive appeal on two fronts; theoretical and methodological. First, the research aimed to generate theoretical concepts about the ways in which employees conceptualise and respond to managing their work-life interaction. Embedded in the sociological tradition, grounded theory is a flexible methodology that can promote insightful discussion about organisational development in a range of contexts (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004). This research therefore addresses the criticism that much management-oriented work-life literature is too narrow in focus, by conceptualising MNC work-life strategy development as a meso-macro-level analysis. Specifically, the research links meso- and macro-level considerations by developing theory about employee experiences and the organisational context in which MNC strategy is developed. Second, methodologically, the thesis contributes a grounded theory comparative analysis to the varied academic field of business where, Douglas argues, 'there remains a paucity of published accounts of the application of grounded theory' (2003: 48).

2.5 Research methods

The next section of this chapter details the specific methods employed to gather data during the research process. It is essentially an instrumental research study, in that it uses selected cases to illustrate a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

The research process therefore commenced with the selection of cases for investigation from a host of possible candidates, and there had to be satisfactory justification of the selection to demonstrate validity. The following section of this chapter explains the choice of MNC study sites. The study involved in-depth interviewing, including the use of selected interview techniques to elicit the highest quality data for analysis. In-depth interviews and associated techniques are also explained, as is participant sampling – the process of identifying individual interviewees within the selected MNCs.

2.5.1 Case-study selection

Having selected the in-depth interviewing research method because of its suitability to this type of study, it was then necessary to clearly define the parameters to establish the scope and identify any limitations of the study. This included selecting suitable case study organisations, an appropriate sample of interviewees and addressing issues of reliability and validity. In the initial stages of the project, purposive sampling methods were employed to select two MNCs operating in Australia, and also the individual employees for interview.

A case-oriented approach was selected for this study because it provided an opportunity to illuminate responses to work-life strategies through intensive investigation (Yin, 1994). Research sites were selected where there was maximum

possibility that the data collection would illuminate the specific research topic (Neuman, 2000). First, the selected MNCs have predominantly skilled blue collar workforces operating in Australia, a relatively understudied population in the field of work-life balance (Hammer & Kossek, 2006); Chapter 1 detailed the relevance of research focusing on this group of employees in relation to work-life balance. Second, these MNCs have developed comprehensive global work-life strategies and as such are considered exemplars of ‘best practice’ in their respective industries. These organisations serve as models for leadership development and organisational change, both of which are factors closely linked to successful work-life reconciliation outcomes for employees (Bloom *et al.*, 2006; De Cieri & Bardoel, 2009). Third, these MNCs were selected because they were accessible to the researcher and prepared to engage with the project over an extended period of time to facilitate supplementary data collection.

2.5.2 In-depth interviews

This chapter has already described the symbolic interactionist perspective that informed the development of grounded theory (e.g. Ezzy, 2002; Jeon, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Symbolic interactionism is also perhaps the best exemplar of what is known as the interpretive tradition. Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995) propose a link between in-depth interviewing as a research method and the theoretical and methodological assumptions that are the foundations of the interpretive research approach. By choosing the method of in-depth interviewing, Minichiello *et al.* (1995: 3f.) assert that the researcher is ‘making a theoretical and methodological choice...the theoretical antecedents of in-depth interviewing coalesce in what is known as the interpretive tradition’. If, as Minichiello *et al.* (1995: 4) assert, reality is subjectively constructed rather than

objectively determined, interpretivism clearly contradicts the view that ‘the study of social phenomena should employ the same scientific techniques as the natural sciences’ and in-depth interviewing is a logical method to employ in an interpretive study such as this.

Proponents of interpretive research argue that recording human experience, rather than raw data in isolation, and building theory from analysis of that lived experience, is a distinct benefit of the method (*cf.* Berry, 1999; Denzin, 1992; Dick, 1999; Minichiello *et al.*, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Berry (1999: 3) defines the central concern of interpretive research as ‘understanding human experiences at a holistic level’. Similarly, Denzin (1992: 18) describes interpretivist theory-building in the social sciences as utilising rich description to probe the motives, meanings, contexts and circumstances of action.

In-depth interviewing is one process in the interpretivist tradition; eliciting high-quality data in an informal, flexible manner, then interpreting that data to supplement existing knowledge. Seidman (1991: 72) suggests that much of the value of in-depth interviewing as a research method lies in the close relationship between the participants and researcher, claiming that the resultant exchange is:

a reflection of the personalities of the participant and the interviewer and the ways they interact... a reflection of the purpose, structure, and method of in-depth interviewing [where] the social forces of class, race and gender, as well as other social identities, impose themselves.

Seidman (1991: 3ff.) also proposes that the depth of information and exploration of ideas is very much dependent on successful research design, technique and implementation. He supports Berry’s (1999: 5) position that researchers must plan to overcome a number of potential problems, including interviewer bias,

unreliable or distorted responses and the problem of distance between the interviewer and participant's own frame of reference. Schutz (1967, cited in Seidman, 1991: 3) identified an equally challenging problem with interpreting interview data; there are internal and external influences on the interview process that result from the gap in knowledge and experience that is present between two people by virtue of their very existence as separate entities. Therefore '[It] is never possible to understand another perfectly, because to do so would mean that we had entered into the other's stream of consciousness and experienced what he or she had'. Healey and Rawlinson (1994: 131) resolve this issue by recommending that researchers identify the participants' frame of reference within which particular events occurred, while concurrently limiting the factors which have the potential to distort the research findings. Partly for this reason, and also because of the over-representation of professional employees in contemporary work-life balance research (McDonald *et al.*, 2007) there were two criteria used to sample employees for interview; participants occupied non-managerial positions in the organisation and performed 'blue collar' work in the enterprise. Participant sampling is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

To understand interviewing and its relationship to interpretivist research, Healey and Rawlinson (1994: 127) suggest that researchers must 'be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of both standardized and non-standardized interview techniques, and to know in what circumstances each is most appropriate'. Dick (1999) argues that structured interviews are not an appropriate choice of method for most interpretivist research primarily because there is insufficient scope in the research design for identification of, and elaboration on, key themes during the

process. High quality interpretivist research is responsive and participative; structured interviews simply do not offer the researcher an opportunity to adapt to the interview dynamic or develop the research direction flexibly (Dick, 1999; Roberts, 1981). Because of their quantitative focus and inflexible design, structured interviews were not considered appropriate for grounded theory research such as this.

Minichiello *et al.* (1995) describe semi-structured interviews as those used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. This usually involves the use of an interview schedule which includes key topics for the interview, without specifying questions or their order. There is greater flexibility in questioning, and some divergence is possible to explore issues as they arise (Minichiello *et al.*, 1995). Although this might reduce the comparability of responses, this model is expected to elicit more detailed information about the participant's perceptions. Semi-structured interviews are closer in process to the unstructured model of interviewing as both allow for more in-depth examinations of people and issues (Minichiello *et al.*, 1995).

Healey and Rawlinson (1994: 133) identify semi-structured interviews as often adopting a two-tiered approach to the interviews. A semi-structured interview may include a common set of factual questions asked of all participants, and an informal conversation to enable participants to elaborate on topics of interest. Patton (1990: 112) noted the appeal of this style of interview to some interpretive researchers: '[a]lthough this method provides less flexibility for questions...probing is still possible, depending on the nature of the interview and

the skills of the interviewers'. This study relies heavily on the unconstrained participation of the interviewees, on their willingness to disclose and discuss potentially sensitive information about experiences in their workplace. To achieve interview conditions conducive to such disclosure, it is therefore important that the researcher establishes good rapport (Berry, 1999; Patton, 1990). Semi-structured interviews also retain a reasonably high level of formality, and the scope for participant engagement can be restricted by a pre-determined interview schedule and research scope (Berry, 1999; Patton, 1990). To address this concern, a set of open-ended questions guided each interview. The specific purpose of the interviews was to learn as much as possible about employees' experiences of work-life balance in their particular national context. This meant gathering data sufficiently rich in detail to convey concerns, observations, perceptions and opinions in connection with the issue of work-life interaction. Interviewees were offered the opportunity to explore additional areas of significance to them, so that any and all key themes were reflected in the coding process and the emergent theory was not 'forced' into preconceived categories (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992).

Healey and Rawlinson (1994: 123) observe that because the model of interview selected for a research project 'is linked to the research design and philosophical framework adopted', there appears to be a growing trend for greater use of in-depth interviewing in business and social research. Dick (1999: 4f.) contends that this trend is growing for two main reasons: firstly, a large amount of data can potentially be gathered on a multitude of topics in each interview and this is therefore an efficient use of resources. Secondly, if access to participants is

limited or the researcher intends to interview a large sample, in-depth interviews are potential opportunities to elicit maximum data with minimum intrusion. In-depth interviews therefore offer perhaps the greatest opportunity to elicit high-quality interpretive data from interviews conducted in multiple organisations and with limited resources (Dexter, 1970; Dick, 1999). Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 77) define in-depth interviewing as:

[F]ace-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words.

Several assumptions appear to underpin this definition: that the interviews are repeated; that there is an equal exchange between interviewer and interviewee; that it is the interviewee's viewpoint that is sought and highly valued; and that the information is sought in the interviewee's own language. These assumptions appear to be well addressed by a semi-structured style of interviewing where research topics guide the interview, information is freely exchanged and the interview is allowed to become a dialogue, as opposed to an interrogation (Berry, 1999; Dick, 1999; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). However, like all research methods, in-depth interviewing poses questions about process, data collection, analysis, reliability and validity. Noting the dangers of making assumptions without sufficient critique of the interview process itself, Dexter (1970: 157) cautions:

Until that process is itself viewed as problematic, something to be analysed and explored, we will not be ready to determine what it records and measures, let alone how it can be used to draw valid inferences.

It was therefore important to continually clarify the research orientation of this project and address potential challenges to validity and reliability during the data collection and analysis phases.

In-depth, semi-structured interviewing was selected for this project because of its design flexibility and interpretivist research orientation. This thesis analyses the work-life balance experiences of employees in two MNCs operating in Australia. In-depth interviews offered the opportunity for a focussed yet responsive exchange of information between the participants and the researcher. Importantly, this approach was suitably flexible to allow participants to self-identify additional work-life topics from their experiences and, if these themes emerged consistently within the data set, the analysis phase was sufficiently flexible to incorporate them as additional categories.

2.5.3 Participant sampling

Burgess (1991) and Thompson (1992) acknowledge that it is often impractical for a researcher to interview an entire group of people about whom it is hoped to make generalisations. Once the researcher defines the target population, and if it is impractical to interview each member, a representative sample will, in deductive research, usually be identified for interview (Burgess, 1982; Thompson, 1992).

Grounded theory presents unique challenges in respect of sampling; the key to the method is to generate enough data so that a comprehensive picture of the patterns, concepts, categories and properties of the given phenomena appears (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Thomson, 2007). Although expressing divergent views on the formalisation of grounded theory procedures, Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987) agree that one of the defining components of grounded theory practice is sampling focused on theory generation, not representativeness.

The appropriate sample size for a study is that which leads to ‘saturation’ of the data, occurring when:

- (a) No new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category;
- (b) The category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation; and
- (c) The relationships among categories are well established and validated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 212).

Eisenhardt (1989) and Linn (1983) observe that the most effective sampling methods are those designed for use in the specific situation in which they will be used; they claim that there is no single preferable method of sampling. Stephan (1950: 372) concurs that sampling methods should be ‘designed to achieve the specific purposes of the study as effectively as possible under the limitations set by the funds, personnel, time, and other resources that are available’. Glaser endorses the use of purposive sampling to identify initial interview participants:

A researcher will go to the group of people they believe will maximize the possibilities of obtaining data and leads for more data on their question (1978: 45).

In the case of interviews, sample size is largely dependent on the scope of the research question. A broader research question will require more data collection and consequently more interviews and interviewees (Morse, 2000; Thomson, 2007). In grounded theory, there is no set number for when interviews will end, or when theoretical saturation will occur. To alleviate the potential for boundless interviews and multiple levels of data collection, Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate a narrowing of the research question after three or four interviews to reduce the number of future interviews required. The first 20 interviews with male, non-managerial employees identified 88 key points relating to experiences and perceptions of work-life interaction. The research focus was then narrowed to

delimit the emerging theory around the four main categories in the data, prompting some repeat and some supplementary interviews. In total, 28 interviews were conducted.

Negotiations with the selected MNCs secured agreement that employees in Australia would be recruited for interview as volunteers, with interviews to be conducted during working hours. An internally distributed communication invited non-managerial employees in operational roles to volunteer for interview. HR staff assisted in identification of non-managerial employees for initial contact, and in the selection of specific operational sites within Australia. Participants were assured of anonymity in recognition of the potentially sensitive nature of the information being provided. When referring to individual participants, this thesis identifies participants in terms of interview number only.

Purposive sampling in the initial stages of a qualitative, grounded theory study is advocated by a number of case-study researchers (e.g. Becker, 1993; Burgess, 1991; Coyne, 1997; Drever, 1995; Eisenhardt, 1989; Neuman, 2000). In-depth interviews are most frequently undertaken with participants purposely selected on the basis of some unique characteristic, or because they are members of a distinct and difficult to access group. Neuman (2000: 36) asserts that in qualitative research the focus is not so much on the representativeness of a sample or the technical aspects of sampling techniques, but on how the sample illuminates social phenomena. In this project, the primary purpose of participant sampling was to gather specific cases that could clarify and deepen our understanding of employee responses to work-life strategies in the MNC context.

2.5.4 Interviewing techniques

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 10) argue that the choice of interview techniques is critical for interpretive research, because the nature and quality of data elicited is significantly influenced by the interviewer's approach to the process. Three particular issues were identified as important in the interview process: rapport, clarification and cues, both verbal and non-verbal. Perhaps the most obvious element of all models of interview is the verbal interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. A number of authors (*cf.* Benney & Hughes, 1956; Dexter, 1970; Dick, 1989; Drever, 1995; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Minichiello *et al.*, 1995) identify language usage and questioning technique as central to the success of an interview. Questioning techniques will vary depending on the model of interview employed. However, there are some aspects of interview technique consistently identified as relevant to in-depth interviewing (*cf.* Berry, 1999; Dexter, 1970; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). These techniques are relevant to this study because they facilitate qualitative data collection without restricting the participants' ability to interpret and emphasise events from their own perspective. They include establishing rapport with the participants, seeking clarification and encouraging elaboration.

In the in-depth interview approach, the first task for an interviewer is to establish rapport with the participants. Berry (1999: 8) describes establishing rapport, or a productive interpersonal climate, as a matter of understanding another's view of the world and communicating your understanding appropriately. It is regarded as an important interview technique because the dynamic between interviewer and participant can significantly affect the interview process (Berry, 1999: 10). Berry

(1999: 9f.) and Kvale (1996: 124) suggest that rapport can be established in a number of ways, including visibly respecting the informants' opinions, supporting their feelings, and acknowledging their responses. Minichiello *et al.* (1995: 80) also advocate reflecting participant behaviour during an interview; rapport can be achieved by 'matching the perceptual language, the images of the world, the speech patterns, pitch, tone, speed, the overall posture and the breathing patterns of the informant'. Kvale (1996: 128-148) concurs:

A good contact is established by attentive listening, with the interviewer showing interest, understanding, and respect for what the subjects say...[a good interviewer] allows subjects to finish what they are saying, lets them proceed at their own rate of thinking and speaking.

Proponents of in-depth interviewing (see for example Dexter, 1970; Dick, 1999; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) recommend that the interviewer sets the tone of the relationship with the interviewee by appearing willing to learn from them, receptive to their ideas and sensitive to emotional cues. In the interviews for this research project, rapport was initially established by encouraging the participants to determine the interview locations and scheduling to suit their work and personal commitments. Allowing interviewees a sense of control, or ownership of the interview process, was a clear signal to each participant that this study was in many ways a vehicle for their personal story to be recounted in their own words. During the interviews, the aim was to empathise with participant perspectives, but without making judgements. It was repeated during each interview that the research was about learning from each participant, and that their personal experiences were valued highly - both as individuals and as representatives of their employing organisation. By conveying a sense of personal interest in their

individual stories, it was hoped that a greater rapport would be built and information elicited that might otherwise have been withheld.

The second important technique for in-depth interviewing is clarification. Unstructured interviews require attention to the areas intended for discussion to avoid vagueness and a drift away from the key themes. Minichiello *et al.* (1995: 78) explain that the interview process reflects conversational norms: '[t]he reality of the social experience is that the conversation process, while not formally structured, is controlled to a certain degree'. In other words, an unstructured interview does not equate to one totally devoid of direction or purpose. Kvale (1996: 138) contends that many of the meanings which are clear to the interviewer may not be obvious to the interviewee, and it is therefore important to use language that is sensitive to the interviewee's context and world view. Dexter (1970: 159) suggests that to enhance their comprehensibility to the interviewees, any specific questions should be easy to understand, single-barrelled (i.e. one idea or purpose per question), in a logical sequence and devoid of jargon.

To describe this project's purpose and structure clearly, the written invitation to each participant contained a description of the multiple-stage interview process and this was reiterated at the commencement of each interview. During the interviews, supplementary questions were brief and designed to elicit additional information about key themes as they arose. Patton (1990: 89f.) recommends the use of verbal or non-verbal cues to encourage the interviewee to give more information. These can include nodding to indicate agreement or understanding, using facial expressions to prompt clarification, and quiet verbal cues to

encourage more information without asking a direct question. Clarification probes are considered useful when the interviewer does not fully comprehend a response and might include prompts such as ‘Could you talk a little more about that?’ (Berry, 1999; Minichiello *et al.*, 1995; Patton, 1990). Kvale (1996: 133) suggests that it can be useful for the interviewer to prompt further conversation on a topic by repeating some of the response back to the interviewee to elicit greater detail or a personal opinion: ‘repeating significant words of an answer can lead to further elaboration’. Each type of probe was employed at various times during the interviews, to elicit the most comprehensive and personalised data.

2.6 Methodological challenges

There are two aspects of this project that potentially present methodological problems for the researcher. Firstly, the selection of grounded theory methods to analyse the data and develop theoretical constructs, and secondly the use of in-depth interviews as a key source of data collection. The selection of a research methodology and strategy does not in itself guarantee a valid or reliable study. The concepts of validity and reliability are central to any discussion about rigour in research (Eisenhardt, 1989; McDougall, 2000). Burgess (1991) describes validity as whether the methods, techniques and approaches used in the research relate to and measure the constructs of interest appropriately.

Different perspectives on grounded theory and its methods have already been discussed in this chapter. Critics of the method suggest that ‘at the beginning of a research project GT seems to be a promising and versatile tool. However, it is

difficult to carry through in a satisfactory way' (Seldén, 2005: 148). A large part of the criticism is levelled at the Strauss and Corbin (1990) approach to data coding, discussed earlier in this chapter. Other concerns relate to the time and resources required to undertake a grounded theory study (Partington, 2002), problems stemming principally from the goal of 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Both Glaser and Strauss insist that theoretical sampling should continue until saturation is reached, or when no new data can be added to and affect the level of categories. Critics of the practicalities of this approach to sampling (Dey, 1999; Partington, 2002; Thomson, 2007) argue that new data always emerges during the research process and saturation is a difficult concept to demonstrate. Dey proposes an alternative measure of *theoretical sufficiency* (1999: 257), in other words sampling ceases when data that is sufficient to theory or theoretical construct development is obtained. Supported by Seidman (2006), the concept of sufficiency addresses, in part, Glaser's (1992) concern that the process of coding may result in data being 'forced' into categories to achieve saturation.

Theoretical saturation can therefore be seen as more closely related to the quality of the data obtained rather than the frequency and total volume of the data (Jeon, 2004). Rice and Ezzy (1999: 46) confirm this view: '[W]hen the researcher is satisfied that the data is rich enough and have enough of the dimensions in which they are interested, the sample is large enough'. Morse (2000: 4) claims that 'there is an inverse relationship between the amount of usable data obtained from each participant and the number of participants'. Therefore, fewer participants will be required if high quality data is obtained from each encounter. To limit the number

of participants to a manageable size for a PhD, the study targeted the most knowledgeable participants – those closest to the phenomenon of interest, male non-managerial employees - to maximise the quality of the data gathered from each interview. In addition, and as part of the theoretical sampling process previously described, repeat interviews were conducted with some participants to elicit the richest possible data, resulting in a smaller sample size (e.g. Lee, Woo & Mackenzie, 2002). Although grounded theory researchers cannot make a final decision on sample size until the data analysis is well underway (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002; Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), Thomson's (2007) literature review of grounded theory studies using in-depth interviews from various disciplines between 2002-2004 indicates that saturation normally occurs between 10 and 30 interviews. He suggests that 'it would be wise to anticipate 30 interviews in order to facilitate pattern, category and dimension growth and saturation' (2007: 5). This study therefore identified an initial interview sample size of 20 participants – 10 from each MNC – with provision for additional interviews as directed by the emerging categories.

The second methodological issue arises from the use of in-depth interviews as the primary data source. Burgess (1991) and Eisenhardt (1989) explain the twofold problem often confronting in-depth interviewers: the potential influence of the interviewer on the interviewee's response (internal validity), and whether the data obtained can be generalised (external validity). To address this, many researchers adopt the use of triangulation (*cf.* Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Dick, 1999; Minichiello *et al.*, 1995; Neuman, 2000, Yin, 1994). Swepson (2000) defines triangulation as the amalgamation of different methods of collecting data in the

study of the same phenomenon. Triangulation essentially aims to overcome problems of bias and validity by mitigating the deficiencies of one method with the strengths of another (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Dick, 1999; Swepson, 2000). Research validity is enhanced in this study by use of the ‘constant comparative method’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which involves identifying categories in the data and then theoretically sampling them to clarify and extend understanding (Connell & Lowe, 1997). Thus the data analysis phase is essentially in and of itself a process of repeated triangulation and review.

The second prospective problem of interview-based research is that of reliability, or the credibility of the research method itself (McDougall, 2000). Neuman (2000: 170-171) identifies a potentially significant problem confronting qualitative researchers in this regard:

Qualitative researchers consider a range of data sources and employ multiple measurement methods. Data collection [is] an interactive process in which particular researchers operate in an evolving setting and the setting’s context dictates using a unique mix of measures that cannot be repeated.

This is particularly true in terms of in-depth interviewing, where checking the strength of the data can be challenging. Neuman (2000) acknowledges that the researcher is never likely to replicate the interview in all, or any, of its aspects. However, Minichiello *et al.* (1995: 178) identify some key steps that can be taken by the researcher to reasonably assess reliability, including:

[Documenting] how and why the researcher made certain decisions in the research process; their perceived impact on researcher and informant/s; how the data were collected (interviews only or personal documents in addition to in-depth interviews or multi-method use); and how they were analysed.

How researchers analyse the data gathered is clearly critical. Data analysis is essentially the process of finding meaning in the information collected (Babbie, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989). Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 68ff.) identify three stages of data analysis – coding the data (discovering themes and developing propositions); refining those themes and propositions; and reporting the findings. In this study, grounded theory methods formalise this process so that that data analysis is not viewed as a distinct phase that occurs after data collection, but as an ongoing process that includes constant comparison of the emerging theory with existing literature and theory (Dick, 1999; Glaser, 1978, 1998). The issue of *external* validity, or the extent to which research findings can be extrapolated to other settings (i.e. generalised), are discussed in next in this chapter as a multi-faceted methodological problem confronting cross-disciplinary researchers and grounded theorists alike.

2.6.1 Generalisability

Generalisability refers to the degree to which developed theory can be applied to the entire population from which the sample is taken (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Thomson, 2007). Qualitative research is ‘concerned with the concepts and idiosyncratic characteristics of a select group’ (Thomson, 2007: 7); consequently, the findings may only be transferable to situations with similar characteristics. A number of researchers contend that case-study research elicits information the researcher can use to build on existing theory and knowledge, or to develop new theoretical concepts (Babbie, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Drever (1995) and Neuman (2000) agree that this approach allows the researcher to select cases without the compulsion to generalise to a larger population. Linn

(1983: 226) cautions that it is vital to properly identify the study's objectives and any constraints, being careful to determine 'the sample size necessary to permit valid generalisations and [to limit] the inferences made from their study'. As discussed, grounded theory research potentially develops theory on two levels; formal and substantive. This thesis' in-depth interviews were conducted as part of an intensive case study of employee experiences within MNCs from contrasting cultural origins. It is therefore concerned with the concepts and characteristics of a select group and aims to develop theory specific to their situation, also known as substantive theory (Auerbach & Silverman, 2003).

This grounded theory study's primary aim was quite specifically to develop an understanding about how male, non-managerial employees in MNC organisations perceive and evaluate the interaction between work and non-work life domains. Consequently, universal generalisation is not a major consideration of the project. Rather, it is concerned with 'understanding the nature and rationale of observed interactions and processes' (Douglas, 2003). Inductive theory generation is embedded in the explanation of work-life interaction experiences, rather than generalisability. Therefore, rather than generalising *probability* to larger populations, grounded theory methods in this study results in a 'rich, complex description of the specific case under study' (Eisenhardt, 1989: 546); a meso-level theory about the *process* in which MNC employees engage when evaluating the interaction between work and non-work life domains.

2.7 Conclusion

This study aimed to both advance our general theoretical understanding about work-life interaction and contribute to the specific discourse on MNC work-life strategy design. This chapter has provided a rationale for the methodological concepts chosen for this research project. The first section of the chapter engaged with the specific issues relating to grounded theory research. The tenets of grounded theory were explained, as was justification for the selection of grounded theory as the methodological approach in this organisational management-oriented project. The advantages and potential disadvantages of in-depth interviewing were also identified, as were the measures taken to ameliorate any challenges to the study's validity and reliability.

Chapter 3 details the coding processes undertaken to elicit the core concern of the participants – organisational identification- and begins the 'write up' of the emergent grounded theory. Here the emergent theory of MNC subsidiary employees' evaluation of work-life interaction in terms of a multi-foci, episode-centred process of organisational identification is introduced. The grounded theory process is systematic but non-linear, adopting the constant comparison method of analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later championed by Glaser (1978, 1998, 2005, 2009). Although the chapters of this thesis are structured to report the development of the substantive theory in a well-defined manner, the process of constant comparison is in fact non-linear, with coding and analysis occurring simultaneously (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Chapter 3 reflects the first interwoven stages of the constant comparison process: open coding and the

emergence of concepts; identification of categories in the data; and integration of the categories and their properties through theoretical coding.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENT THEORY: PRIORITISING IDENTITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the emergent theory of MNC subsidiary employees' evaluation of work-life interaction in terms of a multi-foci, episode-centred process of organisational identification. First, the chapter records the process of open coding in which interview transcripts were analysed to identify key points and conceptual categories. Open coding is the first phase of analysis; it is concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena located in the text. The data was repeatedly interrogated to answer questions such as What is this data a study of? What category does this incident indicate? and What is actually happening in the data? Initially motivated by a general interest in MNC subsidiary employees' experiences of the interaction between work and non-work life domains, the first stage of the analysis comprised a set of unstructured open-ended interviews with 'the most knowledgeable people to get a line on relevancies and leads to track down more data and where and how to locate oneself for a rich supply of data' (Glaser, 1978: 45). The first stage was therefore clearly envisaged as purposeful; the research started with a specific group of informants likely to have firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon under study, but without any predetermined research questions. During the open coding phase (Glaser, 1978, 1998), 88 key point codes were identified; these were subsequently grouped into 20 concepts.

In the second phase of the process, the relationships between concepts were analysed and they were clustered at a higher conceptual level within four major

categories: Events, Levels, Perceptions and Connectedness (the preliminary core category). This phase of analysis involves selective coding; the data was filtered and coded to focus on the categories and conceptual linkages most relevant to the core category. This is also known as ‘delimiting’ the theory (Glaser, 1978); only the most pertinent concepts and passages of transcript were revisited and coded and additional interview questions formulated to encompass the new and more focused direction of the research. Confirmation of the four major categories directed further data collection in the form of eight additional interviews and a review of organisational documents.

In the final phase of analysis, patterns and interrelations within and between categories were noted and these ultimately provided the core of the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978). Relevant academic literature was incorporated at this stage and ‘coding families’ (Glaser, 1978) were used to help focus the theory at a higher conceptual level by identifying the relationships between and within categories. Ultimately, the emergent theory suggests that at the heart of employees’ subjective evaluation of work-life interaction is a multi-foci, episode-centred process of identity formation that focuses on organisational membership.

3.1.1 A note on quotations

The first draft of this chapter was written without including any conceptual indicators from the literature or the data, forcing a write-up of the theory that focuses on concepts as opposed to cases. As Glaser (1978: 134) states ‘The credibility of the theory should be won by its integration, relevance and workability, not by illustration used as if it were proof’. In the second draft,

excerpts from the data were incorporated ‘as conceptual indicators’ (Munhall, 2007: 261). Glaser advises that quotes, or descriptive statement about the data itself serve only as ‘illustration and imagery’ (1978: 134); lengthy direct quotes should not be strung together to tell the participants’ ‘story’ (Munhall, 2007). The goal of classic grounded theory is to ‘generate a conceptual theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved’ (Glaser, 2003: 3); it is not concerned with descriptive statements about people or the pursuit of ‘findings and facts’ (Glaser, 2001: 160). On the contrary, the point of grounded theory is to discover a theoretical explanation for a particular phenomenon that extends conceptually beyond the experiences of any one individual (Glaser, 1978). Therefore, while this chapter does incorporate a number of examples from the data, these have been judiciously selected to illustrate, rather than imply, conceptual categories.

3.1.2 A note on memos

As part of the constant comparison method of data analysis, the grounded theory researcher notes all thoughts, ideas and questions about the concepts and categories as they emerge. The importance of memoing in grounded theory has been discussed in Chapter 2; in the following chapters, the data analysis process incorporates those memos as both an additional data source and a guide to theoretical development. Some are detailed reflections on key concepts as they are emerging, while others are short notes with interesting ideas recorded for later development. For example, the following memo was written immediately following the first three interviews:

Disconnect between HQ/ senior management & branch-level

Directives & policies 'filter down'

Senior management are not interested in branch staff welfare: "we're just numbers"

Critical incident

Restructure in early 2000s broke the 'connection' between mgmt & staff. There is a sense of the 'old company' v 'new company' in the way people talk.

Memo 05.05.10

In this memo, the concept of 'connectedness' is identified, as are the various organisational levels at which connections occur and the critical incident that marked a change in employees' experiences of connectedness. The memo was later incorporated into the coding process and supported the identification of the category Connectedness and the subcategory change events within the category of Events. Connectedness was ultimately re-labelled Identification and selected as the core category around which the substantive theory is centred; at the time of writing the above memo it was still a conceptual note and the kernel of an idea that would be more fully developed. Memos also provide an additional source of illustrative material that can be used not to prove an emergent theory, but to help the reader 'comprehend and make sense of the grounded theory... [to] give the theory life, vivid vision and imagery and catch the reader up in the theory along with the conceptual grab' (Jones & Noble, 2007: 86). Throughout this chapter, relevant memos are referenced because they provide insight into an integral part of the analysis process.

3.2 Emergence of the research question

The primary motivation for this research was to gain insight into how male, non-managerial employees in multi-level organisations evaluate the work-life interface. Grounded theory, and in particular the method of ‘constant comparison’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 101), provides both a means of data analysis, and also a compass which directs the researcher closer to the essence of the phenomenon by revealing and exploring emergent problems. In grounded theory studies, the research problem gradually emerges as the research process continues. This means that innovation can occur at any point during the research (Charmaz, 2006), as the researcher continuously refines the initial focus of the problem until the central concern of the participants is uncovered (Strauss and Corbin, 1997; Glaser, 1992). During the early stages of the research, the real research problem may not be evident. Peripheral research questions, unrelated to the core research problem, may appear as quasi-research problems and are potential distractions from a theory firmly grounded in the data. Grounded theory researchers therefore need to be patient until the real core research concern emerges from participants’ viewpoints, which where the real social process has occurred (Glaser, 1992). To this end, Glaser (1998: 122) asserts that

The first step in grounded theory is to enter the substantive field for research without knowing the problem. This requires suspending your knowledge, especially of the literature, and your experience. The researcher must take a ‘no preconceived interest’ approach and not ask questions that might be on his mind.

The process of problem emergence holds a critical position in the realisation of the real research problem (Glaser, 1992). In this study, the first twenty interviews were conducted without any pre-determined research questions. In order to reveal

the underlying social process, participants were encouraged to respond in their own words to the general question *'Tell me about your experiences of work-life interaction'*. Subsequent interviews were directed by questions emerging from the data analysis and the comparative literature review. Focusing on social processes and following the rule of natural emergence are two the distinguishing features of grounded theory. Consequently, all efforts were focused on letting the central research problem, and specific questions, emerge unencumbered by preconceived theories or predefined categories (Glaser, 1992; Goulding, 2002). The research problem that emerged in this study delineates two distinct stages in the subjective process of evaluating the relationship between paid work and non-work roles: 'Conceptualising Work' and 'Positioning Self'. These two stages were found to comprise an overarching process this thesis calls 'Prioritising Identity'.

3.3 Phase One: Codes and concepts

3.3.1 Open coding

In keeping with classic grounded theory methods, participants were interviewed with 'unstructured and open-ended questioning... allowing respondents maximum freedom to frame their own responses' (Jones & Noble, 2007: 89). The initial stage of coding, open coding, 'runs the data open' (Glaser, 1978: 56) by identifying as many categories, or incidents, as possible. As explained in Chapter 2, interviews were tape recorded but not all were transcribed verbatim. Drawing on previous interview experience, key-word notes were taken during the interviews and post-interview memos written up immediately following each session. Tape recordings were used to identify concepts and patterns, with subsequent review of the interviews to check and re-code as required. This

approach resulted in an efficient use of time and focused research energy on conceptualisation and creativity, as opposed to detailed description (Glaser, 1998).

3.3.2 Key point coding

Micro-analysis of interview data has some drawbacks. It is time consuming and potentially confusing: ‘dividing the data into individual words [may] cause the analysis sometimes to become lost in the minutia of data’ (Allan, 2003: 2). In respect of theory emergence, Glaser (1992: 40) particularly criticises the analysis technique of coding word-by-word and line-by-line, accusing it of ‘producing an over-conceptualisation’. Allan (2003: 2) responds to these problems by proposing ‘key point coding’, or the identification of key points rather than individual words so that the concepts emerge unencumbered by unnecessary description. Miles and Huberman (1984) and Dey (1993, 1999) agree that the selection of important points in qualitative data coding is a good protection against data overload.

The twenty participants in the first round of interviews were male, non-managerial employees in the local work-groups of MNC Australian subsidiary organisations. The first stage of analysis employed key point coding (Allan, 2003) and 88 key point codes were identified at this stage. Each key point in the data was given a sequential identifier where ‘KP’ indicates ‘key point’. This method of identification made it possible to quickly locate the content and context of each key point in the interview notes. It should be noted that some codes do appear to overlap in description – this is because many of the statements made in interview could be allocated a number of codes. Table 2 shows a sample of key point

identifiers, text of the key point and the allocated codes from the initial interview analyses:

Identifier	Key Point	Code
KP1	Personal commitments take up time	Time-based strain
KP2	Partner's employment needs to be accommodated	Partner's work Coping
KP3	Not much free time Frustration at the impact on partner	Time pressure Relationships affected
KP5	Always tired Never feeling rested Stressed	Wellbeing
KP7	Getting along with supervisor is important	Relationship with supervisor
KP8	Relaxed work atmosphere Getting on well with others	Camaraderie
KP9	Feeling removed from broader org. structure	Organisational levels Status within organisation Connectedness
KP10	Pronoun shift in the discourse: 'us' v 'them'	Disconnect between snr management and work-group employees
KP14	Family commitments sometimes suffer Grateful for partner's support	Impact of work on family
KP18	Lack of interest/ concern about H.O. or overseas	Organisational levels Connectedness
KP20	Choosing employer In control of work situation	Control Organisational prestige Autonomy
KP26	Credentials in the industry are valued	Credibility Organisational prestige
KP29	Employees value a customer focus	Customer relationships Disconnect between values across org. levels

KP31	Senior management don't understand us	Connectedness
KP35	Had enough of the workplace Frustration	Control Frustration
KP38	Changes in the industry affecting workloads	Industry knowledge/ expertise Control
KP39	Can't trust senior management	Connectedness Trust
KP44	Get to use company vehicle Access to workshop after hours	Work conditions
KP52	Short travel time from home	Proximity to workplace
KP55	Sense of the organisation being 'Australian'	Local culture dominant Cultural connectedness
KP66	Change in org. dynamics mid-2000s	Change event Organisational levels
KP67	Parent company management style is 'different'	Cultural connectedness Organisational levels Connectedness
KP71	HR functions centralised in Sydney	Centralisation impacts on HR
KP80	It's 'different' at the local level Regional branches are exceptional	Branch 'uniqueness' Regional areas additionally distinct
KP83	We remember the old times	Critical events Shared memories

Table 2: Sample of key points and codes

3.3.3 The emergence of concepts

Analysis of the codes resulted in the identification of 20 concepts, or groups of codes with a common theme or similar meaning. Each concept was given a title to reflect the codes it contained. For example, the concept 'domestic relationships' contained the following codes: 'partner's work' (KP2); 'relationships affected'

(KP3); ‘impact of work on family’ (KP14). The distinguishing attribute of these codes is the influence of work, at both temporal and emotional levels, on domestic relationships. The concepts are discussed below with examples of the key words and phrases that were included in each concept:

Autonomy

Each participant identified work autonomy as an important factor when considering the work-life interface. Autonomy was frequently described in terms of being a privilege bestowed by the immediate work-group supervisor as a sign of trust:

He [supervisor] lets me do my own work in the way that suits me the best (Interview 12).

I’ve been here for a long time so they trust me to work on my own... no-one looks over my shoulder (Interview 5).

The consequence of autonomy was variously described as empowerment, respect, and an increase in the individual’s psychological bond with the organisation:
[Autonomy] makes you feel like you’re respected [and] valued (Interview 5).

It [autonomy] gives you more of a sense of being part of the company (Interview 7).

Connectedness

The concept of connectedness was invoked by most participants when describing positive perception of psychological and emotional attachment to the organisation. A variety of terms such as connection, bond, being part of something bigger, and membership were collectively conceptualised as connectedness. At the individual level, many participants talked about ‘work’ as being ‘part of who they are’:

Being here is really important... it's who I am (Interview 9).

I wouldn't be much without the job here (Interview 5).

It [work] becomes part of you... makes you who you are in some ways (Interview 12).

Connectedness at the individual level was distinguishable from the group-level, or collective sense of association with the organisation. In terms of the latter, participants described how their workgroup seemed sometimes part of and sometimes separate to, the super-ordinate organisational entity. In particular, specific events were highlighted to illustrate the higher-level relationships between the local work-group, national subsidiary and global MNC entity. This suggests that the concept of connectedness is related to other concepts such as organisational levels, overlap and events.

Control

The concept of control was closely related to, yet distinguished from, autonomy because it related to individuals' perception of agency, or choice, in the practical management of time and resources:

I get to choose the hours that suit me (Interview 1).

It's up me whether I work a bit a later one day and then come in later the next (Interview 5).

If I need to do something with the kids after school he [supervisor] knows I'll organise it myself no worries (Interview 8).

Further, 'being in control' was considered evidence of status and respect within the organisation, and reflected perceived support from superiors:

They let me work it out because they know I'll do the right thing (Interview 8).

He [supervisor] made me 2IC [second-in-charge] while he was away... he's seen me organise the blokes and work and all that before (Interview 4).

Disconnection

Disconnection was distinguished from connectedness because the codes contained within the concept were all negatively oriented and suggestive of a break in, or disruption to, the state of being psychologically attached to the organisation.

Disconnection was described using terms such as breakdown, separation, cut off, left out and distance. Disconnection was also most frequently associated with specific events in the individual's work experience, such as a grievance, major dispute or organisational change event. Participants also frequently described being disconnected from the organisation as a conscious and deliberate decision, and a response to negative perceptions of the organisation or their membership of it:

That wasn't how I'd do things... I didn't want any part of that (Interview 5).

I kept well out of that [dispute]... I didn't want people thinking I was part of it (Interview 6).

If they [national subsidiary management] want to behave like that they can but it's not my way, it's just not right (Interview 8).

These examples reflect that justice perceptions and an awareness of public image were significant factors leading to conscious 'organisational disconnection'.

Domestic relationships

Codes relating to the impact of work on immediate family, and particularly the spouse/ partner, were grouped together under the concept domestic relationships. Participants discussed the impact of work on domestic relationships from a range

of perspectives, including: the stress caused by competing demands of work and non-work; the need for the partner to accommodate unusual work schedules and prioritising work over domestic relationships. Some codes contained within this concept also related to the individual's perception that domestic relationships were more adaptable to the demands created by work when there was a positive perception of status as an organisational member and organisational prestige. For example:

[My wife] doesn't mind the extra work I have to do; she knows I'm working for the best company (Interview 3).

The family knows that sometimes I have to do a bit extra, on weekends and that... maybe miss a few things with the kids... they understand that it's because I've been there the longest and he [supervisor] trusts me (Interview 7).

Disputes

The concept disputes comprised codes relating to significant events of disputation at a collective level. Specifically, disputes were described by the participants as major and negative clashes between 'them' (national subsidiary or global MNC management) and 'us' (local work-group employees). It appeared that disputes were incorporated into participants' evaluation of the work-life interface because they influenced employees' general perception of their connection, or bond with, the organisational entity. Disputes were highlighted as exemplars of 'how they [subsidiary or global MNC managers] behave' (Interview 14). For example:

When we had that big dispute over the restructure, it just showed that they [global MNC management] have no interest in what we actually do here (Interview 9).

The way they dealt with it [dispute] was really bad... it felt like we were on our own (Interview 8).

When you have disputes over big issues, you get a feel for how much you really matter to them [senior management] (Interview 11).

‘Major disputes’ included disputation over substantive conditions, such as working hours and wages, as well as disputation centred on the behaviour of particular individuals. For example, a number of participants recalled the role of an individual senior manager in the implementation of an organisational restructure, and from this drew broader conclusions about the attitudes of all senior managers:

When the restructure was happening, he [senior national subsidiary manager] came down here with this big list of things we had to change... like who was going to lose their job... and he just stood there and said ‘take it or leave it boys, this is what we’ve decided’. So if that’s the way they deal with things it’s no wonder we get frustrated at work (Interview 6).

He [national subsidiary manager] handled the restructure pretty badly... everyone knows about it... it shows that they don’t really get what it’s like to work here (Interview 7).

Grievances

In contrast to the collective emphasis of disputes, many of the participants also volunteered accounts of specific individual grievances they had had with work-group colleagues and superiors during their working careers. These grievances were characterised by the very personal nature of the conflict (i.e. one-on-one). Grievances mainly arose in respect of the allocation of resources, substantive employment conditions and management style. They were generally recounted in the context of the individual’s self-evaluation of their status within the organisation:

I had a blue with my supervisor over taking some leave... it got sorted but it really showed how they don't care about anything but the business (Interview 8).

After that [grievance] it took a while for me to trust [supervisor] again (Interview 5).

He [supervisor] was an alright bloke... but I still remember we had some arguments about letting me get on with the job and him not interfering (Interview 12).

Health and wellbeing

Codes relating to the impact of work on the individual's wellbeing were grouped together and as health issues. In most cases, working hours were considered the most influential factor in terms of health and wellbeing. Stress was the most commonly reported consequence of excessive working hours, followed by physical fatigue and chronic injury. In respect of other factors, inflexible work arrangements such as set rosters were reported to generate a feeling of ill-will, or negativity, towards the organisation over time. For example:

After a while you do get a bit sick of it... there's only so much work your body can take without a decent break (Interview 2).

Every time you have to argue about the roster it makes you feel okay about taking some stress leave here and there (Interview 7).

I just got tired of it in the end and told [supervisor] I needed more flexibility with hours... it's been stressing me out for too long (Interview 10).

The concept of health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to the cumulative effect of work systems and procedures on individuals' physical and psychological wellbeing, was found to overlap with the concepts connectedness, disconnection, grievances and work conditions.

Internal status

Internal status related to participants' perception of their status, or standing, as organisational members. Descriptions such as respect, value, high opinion and importance were employed to emphasise perceived positive standing within the organisation. Negative status was described using terms such as disrespect, disregard, unimportant and marginal. For example:

I'm pretty unimportant in the scheme of things... what I think doesn't really mean anything to anyone (Interview 14).

Internal status was linked to multiple organisational levels because participants consciously distinguished between their perceived status at the work-group, national subsidiary and global MNC levels:

Here [in the workgroup] I have quite a lot to do with how things run.... but to them [global MNC management] I'm no-one (Interview 5).

I think they [national subsidiary and global MNC management] respect the job I do and understand how challenging it can be (Interview 10).

National culture

Culture reflects codes that related to perceptions of the organisation's home culture and its influence on the evaluation of work. For example, participants from the Japanese MNC identified a range of organisational and management characteristics as peculiarly 'Japanese', including high standards of timeliness, organisation and product support. Many participants observed that these qualities affected the local work-group work environment:

They [senior managers from Japan] are so organised...they have a particular way they like things done and we have to meet that (Interview 1).

When there's a new product they [senior managers from Japan] give us heaps of training... that's their way (Interview 3).

That's how the Japanese do things... lots of instructions and so you can't really go wrong (Interview 6).

You know you're working for the Japanese... it's their way or no way pretty much (Interview 7).

Similarly, employees of the Swedish MNC reported a perception that the organisation was uniquely 'Swedish' and defined that in terms of product expertise, organisational structure and communication. Again, the MNC's home country culture was considered an influence on the local work-group environment:

When [equipment] comes from Sweden we get this whole lot of information and training... they really know their products well (Interview 10).

They [global/ Swedish MNC entity] have a real handle on communication, it's very impressive... [it] makes our life so much easier with their system (Interview 12).

The central idea in this concept is that the MNC's home culture is perceived as significantly different from the host country culture (Australia), and is consequently a factor affecting individuals' evaluation of their work experience.

Organisational change

Closely linked to major disputes is the concept of major organisational change. Major change included the introduction of new technology, bureaucratic change such as the introduction of new administrative systems, and restructuring of the workforce. Participants distinguished between their view of the change itself and their impression of the process of implementation that accompanied it:

It's not that we minded the new system; it actually works a lot better... it was the way they did it that caused problems (Interview 9).

Sometimes it's not what you do it's how you do it that matters (interview 3).

Implementation of major change was considered by participants to be an accurate indicator of the organisation's approach to consultation, communication and employee participation more generally:

You can see from that how they deal with communication (Interview 1).

Since then we've known that they're not really interested in consultation (Interview 4).

I suppose we would have liked to be more involved in discussing what was going to happen... there were so many problems with how it was done but we kind of expect that now (Interview 8).

Organisational levels

Codes relating to the distinction drawn between different levels of the organisation were grouped together. The levels were articulated in terms of being foci, or referents, for a range of perceptions and experiences. Participants clearly distinguished between three organisational levels: the local and immediate workgroup, the national subsidiary organisation and the global MNC entity.

Overlapping with the category 'Connectedness', the local workgroup level was universally referenced using the pronoun 'we', the national subsidiary organisation alternately 'we' and 'them' and the global MNC organisation 'them'. This observation formed the basis of an additional category, 'Overlap'.

Organisational prestige and distinctiveness

Many participants identified that external perceptions of the organisation influenced their sense of organisational membership. Most frequently, customer

feedback was referenced as an indicator of how the organisation is perceived externally. For example:

People talk.... if you're doing a good job they talk and if you're stuffing it up the word gets around too (Interview 3).

We know if people in the industry are happy; word gets back to us (Interview 10).

In terms of prestige, participants frequently compared the organisation to others in the industry, against a range of subjective criteria such as product quality, service and client base. For example:

Everyone knows we have the best product in the field... when we won the industry award it felt great (Interview 5).

Clients know we go the extra mile for them... you don't get that with [competitor] or [competitor] (Interview 12).

It's taken a while but now we have all the big guys, all the major contracts... it's good to know you work for the best (Interview 9).

Further, these codes suggested that specific instances or events could be identified during which both positive perceptions of organisational prestige, and consequently participants' sense of 'connection' with the organisation, increased. Participants not only highlighted the importance of organisational prestige, but also the perception that their organisation was different, or distinct, from its competitors. Positive perceptions of organisational distinctiveness were similarly associated with specific events, and subsequently increased affinity with or connection to the organisational identity. Conversely, a negative emotional response, or 'disconnection', was associated with negative perceptions of the organisation's prestige and distinctiveness. This concept was therefore considered

in conjunction with other related concepts such as connectedness, disconnection, turning points and positive events.

Overlap

Related to the concept of multiple organisational levels, the immediate workgroup and national subsidiary levels were conceptualised by participants as variously distinct and also combined organisational entities. For example:

We are our own business here [in Tasmania]... we're different to other States (Interview 11).

We [national subsidiary] have some things in common with them [global MNC] (Interview 5).

They [national subsidiary] come down here and tell us what to do (Interview 8).

The global MNC organisation was universally referenced as 'them', drawing a clear distinction between the local workgroup/ national subsidiary foci of identification and the global MNC entity:

They [global MNC] come from a totally different mind-set (Interview 2).

The concept of 'Overlap' also included codes that suggested that the degree to which foci of identification overlapped was not static, but rather changeable:

When that [major org. change] happened I thought "yeah we're part of the company but they [global MNC] just don't get us [local work group]" (Interview 13).

A memo captures the emerging relationship between the concepts 'Organisational levels', 'Connectedness' and 'Overlap':

MAJOR ISSUE! There is no consistent view of what it is to be connected to the organisation. Sometimes there is a distinct 'them' and 'us' perception but at other times there is a more integrated sense of connection with the larger organisational entity. Org. levels seem to overlap more or less at different times. The local workgroup and national subsidiary levels always seem to be related. The global MNC entity is often clearly removed (consciously?).

What is the process leading to this overlapping? Does something happen/ not happen to prompt it? Why is the global entity distinguished so clearly from the national subsidiary/ local workgroup?

Memo 20.06.10

Perception orientation

This concept arose indirectly from the data, recognising that some concepts reflected both negative and positive orientations. For example, connectedness and disconnection were considered to be positive and negative constructs respectively. Disputes and grievances were negatively oriented, whereas positive events were clearly the opposite. Similarly, within the concepts organisational prestige and distinctiveness, identity and values congruence, both positive and negative perceptions were identified.

Positive events

Similar to the concept of disputes, positive organisational events were identified by participants as a significant influence on their feelings of connectedness to the organisation. Positive events occurred at the individual, workgroup and organisational level and ranged from positive one-on-one interaction to formal

organisational events. What all the highlighted events had in common was that they related to one of four factors: internal respect; values congruence; support and appreciation of superiors; and organisational prestige and distinctiveness. Thus a relationship between the specific positive events or incidents, and four other concepts began to emerge.

Shared history

Codes that related to reflections on common past experiences were grouped together and labelled 'shared history'. The consistent theme among these codes was that the anecdotes were employed by participants as a means of articulating a collective identity. Most frequently, this manifested itself at the local work-group level, where individuals emphasised shared experience as a particular form of connection with the organisation:

Some of us have been through it all... all the changes... we know what it means to be part of [organisation] (Interview 10).

In this branch there's five of us who've been here the longest... we've got through some pretty rough stuff together (Interview 6).

When you've been through that many restructures and whatever, you kind of get used to it. That's just the [organisation] way (Interview2).

Shared history was also linked to the concepts of disputes and positive events, because all of the codes arose in the context of specific anecdotes about events and shared experiences as organisational members, both positive and negative.

For example:

We had the big dispute about ten years ago... some of us are still here... we remember it all but the new blokes don't know what it was like (Interview 3).

A few years ago we had a great supervisor. He was really fantastic, talked to everyone about everything... everyone kind of measures [supervisor] against him, you know? (Interview 11).

Support and appreciation of superiors

Many participants talked about the importance of their relationship with superiors at all levels of the organisation. Two aspects of the relationship were emphasised: perceived support during the course of day-to-day employment, particularly from direct supervisors; and public displays of appreciation and recognition by superiors. For example:

I know [supervisor's] got my back... he looks out for me (Interview 4).

If I need anything, I know [supervisor] will support me to the bosses (Interview 12).

Sometimes we get difficult clients and they go crook at us... but [supervisor's] really good and I know he'll stick by me (Interview 1).

When they [MNC managers] came down and gave out the service awards it was really good... made us feel like we're part of something after all (Interview 4).

As the previous quote illustrates, positive interaction with superiors was considered an influence on individuals' sense of connection with the organisation. Further, support and appreciation of superiors was most frequently referenced in terms of specific events or incidents. The possible relationships between and within these concepts were consequently explored through the process of theoretical coding.

Values congruence

The degree to which participants felt that their personal values aligned with those of the organisation was reflected in a number of codes. These were grouped

together and labelled ‘values congruence’. Personal values included honesty, ethical behaviour, pride in the quality of work, good customer service and procedural fairness. When participants felt that the organisation shared and demonstrated the same values, this was most frequently described with reference to an event or incident that illustrated the values congruence. For example:

I know we don’t always get told what we want to hear but they’re [national subsidiary managers] always up front and they don’t stuff us about. I respect that (Interview 7).

It matters that we have a good relationship with the customers ‘cause we’re such a small branch... the bosses [national subsidiary] are right behind us on that which means a lot (Interview 14).

Similarly, when participants felt that their personal values did not align with those of the organisation, they pointed to specific incidents as exemplars:

When they [MNC management] laid off those guys a few years back without any consultation it was totally unfair... That kind of stuff makes you ashamed to be part of [organisation] (Interview 13).

If they [national subsidiary] are going to keep buying shit gear for us to work with, like they did on the last big job, then they’ll end up with a shit product and the word will get out. I don’t reckon that’s the right way to do things (Interview 9).

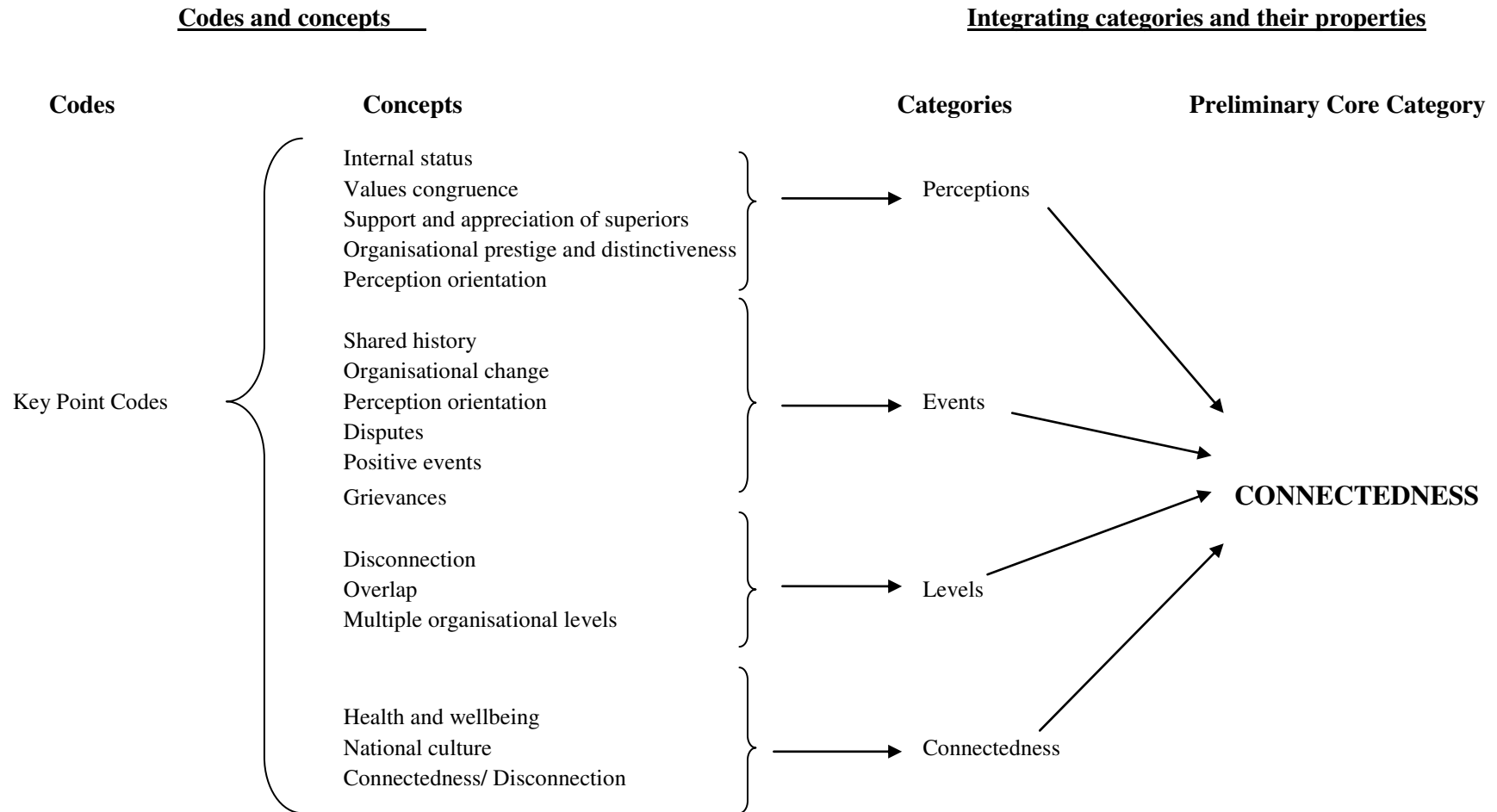
Work conditions

Many codes in the data related directly to physical working conditions, as opposed to time and other resources such as access to paid leave. Most of the codes were located in the context of comments about stress, fatigue and other physical impacts of work. This concept therefore overlapped with the concept health and wellbeing.

3.5 Phase Two: Integrating categories and their properties

Concepts were subsequently compared and regrouped to find yet higher order commonalities, forming even broader categories. Of the 20 concepts articulated in the second phase of coding, 17 were retained and incorporated into the emerging categories. The concepts ‘autonomy’ and ‘control’ were discarded because they were found to replicate or extend other categories such as ‘support and appreciation of superiors’ and ‘internal respect’. The concept ‘domestic relationships’ was ultimately discarded because there were no strong links in this particular set of data, either overt or implied, to suggest that these relationships were a feature of the emerging theory. The four categories that emerged as central to this study are described in the next part of this chapter. Their identification elevates the emerging concepts from key point coding to a more abstract theoretical level. Figure 2 illustrates the transition from open coding and concept identification, to the selection of categories in the data and the emergence of the preliminary core category, Connectedness. The core category is considered preliminary at this stage because a review of the extant literature and further interviewing and data collection are required to confirm it as the central concern of the participants, and therefore the heart of the developing theory.

Figure 2: Emergence of the participants' core concern



3.5.1 Perceptions

This category includes the codes and concepts relating to employee perceptions of the organisation, their role and status as organisational members. Figure 3 is a diagrammatical representation of the concepts with a common theme that were combined to form this category:

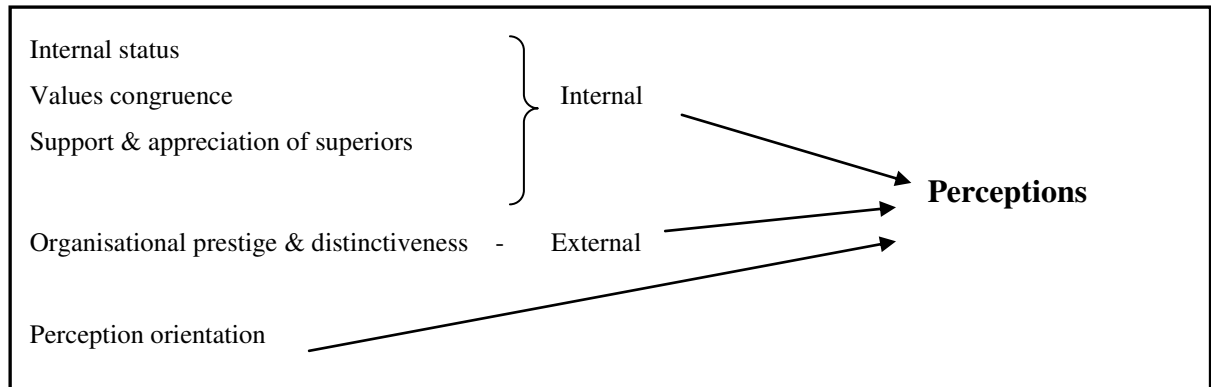


Figure 3: Emergence of the category Perceptions

‘Internal perceptions’ were categorised as such on the basis that they reflected individuals’ perceptions of their own position and relationships within the organisation. Perceived internal status refers to participants’ beliefs about how they are viewed by others in the organisation, particularly in terms of status, or value to the organisation. Individual-organisation values congruence reflects the degree to which participants felt that their personal values aligned with those of the organisation. Supervisor support refers to individuals’ perception that they have the support and appreciation of their superiors, including the immediate supervisor, national subsidiary managers and global MNC entity managers.

‘External perceptions’ are those held by others towards the organisation.

Perceived organisational prestige and distinctiveness was identified as an external

perception because it relates to participants' impressions of public regard for the organisation. 'Perception orientation' reflects that participant perceptions of the organisation and their role/ status within it were categorised as either positive or negative, and that perceptions were subject to change. The following memo provides an example of the conceptual connection between perceptions of organisational status (prestige and distinctiveness) and the preliminary core category, Connectedness:

Organisational status

Employees respond to how the business is portrayed in the media. Bad press makes them want to disconnect from the place. Everything can be going along okay and then something happens to make them feel disconnected. Then it's uphill to get things back on track.

Also, people want to work for the 'best' company in their industry. If they are poached by this employer it's kudos for them.

It seems that how outsiders perceive the organisation impacts on employees' self-esteem and their psychological connection to the org.

Memo 14.05.10

3.5.2 Events

Figure 4 illustrates the grouping of concepts relating to specific Events into the second category. Four factors were consistently related to Events: individual, or self-oriented, experiences within the organisation, the sense of shared history developed around significant events, major organisational change events, and the orientation of events in participants' evaluation (i.e. positive or negative). Many participants identified major organisational change such as a restructure as significantly affecting their experience of work. Recoding the concepts and integrating memos in the constant comparison process highlighted that employees associated the management of organisational change and the communication of that change from senior management, with both positive and negative

experiences. In particular, perceptions of individual-organisation values congruence and perceived support of superiors were mentioned frequently in conjunction with reflection on major organisational change events. ‘Individual experiences’ captures those concepts relating to specific episodes in the individual’s work experience that were considered significant or influential. Concepts in this subcategory included grievances and positive events. ‘Collective experiences’ comprises those concepts that reflected the collective memory of the participants, shaped over time and through common experiences. Concepts included disputes, positive events and shared history. The perceived positive or negative orientation of events was included in the category Events. The majority of events, at both individual and collective levels, were considered to be negative; of the 23 events highlighted, 18 were represented as negative experiences and only 5 as positive. This suggests that negative work experiences may play a more significant role in employees’ evaluation of work in the context of work-life integration. As one participant stated:

It’s like, when they [management] do something good it’s nice and everything, but when something bad happens it really affects how you feel for ages... [it’s] a much bigger deal and people sort of remember that stuff more (Interview 14).

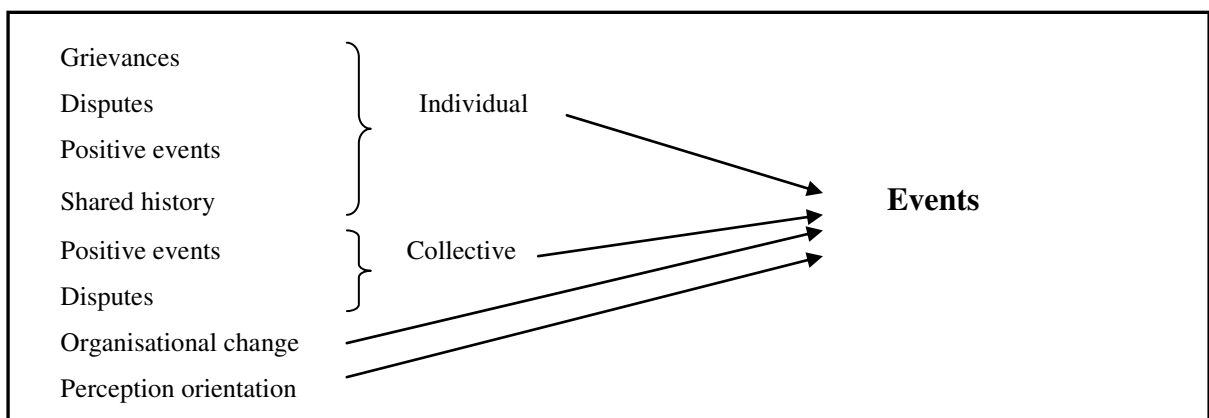


Figure 4: Emergence of the category Events

3.5.3 Levels

The category Levels emerged from the grouping of concepts related to the multiple levels within the organisation (Figure 5).

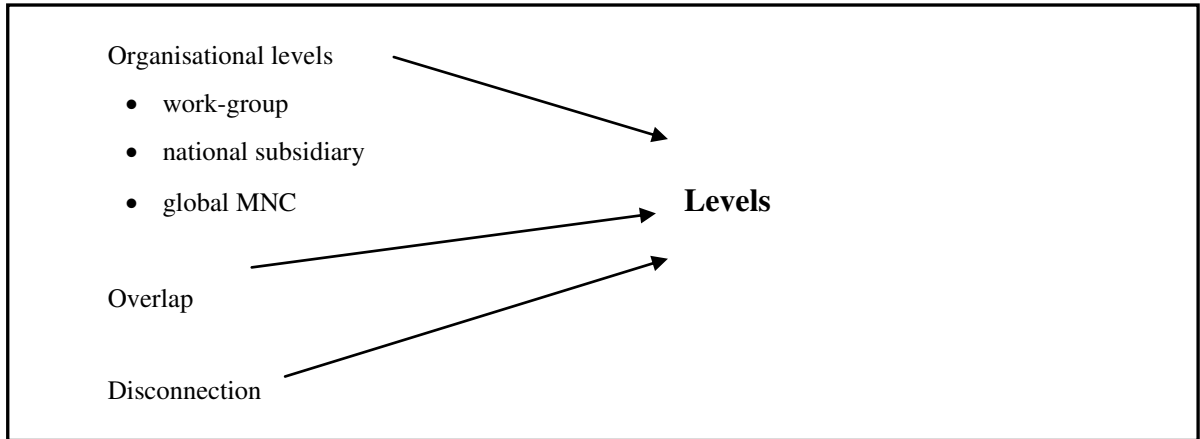


Figure 5: Emergence of the category Levels

Three levels were consistently identified by participants: immediate work-group, national subsidiary and global MC entity. This category was linked to the category Events because specific experiences were oriented at one or more of these levels. For example, some employees explicitly stated that significant events, both positive and negative, originated at the global organisational level:

The restructure was handled so badly. They came down from Head Office and it was like ‘here’s how it’s going to be’... even [national manager] couldn’t believe it; he was so embarrassed about how they handled it (Interview 18).

They [global MNC] had this big presentation and as the [national] manager I got to go... I felt like a total fish out of water, they didn’t know me or what we do here (Interview 3).

When the new product came out it was great, they [global MNC] came down to see us here and you could see he [global manger] was making a real effort to get to know us... you kind of feel good to be a part of [organisation] when that happens (Interview 25).

Further linking this category to the category Events, experiences originating at the global level were generally categorised as significant collective events. This means that they had become part of the shared history, or collective story at the local work-group level. Events perceived as originating at the national subsidiary/workgroup level were generally categorised as individual or experiences, involving personal interaction with immediate superiors.

Participants also frequently articulated a sense of disconnection between levels of the organisation, as well as highlighting times when they felt ‘part of something bigger’ (Interview 12). These concepts were labelled ‘overlap’ to acknowledge that at specific times participants were more conscious of different organisational levels and perceived varying degrees of interrelationship. For example, in reference to the global MNC and national subsidiary levels, observations included:

They see things differently to us (Interview 3).

We have to do what they want us to, but really we run our own show (Interview 22).

They have all these ideas but they don’t get the way we work (Interview 16).

The support is really good, that’s for sure... that comes from overseas and it makes life much easier for us. But then we also have our separate way of doing things... we have to look after ourselves a lot (Interview 30).

Negative perceptions of the global MNC’s relationship with the national subsidiary and local work-group were described using terms such as disconnection, separation, and detachment. Positive descriptions of the relationship centred on specific events and interactions with individual senior

managers that demonstrated support and appreciation for participants and affirmed their value as organisational members. Descriptors such as connected, linked and engaged were used by individuals to describe a sense of collective organisational membership encompassing the global MNC entity. These observations informed the direction of the literature review and focused attention on the psychological attachment of individuals to various levels of the organisation.

Consistently, there was a clear distinction drawn between the global MNC entity and the national subsidiary and local work-group levels. Of particular note, the immediate work-group was always located within the context of the national subsidiary organisation, albeit to varying degrees. A key memo suggested this as a potentially important characteristic of the developing theory:

Organisational levels

‘Them’ and ‘Us’: distinction between the global organisation and the subsidiary/ work-group.

The ‘disconnection’ between levels is not evident between national and work-group levels. When something negative happens at the national level, the connection with the work-group remains, even though people may want to distance themselves personally from the specific event/ issue.

Connectedness: Relatively stable connection between the national and work-group levels. Major events seem to affect people’s connection with the global level. Does this have to do with the actual events or the limited degree of influence that the global level has on the daily working lives of participants? E.g. it’s easier to disconnect from the global org. because it is more removed. Investigate proximity and connectedness.

Memo 08.06.10

This memo also suggests that the concept of proximal salience, or the degree to which individuals are influenced by the organisational level closest to their regular work activity, may be a factor in explaining the relationship between significant events, organisational levels and individuals' connection with the organisation.

3.5.4 Connectedness – the preliminary core category

The fourth category identified was initially labelled Connectedness.

Connectedness in this study describes the extent to which employees feel that their interests, goals and values are aligned with those of the organisation and its management. Further, many of the concepts contained references to employees' desire to psychologically 'connect with' the organisational entity. Indeed it was explicitly observed by many that a sense of disengagement from senior management resulted in a more general detachment from both the organisation as a whole, and also specific levels of it. The following quotation illustrates the relationship between this concept and the category Levels:

We're [local work-group] just numbers to them [global MNC] ... they wouldn't understand what we do here or how we do it. As far as I'm concerned we're on our own (Interview 14).

The following Figure 6 reflects the emergence of this category and the concepts contained within it:

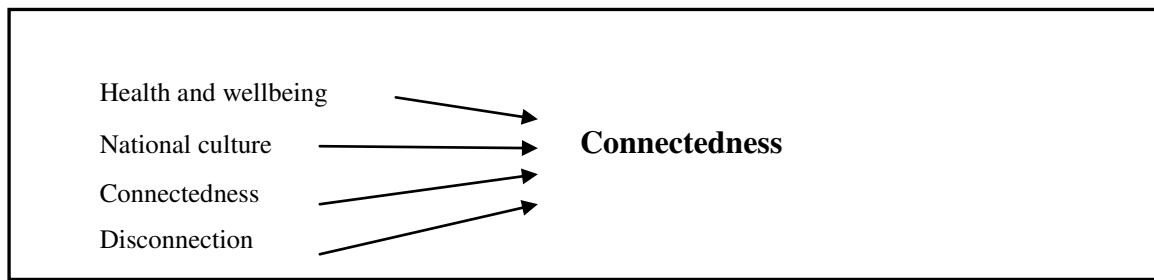


Figure 6: Emergence of the category Connectedness

Memos supporting the development of this category were analysed in conjunction with emergent codes and categories, and then confirmed through supplementary interviews. As the following memo suggests, the categories Perceptions, Events and Levels can all be related through the category Connectedness:

Psychological bond

It seems that employees care about the organisation and relate themselves to it, and this is reflected in their response to important events. When something negative happens they respond by caring less about how the organisation sees them and vice versa. It's like they go into 'defensive mode' and cut off the caring to punish the employer. Caring and being committed appear to be consciously controlled. Sometimes the employee finds this a real issue, but at other times they are not at all concerned about the bond.

Memo 15.05.10

It also became clear that Connectedness was in fact a unique and distinctive concept, representing an attachment to the organisation that was central to the individual's personal identity. This was described in terms more self-referential than concepts such as loyalty, engagement and commitment might suggest; codes relating to personal identity focused particularly on the role of organisational membership as a factor in identity-building.

3.6 Phase Three: Integrating categories and their properties

3.6.1 Theoretical coding

Once the core category of Connectedness had been tentatively selected, theoretical coding was employed to further focus the analysis. Theoretical coding is concerned with identifying a theoretical hypothesis that explains the main concern of the participants (Glaser, 1978). Employing theoretical codes assisted in establishing the relationships between the four categories, and elevated the core category of Connectedness as the central feature of the emergent grounded theory. Essentially, a set of questions was asked of each of the categories to identify links between them and the preliminary core category. These questions are grounded in the theoretical coding ‘families’ identified by Glaser (1978: 72-82) and facilitate the organisation, clarification and interpretation of categories and their interrelationships. Glaser (1978) emphasises that coding families are not mutually exclusive and may legitimately overlap. It is therefore reasonable to begin with one or two coding families and to subsequently employ others from different families as the links between categories become more established. Throughout the analysis, coding families were repeatedly reviewed to ensure that no possible connections were overlooked or underexplored.

Several theoretical codes were used at this stage of the analysis. The first set of questions was based on the ‘the Six C’s: Causes, Contexts, Contingencies, Consequences, Co-variances and Conditions’ (Glaser, 1978: 74). This is the coding model that is considered the ‘bread and butter’ theoretical code of sociology and is most often recommended for novice grounded theory researchers

(Chenitz & Swanson, 1986: 125; Glaser, 1978: 74). Glaser and Strauss (1967: 74)

suggest that the following questions be asked of the data in each category:

- Is this category a condition of some other category?
- Is it a cause, context or contingency of another category?
- Is it a consequence of another category?
- Does this category co-vary with other categories?

As the coding progressed using the six C's family, other coding families were suggested as potentially applicable. The Process, Cutting Point and Representation families (Glaser, 1978) were also employed to help illuminate relationships between categories and their properties. Glaser (1998) subsequently expanded his description of possible coding families and from this later list, the Basic coding family was employed to help clarify the fundamental psychological process that was occurring in the data and which is at the core of the emergent theory. Table 3 details the theoretical coding families utilised and the relevant descriptive codes adopted in this study:

Theoretical coding families	Descriptive codes
The Six C's	Causes Contexts Contingencies Consequences Co-variances Conditions
Process	Stage Staging Phases Phasing Progressions Passages Gradation Transitions Steps Ranks Careers Ordering Trajectories Chains Shaping Cycling
Cutting Point	Boundary Critical juncture Cutting point Turning point Benchmark Division Cleavage Scales In-out Intra-extra Dichotomy Trichotomy Polychotomy Deviance Point of no return
Representation	Descriptive Proscriptive Prescriptive Evaluative Sentimental Properlining Interpreting Vauging Baselining Conceptualising
Basics	Basic Social Structural Processes; Basic Social Structural Condition (shifts, semesters, quarters, fiscal); Basic Social Psychological Process (teaching, child rearing, learning curves, becoming, education, grieving, maturing); Basic Psychological Process (identity development, character formation, loving, unconscious agendas)

Table 3: Theoretical coding families (from Glaser, 1978:73-82 & Glaser, 1998:170-175)

3.6.2 The Six C's

The category LEVELS is a consequence of the category EVENTS. Linking this to the Cutting Point coding family, changing degrees of CONNECTEDNESS, or IDENTIFICATION, overlap across organisational referents is conceptualised as an outcome of the orientation of turning point events. To verify this suggested relationship, additional interview questions were constructed around the concept of 'nested identities', or the idea that identification with organisational LEVELS is both overlapping and subject to change. Participants confirmed the interrelationship and, without prompting, many self-identified turning points as an influence on the degree of identification overlap.

3.6.3 The Process and Basics coding families

Having confirmed that some categories were causes and consequences of each other, attention turned to the Process coding family. Three categories, PERCEPTIONS, EVENTS and LEVELS were suggested as stages in a broader process of identity development. CONNECETEDNESS is in this case reconceptualised in terms of a Basic Psychological Process (BPP) - identity development. CONNECTEDNESS can therefore be conceptualised as both a stage in the process of IDENTIFICATION with the organisation, as well as a specific state of being, or consequence of that process. Here the Six C's, Process and Basic coding families clearly overlap as they are employed to assist with redefinition of the categories and their interrelationships. The view of identity formation as a 3-stage Basic Psychological Process was the impetus for the literature review on organisational identification (see Chapter 4).

3.6.4 The Cutting Point coding family

This coding family was employed in respect of the category EVENTS. EVENTS were categorised as either ‘individual’ or ‘collective’, reflecting the level of their orientation, or foci. Participants reflected on significant events in their working life by identifying them as periods or instances of change. There was recognition that at these times, individuals’ degree of CONNECTEDNESS with the organisation changed. Also considered here was the possible relationship between EVENTS and the subcategory, ‘perception orientation’; where participants described events as either positive or negative. Individual and collectively-focussed EVENTS were found to be either negatively or positively orientated. For example:

When the restructure was on we had so much trouble... everything went from okay to awful (Interview 8).

I’ve had a few blues [arguments] with my supervisor, yeah, so I do get a bit up and down about the place (Interview 11).

He’s [supervisor] been unreal, really positive... I was a bit unsure about staying for a while but he’s made me feel heaps better about being here (Interview 12).

EVENTS were consequently conceptualised as turning points in the process of IDENTIFICATION. Prompting a review of relevant literature on turning point events (see Chapter 4), the category EVENTS was subsequently reconceptualised as ‘episodes of affinity and disidentification’, thus more accurately reflecting the inherent processual element and the orientation of these EVENTS.

3.6.5 The Representation coding family

As well as considering the interrelationships between categories and their properties, the coding process also requires a ‘conceptual leap’, whereby the fundamental process that is occurring in the data, or ‘basic psychological process’ (Glaser, 1978) is revealed. As the preceding examples illustrate, through application of relevant coding families, relationships between categories emerged. Woven throughout this analysis, however, is acknowledgement that the basic psychological process (BPP) in which participants were engaging is in fact identity formation. Applying the Representation coding family, it can be seen that participants are evaluating work-life interaction by conceptualising the ‘work-life’ construct quite distinctly in terms of identity formation. Thus the core category CONNECTEDNESS is confirmed as the most applicable, relevant and explanatory of all the categories because it reflects the underlying process of identity formation that is occurring. By conceptualising CONNECTEDNESS in this way, the core category can be viewed as both a process, an outcome and a conceptualisation related to the research area of interest, work-life interaction. Confirmation of CONNECTEDNESS as the core category, and identity formation as the BPP, directed the literature review in the first instance to the areas of organisational psychology and identification.

3.7 Conclusion

Codes, concepts and categories to emerge from the open and selective coding processes described above ultimately coalesce around the core category of Connectedness. 88 key point codes were grouped into 20 concepts, reflecting similarities between them. Four categories then emerged at a higher level of

conceptualisation; Perceptions, Events, Levels and Connectedness. Using Glaser's (1978) coding families in the first instance, relationships between the categories were explored in order to determine the core process that was occurring. It was evident that in the process of evaluating work-life interaction, participant responses were informed by a distinctly self-referential conceptualisation of 'work' centred on identity and connectedness with the organisation. By this stage, Connectedness was emerging as an ongoing process, punctuated by distinguishable 'turning points', or episodes of affinity and dis-identification with different organisational foci. These turning point events appeared to be cued by changed perceptions of the organisation and participants' view of their relationships within, and status as members of, the organisation. The outcome of turning point events was apparently a change in the degree of identification overlap across the global MNC entity, national subsidiary and local work-group organisational levels. It is this immediate or current, state of identification that appeared to be the basis for evaluating work-life interaction; participants were 'positioning' themselves in terms of organisational identity.

Clearly then, the research problem that emerged from the initial area of enquiry did not reflect the dominant constructs in the work –life literature, such as balance, satisfaction or conflict. Nor did the data point to the linking mechanisms most frequently used to investigate the work-life interface, such as spillover, compensation or segregation. Instead, the emergent theory suggests that at the heart of employees' subjective evaluation of work-life interaction is a multi-foci, episode-centred process of identity formation that focuses on organisational membership.

The overarching theoretical concept was re-labelled Prioritising Identity. Within this, two stages were clearly distinguishable: Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self.

As discussed in Chapter 2, grounded theory researchers must remain particularly alert to the dangers of ‘forcing’ the theory at this stage, conscious of the need to allow the theoretical model to emerge from the data and analysis process. Consequently, while sampling of existing theoretical literature continued during the selective coding stage, it was deliberately limited to those areas explicitly directed by the emerging categories and preliminary hypotheses. Chapter 4 presents the literature on organisational identification and work-life satisfaction to highlight the relevance and fit of the developing theory and to situate the study in an appropriate context; it is a significant part of ‘put[ting] the categories back together again, but in conceptually different ways’ (Punch, 2005: 210). Although the chapters of this thesis are presented in a linear fashion to aid comprehension, again it is important to note that the entire process of developing the grounded theory is in fact non-linear and cyclical in nature. Both this chapter and the next therefore constitute the combined ‘write up’ of the emergent theory. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the study’s theoretical propositions, learning outcomes and implications for theory and practice.

CHAPTER 4

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Introduction

The research problem emerging from the initial process of analysis suggested that at the heart of employees' subjective evaluation of work-life interaction is a multi-foci, episode-centred process of identity formation. This was markedly different to the dominant constructs in the work-life literature such as balance, satisfaction and conflict. As part of the constant comparison process, relevant literature was reviewed to synthesise existing knowledge about emergent themes into the developing theory. This thesis proposes that organisational identification is a *process*, punctuated by specific turning points (episodes of affinity and dis-identification) and resulting in changing degrees of identification overlap across organisational referents. Specific factors - generally conceptualised in the literature as antecedents to organisational identification as a static state of being-were instead indicated as *cues* for these turning point events in the process of identification. Hence, relevant literature on identification overlap and turning point events was examined to develop a more thorough understanding of these aspects of the theory.

The literature review was comparative in the sense that relevant sources of literature were compared, although not with each other but with key elements of the emergent theory. The extant literature was treated as any other source of data would be, theoretically sampled (i.e. selected on the basis of categories central to the theory) and incorporated in support of the emerging propositions. The emergent streams of literature presented the challenge of considering concepts and

constructs that were either unknown previously or significantly different to expectation. This notion of expectation is incongruent with grounded theory, and therefore the process of reflective memoing was adopted to integrate these expectations into the analysis process, as with all other sources of data. In this way, the data, and not preconceived expectations, clearly directed the literature review.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, placing researcher in a situation of having to contemplate unfamiliar areas within the literature is considered a strength of grounded theory; researcher preconceptions and over-familiarity with specific bodies of research may obscure the core concern emerging from the data. Hence, the literature review is situated so that it occurs *after* the first phase of comparison has generated preliminary theoretical categories; indeed, Glaser (2009: 6) posits that ‘novices without a literature search in the substantive area to distract or force them are more open to the emergent and soon find their thought emerging from the constant comparisons in the data’. The intention was to use the literature to situate this study’s specific theoretical contribution and also to illustrate how this study’s conceptualisation of a particular phenomenon, organisational identification, differs from, or extends, the extant body of knowledge. The emerging theory is not presented as confirmation of previous theories or research, rather the literature provides an additional test for this theory’s ‘fit’ and ‘relevance’ (Glaser, 1978) in the substantive area of enquiry.

The processes of constant comparison and theoretical sampling are at the heart of the grounded theory method (Glaser, 1978, 1998; see chapter 2); they occur simultaneously as the theory-building progresses to incorporate reviews of

relevant literature, recoding of the data, assessment of secondary sources of material and sampling of possible theoretical frameworks. Identifying the core category in the data was a critical point in the grounded theory process (Glaser, 1978, 1998; Punch, 2005). Chapter 3 reported the emergence of categories and the formation of patterns and interrelations between them which confirmed the core category of Identification. As the theory solidified, more incidents were compared and irrelevant properties of the categories were removed. Relevant literature was integrated into a more conceptually dense description of those interrelated categories.

4.1.1 Expectations

While following the classic grounded theory method, it was evident that my extensive experience in the labour movement, professional consultancy work and a developing career in academia had resulted in some strong preconceived notions of how MNC subsidiary employees might evaluate their work-life satisfaction. I expected to hear many of the same interpretations of the work-life interface that I had heard before, specifically around the (non)availability of time and resources. Having been a trade union official for more than a decade, I was accustomed to intervening in exchanges between employers and employees about issues relating to the management of work and non-work commitments. Negotiating enterprise agreements with MNC subsidiaries, promoting union policy, and assisting individuals in their personal negotiations at the work-group level all instilled in me quite specific notions of ‘work’, ‘life’ and the potential conflict between them. Based on these experiences, I expected to find that individual employees would respond to questions about the work-life interface primarily in terms of job

satisfaction and work autonomy, or the degree to which they could control the responsibilities of paid work and consequently cope with competing ‘life’ demands.

My familiarity with the academic literature on the work-life interface was limited, and this was ultimately an advantage in the grounded theory process. I did have some preconceived ideas about the suitability of the work-life ‘balance’ construct, and a very general awareness of the debate among academics and practitioners about associated constructs such as work-family balance and work-family conflict. In respect of MNC organisations, my background in the literature was similarly limited; most of my reading had been in general HRM and international HRM strategy (e.g. recruitment, retention, and expatriation) and cross-cultural issues. I expected ideas related to job satisfaction, conflict with family and MNC culture to emerge as the central themes in how MNC subsidiary evaluate their work-life satisfaction. However, the themes to emerge, and the literature reviewed, were significantly different.

4.1.2 Emergent literature streams

Thorough review of the emergent categories, the connections between them and the preliminary theoretical propositions revealed that participants were responding to the research question *Tell me about the interaction between your work and life* in a way that was quite unexpected.

The first surprise in the developing theory was the relative absence of job-specific concepts. Participants rarely mentioned their job role, or satisfaction/

dissatisfaction with it. Rather, they focused on their cumulative impressions of the organisation and their relationship to it as members. The preliminary core category Connectedness contained concepts such as ‘being part of something bigger’, ‘values alignment’ and ‘feeling good’. This prompted a search of the literature for self-esteem, self-definition, psychological bond and organisational membership. The search revealed a well-established research stream in the organisational psychology literature of *organisational identification*. As relevant literature was incorporated into the emergent theory, the preliminary core category Connectedness was re-labelled Identification.

The second surprise related to participants’ interpretation of specific events in their working life. These were significant episodes in the employees’ work experience that they specifically recalled as such. It was surprising to find that the concepts contained within the category Events all reflected employees’ evaluation of those events in terms of the perceived change in individual-organisation relationship they brought about. For example, a key concept in this category was ‘change’, which contained the property ‘orientation (+ve/-ve)’ and the dimensions ‘before’ and ‘after’. A search of the literature on change events, critical events and affective events suggested that these concepts related to a comparatively underexplored concept in the identification literature, *turning points*.

The third area of particular interest was the conceptualisation of Identification as a *process*, rather than an outcome. Further review of the identification literature suggested that this is also an underexplored, but potentially illuminating, approach to organisational identification.

The category Levels prompted a review of the literature on MNC organisational structure, specifically in relation to organisational identification. MNCs are multi-level organisations, and *multiple foci of identification* were revealed as a specific concern in the identification literature. Concepts in this category included ‘crossover’, ‘competition’ and ‘change’. The review of literature on multiple and competing foci of identification supported the proposition that changing degrees of identification overlap across organisational referents is an element of the identification process.

This chapter illustrates the role of the existing literature in the reconstruction of the data around the core category. Elevating the concepts and categories to a theoretical level is inherently cyclical in nature and recording it in a traditionally linear fashion has the potential to detract from what is a defining feature of the grounded theory process (Glaser, 1978). This chapter is therefore presented in such a way as to capture, as much as possible, the dynamic and fluid process of theoretical sampling, literature review and interpretation that culminated in specific propositions about how MNC subsidiary employees incorporate organisational identification into their evaluation of work-life satisfaction. Each key area of the literature has overlapping components with the others and no one aspect of the literature fully explains the emergent themes from the data (Figure 7). Within each section of the literature review are statements explaining how that the literature contributed to a particular aspect of the developing theory. The remainder of this chapter is organised as follows: (1) discussion of the key components of organisational identification as they relate to this research; (2) discussion of turning points and their application to organisational identification;

- (3) a discussion of a potential process model of organisational identification; and
- (4) review of the literature on the work-life construct.

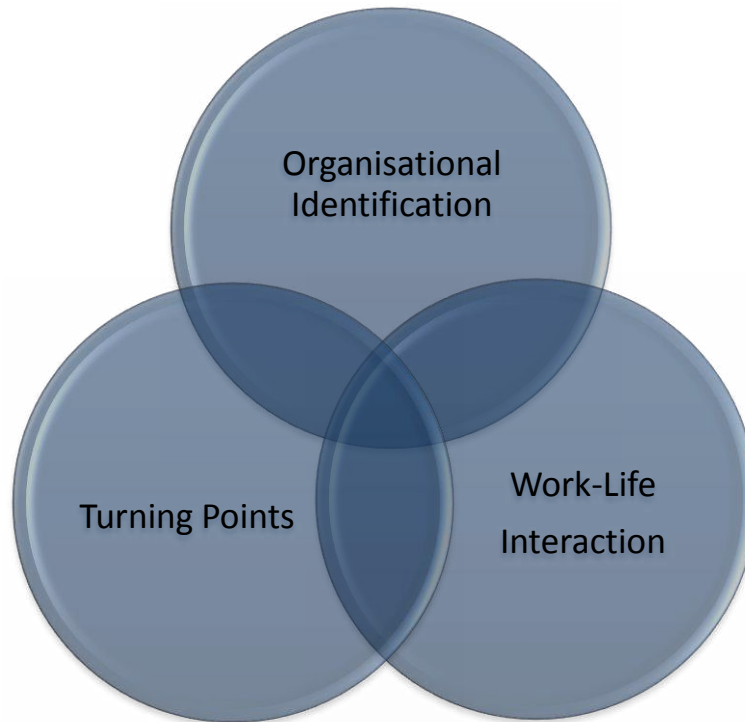


Figure 7: Literature streams contributing to the emergent theory

4.2 Identification

There is strong empirical evidence that identification is distinguishable from other closely related constructs such as commitment and engagement (cf. Guatam, Van Dick & Wagner, 2004; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Riketta, 2005; Van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher & Christ, 2004; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). The theoretical construct of identification is rooted in the exploration of individual identity, therefore ‘to understand identification, one must first understand identity’ (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008: 327). The dominant theoretical approach to understanding identity is Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1978;

Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In summary, SIT assumes that at the micro-level, people ascribe themselves a 'personal identity', recognising their 'unique sense of self' with particular attributes, traits and interests (Postmes & Jetten, 2006: 260). These personal identities are unique to each individual and are what create distinction between individual members of a group (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994).

This theory also assumes that people maintain both a personal identity and a number of 'social identities' in order to situate themselves in the broader social world. To simplify the process, individuals categorise themselves and others into various social groups, subsequently assigning themselves to particular categories as they construct a self-concept. SIT proposes that people will assign themselves, consciously or subconsciously, to the social groups that provide the most positive emotional attachment and promote positive self-esteem (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identities are shared by members of a particular group and are used to distinguish between groups (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008); they differ from personal identities because they are concerned with a different level of self and self-perception.

4.2.1 Organisational identification

The conceptualisation of identity in an organisational context has been the subject of increasing scrutiny in the academic literature since the 1950s. A review of the literature reveals a diverse and large body of work ranging from quite narrow to quite broad conceptualisations of the construct. Foote (1951: 17) described organisational identification as the 'appropriation of and commitment to a

particular identity or series of identities’; he suggested that individuals’ self-conception as an organisational member will motivate them to act on behalf of the organisation (self-conception was later elaborated by Tajfel and Turner (1979) as self-categorisation and it underpins the influential Social Identity Theory).

Researchers in organisational behaviour and social psychology have since tended to focus on translating the social identity approach into an organisational context by viewing organisational identification as a unique construct (cf. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Pratt, 1998; Rousseau, 1998; Tyler, 1999; Van Knippenberg, 2000).

In this vein, Ashforth and Mael (1989) influentially defined the nature and degree of individuals’ identification with an organisation as a specific form of social identification. In particular, they emphasise that ‘self-categorisation’ describes how individuals perceive that they are psychologically intertwined with the fate of their organisation. Hogg and Terry (2000) propose that because work plays such a vital role in an individual’s identity-building process, identification with the organisation is actually more important to people than identification based on other category such as age, gender or ethnicity. Certainly there has been a significant rise in attention to organisational identification in recent decades, as academics and management practitioners seek to explore the possible financial and productivity benefits arising from an individual’s psychological bond, or identification, with an organisation (cf. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown, 1969; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Harquail, 1998; Lee, 1971; Patchen, 1970; Riketta, 2005; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; Rotondi, 1975; Rousseau, 1998; van Dick, 2001, 2004).

4.2.2 Motives for organisational identification

Ashforth *et al.* (2008: 328-329) place self-definition (how the individual cognitively defines their personal identity), importance (the value ascribed to membership of the group), and affect (how the individual feels about group membership) at the heart of organisational identification. A consistent theme in contemporary research is the view organisational identification is linked to an individual's association of their collective identity with some deeper personal psychological meaning; identification is seen as resulting in a sense of connection, order and stability (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Hogg, 2000; Hogg & Mullin, 1999).

Ashforth *et al.*'s (2008) approach suggests that individuals pursue a positive organisational identity by seeking positive intergroup distinctiveness (Hogg & Terry, 2000), which is in turn motivated by a need for self-esteem (cf. Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Hogg & Mullin, 1999). In fact, the bulk of organisational identification research focuses on the motivational processes that drive identification, or *why* individuals do or do not identify (Pratt, 2001). Motives equate to the psychological needs that impel individual behaviours and intentions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Such motives have been found to include affiliation needs (Cheney, 1983), self-efficacy (George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Pratt, 1998) and positive self-esteem (Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2000). More specifically, there is evidence that a range of motives influence identification at different levels in organisations (cf. Riketta, 2008; Vignoles *et al.*, 2006). For example, some work-group characteristics have been found to fulfil identification motives such as uncertainty reduction (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000) and self-esteem (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000), while some

organisational attributes, such as prestige and distinctiveness, appeal to identification motives (Dukerich *et al.*, 2002; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Ashforth and Johnson (2001) identify five other self-related motives for identification: self-knowledge, self-expression, self-coherence, self-continuity and self-distinctiveness.

4.2.3 Related constructs

Identification was indicated as the core category because it occurs frequently, connects the categories in the data with their properties and is flexible enough to account for the nuances in the data (Glaser, 1998). The literature review was also directed to related constructs which were investigated because they ‘all involve a sense of attachment to or resonance with the organization’ (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008: 332). These constructs include employee engagement, organisational citizenship, perceived organisational support and organisational commitment.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is defined in the academic literature as ‘a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performance’ (Saks, 2006: 602). Kahn (1990, 1992) popularised the argument that organisational engagement arises when employees are ‘psychologically present’ in their interaction with the workplace; in other words, when employees’ beliefs, values, thoughts, feelings, inclinations and relationships are all unrestrained they will manifest in positive behaviours at work. Kahn (1990) suggests that three factors promote employee engagement: *meaningfulness* (when employees feel their work

relates to some broader or deeper objective), *psychological safety* (when employees feel that they are unlikely to encounter problems, or can reasonably expect to manage them without negative consequences) and *availability* (the ability to access the necessary resources such as energy or exertion).

Subsequent studies have examined this definition of engagement from a range of perspectives. For example, burnout researchers (cf. Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker & Lloret, 2006; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) describe engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout, defining it as the *energy, involvement and efficacy* of employees' interaction with work and their organisation. Rothbard (2001) expanded Kahn's (1990) definition to propose that engagement involves two other specific components: *attention* (the amount of time one spends thinking about a role) and *absorption* (the intensity of focus on one's role). Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma & Bakker (2002:74) emphasise the enduring nature of engagement as relevant to organisational development, describing it as 'a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior'.

The definition of engagement in the practitioner literature is often used interchangeably with other organisational behaviour concepts such as commitment and job involvement (cf. Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004; Saks, 2006), however 'in the academic literature it has been defined as a distinct and unique construct' (Saks, 2006: 602). In addition, the terms 'employee engagement' and 'work engagement' are frequently used interchangeably (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). This potentially blurs the distinction between an

employees' relationship with their *work* as opposed to their relationship with the *organisation* and has exacerbated the problem of clearly conceptualising 'engagement' in the academic literature. Schaufeli and Bakker (2010: 15) recently evaluated the development of employee work engagement as a distinct concept in academia and concluded that:

Although a partial overlap is observed between work engagement and personal initiative, job involvement, positive affectivity and flow, the concept of engagement cannot be reduced to any of these. Furthermore, work engagement is conceptually distinct from extra-role behavior, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and workaholism.

Similarly, Saks (2006) argues that engagement is distinguishable theoretically from related constructs, proposing that social exchange theory (SET) can be effectively employed as the theoretical framework within which to analyse employee engagement with work. SET posits that the interaction between parties in a relationship, such as employer-employee, generates obligations and 'a state of reciprocal interdependence' (Saks, 2006: 603). As such, benefits and rewards proffered by one party are reciprocated with responses or actions by the other, thus developing over time relationships that are 'trusting, loyal and mutual' (Saks, 2006: 603). From a SET perspective, employee engagement is maximised when individuals receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their organisation; they feel obliged to respond in kind and benefit the organisation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Thus, individuals repay their organisation '... through their level of engagement. That is, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization' (Saks, 2006: 603).

However engagement did not satisfactorily explain the conceptual linkages between categories in this study's data for two reasons. Firstly, it failed to encapsulate the nuances of 'belongingness' (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979), or a psychological bond with the organisation in the way that corresponded with the participant data. Secondly, the theoretical rationale for employee engagement is grounded in Social Exchange Theory which is concerned with the effects of reciprocal interdependence between employees and their organisation (cf. Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Robinson *et al.*, 2004). None of the codes or concepts in this study suggested that this was the major concern of the participants; in contrast, 'connectedness' appeared to be more closely related to organisational membership than exchange or rewards.

Organisational citizenship behaviour

A number of the concepts identified in the data suggested that employees engage in behaviour that is discretionary, or beyond that which is rewarded by the organisation's formal reward structure. Smith, Organ and Near (1983) termed this type of employee behaviour 'organisational citizenship behaviour' (OCB), initially identifying two components; altruism and general compliance. Altruism, or 'helping behaviours' does not necessarily directly result in specific instances of organisational productivity; rather the positive effect on the organisation is cumulative over time (Organ, Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 2006). General compliance behaviours include low absenteeism and a general propensity for employees to act in the best interests of the organisation (e.g. return from breaks promptly, complete work on time) (Organ *et al.*, 2006). Organ (1988) subsequently deconstructed this basic typology and added new dimensions of

OCB: courtesy (minimising intra-group conflict); conscientiousness (behaviour that goes well beyond the minimum role requirements); sportsmanship (adapting to changed, or less than ideal, circumstances without undue complaint); and civic virtue (maintaining an active interest in, and defending, the organisation).

Organ's (1988) reconceptualisation of OCB as a multi-dimensional construct led to a refined definition of OCB as work-related behaviours that are discretionary, not related to the formal organisational reward system, and, in the aggregate, promote the effective functioning of the organisation. To test this empirically, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990) utilised Organ's five-dimension conceptualisation as the basis for developing a 24-item scale to measure OCB. The OCB scales developed by Podsakoff *et al.* (1990) have informed a substantial amount of contemporary OCB research into the relationship between OCB and organisational performance. For example, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrach (2000) found that the behaviours of civic virtue and sportsmanship were both significantly related to indices of sales performance. Podsakoff, Ahearne and MacKenzie (1997) found that helping behavior was significantly related to product quality. Walz and Niehoff (2000) found that helping behavior was significantly related to operating efficiency, customer satisfaction, and quality of performance. More recently, Podsakoff, Blume, Whiting and Podsakoff (2009) assert that OCBs are positively related to unit-level performance.

Organ's (1988) definition is potentially pertinent in the context of this research because it suggests two things; firstly, that employees *choose* to engage in OCBs; and secondly, that OCBs lead to positive organisational outcomes. The OCB

construct was considered a possible candidate for core category in this research however it does not in itself adequately establish connections between *all* the categories or account for all the nuances in the data (Glaser 1978, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In addition, like engagement, OCB failed to explain the element of psychological attachment that was integral to the core category identification.

Perceived organisational support

Perceived organisational support (POS) is the degree to which employees believe that their organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Huntington & Sowa, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS is generally understood to describe a positive reciprocity dynamic with employees, where employees improve their performance to repay perceived commitment from the organisation (here the supervisor acts as an agent, or representative of the organisation) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Organisational support theory (cf. Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995) suggests that employees form a general perception about the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. High perceived organisational support would consequently increase employees' desire to help the organisation reach its objectives and increase their affective commitment to the organisation (a discussion of the commitment construct follows in this chapter). Behavioural outcomes of POS may include increased in-role and extra-role performance and decreased withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and turnover (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986; Hekman, Steensma, Bigley & Hereford, 2009). Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis of more than 370 studies since 1999 found clear and consistent

relationships between POS and behavioural outcomes beneficial to the organisation.

Organisational support theory does incorporate the idea of psychological attachment that is a central feature in the preliminary core category ‘connectedness’:

[T]he caring, approval, and respect connoted by POS should fulfill socioemotional needs, leading workers to incorporate organizational membership and role status into their social identity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002: 699).

POS has also been found to be distinct from related constructs such as leader-member exchange (Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997), supervisor support (Shore & Tetrick, 1991), job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Shore & Tetrick, 1991), and affective commitment (Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003; Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). However, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) suggest that POS is but one potential facet of a more complex and fundamental process of identity-building. Because it failed to establish a strong connection between the categories in the data, POS was discounted as the core category in the developing theory; the literature review instead turned to those constructs more frequently associated in the literature with organisational membership and identity-building.

Quality of working life (QWL)

In general, management and industrial psychology scholars define quality of working life (QWL) as a construct that deals with the well-being of employees. There is no formal definition of QWL, however most agree that it differs from job satisfaction because job satisfaction is one outcome of QWL (e.g. Champoux, 1981; Efraty and Sirgy, 1990; Hackman & Suttle, 1977; Kabanoff, 1980; Kahn, 1990; Lawler, 1992; Near, Rice & Hunt, 1980; Quinn and Shepard, 1974; Quinn & Staines, 1979; Staines, 1980). It is suggested that QWL also affects satisfaction in other life domains such as family life, social life and financial life. QWL is therefore a more holistic construct than job satisfaction, involving the effect of the workplace on job satisfaction, satisfaction in non-work life domains, personal happiness and well being. QWL is considered an important construct in organisational theorising because there is evidence showing that a happy employee is a productive, dedicated and loyal employee (cf. Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003). QWL has also been shown to have a significant impact on organisational identification, job satisfaction, job involvement, job effort, job performance and organisational turnover (Efraty and Sirgy, 1990; Lewellyn & Wibker, 1990).

Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel and Lee (2001: 242) define QWL as ‘satisfaction of a variety of needs through resources, activities, and outcomes stemming from participation in the workplace’. Thus, they propose that need satisfaction in one of the major life domains, work life, will contribute to satisfaction in other major life domains such as family life and home life. The need satisfaction approach to QWL follows models developed by Maslow (1954), McLelland (1961), Herzberg (1966), and

Alderfer (1972). The basic proposition of this approach is that people have basic needs that they seek to fulfil through their work. Employees therefore derive satisfaction from their jobs to the extent that their jobs meet those needs.

Many aspects of the QWL construct resonate in the categories and concepts in this research. Need satisfaction was considered a potentially relevant factor in the developing theory, and was suggested by concepts such as ‘feeling good’ and ‘values’ in the preliminary core category Connectedness. However QWL was not found to adequately explain the central element of *process*, nor did it connect the categories Levels and Events.

Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment was seminally defined by Mowday *et al.* (1979: 226) as ‘the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization’. Allen and Meyer (1990) subsequently synthesised the developing research into a multidimensional organisational commitment concept with three components: affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment refers to the emotional bond between employees and the organisation: employees with strong affective commitment continue their organizational membership because they want to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1990, cited in Guatam *et al.*, 2004: 304). Continuance commitment refers to employees’ continued membership of an organisation because of the perceived costs of leaving (e.g. loss of income, reduction in facilities) or the lack of alternative employment opportunities (cf. Solinger, van Olffen & Roe, 2008). Normative commitment refers to the sense of obligation employees feel towards the organisation due to work culture or other social norms (Baruch & Cohen, 2007).

The components of organisational commitment as defined by Allen and Meyer (1990) were reflected in the categories and subcategories in the data, however the core category, Identification, reflected a conceptual grounding not fully captured by the three-component model of organisational commitment. Two factors appeared to be relevant in this respect. Firstly, the data coding identified ‘self-concept’ as a subcategory of identification, in particular the degree to which employees incorporate membership of the organisation into their personal identity (cf. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam, Powell & Turner, 2000; Van Dick et al., 2004). In contrast, organisational commitment ‘focuses mainly on the attitudes that an individual holds towards his or her organization because of exchange-based factors’ (Van Dick *et al.*, 2004: 185). Theoretical coding employed the code ‘conceptualisation’ to help explain the relationship between the categories ‘evaluation’ and ‘identification’. When employees evaluated their work-life satisfaction, they did so by conceptualising work-life satisfaction in terms of the degree to which they felt identified with different organisational referents. This can also be seen as the degree to which individuals perceived their various organisational identities to overlap, or be ‘nested’ within their personal identity. This means that the central concern of the participants was not ‘How do I *feel* towards the organisation?’, but rather the extent to which being a member of the organisation related to their personal identity, i.e. ‘Who *am* I?’. While organisational commitment is fundamentally attitudinal (Gautam *et al.*, 2004), coding suggested that a suitable construct that explained the core concern would actually be self-referential, or self-definitional.

The construct of organisational commitment overlaps to a large degree with, and is most often confused with, the construct of organisational identification (Ashforth et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005). Whereas the construct of organisational commitment failed to explain the self-definitional aspect of the category identification, it was evident that the closely-related construct of organisational identification did provide a satisfactory conceptual ‘bridge’ between each of the categories. The literature review subsequently returned to organisational identification to locate other categories, concepts and theoretical codes in the literature.

4.2.4 Dimensions of organisational identification

Many conceptualisations of organisational identification are based on Ashforth and Mael’s (1989: 34) seminal definition as the ‘perception of oneness or belongingness to’ the organisation (cf. Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Hall, Schneider & Nygren, 1970; Pratt, 1998; Rousseau, 1998). This implies that, to a large extent, organisational identification is a cognitive process, whereby individuals are aware of their membership of the organisational group and recognise a congruence of personal and organisational values (Riketta, 2005).

However some, such as Bergami and Bagozzi (2000), Harquail (1998) and Van Dick (2001, 2004), contend that organisational identification is not only cognitive but also emotional; they propose that employees who identify with an organisation link their ‘organizational membership to [their] self-concept, either cognitively (e.g. feeling a part of the organization; internalizing organizational values), emotionally (pride in membership), or both’ (Riketta, 2005: 361). These

assertions essentially elaborate Tajfel's (1978: 63) original distinction between personal and social identity:

[Social identity is] that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.

Tajfel's (1982: 229) subsequent and more detailed definition of group

identification has three components:

- A cognitive component, which is the knowledge of a certain group membership;
- An affective component, which describes the emotional attachment to this group; and
- An evaluative component which is the value connotation assigned to that group.

In other words, individuals know they are part of a particular group (*identify as a group member*), feel an emotional attachment to that group (*identify with the group*), and positively or negatively evaluate the group's characteristics. In terms of temporal or causal sequencing of organisational identification, van Dick *et al.* (2004) assert that cognition, or self-categorisation, is the necessary first step in the identity-building process (for alternative arguments in favour of the primacy of affect, see Zajonc, 1984). Adopting the SIT approach means accepting that an individual must realise that he or she is a member of a certain group before any emotional attachment can be formed:

[F]irst an individual considers him- or herself as a member of an organization, which is a cognitive process. Only if this cognitive identification is given, the other dimensions... come into play and the individual can identify with the organization in terms of affective, evaluative and behavioural commitment (van Dick, 2001: 272).

Having already acknowledged this cognition in employees' self-evaluation of their work-life satisfaction, a comparison of research memos and concepts in the data suggested that the affective and evaluative components of identification were indeed present. It is suggested that an individual's organisational identification incorporates these multiple dimensions. Indeed, Whetten (cited in Albert, Ashforth, Gioia, Godfrey, Reger & Whetten, 1998) likened identities to onions, suggesting that as each layer is revealed tears (strong emotions) are elicited that are essentially the core of the individuals' identity. In terms of the developing grounded theory, the 'layers' of identification are found to be relevant because they are indicated in the categories and subcategories of the data.

4.3 Organisational identification in multinational corporations (MNCs)

As interest in the study of MNCs increases, the challenges associated with applying existing organisational theories in a cross-national and cross-cultural context become more apparent. At the same time, there is a growing body of literature that explicitly acknowledges the organisational implications of employee identification at more than one organisational level (cf. Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Bartels, Pruyn, de Jong & Joustra, 2007; Baruch & Winkelmann-Gleed, 2002; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer & Lloyd, 2006; Larson & Pepper, 2003; Moreland & Levine, 2001; Reade, 2001 a,b; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; Scott, 1997; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Despite this, identification research in the context of MNCs remains underexplored. What research there is, has predominantly explored aspects of identification with separate levels of the organisation (e.g. MNC and subsidiary) (cf. Gregersen & Black, 1992; Reade, 2001 a,b), as opposed to theorising with a

view to developing a more integrative conceptualisation of multi-foci identification in MNCs.

4.3.1 Foci of organisational identification

The data analysis pointed to the multi-foci nature of the organisation as a relevant factor in the process of identification. Simultaneous identification with different levels of the organisation was both explicit in the interview data, and emerged as a subcategory of the core category Identification. Many of the foundation studies of organisational identification tend to consider identification with and commitment to the organisation as a single entity, however consensus among scholars in this field (cf. Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Meyer and Allen, 1997; Becker, 1992; Becker, Billings, Eveleth & Gilbert, 1996; Ellemers, de Gilder & van den Heuvel, 1998; Zaccaro & Dobbins, 1989) is that this narrow conceptualisation is problematic:

It would be an oversimplification to depict an organization as a single indivisible entity, without acknowledging that organizations are also networks of groups that may elicit feelings of identification in themselves (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000: 139).

There is now recognition that organizations offer their members multiple group memberships, and therefore potentially competing foci of identification (Friedkin & Simpson, 1985; Zaccaro & Dobbins, 1989; Guest *et al.*, 1993; Reade, 2001b; Yoon, Baker & Ho, 1994). There are also other foci of identification explored in the literature, such as union commitment (Snape, Redman & Chan, 2000) and identification with supervisors (Meyer & Allen, 1997); however most of the available empirical research is concerned with four examples:

- Identification with one's own career;
- Identification with one's work unit or work-group (Brown & Williams, 1984; Brown et al., 1986; Guest et al., 1993);
- Identification with the organization as a whole; and
- Identification with a profession or occupational group (Brown, 1969; Lee, 1971; Rotondi, 1975).

The first of these, career identification, can be considered an individual-level construct, while the other three are oriented at the group level. Multinational organisations are, by definition, multi-level in structure. Within the category Identification, the subcategory 'levels' contained the concepts 'overlap' and 'competition'. This suggested that identification with multiple levels, or referents, within the multinational organisation may be occurring simultaneously. (cf. Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Bartels, Pruyn, de Jong & Joustra, 2007; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Larson & Pepper, 2003; Moreland & Levine, 2001; Riketta & van Dick, 2005).

Three distinct foci of identification were distinguished in the process of coding: global MNC entity, national subsidiary, and local work-group. Categories, subcategories and properties related to these three foci also suggested that two of them, the national subsidiary and local work-group, were consistently viewed as overlapping to some degree. In contrast, the global MNC identity was often conceived of as quite separate to, and distinct from, the national subsidiary and work-group identities.

4.3.2 Antecedents of organisational identification

One of the first to explicitly examine identification in MNCs was Reade (2001b), whose influential model of organisational identification in MNCs introduced the concept of ‘dual organisational identification’. Reade (2001b) draws on the pioneering work of Ashforth and Mael (1989) in this area, situating a MNC-specific model of antecedents in a social identity theory (SIT) framework. In addition to examining the antecedent factors proposed by Ashforth and Mael (1989), Reade (2001b) includes several other factors derived from the broader group identification and organisational identification literatures (cf. Benkhoff, 1997; Brown, 1969; Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Lawler, 1992; Lee, 1971). These additional factors ‘primarily reflect group belongingness, a central theme in social identity theory’ (Reade, 2001b: 1274). Reade’s central finding is that ‘there appear to be different antecedents to employee identification with the local subsidiary and with the MNC as a global entity’ (2001b: 1283). Reade (2001b) suggests that a given set of antecedents will predict identification with organisational referents that are distinct (subsidiary and the MNC global entity). Hence what follows is a review of Reade’s (2001b) proposed antecedents and observations about their relevance to this research project.

Internal respect

Organisational prestige and distinctiveness is described above as an ‘external’ image of the organisation; it is concerned with how the organisation is viewed by those outside it. The developing theory suggested that participants’ ‘internal’ view of their own status as an organisational member, specifically the level of respect

perceived to be accorded them by other organisational members, also influenced identification.

Extant research supports this concept's relationship to identification. Tyler and Blader's (2003) group engagement model proposes that individuals' organisational identification is affected not only by their evaluation of the organisation's status (external prestige and distinctiveness), but also by their own perceived organisational status (internal respect). An individual's self- that is, their personal identity- was conceptualised by Mead (1934) as a reflection of the approval and recognition that is gained from others. Employees essentially evaluate their self- worth through the respect they obtain from work colleagues, superiors and through their actual work (Hodson, 2001; Margolis, 2001). In organisational terms, respect is said to communicate critical information about one's self and influences one's self-definition (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Smith & Tyler, 1997; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2003). Organizational respect connotes that employees are treated with respect, dignity, and care for their positive self-perception through approval and positive valuation (Ramarajan, Barsade & Burack, 2008), while disrespect connotes disapproval or devaluation. Respect in organisations has been shown to have a range of consequences. Empirically, respect has been shown to positively impact on trust in management (Laschinger & Finegan, 2005), and individuals' perceptions of disrespect have been shown to influence both intentions to quit and actual turnover (Pinel & Paulin, 2005).

Individual-organisation values congruence

Following Social Identity Theory (SIT), organisational identification is fundamentally conceptualised as the congruence of individual and organisational values (Hall *et al.*, 1970; Pratt, 1998; Riketta, 2005). Ashforth and Mael's (1989: 34) seminal definition of organisational identification is 'the perception of oneness with or belongingness to' the organisation; this reflects the view that when people identify with their organisation they are incorporating their organisational membership into their self-definition, based on perceptions of shared characteristics and values (Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Elsbach, 1999). It was therefore unsurprising to find that 'individual-organisation values congruence' emerged in this study as a conceptual sub category related to identification.

Supervisor support

Reade (2001b: 1285) argues that 'having the support and appreciation of one's immediate supervisor also contributes significantly' to identification. She suggests that the interpersonal skill of individual managers will influence employees' feelings that they are trusted and respected members of the MNC subsidiary, and that this in turn will lead to pride in organisational membership and increased identification. Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003: 264) define perceived supervisor support (PSS) as '[the] perception concerning the extent to which their supervisor cares about [the employee] and values their contributions'. There are a range of approaches to PSS in the literature. Some scholars have investigated the relationship between PSS and specific aspects of the employee-supervisor relationship. For example, Rhoades *et al.* (2001) and Yoon and Thye (2000) study the PSS-affective commitment relationship, while Eisenberger *et al.* (2002)

consider the impact of PSS on employee retention. Other research conceptualises the supervisor's role in that relationship as an internal focus of organisational identification (cf. Becker, 1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Clugston, Howell & Dorfman, 2000; Gregersen, 1993; Stinglhamber, Bentein & Vandenberghe, 2003), perhaps becoming more relevant as organisations decentralise and the role of the supervisor is extended (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003). This concept clearly has potential application to the study of identification in multi-foci organisations such as MNCs; however the concern of this study's participants was the perceived support received *from* the supervisor, not the affective commitment felt *towards* the supervisor in reciprocation.

PSS has also been conceptualised as part of a process whereby employees develop exchange relationships with their supervisor quite independent of those with the organisation (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988; Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Wayne *et al.*, 1997). Described as leader-member exchange (LMX), it is suggested that when an employee receives favourable treatment from their supervisor (i.e. PSS), they feel obliged to reciprocate and equalise the exchange (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). Tangirala, Green and Ramanujam (2007) develop this proposition and argue that LMX ultimately facilitates organisational identification. Employees who engage in positive exchange relationships (LMX, including PSS) are therefore likely to feel increased internal respect, values congruence and heightened self-esteem (cf. Graen & Cashman, 1975; Tangirala *et al.*, 2007; Tyler & Blader, 2000).

Prestige and distinctiveness of the organisation

SIT posits that individuals aspire to belong to groups that have prestige and are distinctive because membership of these groups enhances the individual's self-esteem (cf. Ashforth, *et al.*, 2008; Christ, van Dick, Wagner & Stellmacher, 2003; Mayhew, 2007; Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Distinctiveness refers to the perception that the group's values and practices are distinguishable and unique from those of comparable groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Oakes & Turner, 1986). Prestige refers to the perceived relative status of the group when compared with comparable groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Chatman, Bell & Staw, 1986). In an organisational context, this means that individuals are expected to identify more strongly with their organisation when they perceive the organisation to be distinctive and prestigious. Identification at multiple levels has been found to be closely correlated with organisational prestige and distinctiveness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Bartels *et al.*, 2007; Benkhoff, 1997; Lee, 1971; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Vignoles *et al.*, 2006). Tyler and Blader (2003) also find that organisational identification is influenced by the individual's perceptions of the organisation's status, or external prestige. Bhattacharya, Rao and Glynn (1995), Dutton *et al.*, (1994), Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel (2001) all describe perceived external prestige as an antecedent of organisational identification. In the MNC context, Reade (2001b: 1284) proposes that this factor is the most influential in fostering employee identification with the subsidiary level of the organisation, because 'it fosters shared values and goals between the employee and the local company, pride in the company membership, and a positive attitude toward the company and its top management'.

A review of the literature on antecedents of organisational identification in MNCs revealed that the categories and subcategories in this study's data were not conceptually unique. In fact, there is an extensive body of work proposing that factors equivalent, or similar, to organisational prestige and distinctiveness, internal respect, individual-organisation values congruence and perceived supervisor support are antecedents of organisational identification. What was not well-developed in this literature, and where the emerging theory appears to make a contribution, is a conceptualisation of organisational identification in MNCs as a *process*. This thesis proposes that the process of identification is punctuated by specific turning points (episodes of affinity and dis-identification), resulting in changing degrees of identification overlap across organisational referents. In this context, rather than being antecedents of organisational identification as a static outcome, these factors were indicated as cues for specific turning point events in the process of identification. Relevant literature on identification overlap and turning point events was subsequently examined to develop a more thorough understanding of these aspects of the theory.

4.4 Identification overlap

The emerging theory suggested that the consequence of turning points in the process of identification was a change in the degree to which employees simultaneously identified with different organisational foci, also described as identification 'overlap' across referents (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). Reade's (2001b) study of the antecedents of organisational identification in MNCs was examined earlier in this chapter; her approach is one which inherently views identification as a noun, or as a stable and 'ultimate' state of being. A major criticism of this

approach is that multiple identifications are essentially viewed as separate identification with more than one entity, essentially ignoring the complexities of multi-level organisational membership (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Pratt, 1998; Vora & Kostova, 2007).

During coding, dimensions of properties in the data suggested that identification overlap is changeable. Specifically, the extent to which individuals identified with one or more organisational referents simultaneously was found to be subject to change following specific events, and was conceptualised as a consequence of those events. Research memos, codes and concepts supported Lawler's assertion that (1992: 327) organisations are in fact more accurately conceptualised as 'nested collectivities'.

Extending aspects of the pioneering work of Ashforth and Mael (1989), Vora and Kostova's (2007) model of dual organisational identification in MNCs is a more recent attempt to 'provide the missing link between the organizational behaviour, international management, and organizational theory literatures on this topic' (2007: 329). Their theoretical contribution responds to issue of simultaneous identifications by exploring the complex interrelationship between multiple identities and the specific challenges posed in a multinational business environment:

MNEs are characterised by extreme heterogeneity at the external level (e.g. culture, institutions), the intraorganizational level (e.g. strategic goals, management practices, and control mechanisms of each unit), and the individual level (e.g. nationalities, languages, values, and beliefs of employees). This makes it difficult for shared norms and values to emerge... [and] it also increases the difficulty of developing identification with multiple units, especially when those units are geographically separated (Vora & Kostova, 2007: 328).

Achieving organisational cohesion is considered particularly important for large, complex organisations such as MNCs (Adler, 1997; Gronhaug & Nordhaug, 1992; Reade, 2001b; Scullion, 1995). Vora and Kostova (2007) explore the implications of MNC complexity by developing a context-specific model of the antecedents and consequences of dual organisational identification, or simultaneous identification with two organisational referents, among MNC subsidiary managers. While social identity theory suggests that individuals alternate between different identifications depending on which identity is more salient (cf. Ashforth & Mael, 1989), the notion that individuals can identify with more than one organisational referent at the same time has gained support in the literature (cf. Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; George & Chattopadhyay, 2005; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000).

Building on the dual organisational identification theory, Vora and Kostova (2007: 596) find that because subsidiary managers ‘act as boundary spanners between the subsidiary, the headquarters and often other units of the MNC’, they simultaneously combine their identifications with multiple organisational foci (or referents). The success of this is said to be a key factor in predicting a range of positive organisational outcomes (for a description of MNC subsidiary manager roles and related organisational outcomes see Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1992, 1998; Gregersen & Black, 1992; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Kostova & Roth, 2003). This is a marked departure from, and one significantly more complex than, the view that multiple identifications are merely separate identifications with more than one organisational referent (cf. Christ *et al.*, 2003; Reade, 2001b; Scott,

1997). Indeed, Vora and Kostova explicitly encourage further extensions of their theoretical model to possibly include

the negative consequences of DOI, developing a dynamic model rather than a static model of this state, or focusing on other aspects of identification only recently emerging in the literature, such as dis-identification... The model can also serve as the basis for theorizing on multiple (rather than dual) identifications targeted at various groupings in the organization (e.g. team, division, company) (2007: 345).

The developing grounded theory in this project addresses a number of the research directions identified by Vora and Kostova (2007). To incorporate the ‘identification overlap’ concepts into the developing theory, two characteristics of identification - form and relative magnitude (Vora & Kostova, 2007) – were considered because they appear to effectively capture the changing degrees of identification resulting from turning point events. *Form* refers to the ‘conscious or even subconscious sense of the degree of overlap between identifications with each entity’ (2007: 332-3). *Relative magnitude* refers to ‘the relative strength of the sense of identification with each of the two entities... [a]n individual can identify more with one entity than the other, or can identify at comparable (i.e. equal) levels with both’ (2007: 331-2).

4.4.1 Form of identification

Studies of local managers’ psychological attachment to the subsidiary versus global organisation (cf. Gregersen & Black, 1992; Reade, 2001a,b; Vora & Kostova, 2007) have found that ‘managerial employees... draw a distinction between the local subsidiary and the global organisation in a way similar to that drawn between the subunit and wider organization in a domestic context’ (Reade, 2001b: 1272). These studies consider, from varying perspectives, the concept of

nested identities (e.g. a work-group is part of a department which in turn is part of a larger organisation, cf. Lawler, 1992) and multiple foci of identification in the context of multinational organisations (cf. Reade, 2001b).

Reade's (2001b) basic model of organisational identification in MNCs is reproduced at Figure 8. Despite the apparently theoretically significant overlap of identification foci, Reade adopts an approach which conceptualises multi-level organisations as having distinct foci of identification. The 'nesting' of the subsidiary organisation within the global identity in her modelling acknowledges that formal organisational levels (structures) overlap, but the model fails to conceptualise this in terms of simultaneous identification.

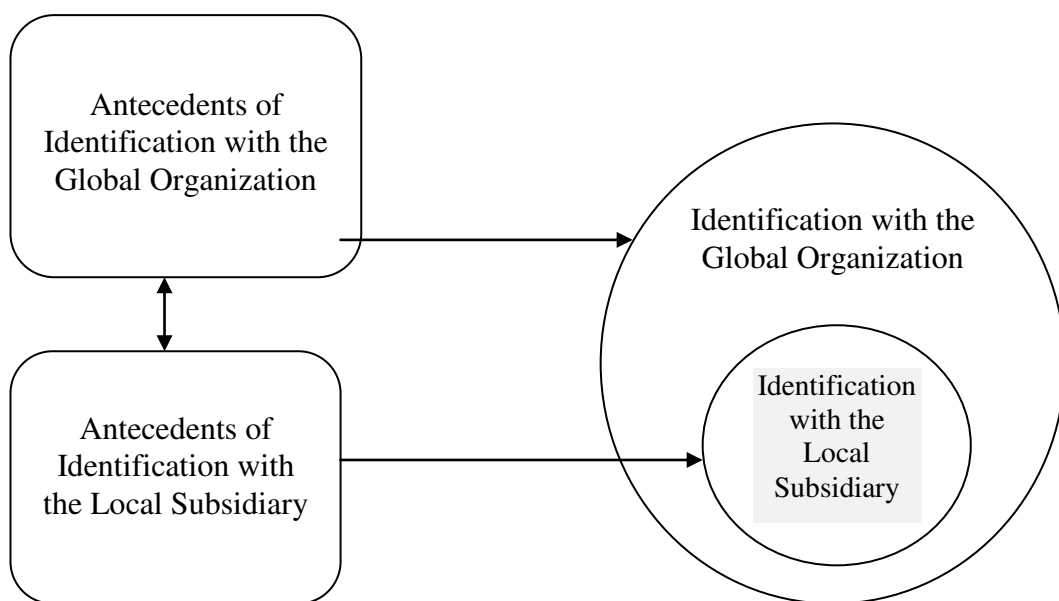


Figure 8: Basic model of organisational identification in MNCs (Reade, 2001b: 1273)

Developing the construct beyond such a 'boxes-and-arrows feel' model of antecedents and consequences of organisational identification (Ashforth *et al.*,

2008: 359), Vora and Kostova (2007) propose an extended conceptualisation of the *form* of dual organisational identification. Following Lawler (1992), they suggest that dual organisational identification (DOI) form ‘can be distinct, compound or nested’ (2007: 333) (refer Figure 9). Distinct DOI refers to identification with two entities in cognitively differentiated ways. For example, while an individual may identify with both the subsidiary and MNC, he or she ‘perceives such identifications to be separate and unrelated... the individual would generally switch between identifications rather than experience them simultaneously’ (Vora & Kostova, 2007: 333). Compound DOI recognises that some individuals perceive an overlap in identifications when the two organisational entities share some goals and values. At the other end of the continuum, nested DOI occurs when ‘an individual identifies with two entities and views one identification as superordinate to, and therefore encompassing, the other’ (Vora & Kostova, 2007: 333). In this case, the foci of identification may blur because of the closely interrelated nature of the dual targets (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Vora & Kostova, 2007).

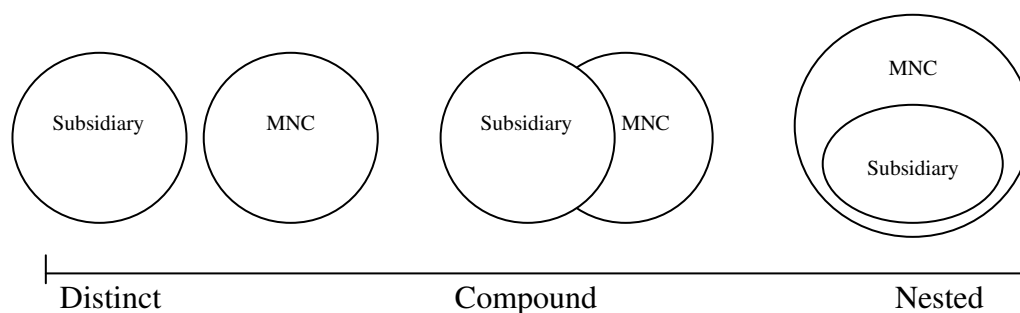


Figure 9: Form of organisational identification (Vora & Kostova, 2007: 333)

Importantly, Vora and Kostova (2007) suggest that the degree to which identification with different organisational referents is ‘nested’ is open to change. This is consistent with the conceptualisation of identification as a process. More specifically, it suggests that different foci of identification sometimes overlap and at other times are quite distinct.

4.4.2 Relative magnitude of identification

Vora and Kostova (2007) also propose that an individual can experience higher identification with the MNC compared with the subsidiary, higher identification with the subsidiary compared with the MNC, or comparable levels of identification with both referents (refer Figure 10).

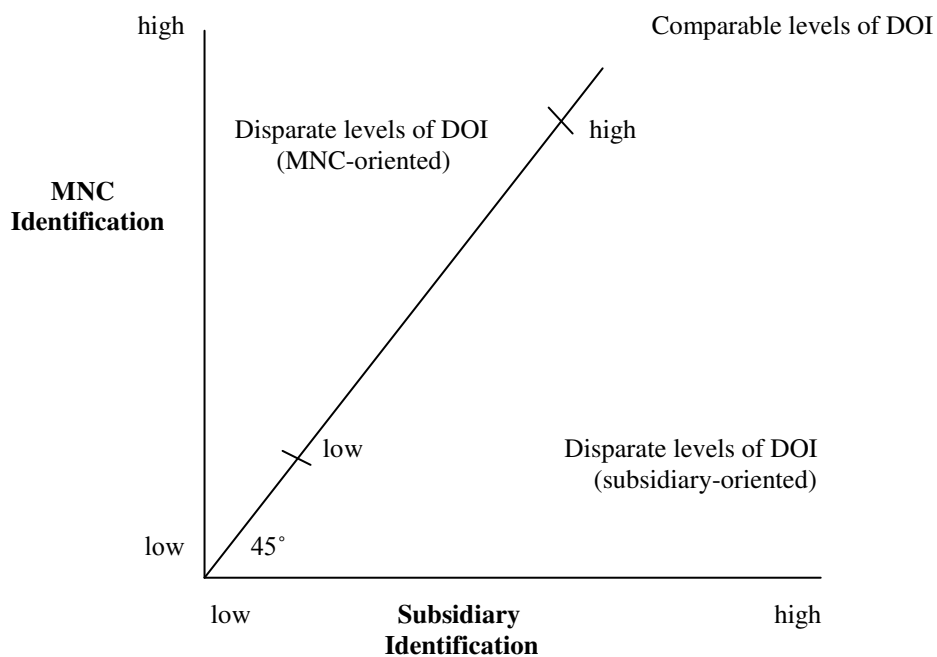


Figure 10: Relative magnitude of dual organisational identification (Vora & Kostova, 2007: 332)

This approach is underpinned by the conceptualisation of organisational identification as a cognitive state of psychological attachment, first articulated by Ashforth and Mael (1989) and grounded in social identity theory (SIT). This means that individuals incorporate their organisational identity into the process of building a personal identity and consequently personalise the organisation's successes and failures. Literature suggests that 'lower order identities' (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008: 353), or those most proximal to the individual, are those with which employees will most strongly identify. For example, in their study of Dutch government and university employees, van Knippenberg and van Schie (2000) found that work-group identification (WID) was generally stronger than organisational identification. Others have reached similar conclusions in research spanning a variety of disciplines, including nursing, management studies, psychology and communications (Bartels *et al.*, 2006; Hennessey & West, 1999; Johnson *et al.*, 2006; Lipponen, Helkama & Juslin, 2003; Lipponen, Helkama, Olkkonen & Juslin, 2005; Reade, 2001a,b; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Dick, Wagner *et al.*, 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Possible reasons for stronger identification with lower order identities are many. For example, because an individual's membership of the immediate work group is their primary basis for interaction and interdependence in the organisation, identification is likely to be strongest at this level. Furthermore, individuals may consider that they have more in common with other members of lower order identities, and may perceive that they better understand that locus of identification, because they are more involved with, and consequently able to better influence, their interaction at that level (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Ashforth &

Johnson, 2001; Lawler, 1992; Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Social identity theory suggests that ‘a given identity becomes more salient when a comparison identity is salient’ (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008: 354). In the context of the MNC, this means that individuals are expected to identify more strongly with the organisational level with which they interact more frequently, such as the immediate work-group, than with the less-frequently encountered subsidiary or global entity.

4.5 Turning Points

Specific episodes of affinity and dis-identification – turning points- emerged from the initial phases of analysis as central to employees’ evaluation of their organisational identification. The following factors were suggested as possible cues, or markers, for those turning point events:

1. Internal respect;
2. Organisational prestige and distinctiveness;
3. Individual-organisation values congruence; and
4. Support of superiors.

The following literatures were explored to help illuminate the implications of turning point events for the developing theory of identification: Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory and Bullis and Bach’s (1989) application of ‘turning point analysis’ in organisational research.

4.5.1 Affective Events Theory

Affective Events Theory (AET) (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) proposes that features of the work environment influence the attitudinal and behavioural

responses of employees. The theory also suggests that discrete events occurring during work are the proximal causes of momentary positive or negative moods and emotions. In turn, the cumulative experience of these momentary positive and negative feelings influences individuals' attitudinal and behavioural responses to their job. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) further suggest that the events-reaction relationship is moderated by the employee's personality and mood. AET originates in the influential work of Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959), who investigated employees' evaluations of experiences at work that made them feel good or bad about their job. The literature on daily hassles (negative events) and uplifts (positive events) (e.g. Basch & Fisher, 2000; Fisher, 1998; Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1981), offers some insight into the positive and negative evaluation of event-level phenomena at work.

Review of the data identified that AET is unsuitable as a theoretical framework for the emerging theory. At the core of AET is the definition of an 'event'. This term is not well-defined in the literature. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) describe 'a happening, especially an important happening', and 'something that occurs in a certain place during a particular period of time'. Ortony, Clore and Collins (1988: 18) expand the definition to include the individual perceiver in its scope, defining events as 'people's construals about things that happen, considered independently of any beliefs they may have about actual or possible causes'. Acknowledging that events intersect with, and affect, processes, Oatley and Johnson-Laird (1987: 32) define them as 'an emotional reaction to appraised change interrupting multiple goal oriented activity'. AET is concerned with immediate (momentary) emotional responses to specific events at work, and the long-term effect of

accumulative events. However, participant data in this research suggested that such events were actually moments when individuals' perceptions *changed* and that this was the key element of the phenomenon. For example, participants described feeling 'valued', 'special' and 'disconnected', as opposed to 'happy' or 'angry'. Consequently, AET was discounted as an appropriate theoretical lens through which to analyse the turning point events identified in this research. The literature review turned instead to another approach, Turning Point Analysis, notably underutilised in organisational research (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008).

4.5.2 Turning Point Analysis

Baxter and Bullis (1986), define 'turning points' in keeping with Bolton's (1961) conceptualisation of patterns of change. Unlike AET, turning points are described as 'any event or occurrence which is associated with change in a relationship... [they are] the substance of change' (Baxter & Bullis, 1986). Turning Point Analysis (TPA) uses the turning point as 'a unit of analysis upon which to base a descriptive profile of the substance of change' (Bullis & Bach, 1989: 8). The concept of turning points has been incorporated into the sociology and psychology literatures (cf. Clausen 1995, 1998; Elder 1998; Wethington, 2002). In this project, one of the outcomes of the grounded theory process is the inclusion of turning points as a central component of the emerging theory, but in an organisational context. The research was directed to this conclusion by comparing and repeatedly re-assessing relationships between categories and their properties, supplemented by additional interview data, literature and the process of theoretical memoing (Glaser, 1978). Consequently, the value of TPA in this study lies not in its ability to analyse this study's interview data per se – the possibility

of doing so, and potential implications, are discussed in Chapter 5 – but in its fundamental explanation of turning points as moments when relationships change; in this case the individual-organisation relationship, or identification.

At another level, Bullis and Bach's (1989) conceptualisation of turning points offered additional support for the four factors identified as conditions of turning point events. Bullis and Bach (1989) identify fifteen 'types' of turning points in the context of work experiences, of which five related to this thesis' data:

Receiving informal recognition comprises positive feedback from peers and supervisors and includes general, informal positive comments. The study found that 'receiving informal recognition brought about the greatest positive change in identification' (Bullis & Bach, 1989: 16-17). Similarly, ***Gaining formal recognition*** is where individuals experience affinity with the organisation as a result of positive, and public, recognition of their achievements. These turning points corresponded with the cues 'supervisor support' and 'individual-organisational values congruence'.

Disappointment 'occurred when the organization or its members were less "perfect" than originally perceived'. Bullis and Bach (1989: 18) note that the most common Disappointment 'occurred when "the department" [organisation] did not meet... expectations'. This turning point corresponded with the factor 'individual-organisational values congruence', which is where participants perceived their personal values as either aligned with or distinct from those of the organisation.

Sense of Community refers to ‘an overall sense of identification...experienced as a cognitive or emotional state of organizational identification’ (Bullis & Bach, 1989: 16). This corresponds with the factors ‘individual-organisation values congruence’ and ‘internal respect’. Experiencing Sense of Community is a positively-oriented turning point event, articulated in this research as an episode of affinity. Bullis and Bach (1989: 19) found that the opposite of Sense of Community, *Alienation*, was not only a perceived lack of community but also ‘an internal feeling of difference between self and others’. Experiences of Alienation were consistently linked to a ‘loss of organisational identification’ (Bullis & Bach, 1989: 19).

In light of this approach, the four factors previously conceptualised as *conditions* of turning point events were reconsidered to see if they conformed to Bullis and Bach’s (1989) conceptualisation of *types* of turning points. This was rejected, however, because the factors emerged as central to the category ‘perceptions’, and more specifically ‘changed perceptions’. The relationship between the categories ‘perceptions’ and ‘experiences’ was clearly indicated as conditional; perceptions (specifically changed perceptions) mark, or *cue*, change events (turning points). This study therefore offers a new perspective on the turning point approach to identification in organisations, suggesting that changed perceptions of internal respect, organisational prestige and distinctiveness, individual-organisation values congruence and support from superiors are specific *cues*, or *markers* of those events. Bullis and Bach’s (1989) use of turning points analysis in the context of organisational identification is the only example of such an approach located and

there was no literature located that specifically considered the *cues* for turning points in organisational identification.

4.5.3 Dis-identification

Bullis and Bach (1989) also acknowledge that the orientation of specific events is relevant; specifically, turning points are categorised as either ‘negative’ or ‘positive’. This prompted a review of the literature on the opposite of identification, dis-identification. The concept of dis-identification has received little attention in existing models of organisational identification (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). It is distinguishable from ‘de-identification’, in that it is more than a temporary disruption to identification (e.g. Ashforth, 1998). Pratt (2000: 20) defines dis-identification as

[I]dentification with a set of value and beliefs that are antithetical to those of a group. In addition, unlike positive identification, which involves identifying oneself based on what a group *is*, dis-identification is based on identifying oneself based on what a group is *not*.

This suggests that when an employee dis-identifies, it is a cognitive decision to disassociate themselves from the organisation (or part of it) based on a perception that important aspects of their identity are opposed to some or all of their organization’s defining characteristics (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Scott, Corman and Cheney (1998) also describe dis-identification as involving the employee exercising agency in the decision to dis-identify, as do Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) who assert that employees who dis-identify have distanced themselves cognitively and emotionally from their employer. Theoretical memoing indicated that dis-identification was indeed the appropriate phenomenon to explain what was happening in the data.

What limited research there is tends to emphasise how dis-identification involves creation of strong distinctions from other groups and the negative marking of these groups (e.g. Dukerich *et al.*, 1998; Elsbach, 1999; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). However what such studies do not do, and what was indicated as most relevant in this study, is capture is the *process* through which such distinctions are made. There is even less evidence about exactly *why* some individuals and groups dis-identify. Some antecedents of dis-identification have been proposed, suggesting that people will dis-identify with organisations when they perceive a conflict between their personal values and those of their organisation (Steele, 1988). This was supported in the present research through the turning point cue ‘individual-organisation values congruence’. Dis-identification may also occur because of a perceived negative public image of the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Again, the turning point cue ‘organisational prestige and distinctiveness’ captured this antecedent.

Pratt (2000) responds to the question of process by proposing a model attempting to explain how organisational practices can simultaneously produce positive identification, dis-identification, ambivalent identification (where an individual at once embraces and rejects aspects of their organisation), and temporary breaks in identification (de-identification). Pratt (2000) uses SIT and sensemaking theories to guide the model’s development, focusing on the organisation’s ability to create and fill the need for meaning among its members. He argues that dis-identification will occur when employees’ organisational identity is salient, but they evaluate that identity based on the negative opinions of ‘out-group’ members (Pratt, 2000: 21). Returning to this research, it is posited that perceived changes in

organisational prestige and distinctiveness, or how employees think ‘outsiders’ view the organisation, will cue a turning point event in the process of identification. Supporting Pratt’s (2000) contention, turning points were found in this study to be positive (i.e. affinity/ identification) when perceptions of the organisation’s prestige and distinctiveness were positive, and conversely negative (i.e. dis-identification) when perceptions of prestige and distinctiveness were negative.

Pratt’s (2000) model is grounded in SIT, which states that a cogent social identity is formed through self-identification as a member of specific group. SIT posits that individuals will tend to identify with a category to the extent that the category is distinctive, prestigious, and if there are salient out-groups. Inherent in the concept of ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ is the premise that groups will seek to bolster their collective identity by categorizing themselves in a way that is distinct from others (cf. Steele and Aronson, 1995; Tajfel, 1982). Abrams and Hogg (1990: 23) state that such social comparisons seek to ‘accentuate inter-group differences especially on those dimensions which reflect favourably upon (the) in-group... the in-group acquires a *positive distinctiveness*, and thus a relatively *positive social identity* in comparison to the out-group’.

However when dis-identification occurs in terms of an individual’s own personal identity, the outcome is apparently markedly different. In some cases disidentification has been found to create opportunity for processes of identity change to occur (Pratt, 2000; Chriem, 2002). Fleming and Spicer (2003) suggest that individuals who dis-identify with a current identity are likely to become

particularly cynical about that identity. In some cases, people have been found to engage in various forms of resistance (overt or covert) which are aimed at disrupting the targeted identity (Collinson, 1992). Newman and Newman (1976) propose that dis-identification can result in feelings of alienation.

This latter observation is consistent with Bullis and Bach (1989) who, although not explicitly examining dis-identification in their study of turning points in the socialisation process, do make a number of observations that suggest that dis-identification may have occurred as a consequence of Alienation and Disappointment. For example, 'Disappointment appears to create a decrease in identification from which the relationship does not recover' (1989: 28) suggests a distinct and permanent state of disassociation consistent with dis-identification. Similarly, in reference to behaviours enacted to protect their identity from being 'swallowed' (1989: 19), they observe that participants make '... a conscious move to disassociate', which suggests individual agency in the decision-making process, a feature of disidentification (Pratt, 2000; Scott *et al.*, 1998).

It is evident that, despite the sparse literature on dis-identification in organisations, some key characteristics can be extracted that are useful in informing this aspect of the emergent theory. Specifically:

1. Dis-identification is a legitimate concept in the process of building and maintaining an organisational identification;
2. Dis-identification occurs when an individual cognitively disassociates aspects of their personal identity from aspects of the organisational identity; and

3. The decision to dis-identify is associated with negatively-oriented turning point events.

In this research, a turning point was defined as a decisive moment in which employees' perceptions changed, transforming their organisational identification. Turning points are inherently about change, and they imply an altered state of employee identification, either positive or negative, after the event. This suggested a further direction for the literature review. The preceding section of this chapter reviewed the literature relating to the role of 'changed perceptions' as possible *cues* for turning points in the process of identification. The extent to which individuals identified with one or more of those referents simultaneously was found to be subject to change following specific events, and was conceptualised as a *consequence* of those events. Given that turning points inherently contain a temporal dimension, it was also suggested that organisational identification is more accurately considered a *process* of 'becoming' (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Pratt, 1998). The process of constant comparison returned the research to the identification literature to determine which scholars, if any, have adopted a process approach to understanding *how* employees identify across organisational referents.

4.6 A process view of organisational identification

The penultimate sections of the literature review turn to a second proposition arising from the literature on events and turning points; specifically, the conceptualisation of identification as 'a process of emerging identity' (Scott *et al.*, 1998: 304). Directed by this aspect of the data, the developing theory attempts to

‘...account for this dynamism, explicating the intense episodes that require conscious, deliberate decisions that serve to either solidify or transform identities’ (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008: 340). A review of the literature in this area suggested that while research conceptualising identification as a process is increasing in volume and application, it nonetheless remains ‘a loosely affiliated body of research (Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006: 238).

In their research into adolescent identity-development Grotevant and Cooper (1999: 6) describe the process of identity-building as ‘a lifelong process, characterized by cycles of exploration and consolidation’. Following Bosma, Graafsma, Grotevant, de Levita (1994) they suggest that ‘[t]he possibility for reformulation of identity exists... because individual, relational and contextual changes occur. Factors internal or external to individuals can impede such reformulation’. In a similar vein, Gioia observes that organisational identity ‘develop[s] over time in interaction with internal and external parties’ (1998: 45). These conceptualisations resonated in many of the aspects of this research, specifically that identification is a dynamic process, that identities can be reformulated as a consequence of contextual changes, and that it is possible to identify the markers, or cues, of those points of change.

Scott *et al.* (1998) employ elements of Giddens’ (1984) structural model as a framework within which to analyse multiple identifications, and identities in organisations. In doing so, they explicitly acknowledge that

... identification is the process of emerging identity... represent[ing] the dynamic social process by which identities are constructed (1998: 305-306).

Scott et al. (1998: 304) caution against adopting a ‘reified view of the identity construct’ as something that can be measured generally and as a stable construct. They argue that ‘identity is constantly being produced, reproduced and altered’ (1998: 304), and is subject to situational change. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), Abrams and Brown (1989) and Burke (1980, 1991) also suggest that identity, and therefore the process of identification, may vary situationally. Examples of such situational variation are beginning to emerge in empirical research which shows that organizational identification is dynamic and sensitive to alterations in the employee/organization relationship (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000; Turner *et al.*, 1994). The possible implications of situational variation are for this study’s findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

More recently, Ashforth *et al.* (2008: 339) suggest that ‘[e]xamining how individuals bring the organization in [to their own identities] necessitates a focus on how identities might steadily evolve, momentarily fluctuate, or drastically change’. In support of a process-oriented model of organizational identification, they acknowledge those scholars who, even by implication, acknowledge that identification is far from static. For example, DiSanza & Bullis (1999) describe the process of identification as dynamic, while Albert et al. (2000) and Gioia *et al.* (2000) use the term turbulent to convey the uncertain nature of the identification process. Marcia (2002: 14) observes the ‘successive disequilibriums’ incorporated in the process of identification, while others analyse specific turning point events to help understand ‘the mystery and division inherent in organization’ (Bullis and Bach, 1989: 6). Miller, Birkholt, Scott and Stage (1995) describe the ‘ebb and flow of identification’ in a service-oriented context, a metaphor adopted by

Ashforth *et al.* (2008: 341) who observe that many studies ‘... provide pictures of the surface of an ocean wave, not the undercurrent that formed it’. In essence, the intent and the language appear to support a process-oriented approach to identification in the literature, however very few studies explicitly incorporate a processural element into their research design or the models they produce: ‘the rich descriptors... belie the static models guiding research’ (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008: 340).

Pratt (1998) suggests that failure to conceptualise identification as a process is inhibiting the development of parsimonious models of identification. He observes that ‘of all of the central questions of organizational identification, the one that has probably received the least attention by organizational scholars has been, ‘How does organizational identification occur?’’ (1998: 192). Demo (1992: 306) also argues that research designs promoting static impressions of identification plague the literature, preventing ‘the processural perspective from being systematically applied in empirical research’.

This research responds to the challenge on two fronts. First, adopting a relatively underutilised research methodology in the management discipline, classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1998, 2005) offers a fresh approach to developing substantive theory in such areas ripe for exploration. Unencumbered by predetermined theoretical frameworks, a priori knowledge and existing models, this methodology promotes the development of substantive theory that is theoretically rich, relevant and which ‘fits’ the data (Glaser, 1998). Second, the initial and very general area of interest in this study was the evaluation of work-

life satisfaction by MNC subsidiary employees. In the end, the research also makes a specific and timely contribution to the organisational identification discourse because it suggests a conceptualisation of identification as process-oriented and episode-centred.

4.7 Exploring the work-life interface

At this point, the comparative review turned to the work-life literature to explore the conceptualisation of ‘work’ in terms of ‘organisational identification’. The following questions informed this part of the literature review:

- How are ‘work’ and ‘life’ conceptualised in various literatures?
- What are the commonly described links between work and non-work domains?

4.7.1 Defining ‘work’ and ‘life’

Following Piotrkowski, Rapoport and Rapoport (1987), Edwards and Rothbard (2000: 179) define ‘work’ as ‘instrumental activity intended to provide goods and services to support life’. Similarly, other researchers in the organisational literature concur that work typically involves membership in an employing organisation, where the individual is compensated for his or her contributions (Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Kabanoff, 1980). Compensation, or reward, for work is described in terms of intrinsic satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and extrinsic reward (Locke, 2004).

The term ‘work-life’ suggests that associated issues extend beyond the immediate family. Whether focussing on ‘balance’, ‘conflict’ or ‘fit’, work-life tends to be

broad in scope and encompasses domains such as home, financial security and leisure under the umbrella of 'life' (Warren, 2004). 'Work-family' on the other hand clearly encompasses paid employment and home, with family generally defined as people related by biology, custom, marriage or adoption (Chang, McDonald & Burton, 2010; Clark, 2000; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Lambert and Haley-Lock 2004). Research in the past couple of decades has focussed predominantly on the work-family interface, examining antecedents and consequences, gender differences in perceptions of conflict, organizational initiatives to decrease conflict, and the positive features of work and family roles (e.g. Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Voydanoff, 2005). Family is an undeniably important aspect of life. However, growing diversity in families and trends in marriage and childbearing point to a need for a measure focused on non-work roles beyond the traditionally defined family (Fisher, Bulger & Smith, 2009). An abundance of work-family research dominates the few studies focusing on conflict and enhancement with non-family 'life' outside work (e.g. Kirchmeyer, 2000; Voydanoff, 2005), and it is to the latter body of literature that the developing theory will contribute.

4.7.2 Work-life linking mechanisms

The relationship between work and life constructs is defined by Edwards and Rothbard (2000: 180) as a 'linking mechanism'. Much of the work-life/ family literature is concerned with these linkages, attempting to explain how one construct interacts with, or affects, the other. The most suitable concepts for application in this research context were considered to be spillover, segmentation and compensation.

Spillover

The spillover approach posits that satisfaction in one area of life may influence satisfaction in another, or ‘spill over’ (Bromet, Dew & Parkinson, 1990; Burke & Greenhaus, 1987; Crohan, Antonucci, Adelman & Coleman, 1989; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; George and Brief, 1990; Kabanoff, 1980; Lambert, 1990; Leiter and Durup, 1996; Loscocco, 1989; Near *et al.*, 1980; Orpen, 1978; Schmitt and Bedian, 1982; Staines, 1980; Steiner and Truxillo, 1989; Zedeck, 1992). There is horizontal spillover and vertical spillover (Sirgy *et al.*, 2001). *Horizontal spillover* is the influence of affect (i.e. mood and satisfaction) in one life domain on another domain. For example, job satisfaction may influence feelings of satisfaction in the family life domain (cf. Gutek, Repetti & Silver, 1988; Near *et al.*, 1980). The concept of *vertical spillover* arises from the notion of domain hierarchy, which argues that life domains (e.g. job, family, leisure) are arranged hierarchically in people’s minds. Overall life satisfaction is considered the most superordinate domain. Subordinate domains include life domains such as family, job, leisure and community (Sirgy *et al.*, 2001). *Vertical spillover* is when satisfaction or dissatisfaction within each of these major life domains ‘spills over’ to the most superordinate domain. For example, satisfaction in the job domain spills over vertically (bottom-up) affecting life satisfaction. This is *vertical bottom-up spillover*. *Vertical top-down spillover* refers to the influence of overall life satisfaction on a particular subordinate domain such as job satisfaction.

Segmentation

Segmentation is defined as the separation between work and life domains such that one does not affect the other. Blood and Wolfe (1960) originally viewed this

as a natural division between domains separated by time and space and roles. Subsequent research challenged the notion that work and life are naturally distinct and the two domains are now generally acknowledged as being closely related (cf. Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Voydanoff, 1987). In light of this, segmentation is considered an active process of deliberately maintaining a boundary between work and life spheres (Eckenrode & Gore, 1990; Lambert, 1990). Suggested reasons for this process of actively suppressing thoughts, feeling and behaviours of one domain while in the other include that it is a way of coping with stress (Lambert, 1990; Piotrkowski, 1979), or that it is a way of establishing a preferred connection between work and non-work domains (Kanter, 1977). Segmentation is also conceptualised in the literature as compartmentalisation, disengagement and detachment (Zedeck, 1992).

Compensation

Compensation refers to the individual's efforts to offset dissatisfaction in one domain by seeking satisfaction in the other (Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Lambert, 1990; Zedeck, 1992). This may happen in one of two ways. An individual may decrease their involvement in the domain that is less satisfying while increasing activity in the other domain (Champoux, 1981; Staines, 1980; Zedeck, 1992). In other words, there is a 'reallocation of importance, tie, or attention from a dissatisfying domain to a potentially satisfying domain' (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000: 181). Alternatively, someone may respond to dissatisfaction in one domain by actively pursuing rewards, or experiences, in the other (Champoux, 1981; Zedeck, 1992). This also involves shifting involvement between domains.

Comparison of these conceptual linkages with the categories in the data in fact suggested that they do not adequately explain the degree to which participants integrated the work construct into their personal identity. Indeed, Edwards and Rothbard (2000) acknowledge that such linking mechanisms may only exist when work and life are conceptually distinct. Spillover and compensation theories assume that work and non-work are interdependent, yet still distinct. Yet such theories are of limited usefulness because they do not predict and help solve problems that individuals face when managing work and non-work responsibilities. Most research on work and family has been described as atheoretical, utilising theory to explain research results without necessarily driving research questions (Lambert, 1990; Zedeck, 1992). Another problem with spillover and compensation theories is that they view individuals as reactive, ignoring the individual's ability to enact and shape their environments. Zedeck (1992) further argues that spillover and compensation theories fail to explain the way that individuals consciously determine the parameters and scope of their activities and create personal meaning.

In addition to these criticisms, it is apparent that much of the extant research is concerned with a conflict perspective (Barnett, 1998; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Such research assumes that individuals have a fixed amount of time and energy to invest in life domains, and that participation in multiple roles such as work and family inevitably leads to conflict and stress. Reflecting this, much of the research on the work-life interface has developed not only with an emphasis on family, but also on conflict, stress, and impaired well-being. More recently, researchers have called for a more balanced approach that explores the potential positive effects of combining work and family roles (cf. Barnett, 1998; Frone,

2003; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Grzywacz (2000) responded with a theory of the positive interdependencies between work and family roles. Other positively-oriented concepts have emerged in the literature, including enrichment (Kirchmeyer, 1992; Rothbard, 2001), positive spillover (Crouter, 1984; Grzywacz, 2000; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Hammer & Thompson, 2003; Hanson, Hammer & Colton, 2006; Kirchmeyer, 1992; Stephens, Franks, & Atienza, 1997; Voydanoff, 2001), enhancement (Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer & King 2002), and facilitation (Frone, 2003; Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson 2004).

Further exploration of the relationships between the categories and concepts in this study suggested that the developing theory was not specifically oriented in either direction. Nor does the data confirm that the constructs of work and life were integrated in the process of self-evaluation. It is the fundamental conceptualisation of work that is challenged by this theory; this thesis suggests that MNC subsidiary employees evaluate the interaction between work and non-work domains primarily in terms of their organisational identification. This appears to be a much broader conceptualisation of work than is envisaged in the extant literature. Research on quality of working life (QWL) offers perhaps the most expansive definition of work as a multi-faceted construct; nonetheless, organisational identification is still considered either an antecedent and/or consequence in the QWL research. The developing theory proposes that the process of organisational identification is in fact a central concern in MNC employees' conceptualisation of work. It is proposed that MNC subsidiary employees' self-evaluation of their work-life satisfaction is informed by a

conceptualisation of work that is much broader and self-referential than simply paid employment. Comparison of the data with the existing literature suggests that this is a new approach to conceptualising work in the work-life discourse. A review of the literature on measuring and evaluating work-life satisfaction, and other closely related constructs, confirms that most existing measures rely on a narrower conceptualisation of work as paid employment. A number of potential implications are consequently suggested, most obviously in terms of the measurement of work-related phenomenon. These implications are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has described the comparative literature review undertaken partly in response to, but also in juxtaposition with, the analysis of data and theoretical memos from interviews with 20 MNC subsidiary employees. Grounded theory involves a ‘complex and infinitely messy process’ (Munhall, 2007: 253), where the researcher alternately considers the data at both the micro and macro levels (Glaser, 1978; Munhall, 2007). For example, comparing categories and instances in the data with theoretical memos requires ‘big picture’ questions such as ‘What is going on here?’ and ‘What is the central problem/ concern in the data?’ as well as micro-level questions focussed on each bit of data, such as ‘What is this an indicator of?’ and ‘How are these bits similar or different to other bits?’. Munhall (2007: 253) captures the dynamism of this process:

Throughout the analytical process, the researcher moves back and forth from the micro to the macro level, staying grounded in the data, but thinking about how they are related to the domain of study.

To properly integrate the literature, it was treated as any other source data would be, repeatedly compared with concepts identified in the participant data. In this study, reading across disciplines such as sociology, psychology and management raised the theoretical level and improved construct definitions (Eisenhardt, 1989). Many of these readings were outside the substantive area of research, yet they were suggested by the participants' main concerns and the core category in the emergent theory.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose that the analysis should cease when the data is theoretically 'saturated', or when the main concern of the research can be explained and further sampling fails to add new categories or properties. Within the time and resource constraints of a PhD study however, limitless literature sampling means that new data may continue to emerge well beyond a reasonable timeframe (cf. Dey, 1999; Partington, 2002; Thomson, 2007). Dey's alternative measure of 'theoretical sufficiency' (1999: 257) responds to this potential difficulty by suggesting that sampling cease when data that is sufficient to theory or theoretical construct development is obtained. Supported by Seidman (2006), the concept of sufficiency addresses, in part, Glaser's (1992) concern that the process of coding may result in data being 'forced' into categories to achieve saturation, while still providing some boundaries in terms of time and resources. Following Jeon (2004) and Rice and Ezzy (1999), theoretical saturation was considered to be more closely related to the quality of the data obtained rather than the frequency and total volume of the data; sampling therefore ceased once the comparative literature review indicated that no new conceptual dimensions were indicated and the core concern of the participants was well-explained.

The structure of this thesis is intended to capture the fluid and complex nature of the grounded theory process, while at the same time ‘walking through’ the research with logic and clarity. Suddaby (2006: 637) acknowledges that it is difficult to represent this process:

In pure form, grounded theory research would be presented as a jumble of literature consultation, data collection, and analysis conducted in ongoing iterations.

This chapter presented the literature that was incorporated into the process of elevating the codes and categories in the data to a higher conceptual level. Examining the extant literature and incorporating additional sources of evidence where necessary, the emergent theory has become dense and complete. It was originally envisaged that this study’s theoretical contribution would be situated only in the work-life literature. As the substantive theory has emerged, so too has the study’s relevance to another, unanticipated, area of enquiry, organisational identification. Review of a range of literatures challenged, confirmed and extended the theory’s conceptual linkages between evaluation of work-life satisfaction and organisational identification. Chapter 5 presents the theory in its final form and considers the study’s learning outcomes, limitations and implications for further research.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING OUTCOMES & RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Grounded theory methodology tends to result in a developmental theory, which lends itself to further evolution. Chapters 3 and 4 described the processes of data coding and the literature review directed by the emerging categories. The role of this chapter is to clarify the thesis' theoretical propositions and discuss the implications for theory development and future research opportunities. This final chapter codifies the central elements of the emergent theory into a structured and coherent hypothesis that helps illuminate the initial research context: how MNC subsidiary employees evaluate work-life interaction. Incorporating an episode-centred process of organisational identification, the evaluative process focuses on Prioritising Identity and has two stages: Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self. Returning to the research methodology, the theory is then tested against Glaser's (1978, 1998) criteria for evaluating a Grounded Theory: fit, work, relevance and modifiability. The chapter continues with a discussion about how the emergent theory contributes to the extant literature; specifically, how it offers new perspectives on the process of organisational identification and the evaluation of work-life interaction. Acknowledging the limitations of this research, the chapter concludes by suggesting a number of possible research opportunities for continued development of the theory.

5.2 Central elements of the theory

The processes of open, substantive and theoretical coding confirmed the core category Identification. Other categories were analysed in relation to the core category and their relationships explored using Glaser's (1978) theoretical coding families. The grounded theory of Prioritising Identity suggests that:

- Employees prioritise identity formation when they subjectively evaluate work-life interaction;
- A process-oriented and episode-centred model of identification is central to employees' conceptualisation of work;
- Employees position themselves as organisational members with reference to the current degree of perceived identification overlap across organisational referents.

The theory centres on the Basic Psychological Process (Glaser, 1978) of Identity Formation. Labelled Prioritising Identity, the process consists of two distinct stages: Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self. Chapter 4 detailed a review of the literature directed by the coding processes, which was in turn incorporated into the analysis process as an additional source of data. Following is a review of the central elements of the resultant theory.

5.2.1 Conceptualising Work

In the first stage of the evaluative process, employees were found to adopt a broad conceptualisation of work that was characterised by an episode-centred view of organisational identification. These episodes reflected specific events where

psychological attachments to various levels of the organisation were distinguishable as either negative (disidentification) or positive (affinity). Such episodes were identified as turning points in the process of organisational identification and were cued by changed perceptions of internal status, values congruence, support and appreciation of superiors and organisational prestige and distinctiveness. The relationship between these factors and organisational identification is not in itself new; there is ample literature classifying them as antecedents of a static state of identification. What is new is conceptualising them as cues for turning point events in a dynamic process of identification. The consequence of turning point events was found to be a change in the degree of identification overlap across organisational referents. Specifically, the national subsidiary and local work group levels were found to remain closely ‘nested’, regardless of any specific episodes of affinity or disidentification. In contrast, the global MNC entity was clearly distinguished as ‘distinct’ from other organisation levels following a negative turning point event.

5.2.2 Positioning Self

In the second stage of the process, individuals locate their current identification state along a continuum ranging from ‘nested’ to ‘distinct’. Hence, Positioning Self emerged as a separate stage in the overall process of Prioritising Identity; at this stage individuals explicitly acknowledged, and subsequently prioritised, their identification state. Despite some retrospective consideration of episodes of identification, participants invariably referred to their immediate state of identification as they positioned their identity as an organisational member. For example:

Yes those negative things happened but right now I think everything's a lot better... I'm comfortable being part of [organisation] (Interview 15).

You can sort of look past those things that went on and weren't great... I think at the moment it's how I feel now that matters and I feel like we're starting to be a much more 'together' company (Interview 9)

There was no suggestion in the data that individuals 'aggregated' episodes of affinity and disidentification to form an overall assessment of organisational identification. However what did emerge clearly was a relationship between turning point events, identity 'nesting' and individuals' evaluation of their work-life interaction as either positive or negative. Figure 11 depicts the stages of Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self in the broader process of Prioritising Identity:

PRIORITISING IDENTITY

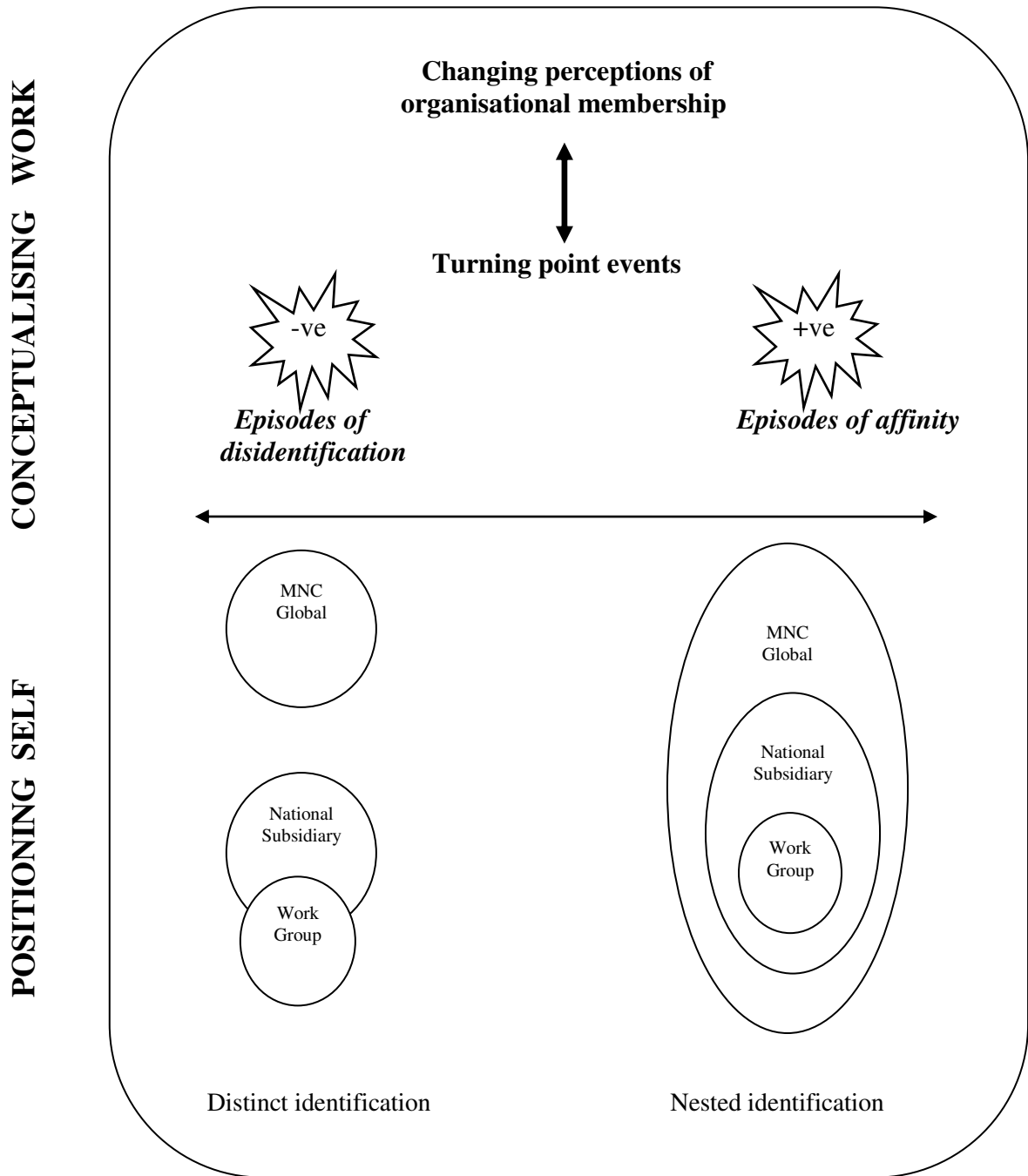


Figure 11: The emergent theory of Prioritising Identity

5.3 Evaluating the Grounded Theory

The goal of a grounded theory (GT) inquiry is to explain the underlying social processes occurring within a substantive area; it is a hypothesis-building research method and as such does not produce ‘findings’ (Glaser, 2001). All methodologies pose particular challenges and GT is no exception. For example, in GT the role and timing of the literature review is quite different and both methodology and theory develop gradually as interpretations accumulate. Glaser, (1978; 1998; 2001) advises that in practice, grounded theorists should:

1. Tolerate confusion – there is no need to force the data or know *a priori*;
2. Tolerate regression – researchers might briefly get ‘lost’ before finding their way;
3. Trust the emerging data – the data will provide the justification;
4. Confide in someone – GT requires both isolation and consultation to get the best from the analytical process;
5. Be open to emerging concepts and new evidence that might challenge the way the researcher has thought about the subject matter;
6. Be able to conceptualise to derive theory from the data; and
7. Be creative; the researcher should be able to devise new ways of handling data and be prepared to test existing approaches in new ways.

Further, Stern (1994) cautions that in disciplines where the GT is relatively infrequently utilised researchers, especially PhD candidates, may experience ‘Minus-mentoring’ – that is, employing GT for the first time by learning from books, without the guidance of a supervisor who has first-hand experience in the methodology. Glaser (1998) concurs that minus-mentoring could produce methodologically unsound studies that breach fundamental tenets of the method. To ameliorate these risks, Stern (1994) recommends that researchers (a) work with others who are conversant with the methodology; (b) read the Grounded

Theory Bibliography; and (c) participate in relevant discussion groups. Minus-mentoring was addressed in this case by frequent participation in fora conducted by the Grounded Theory Institute, presentation of methodological papers at two conferences (ECRM, 2010 and Academy of Management, 2010) and email communication with two academics experienced in, and published using, GT methods.

The credibility of a GT rests on the four criteria of fit, work, relevance, and modifiability (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). In analysing data, it is important that categories not be forced or selected out of preconceived understandings of the phenomena studied. It is essential that they be generated systematically from data and constantly validated by fitting and refitting the categories to data. Later in the analysis, categories are fitted together to a dense and parsimonious theory that ‘fits’ the substantive area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). The second criterion is ‘work’, which means that a grounded theory must be able to explain what is happening in the specific data, predict what will happen, and more broadly interpret what is happening in the area studied. Workability describes how well a theory accounts for the way in which participants resolve their main concern (Glaser, 1998). The third criterion is ‘relevance’. A theory is relevant when it has good grab for participants and practitioners in the substantive field and when it allows the core problems and processes in the area to emerge. The fourth criterion is ‘modifiability’. A substantive GT has only partial closure because new ideas and more data can modify the theory. As new data emerge, the theory may be qualified, extended or recontextualised (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). As Lomborg and Kirkevold (2003: 191) highlight, these criteria are closely related:

It seems reasonable to believe that, all being equal, a relevant theory should work in practice, and that a theory, generated from empirical data, should be relevant...the fitness of a theory must be understood as being situated in a context with possibilities for modification as the theory is brought into new contexts where new data are available.

Grounded theory has its roots in the symbolic interactionist works of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969); it is concerned with the dynamic interactions between persons (either individually or collectively) and society. Blumer (1969) explains that symbolic interactionism assumes that people continually construct and reconstruct the meaning of reality as they interact with themselves and others around them. Based on this assumption, theory development about how humans act and interact in specific social contexts becomes centrally important. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 224) acknowledge the particular challenge for grounded theory researchers: how to defend the emergent theory as 'valid' and 'credible' in a research environment predominantly taking as a guide to credibility

the canons of rigorous quantitative verification on such issues as sampling, coding, reliability, validity, indicators, frequency distributions, conceptual formulation, hypothesis construction, and presentation of evidence. [We] raise doubts about the applicability of these canons as proper criteria for judging the credibility of theories based on flexible research.

Lomborg and Kirkevold (2003: 194) point out that 'the concepts of reality, truth and validity in grounded theory are certainly suggested, but not sufficiently elaborated in the originators' writing'. As discussed, this study adopts Glaser's (1978, 1992, 1999, 2001) 'classic' approach to grounded theory research, where the inductive method and analytical focus on abstraction and conceptualisation are the most important aspects of the grounded theory process. Indeed, Glaser (2001: 48) explicitly cautions against seeking 'bedrock objectivity', warning that researchers risk becoming paralysed in that pursuit and may fail to remain

conceptual. In this case, 'fit' is considered a strength of grounded theory, focusing attention on 'what is', and not what should, could or ought to be (Glaser, 1999).

Searle (1995: 125) reconceptualises Blumer's (1969) thoughts on human interaction and considers the preconditions for objectively evaluation of social facts. Specifically, he posits that people have a 'collective intentionality' and a capacity to represent objects and states of affairs. Our representations give rise to 'social facts', or designations of how-things-are-in-the-world. Searle proposes that a valid theory is one that corresponds to the phenomena in the area of study, where 'correspondence' means 'a general characterisation of the variety of ways in which statements can accurately represent how things are' (Lomborg & Kirkevold, 2003: 198). Glaser's concept of 'fit' can therefore be interpreted as a simple and realistic mechanism for externally validating social research:

Even though infinite varieties of theoretical interpretations of a given social subject can in principle be established, not every theory *fits* the subject under study (Lomborg & Kirkevold, 2003: 199).

Silverman (1998) argues that qualitative researchers cannot beg the issue of reliability; reliability is incumbent on documenting procedure. For this reason Chapter 3 details the phases of coding and conceptualising the data in this study, as well as explaining the application of relevant theoretical coding families to help illuminate relationships between the core category and subcategories. Credibility is most often applied in qualitative research as a test of 'trustworthiness' (Carpenter Rinaldi, 1995) or 'how vivid and faithful the description of the phenomenon is... informants, and also readers who have had the human experience... recognise the researcher's described experiences as their own'

(Becker, 1993: 264). Here the other criteria of work, relevance and modifiability are interdependent and remain important in the process of GT validation. This is because ‘validity’ is not the only concern when considering the quality of a grounded theory, or indeed any theory. Where it is hoped a theory will contribute to practice, relevance becomes particularly important. Similarly, because social reality and identity formation are fundamentally fluid and dynamic concepts, emerging theories must be credible, and this requires modifiability.

Fit

In this study, the core category, the main concern of the participants, was IDENTIFICATION. The other categories EVENTS, PERCEPTIONS and LEVELS were all found to interact with and inform the core category.

IDENTIFICATION refers to the sense of ‘connectedness’ or psychological bond that participants identified as central to their subjective evaluation of the work-life interface. It is both a noun, a static state of being, and a verb, or a process experiences by participants. The emergent theory situates IDENTIFICATION at the heart of a two-stage process of evaluating work-life interaction. It is the foundation of participants’ conceptualisation of ‘work’; it is the ‘state of being’ to which participants refer when considering their organisational membership; and it is prioritised in the process of evaluating the interface between work and non-work life domains. The theory emerges from the participants themselves and corresponds with participants’ perceived reality. It therefore achieves the criteria of ‘fit’ in respect of the phenomenon under study.

Work

This criterion evaluates whether the theory helps the people in the situation make sense of their experience, and whether it helps them manage the situation better.

The emergent theory in this study proposes a process-oriented, episode-centred view of organisational identification in MNC organisations. Incorporating the four categories in the data, PERCEPTIONS, EVENTS, LEVELS and IDENTIFICATION, the theory deconstructs the evaluative process in which participants engage when considering the work-life interface. In broader terms, the theory helps us interpret the decisions individuals make about managing the demands of work and non-work domains, as well as placing identity formation at the centre of the discourse. The theory meets the criteria of ‘workability’ because it has predictive, explanatory and interpretive power.

Relevance

A theory is considered ‘relevant’ when it has good grab for participants and practitioners in the field; it should make sense and be meaningful to those to whom it relates (Glaser, 1978). Organisational development is a practical discipline and the emergent theory must be relevant to practice. In this study, the theoretical propositions suggest a number of practical applications. For example, by illuminating the process of organisational identification as having markers (cues) and turning point events, organisations can focus attention on managing these perception-based cues and promoting episodes of affinity among employees. By exposing how individuals incorporate an episode-centred process of identification into their conceptualisation of work, the theory highlights how a much broader definition of ‘work’ might inform work-life and identity-building

strategies. The theory proposes that episodes of affinity and disidentification influence the degree of identification overlap across organisational referents, or levels. Recognising that, in MNCs, the global organisational identity is most frequently distinguished from the national subsidiary/ local work group identities suggests that organisations might focus on strengthening employee attachment to the global MNC identity. The theory also proposes that individuals prioritise their current identification ‘state’ and prioritise organisational identity when evaluating work-life interaction. In practice, organisations could respond to this hypothesis by incorporating measures of identity into work-life strategies, focusing on maximising episodes of affinity at the global organisational level as opposed to traditional time and resource-oriented strategies. Beyond the MNC context, a process-oriented and episode-centred model of identification could be applied in a range of multi-level organisational settings to help deconstruct the stages and events in the process of identity formation. For these reasons the theory is considered ‘relevant’ to participants and practitioners alike.

Modifiability

The fourth criterion for evaluating a grounded theory is ‘modifiability’. This means that the theory is sufficiently flexible as to be revised in light of new data or changing contexts. This study’s theory is generated in the context of male, non-managerial employees of MNC subsidiaries. Despite the limitations of this context, a substantive (or mid-range) theory has been generated to explain an underlying phenomenon of interest: how employees incorporate identity formation into their subjective evaluation of the work-life interface. Future research may broaden the context of study to other employee groups; for example

women, part-time and young workers may be of particular in respect of work-life interaction and identity-building. New data may extend the theory's depth or suggest revision to the staged process identified here. There is sufficient flexibility in the theoretical propositions to accommodate an extended range of cues for episodes of affinity and disidentification, a more detailed deconstruction of identity 'nesting' and a deeper analysis of the relationship between identity formation and work-life interaction. The theory therefore achieves the criteria of 'modifiability'.

5.4 Contribution to the literature

One of the concerns with any exploratory research is the risk of finding something that is not new. To address this, grounded theory research integrates the extant literature as another source of data, so that variations and particularities might be identified as the analysis deepens. Two main streams of literature were sampled as part of this process - organisational identification and work-life interaction - and the emergent theoretical propositions contribute to both.

Organisational identification

This research contributes to creating a process-oriented and episode-centred model of organisational identification in multi-level organisations. The model is developed in the context of a subjective evaluative process in which male, non-managerial MNC employees engage when considering the interaction between work and non-work life domains. Two distinct stages are identified as individuals Prioritise Identity: Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self. Turning point events are central to the process of identification, and some cues for those events

are identified. This is a timely finding in that it meets the challenge identified by Ashforth *et al.* (2008: 337) who caution that:

Many of the outcomes attributed to OI are actually quite distal. Indeed, as more and more outcomes become associated with the identification, there is a danger of the construct becoming diluted and losing the value gained from its status as a root construct.... To help ensure the continued viability of the construct, we advocate that researchers focus on dependent variables that are particularly related to identification as an outcome or a process.

It is also hypothesised in the emergent theory that identity ‘nesting’, or overlap, across organisational referents changes as a result of episodes of affinity and disidentification. Specifically, episodes of affinity lead to greater overlap across organisational referents, whereas episodes of disidentification lead to a kind of ‘balkanisation’, where distinction is drawn between the global MNC entity and the national subsidiary/ local work group referents. Studies consistently show that identification with nested referents is positive (cf. Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008). This research deconstructs that argument and illustrates that individuals do clearly distinguish between organisational referents. Specifically, this occurs in response to significant turning point events which are cued by changing perceptions of (at least) four factors.

Work-life interaction

There is no shortage of literature exploring the interrelationships between work and non-work life domains. The extant literature is diverse and benefits from truly multi-disciplinary research approaches. However there is significant variation in and discrepancy between, measurements of the central constructs in this discourse. There appear to be few, if any, studies challenging the fundamental

conceptualisation of work as ‘paid employment’. Indeed, Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002: 299) assert that in the work-life/family literature ‘there are many more unanswered questions than those for which we have a firm foothold’. As the nature of work, family and society changes ever more rapidly, research in this area risks becoming outdated and the imperative for innovative, contemporary theorising increases. Understanding exactly how individuals evaluate and make decisions about work and non-work role demands is a critical area of enquiry for organisational and management scholars, particularly those interested in empirical application of theory (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). This requires accurate and detailed assessment of the many variables that can influence individuals’ experiences of work-life balance:

If we don't have means to assess progress in organisations, our research lacks the most fundamental justification and credibility. In order for... studies to generate useful data though, we need both good measures and sound research designs, and in the actual state of affairs, both are still lacking (Kalliath & Brough, 2008: 326).

This thesis responds to the call for research that involves qualitative case studies of work-life reconciliation in MNCs (De Cieri & Bardoel, 2009; Poelmans, 2005). It contributes a new perspective on non-managerial employee evaluations of the work-life interface in multi-level organisations. The emergent theoretical propositions place the process of organisational identification at the heart of the work-life question, suggesting that traditional time and resource-based responses to work-life issues may be too narrow and neglect a central concern.

Further, this thesis proposes that MNC subsidiary employees subjectively evaluate their satisfaction with work and non-work domains with reference to their immediate state of organisational identification. This suggests a much broader

conceptualisation of 'work' than is currently portrayed in the extant literature. A review of the literature on measuring and evaluating work-life satisfaction, and other closely related constructs, confirms that most existing measures rely on a narrower definition of work as 'paid employment'. A number of potential research opportunities are consequently suggested, most notably in terms of measurement of work-related phenomena.

Finally, there is evidence of a relationship between orientations to work and career and life stage comes (Sturges, Guest & Mackenzie Davey, 2000). At the point of entry into their organisational career, employees consider the issue of work-life balance very important. As careers advance, people work longer hours and the potential for dissatisfaction with work-life balance increases. Sturges *et al.* (2000) found that individuals rationalise this situation by arguing that it is only temporary and that they retain a capacity to control their working lives. Control apparently remains central to their capacity to cope with competing work and non-work pressures. This study adds a new perspective to this argument, by expanding the concept to include an episode-centred process of organisational identification. In other words, if employees are to positively evaluate their capacity to control work and non-work demands, organisations should aim to maximise episodes of affinity and identification overlap. Future research could investigate potential relationships between concepts of control and perceptions of organisational identification.

5.5 Implications for practice

As discussed, employing grounded theory to investigate employee evaluations of the work-life interface generates theoretical propositions that are truly grounded in the data, broadly applicable in a substantive area, and have meaning in practice.

The overarching theory of Prioritising Identity has implications for organisational strategy, managerial practice, and employees. Similarly, the core elements of the theory – Conceptualising Work and Positioning Self – have potential relevance to practitioners and organisational scholars.

In the theoretical model, employees' perceptions of the organisation and their status within it are recognised as triggers, or markers, of the events that affect the central process of organisational identification. Organisations seeking to maximise positive employee evaluations of work-life satisfaction clearly need to recognise and manage these motivational cues or markers as they predict critical turning points in the process of identification. Similarly, turning point events themselves will present opportunities to maximise identification overlap across referents and managers can consciously strategise to generate these events and the MNC context specifically focus on episodes of affinity at the global MNC level.

In much of the debate about work-life interaction, key terms are used loosely and interchangeably. On one hand, the blurring of the distinctions and the borders between them has stimulated interest in the topic and spawned a multi-disciplinary interest in the phenomena. As the literature review reveals, 'work' is normally conceived of as paid employment while 'life' indicates family and other activities outside work. At the organisational level, debate has most frequently

focused on the importance of family-friendly policies, however just what is meant by the family is often unspecified or assumed to be a traditional or legal definition of family (Rothausen, 1999). A central component of this study's propositions is the conceptualisation of work in terms of a process of organisational identification. This adds another dimension to the argument that effective strategies are those which look beyond time and resource-based responses to work-life demands.

This research addresses the question of why organisational work-life policies and practices may not respond to employee concerns to the extent we might expect. In this vein, Perry-Smith and Blum (2000) investigated the effects of comprehensive 'bundles' of practices on a range of organisational outcomes. While their focus is on corporate performance, they found that isolated work-life practices were significantly less effective. The presence of a bundle of practices indicates that they have become embedded in the organisational culture whereas isolated practices more likely operate on the margin. By emphasising organisational identification – as both process and an outcome – in the development of strategic 'bundles' of work-life practices, multi-level organisations such as MNCs can ensure that identity is central to the localised workplace practices that are implemented.

Finally, there are implications for the measurement of work-life constructs that are suggested by this study. Supporting and extending the work of Greenhaus *et al.* (2003), the emergent theory recognises identity-formation as the basic psychological process at the heart of subjective evaluations of work and non-work

interaction. As discussed in Chapter 4, the many constructs associated with the work-life interface have resulted in a variety of measurement tools that are utilised by organisations as a foundation for developing strategic and operational responses. McMillan, Morris and Atchley (2011: 6) argue that in respect of the measurement tools for work/life interface concepts,

an understanding of these concepts is critical to HRD professionals because interventions designed to counter work/life interface issues cannot be strategically created... until the discipline understands the nature and the organizational implications of employees' work/life interface.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance has been given multiple, and at times, inconsistent definitions throughout research (McMillan *et al.*, 2011). Indeed, the phrase has almost become a 'taken for granted metaphor' in the literature and in practice (Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek & Sweet, 2006: 9). Traditionally, the balance construct has been defined the absence of conflict between work and non-work domains. Frone (2003: 145) contends that balance occurs when there is a 'lack of conflict or interference between the work and family roles'. Greenhaus *et al.* (2003) propose a definition of balance that combines the different foci of prominent researchers in the field: equality (Clark, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 2000; Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Mead, 1964) and engagement (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Balance is also defined as 'the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in—and equally satisfied with—his or her work and family role' (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003: 513). Fleetwood (2007: 352) points out that:

It is unclear whether WLB refers to an objective state of affairs, a subjective experience, perception or feeling; an actuality or an aspiration; a discourse or a practice; a metaphor for flexible working; a metaphor for the gendered division of labor; or a metaphor for some other political agenda.

The wide variety of work-life balance definitions highlight the many personalised and individualised meanings associated with the work-life interface (McMillan *et al.*, 2011). To this end, the incorporation of identification, as both process and outcome, adds a new dimension to our interpretation of the subjective evaluation of work-life interaction. However measuring ‘balance’ presents difficulties due to a lack of consistency in construct definitions; develop a consistent operational definition is consequently problematic. Historically, balance measurements have been based on individuals’ self-reported assessment and have therefore been limited in their interpretability (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). McMillan *et al.* (2011: 17) argue that ‘HRD interventions to address work-life interface issues cannot be created, and culture changes cannot be facilitated, until the organisation understands the nature and the organisational implications of employees’ work/life interface’. Studies such as this facilitate that understanding by illuminating the subjective experiences and interpretations of employees. The resultant hypotheses are useful in practice because they can inform organisational feedback systems, culture surveys and performance appraisal and communication systems. Morris and Madsen (2007) also note that by better understanding work–life theory, issues, challenges, and possible solutions, Human Resource Development professionals can respond strategically to work culture, work design, training and career imperatives.

Work-life conflict

Work-life conflict is defined as ‘a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect’ (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 77). Three types of conflict are identified in the literature: time-based, strain-based, and behavioural-based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Time-based conflict is considered the most prevalent type of conflict (Hammer & Thompson, 2003) and refers to the situation where either the amount of time spent in one role detracts from the amount of time available for the other role and/or preoccupation with one role impairs the ability to function in the other. Strain-based conflict occurs when stressors felt in one role make it difficult to perform in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Strain-based conflict is based in the idea of fatigue and irritability created from one role affecting the activities in the other role (Pleck, Staines & Lang, 1980).

Behavioural-based conflict occurs when the behaviours required in one role are incompatible with the behaviours required in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997). The conflict construct has been foundational for researchers for more than 30 years (McMillan *et al.*, 2011) and numerous scales measuring conflict have been proposed in the literature (cf. Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1988; Burke, 1988; Burke, Weir & Duwors, 1979; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; MacDermid *et al.*, 2000). The majority of the measures recognise the bi-directionality of work/life conflict but lack a multidimensionality consideration of the work-life conflict construct (i.e. time-, behaviour-, and strain-based conflict). Only the Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000) scale acknowledges bi-directionality in all three components of conflict (McMillan *et al.*, 2011). Despite the multidimensional

characteristics of work-life conflict, current measures do not incorporate identification as a distinct construct. This study therefore contributes to this perspective on the work-life interface in much the same way as it does to the work-life balance perspective. By placing the fundamental psychological process of identification at the heart of both constructs, measures to evaluate work-life conflict and/ or balance can move away from predominantly time and resource-based concerns and instead be adapted to account for factors such as critical turning point events and identification overlap across organisational levels.

5.6 Limitations and future research opportunities

The preceding section of this chapter has addressed potential concerns about methodological reliability and rigour in Grounded Theory research. However as with any study, there are other limitations to this research that must be acknowledged. First, the study is based on one-time interviews and any inferences of change over time are necessarily retrospective. A full ethnographic study in real-time could test the emergent hypotheses about turning point events and their cues. The potential to adopt that approach was limited by the requirement to complete the PhD project within a specific timeframe. Consequently, this study focuses on one area of interest and seeks to illuminate our understanding of the participants' core concern. Once the theory was sufficiently 'rich', the study was completed, however there is certainly scope for a more detailed longitudinal study to be conducted to test the propositions and tease out further nuances. Similarly, there is also scope to test the theory by returning to the study participants; a potential PhD project could test and further refine the theory with a broader sample of participants and organisational types.

Second, the study investigates the work-life experiences of male, non-managerial employees in traditional ‘blue collar’ employment. It is not clear from this research whether the occupational grouping of the participants has a particular bearing on the evaluative process, or whether full-time employment status influences the incorporation of identification into evaluations of the work-life interface. Future research could extend the sample group to self-employed persons and workers employed on non-standard work schedules such as part-time and casual work (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002).

Third, the study seeks to illuminate the apparent conflict between employer attempts to provide effective work-life strategies and anecdotal evidence suggesting that male, blue-collar employees are not connecting with those strategies. Consequently there is a gendered aspect to the study that must be acknowledged. However the emergent theoretical propositions, while grounded in male evaluations of the work-life interface, are ‘mid-level’ (Merton, 1968) that can be applied in a range of settings. Thus, the hypotheses are intended to be broadly applicable and in future could be tested and modified in the context of women workers and workers in a range of occupational roles.

Finally, the data indicates three distinct foci of identification in the MNC context: global MC, national subsidiary and local work group. Because the emergent theory is necessarily directed by the concepts in the data (Glaser, 1978), this study focuses on identification ‘nesting’ in respect of those three organisational foci. Future research could modify the theory and investigate the concept of identification overlap in respect of a number of other membership groups, both

organisational (e.g. professional group, employment status, hierarchical position) and individual (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity).

The application of grounded theory methods in this underexplored research setting formed the basis of a number of conference papers and presentations as the study progressed. These are acknowledged in the preliminary pages of the Thesis. They will inform the development of a programme of publications around methodological issues (the application of grounded theory in organisational sociology research), dissemination of findings (the theory of Prioritising Identity) and testing/ refinement of the theory.

5.7 Conclusion

The individual's incorporation of organisational identification – as both process and outcome - into their subjective evaluation of work and non-work life domains is at the core of this study's emergent theory. As the literature review reveals, Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978) is a suitable theoretical framework within which to situate propositions about the basic psychological process of identity formation. SIT suggests that individuals construct a number of identities based on their interactions as members of, or exclusion from, specific social groups. Ashforth and Mael (1989) applied SIT concepts in an organisational context, focusing on the organisational environment as one of the most significant social groups that will influence an individual's personal identity formation. The interaction between work and non-work life domains is therefore an area of study where it is unsurprising that identity formation is pertinent.

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of male, non-managerial employees in MNCs. To allow the true concerns of the participants to emerge unencumbered by predetermined theoretical frameworks, an emergent methodology - grounded theory - was employed. The central proposition arising from the study is that individuals Prioritise Identity in their subjective evaluation of the work-life interface. As part of this, employees engage in a two-stage process; first, Conceptualising Work in terms of an episode-centred process of organisational identification; and second, Positioning Self along a continuum of identification across organisational referents (i.e. locating themselves as having a more or less 'nested' or 'distinct' organisational identity). This study deconstructs the argument that nested identities are positive (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008) by teasing out the cues for episodes of affinity and disidentification as part of the process of Conceptualising Work. Application of Turning Point Analysis (Bullis & Bach, 1989) is a unique feature of the emergent theory, as is establishing a relationship between the process of organisational identification and subjective evaluations of work-life interaction.

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