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ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY, FUTURE ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGES, AND

THE CONSTRUCTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

IN A MERGER ENVIRONMENT

by

Sheila L. Margolis

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Human Resource Development
in
the Department of Public Administration and Urban Studies
in
the School of Policy Studies
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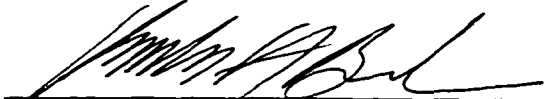
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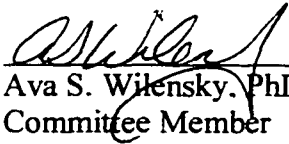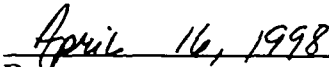
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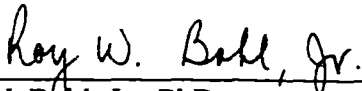Committee Member

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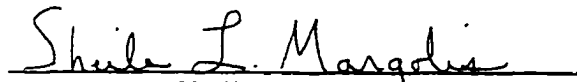Ava S. Wilensky, PhD
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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the Dean of the School of Policy Studies, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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ABSTRACT

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY, FUTURE ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGES, AND

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IN A MERGER ENVIRONMENT

by

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Mergers often contribute to organizational instability; therefore, such changes may induce members to revise how they view the organization and their identification with it. The purpose of this research was to investigate how individuals constructed their perceived organization identity, and how it was reflected in a collective, shared identity. This research examined links between the merger and identity, members' future organizational images, and the construction of identification.

This study was conducted using qualitative, case study methods with data collected through interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts. It was an in-depth examination of one organization's response to these issues during a time of change.

The findings suggest that the organization's purpose and philosophy constitute organizational identity. Surrounding this core are application attributes—priorities, practices, and projections—where those closer to the core are more enduring; those further from the core fluctuate with the needs of the organization in its attempts to be competitive. If a significant component of organizational identity is altered, then the

organization will be a new organization because that identity constitutes the essence from which other organizational attributes emerge.

The findings of this research indicate that the construction of organizational identity is influenced by its founders and leaders, hiring, previous employment, size, training, systems, celebrations, and personal experiences. Personal experiences can be affected by construed internal and external images.

Members have multiple future organizational images—expected, ideal, feared—plus perceptions of what others inside and outside the organization see as the organization's future. These perceptions can influence a member's perceived future images. Uncertainty during a merger can be managed through face-to-face meetings, information sharing, and clarification of employment status, organizational identity, application attributes, and vision.

Multiple factors support construction of organizational identification. These include a sense of ownership, a family philosophy, a positive sense of self, personality and background, and a crisis.

This research provides an expansion of the identity language and suggestions for human resource development professionals in planning and implementing change and managing the levers of communication, organizational identity, vision, and alignment. These anchors enhance an organization's capacity to thrive in a changing environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mergers have transformed the landscape of organizations, contributing to an environment of instability (Bastien, Hostager, & Miles, 1996). The dynamics of this change event unfold in a way that stimulates tension, uncertainty, and stress throughout the organization (Buono & Bowditch, 1990; Marks & Mirvis, 1997). With merger research predominantly focusing on the financial and strategic aspects of this change (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Ramaswamy, 1997; Ravenscraft & Scherer, 1987), there is a need for more research on merger implementation from the vantage point of the people experiencing it (Hogan & Overmyer-Day, 1994; Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1993).

Mergers stimulate the organization to rethink and transform, thus having the potential for altering the boundaries and content of a member's perceived organizational identity (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). A merger can impact "cognitions of oneness" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 35) with the organization. With aspects of organizational identity in flux, members are more aware of these organizational images (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

This study provided a unique opportunity to see the identity transformation process in an organization that had chosen a merger as its avenue for survival. This research focused on what members described as the essence of the organization, how they saw its future, as well as the construction of their feelings of identification with it.

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The organizational identity construct has received limited theoretical development and systematic examination (Gustafson, 1995). The construct of organizational identification, within the social identity theory perspective, has been the focus of scant research in an actual merger context (Bachman, 1993). Examination of perceptions of organizational identity, future organizational images, and the construction of organizational identification in a merger environment was the scope of this research.

The Problem

A merger is an event that brings tremendous change to an organization, causing issues of organizational identity to move into central focus for its members (Datta, 1991; McEntire, 1994; Napier, 1989; Schweiger, Ivancevich, & Power, 1987). Even when the merger is an avenue for organizational survival, it has the power to shake up emotions and produce feelings of loss and uncertainty (Mirvis & Marks, 1992; Overmyer Day, 1993; Schweiger, Csiszar, & Napier, 1994). The organization has an identity; it is the essence of the organization, a source of stability and definition for its members, and a basis for action (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1996). What are the attributes of the organization that not only are core and distinctive but also endure periods of flux? Is there a common identity that most members share, bringing unity to their perceptions of the organization? And with this period of transition, how do members see the future of the organization? Do these future images exist in spite of the disorientation of this change event? Is there a future image that members can picture that sustains the core, distinctive, and enduring

attributes yet allows the organization to be transformed into a brighter future? During this merger event, what support do the members need in order to get through these changes so they can perform in a manner that supports the organization's goals? And in an environment where organizational members are forced to make multiple sacrifices for survival, how can the organization nurture members' perceptions of oneness with it, exceeding the traditional work relationship?

The goal of this research was to investigate these issues of organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification during a merger in order to discover how purpose, meaning, and connection could be both the essence of being human and the path to organizational competitiveness and durability (Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1997; Leider, 1997).

Guiding Questions

The research questions were the heart of the research design (Maxwell, 1996). They were generated from both experience and theoretical knowledge and served as the basis for the methods and focus of the inquiry. The research questions for this study emerged from a review of the literature on the human aspects of mergers and acquisitions, organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification. At first, the focus questions targeted only issues of organizational identity and future images in the merger context. But during the data collection process, signs of strong identification with the organization emerged from the data. Thus, a question on construction of identification was added.

The following questions served as the focus for this research.

1. How do members describe organizational identity? What attributes are shared?

2. How has the merger influenced organizational identity?

3. What contributes to a member's perception of organizational identity?

4. How can the organization support its members during this merger?

5. How do members describe future organizational images?

6. How can the organization cultivate member identification?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions and issues of

organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational

identification, using a merger as a catalyst for understanding. The aim was to

investigate how individuals described and constructed their perceived organizational

identity and how it was reflected in a collective, shared organizational identity. Since

merger environments are periods of change and uncertainty, this research also

focused on members' perceptions of future images of the organization. In addition,

because frequent signs of identification were expressed during the research process,

the purpose was expanded to include construction of organizational identification.

Positive consequences often result from identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989;

Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Dutton et al., 1994; Kramer, 1993); therefore, this

research was expanded to examine how this organization cultivated these feelings of

belonging and connectedness in its members.

Conceptual Framework and Methodological Overview

This research has three primary bodies of literature as its conceptual base: human aspects of mergers and acquisitions, organizational identity and future images, and organizational identification. These areas served as the foundation for studying the human responses to a merger, members' perceptions of the essence of the organization, members' future images of the organization, and members' identification with the organization, all within the context of a change environment.

The selection of these bodies of literature as the basis for this research evolved throughout the research process. In the beginning, issues related to the human response to a merger were the focal point of this study. Since mergers have been and are continuing to be the path for organizational growth and survival (Sikora, 1997), the human response to this dramatic change event was of interest. What emerged from a review of the literature on the human issues in mergers (Buono & Bowditch, 1990; McEntire, 1994; Napier, 1989; Schweiger, Csiszar, & Napier, 1993) were the feelings of loss of identity that often cripple people emotionally not only during the change but also long into the future (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996; McEntire & Bentley, 1996; Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1993). Although loss of identity appears to be a significant issue, there has been little research with this focus in an actual merger environment (McEntire, 1994). Also, most of the research that touches on this loss is embedded in varying definitions of organizational identity, and the research rarely distinguishes between organizational identity and organizational identification. A separate body of literature on organizational identity has been evolving using the definition by Albert and Whetten (1985) as its base. The merger

literature on loss of identity is lacking this consistent foundation. Since aspects of identity appear to contribute to merger problems, this second body of literature on organizational identity was considered key to this research.

The literature on organizational identity is theoretical (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996; Dutton et al., 1994; Dutton & Penner, 1993; Fiol & Kovoor-Misra, 1997; Hatch & Schultz, in press), and includes a growing body of research (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Foremen, 1995; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Gustafson, 1995; Gustafson & Reger, 1995). Much of this work is based on a noted article by Albert and Whetten (1985) on organizational identity. Although there are disagreements about the definition of identity (Barney et al., in press), the enduring nature of identity within a context of change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), as well as the need to discuss dimensions of identity (Barney et al., in press), this identity literature builds on a foundation that contributes to the development of theory.

Related to the construct of organizational identity is the research on future organizational images (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Reger, Gustafson, DeMarie, & Mullane, 1994). The perspective of future images is a temporal perspective on multiple identities in an organization and directly links to organizational change and the enduring nature of identity. There has been limited research on future organizational images in the context of organizational identity literature (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gustafson & Reger, 1995), and no research has been located that studies these issues within the context of a merger. Although some research, not framed in the organizational identity literature, deals

with the visioning process, content, and the importance of a visionary leader (Awamleh & Gardner, 1997; Larwood, Falbe, Kriger, & Miesing, 1995; Thoms & Greenberger, 1995), most of the literature on future images is presented with a practitioner perspective (Emery & Purser, 1996; Senge, 1990; Weisbord & Janoff, 1995).

While researching organizational identity literature, the related construct of organizational identification was often addressed (Dutton et al., 1994). Much work exists on organizational identification as a product or state that can be measured or as a process. But the classic work on organizational identification with a social identity theory perspective is by Ashforth and Mael (1989). Organizational identification is a type of social identification that is specific to an organization and not dependent upon affiliation, based on Ashforth and Mael's interpretation. There is a shared identity and destiny with the organization.

Initially, organizational identification was not included as the focus of this study in efforts to hone in on a smaller body of literature. While gathering data, signs of identification were so salient, that it was added to the focus of this research.

Identification thought pieces (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Elsbach & Glynn, 1996; Kramer, 1993; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) and research (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Bullis & Tompkins, 1989; Cheney, 1983a; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Vaughn, 1997) seem to be a developing body of literature. Although much of this current literature is based on the article by Ashforth and Mael (1989), not all of the organizational identification research uses social identity theory as its foundation

(Bullis & Tomkins, 1989; Cheney, 1983a; Vaughn, 1997). With varying definitions of the construct, findings can be confusing and lack a unifying framework for building theory. In order to provide precision in my research focus, the social identity theory perspective on organizational identification as described by Ashforth and Mael (1989) was used in this research.

The overlap of these bodies of literature offered a unique perspective. Previous published research had not taken this focus. Although issues of identity and identification had been suggested for research in a change environment, the combination of these had not been studied during a merger. In addition, future organizational images were a component of this study. This research addressed the gap in understanding ways that organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification issues can be intertwined as members of an organization experience a merger. An in-depth examination of one organization's response to these issues was the focus of this research.

Qualitative methods were used in this research in order to understand this experience from the viewpoint of organizational members. Using an inductive and emerging process, this qualitative case study provided an opportunity to examine a bounded system to discover and understand this merger experience and uncover insiders' perceptions of organizational identity and identification. This particular case offered a unique setting because the organization was using a merger for the purposes of losing identity.

Definitions

There are several key terms used in this research. Those terms without

citations have emerged from this research. Listed below are definitions of these

terms.

Application Attributes

Application attributes are priorities, practices, and projections that are

applications or representations of organizational identity.

Application Attributes Gap

Application attributes gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the

current organizational attributes and future organizational image where organizational

identity is left intact.

Construed Current Organizational Images

Construed current organizational images are the images that members have of

what others inside (construed internal image) and outside (construed external image)

the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization. These

images can influence perceived organizational identity.

Construed External Future Image

Construed external future image is what a member believes others outside the

organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Construed External Image

Construed external image is what a member believes others outside the

organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (Dutton &

Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994).

Construed Future Images

Construed future images are the multiple future images that a member has of what others inside (construed internal future image) and outside (construed external future image) the organization think will be the future attributes of the organization. These images can influence perceived future images.

Construed Internal Future Image

Construed internal future image is what a member believes others in the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Construed Internal Image

Construed internal image is what a member believes others in the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization.

Construed Organizational Images

Construed organizational images are images that a member has of what others inside and outside the organization see as core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed internal image and construed external image) and see as the future attributes of the organization (construed internal future image and construed external future image).

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with rivals (Fombrun, 1996). Reputation is outsiders' beliefs about what distinguishes an organization (Dutton et al., 1994).

Merger

Merger is a joining of two or more companies under one corporate roof and management team (Mueller, 1995).

Organizational Attributes

Organizational attributes are organizational identity and application attributes. The components of organizational attributes are purpose, philosophy, priorities, practices, and projections.

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification, based on social identity theory, is a form of social identification that is organization-specific, distinct from commitment and internalization. It is a cognition or perception that is not dependent upon behaviors or affect. Members perceive a shared destiny and identity with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Organizational identification is a cognitive connection that exists when a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity (Dutton et al., 1994). Organizational identification, based on social identity theory, is a form of social identification that is organization-specific, distinct from commitment and internalization. It is a cognition or perception that can include some emotional and value significance but that does not include behaviors.

Organizational Identity

Organizational identity is what organization members think is central, distinctive, and enduring (temporal continuity) about that organization. All three criteria are necessary, and as a set sufficient to describe the character of the

organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The purpose and philosophy of an

organization are the two components of organizational identity.

Organizational Identity Gap

An organizational identity gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between

the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image where

application attributes and organizational identity must be significantly altered to

achieve that future state.

Perceived Expected Future Image

Perceived expected future image is what a member believes will be future

attributes of the organization.

Perceived Feared Future Image

Perceived feared future image is what a member fears will be future attributes

of the organization.

Perceived Future Images

Perceived future images are the multiple future images that a member has of

the organization, such as perceived expected future image, perceived ideal future

image, and perceived feared future image.

Perceived Ideal Future Image

Perceived ideal future image is what a member believes would be the ideal

future attributes of the organization.

Perceived Organizational Identity

Perceived organizational identity is what the member believes is central,

distinctive, and enduring about the organization (Dutton et al., 1994).

Philosophy

Philosophy is the spirit of purpose and the framework for how members do business. It is the guiding spirit and organizing principle behind working practices in the organization. It is a feeling understood by members that serves as the source for the distinctive way members do business. It is understood best by insiders. The philosophy is one of the two components of organizational identity.

Practices

Practices are application attributes. They are the features or ways of doing business that put purpose, philosophy, and priorities into action.

Priorities

Priorities are application attributes. They are the key standards for action that support organizational identity. Priorities guide the path for applying purpose and philosophy to practice.

Projections

Projections are application attributes. They are the images of the organization to the public.

Purpose

Purpose is the organization's reason for being in business (not to be defined as making money); it is the service that the organization is providing. Purpose is broad in scope and lasts over time. Purpose is one of the two components of organizational identity.

Social Identification

Social identification is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate, based on social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Strength of Identification

Strength of identification is the degree to which the content of the member's self-concept is tied to his or her organizational membership. Strength of identification is indicated when one's self-concept has many of the same characteristics that one believes define the organization. Strength of identification is indicated when a person ranks or rates the organizational identity higher than other social identities (Dutton et al., 1994). Strength of identification can be measured using the "Identification of Psychological Group Scale (IDPG)" (Mael, 1988).

Overview

This study addresses issues of organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification in the context of a merger. Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of the literature that framed this study. Chapter 3 offers a detailed description of the qualitative case study method and its execution. Chapter 4 presents a descriptive analysis of the data collected. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings as they relate to the focus questions. Chapter 6 includes a summary of findings, a discussion of how this research relates to theory, existing literature, and human resource development (HRD) practice, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to the human aspects of mergers and acquisitions, organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification. The theoretical and empirical work is examined, and its relevance to this study is discussed.

Mergers and Acquisitions Literature

Mergers and Acquisitions as a Vehicle for Change

In an environment of continuous change and turbulence (Negroponte, 1995), the merger and acquisition phenomenon contributes to the instability and chaotic setting of organizational life (Buono & Bowditch, 1989; Mirvis & Marks, 1992). The dilemma of balancing stability with the capacity for change is heightened in the context of a merger (Howard & Geist, 1995). Mergers and acquisitions have been described as "trigger events" (Isabella, 1993, p. 18) because of their potential for erupting organizational change and altering people's mindsets. They affect not only the companies involved but also their host cities and regions (Green, 1990). Merger activity puts power and control in a state of flux, affecting the economies of the area.

In attempts to create value (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Lubatkin, Srinivasan, & Merchant, 1997), organizations have continued to pursue the mergers and acquisitions path. Mergers are structured as financial investments or for strategic

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purposes such as growth in an environment that cannot always tolerate the tensions and time of a start-up. By buying talent, an organization can achieve instant growth (Christensen, 1994). It is an avenue for "buying knowledge off the shelf" (De Geus, 1997, p. 162) and assuming a more formidable position in the market. It is an opportunity to "exploit the organic growth potential of the companies they acquire better than the previous owners" (Morgan, 1988, p. 17). A company experiencing discontinuous technological change has the option of merging with or acquiring a company that possesses the technology that it needs for survival (Lambe & Spekman, 1997).

American merger history can be studied from the perspective of waves of intense activity (Gaughan, 1994). The biggest merger wave of the century may be the merger and acquisition activity of the 1990s (Sirower, 1997), described by Katz, Simanek, and Townsend (1997) as the fifth wave in the past 100 years. This wave is characterized by equity financing more than debt (Gaughan, 1994). According to Barmash (1995), these mergers and acquisitions tend to be more strategically oriented than those of the past. Rather than being purely investment focused, they appear to be entrepreneurial in nature, conceived internally as part of an expansion strategy (Gaughan, 1994). In contrast to earlier waves of a conglomerate type, the present activity has been dominated by mergers between companies in similar or related business activities (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996). These mergers tend to be more dependent on the integration of people and a more "hands on" management style. The focus is achieving operational synergy, which is a difficult task to realize (Katz et al., 1997).

In 1996, there were 6,828 completed mergers and acquisitions, with a value of at least $5 million each, involving American companies on both sides of the deal or on one side as buyer or seller (Sikora, 1997). This number of mergers and acquisitions set a record high, far surpassing the volume in any year in the 1980s. For 40% of the publicly announced transactions, the activity exceeded $550 billion, based on known prices for 2,752 deals. For the first time ever recorded, all top 100 transactions were worth $1 billion or more each. These megadeals account for 53.5% of the confirmed market-wide total with a value of $294.8 billion. These deals have continued at a strong pace in 1997, the fourth straight year of extensive dealmaking after a brief slowdown in the early 1990s.

European activity has also been brisk due to deregulation and globalization (Holmes, 1997). American buyers are dominant in European cross-border purchases. In 1996, the volume of European cross-border transactions totaled 1,836, valued at $114 billion. Megadeals continue to grow in number with 26 in 1996, compared with 24 in 1995 and 9 in 1994.

Reports of continued growth in mergers and acquisitions activity in the second quarter of 1997, reported by Bloomberg News (Ratigan, June 27,1997), made that year a record year. With a ten-percent increase in the second quarter, merger activity globally was valued at $332.3 billion, an amount surpassing the $301.2 billion figure for the same quarter of 1996. Heightened activity was fueled by the strong and growing economy and a desire by companies to grow quickly and benefit from this economy, plus expand globally. With rising stock prices, companies are increasingly

choosing to pay for acquisitions through stock. Optimism has encouraged aggressive strategies.

Financial and Strategic Aspects of Mergers and Acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions research has predominantly concentrated on the financial and strategic aspects (Payne, 1987; Ravenscraft & Scherer, 1987) such as merger motives (Trautwein, 1990); choosing between mergers/acquisitions and joint ventures (Hennart & Reddy, 1997); repetitive momentum in merger activity (Amburgey & Miner, 1992); interorganizational imitation (Haunschild, 1993); performance of acquisitions of distressed firms (Bruton, Oviatt, & White, 1994); positive relationship between premium paid and compensation for investment bankers (Kesner, Shapiro, & Sharma, 1994); managerial overcommitment to making a specific acquisition (Haunschild, Davis-Blake, & Fichman, 1994); chief executive officer hubris and premiums paid (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997); firm control, chief executive officer rewards, and acquisition performance (Kroll, Wright, Toombs, & Leavell, 1997); the effects of chief executive officer incentives and individual characteristics in takeover resistance (Buchholtz & Ribbens, 1994); executive departures (Cannella, 1991; Cannella & Hambrick, 1993; Hambrick & Cannella, 1993; Siehl & Smith, 1991; Siehl, Smith, & Omura, 1990; Walsh, 1988,1989; Walsh & Ellwood, 1991); the role of risk in acquisition decision processes (Pablo, Sitkin, & Jemison, 1996); factors influencing wealth creation (Datta, Pinches, & Narayanan, 1992); negative effects on the internal development of firm innovation (Hitt, Hoskisson, & Ireland, 1990; Hitt, Hoskisson, Ireland, & Harrison, 1991; Hitt, Hoskisson, Johnson, & Moesel, 1996); issues of

relatedness and performance (Flanagan, 1996; Seth, 1990; Shelton, 1988; Singh &

Montgomery, 1987); the performance impact of strategic similarity in horizontal

mergers (Ramaswamy, 1997); the effects of ownership on performance (Blackburn,

Lang, & Johnson, 1990); positive effects of differences in resource allocations on post-

acquisition performance (Harrison, Hitt, Hoskisson, & Ireland, 1991); synergy

(Chatterjee, 1986, 1992; Kitching, 1967; Larsson, 1989; Sirower, 1997); and previous

acquisition experience, age, and whether or not the acquisition had been contested

(Fowler & Schmidt, 1989).

Although some research has shown that acquisitions lead to improved

performance (Switzer, 1996), too often research indicates that results do not meet

expectations (Clark, 1991; Hall & Norburn, 1987; Lubatkin, 1988; Marks, 1988a;

Mueller, 1995; Ravenscraft & Scherer, 1989; Sirower, 1997; Zangwill, 1995; Zweig,

1995), especially from the perspective of the bidding firm (Datta et al., 1992).

Although there have been an array of measures used to evaluate success, much of the

evidence confirms that *the majority of mergers don't work when objectively assessed

in future years*" (Clark, 1991, p. 3). Some have determined that the actual process is

the source of the problems (Jemison & Sitkin, 1986). Based on Barmash's (1995)

discussions with mergers and acquisitions mavens, most deals do not achieve the

benefits anticipated during the planning. Companies would be more profitable and

innovative if they had stayed independent (Davidson, 1991). Schweiger et al. (1994)

described the empirical research on profitability and performance as equivocal. Any

analysis must be framed in the specific context of the merger or acquisition since

varying conditions can produce disparate outcomes (Salk, 1995).

With mixed performance results and conflicting research outcomes, a need for studying the qualitative dimension of the phenomenon, the integration process, has become a growing focus in the literature (Nadler & Limpert, 1992; Schweiger & Walsh, 1990). Recent merger and acquisition literature has focused on issues of organizational fit, targeting the proper handling of an array of cultural and human factors (Buono & Bowditch, 1989; Krishnan, Miller, & Judge, 1997) as necessary ingredients for success. The human factor appears critical in both pre-acquisition planning as well as post-acquisition management (Sudarsanam, 1995). Ulrich (1997) stated that mergers often fail because of the lack of cultural fit between the merged companies. Financial and strategic fit, without the necessary cultural fit, can produce dismal results.

Cultural and Human Factors in Mergers and Acquisitions

The importance of culture in mergers and acquisitions has been discussed extensively from a practitioner view (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993b, 1995; Conklin, 1994; Pritchett, 1985; Schein, 1990, 1992; Schonfeld, 1997), from a theoretical perspective (Elsass & Veiga, 1994; Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988), and through research (Bastien, 1992; Buono, Bowditch, & Lewis, 1985; Datta, 1991; Datta & Grant, 1990; Greenwood, Hinings, & Brown, 1994; McEntire, 1994; Roach, 1988; Weber, 1988, 1996). Several researchers have examined the blending of two organizational groups from an anthropological perspective (Elsass & Veiga, 1994; Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1993; Weber & Schweiger, 1992). Recently, the effects of culture have been studied in international mergers and acquisitions (Calori, Lubatkin,

& Very, 1994; Olie, 1994; Schweiger et al., 1993; Weber, Shenkar, & Raveh, 1996).

David and Singh (1994) suggested that cultural differences could come from many

levels: organizational, professional, and national.

Most of the literature on the cultural aspects of mergers and acquisitions has

focused on cultural fit from the perspective of corporate or organizational culture.

Organizational culture has been studied in the mergers of travel agencies (McEntire &

Bentley, 1996), banks (Buono & Bowditch, 1989; Kelly, 1989), community and

technical colleges (Stevens, 1996), and hospitals (Chandran, 1994; Wilkins, 1996), just

to name a few. The complexities of blending two unique cultures are often a task that

the acquiring organization has not considered prior to announcement. Because culture

impacts all aspects of organizational life, resistance is common; it deters achieving the

synergy needed to enhance performance and create value. There is minimal research,

based on large samples, on the effects of these cultural differences on integration and

financial performance (Weber, 1996).

Mergers and acquisitions have been attributed with numerous negative

outcomes, both on an organizational level and an individual level (Bastien, 1988;

Bruckman & Peters, 1987; Marks, 1988a). The merger and acquisition experience has

been compared to a marriage (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993b), a blended family (Fulmer

& Gilkey, 1988), a planned crisis (Coulter, 1996), an infection (De Geus, 1997), and

even death (Ginter, Duncan, Swayne, & Shelfer, 1992). The psychology of the merger

and acquisition experience has been reviewed (Hogan & Overmyer-Day, 1994).

Bastien et al. (1996) wrote about the "dark side of change" (p. 261). They

described the problems experienced by companies that are merged or acquired, making

them vulnerable to exploitation by their competitors. The dysfunctional conditions experienced by companies undergoing such change make this an opportunity to implement "corporate judo" (p. 261) for those competitors who have the intelligence, knowledge of tactics, and understanding of timing. Competitors can take advantage of company instability and customer and employee dissatisfaction.

The importance of communication has been a specific focus for both practitioners (Bastien, 1987; Napier, Simmons, & Stratton, 1989; Schweiger et al., 1993) and from a research perspective (Bastien, 1988; Howard & Geist, 1995; Roach, 1988; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991; Wilkins, 1996). Due to Securities and Exchange Commission restrictions on disclosure, there are regulated limits to information that can be communicated (Marks, 1988a). Although public comment on mergers under review by the Federal Trade Commission has been restricted, the agency, for the first time on March 14, 1997, posted a message on its Web site welcoming any comments from the public on a proposed merger of Staples and Office Depot (Weisul, 1997). There were 1,662 messages in just five days. There appeared to be a thirst for information. As stated by Marks (1994), "Silence...breeds distrust and anger" (p. 104). Bastien et al. (1996) labeled this condition as "information constipation" (p. 265). Ambiguity resulted not only from a perception by top management that there was a need for being discreet but also from their own lack of clarity as to the impact of merger activities (Pritchett, 1985). Pritchett described this condition:

> Everybody is suffering from the unknown. And the truth is that even
> the president and board of directors do not have it within their power
> to satisfy everyone's curiosity and rid the work environment of the
> ambiguity. Furthermore, top executives usually consider it injudicious,

possibly unkind, and maybe even illegal to inform people of the hard
facts in many situations. (p. 42)

The combination of the shock of the merger announcement and an environment of

tightly held information often resulted in feelings of diminished trust and a

preoccupation with self-preservation. There was a longing for control and

predictability that was not being satisfied, because mergers demand change and

adaptation. With a reduction in trust, individuals were less willing to share

information. Employees became preoccupied, somewhat paralyzed by the event, with

rumors running throughout the organization in response to the void in official

communications (Marks, 1988a). According to Matteson and Ivancevich (1990),

ensuring that there was sufficient information flow as early as possible, using strategies

such as realistic job and merger and acquisition previews, was a critical priority for

preventing stress. Bastien's (1987, 1988) research suggested that there was an inverse

relationship between amount of communication and congruence of communication

with the level of personal uncertainty. The use of high levels of formal, official

communication motivated the use of other forms of communication and diminished

resistance. Plus, collegiality, defined as communication of acceptance and equality,

reduced uncertainty.

In describing the SmithKline Beecham merger (Bauman, Jackson, & Lawrence,

1997), the authors suggested five essential characteristics for enhancing the capacity

for organizational change. One of these was instituting strategic communication in

both content and process. These authors suggested that the company's strategy

should be the framework for communication content. Communication should be

implemented systematically in a consistent and clear manner. The environment should

value dialogue and feedback. And communication should serve as a valuable link

between strategy and strategic action.

Balloun and Gridley (1990) suggested timely and effective communication and

actions to restore equilibrium in the "3Ps: Purpose, Power, and People" (p. 91). There

are three questions most commonly asked by employees after the merger or acquisition

announcement: "Why are we doing this?" (Purpose), "Who is in charge?" (Power),

and "What will happen to me?" (People). It is essential that the purpose of the merger

be communicated clearly to everyone. There must be a clear understanding of both

the purpose of the new organization and its vision. The company must provide clear

communications about the top-level power structure so individuals can react and

respond based on accurate information. Employees should be informed of the

management philosophy and schedule for implementing changes. And efforts should

always be directed at reducing ambiguity and uncertainty for employees. All of these

activities require frequent and accurate communication that is handled effectively.

Buono and Bowditch (1989) discussed a staged communication approach for

providing information. They suggested that employees should hear the merger

announcement within the organization prior to public announcement, even if only

within hours of that announcement. Because spreading inaccurate information can be

devastating, sometimes it is better to communicate with people even when there is no

new information. Two-way communication is critical where information can be

provided and questions can be asked. Some communications mechanisms suggested

by these authors are newsletters, special phone lines, and group presentations. Employees need a realistic picture of job duties and responsibilities.

Commitment is usually affected because members do not understand the organization's goals and objectives. Without a clear focus, energies are diffused. In addition, employees feel like they are being neglected and not valued, causing their loyalty to diminish. Financial priorities appear to be the focus of the organization, leaving individuals alone to look out for themselves. The results are often bailouts which have a contagious effect (Pritchett, 1985). Turnover due to bailouts, terminations, and people recruited away to other companies have significant effects on the organization.

Fried, Tiegs, Naughton, and Ashforth (1996) suggested that companies concentrate not only on how they treat terminated employees but also on how they communicate that treatment to survivors. This communication specifically should be directed to those with an external locus of control who might identify with the terminated employees.

Isabella (1993) conducted research on the effects of trigger events on people's mindsets. Through her research, she identified four changes in mindsets. She described the anticipatory stage that often occurs prior to major organizational changes where rumors of fragmented speculation flourish in an attempt to understand events. Although managers may also be experiencing some confusion, Isabella recommended that they must aggressively anticipate and provide clear, honest communication in efforts to reduce anxiety and fear and curb aggressive, malicious rumors. She suggested that managers provide information that is available even if it is

just boundaries of the puzzle, and managers should also acknowledge that which is not known. When the event has been confirmed and is no longer in question, Isabella described a conventional mindset that allows people to reduce anxiety by turning to their own past or to histories of others in similar circumstances as a source of answers to their future. Managers should handle the announcement of the change so that people feel included and informed. They should also develop and use analogies and comparisons to give anchor to the instability. A connection to the past should be woven into members' understanding of their new future. This stage was followed by an amended mindset where the past and the new present can overlap in a state of confusion. The loss of the familiarity of the past must be experienced with a reconstruction of what life is like in the present and the expected future. Divergent perspectives must be brought into harmony through symbols that represent a shared identity. Managing symbols could include not only rituals and ceremonies to introduce changes but also clear formal and informal communications through multiple methods. These actions should focus on issues of vision, strategy, procedures, and other aspects of organizational life. This period of transition was often an opportune time to make other needed changes. As time moved on, the mindset altered to an evaluative one where conclusions and learnings were drawn from the experiences. To manage this stage, it was important for managers to evaluate and communicate the effects of the changes to organizational members, admitting any failures and displaying energy in moving ahead toward a positive future. Isabella stated that managing this process effectively was necessary for people to be productive. Being aware of what was on people's minds was critical for success, especially in these times of change.

There are numerous articles directed to the human resources practitioner focusing on issues such as the importance of pre-merger personnel planning (Manzini & Gridley, 1986), human resource issues in international mergers and acquisitions (Potgieter, 1996), investigating cultures and policies (Anfuso, 1994; Cartwright & Cooper, 1995), minimizing stress (Ivancevich, Schweiger, & Power, 1987), reducing the people-fit merger problems (Krupar & Krupar, 1988; Somers & Bird, 1990), appraising management talent in acquired firms (Ivancevich & Stewart, 1989), proper handling of employee layoffs (Leana & Feldman, 1989), helping mid-level managers in coping (Buono & Nurick, 1992), developing managers (Andrews, 1991), and serving in the human resource role as a strategic business partner throughout the merger process (Marks, 1997; Schweiger & Weber, 1989; Ulrich, Cody, LaFasto, & Rucci, 1989) with the responsibility for achieving alignment in the organization (Kleinman, 1988).

Research has shown that mergers and acquisitions can be stressful events (Fried et al., 1996; Harshbarger, 1987), potentially debilitating experiences for individuals (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1990), with numerous physiological effects (Marks, 1988a; Marks & Mirvis, 1992; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1990; Schweiger & Ivancevich, 1985) even when there is a high degree of cultural compatibility between the partnering organizations (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993a). Several sources of merger stress were increased feelings of uncertainty (Bastien, 1987; Harshbarger, 1987; Marks, 1988b; Schweiger et al., 1994), diminished trust (Pritchett, 1985), low morale (Overmyer Day, 1993), lower job satisfaction (Franks, 1992), job loss (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1990; Pappanastos, Hillman, & Cole, 1987), management

and employee turnover (Bastien, 1987), separation anxiety (Astrachan, 1989), and the debilitating threat and sense of loss (Marks, 1988a, 1994; Mirvis, 1985). Managers should take an ethical posture in handling these integration issues (Buono & Bowditch, 1990). Companies need to send the "right signals" (Perry, 1986, p. 51) which demonstrate fairness, respect, caring, and a sense of community.

Research by Jick (1979) indicated that there was "a strong and significant pattern between merger-related stress and both individual and organizational costs" (p. 224). A surprising finding was that the negative effects lasted long after the event took place. Although this was one of the earlier dissertations on this topic, the ten propositions that emerged from this research are extremely relevant today:

Proposition 1: Mergers may exacerbate the very problems they are designed to solve.

Proposition 2: If the merger is a realized "success," the organization may be short of talent. If it's unsuccessful, the organization is worse off than before the merger.

Proposition 3: The course of mergers tends to be unpredictable, fraught with unexpected developments.

Proposition 4: Mergers require a long time to unfold since change is very gradual.

Proposition 5: Mergers may initially cost the organizations more than they save. It is moreover self-evident that a failure can be exceedingly costly.

Proposition 6: Mergers typically involve considerable trauma and crisis for individual participants. The functioning of the organization is commensurately impacted.

Proposition 7: Mergers affect individuals differentially.

Proposition 8: Noticeable anxiety is to be expected and tolerated under merger conditions. However, excessive anxiety can be highly destructive.

Proposition 9: The utilization of the layoff strategy under merger conditions should be more critically evaluated.

Proposition 10: Organizations tend to be resilient in the face of crisis. A strong "survival instinct" surfaces to preserve organizational traditions and immortality. (pp. 229-233)

The merger and acquisition experience is potentially the most stressful for those at mid-career (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1990). They are not only psychologically most committed to their careers in the organization but also vulnerable to experiencing a personal mid-life transition or crisis. According to their model, individual responses to ambiguity, self-esteem, and locus of control will impact one's level of stress and its outcomes.

The issue of loss of autonomy has been a focus of recent research (Datta, 1991; Datta & Grant, 1990; Datta, Grant, & Rajagopalan, 1991; Fried et al., 1996; Weber, 1996). Even low levels of integration do not necessarily mean true autonomy (Datta, 1991). Overemphasis on controlling newly acquired firms by imposing goals and decisions may not be productive (Chatterjee, Lubatkin, Schweiger, & Weber, 1992). Words of tolerance are highly recommended. Yet, research suggested that the degree of autonomy was significantly greater in unrelated acquisitions than in related acquisitions. Also, autonomy was associated with superior performance in acquired firms in unrelated acquisitions but not in related acquisitions (Datta & Grant, 1990). Because there were limited synergistic benefits in unrelated acquisitions, autonomy was more feasible. It appeared that in related acquisitions there was a need to balance the synergistic benefits with the need for autonomy. In these environments, the tradeoff may result in a need for reduced autonomy. Datta et al. (1991) found a moderating effect of autonomy in related acquisitions between management incompatibility and performance. Thus, where the management styles were incompatible, they recommended providing more autonomy than in situations where management styles were compatible. The benefits of autonomy in unrelated

acquisitions were supported in environments with both high and low management compatibility.

Research by Fried et al. (1996) focused on contested acquisitions that also imposed new policies and procedures on those in the acquired company. Their research suggested that locus of control was a significant predisposition factor for success at keeping or acquiring more job control after the acquisition. Internals, who believed that they control what happens to them, were much more adaptive to the change than externals, those who believed that what happens to them was the result of forces beyond their control. Externals were also more likely to believe that terminated employees were treated unfairly and the change would negatively impact their career. Employees with higher external locus of control were more likely to psychologically withdraw from work. When survivors identified with the terminated employees, they exhibited even greater stress and feelings of helplessness.

Mirvis and Marks (1992) have described a "merger syndrome" where executives exhibit heightened stress and a crisis management response to the added work, uncertainty, and insecurity caused by the merger or acquisition. Employees are consumed with a range of emotions and exhibit a level of self-interest that deters productive work. Although this condition was first described over a decade ago, Marks and Mirvis (1997) stated that these stressful reactions continue today. The twelve signs of the merger syndrome include the following: a preoccupation with the event at the expense of job performance, an environment permeated with rumors of the worst case situations, numerous psychological and physiological responses to stress, a crisis management atmosphere, inadequate communication, a lack of trust as

to who has control, a clash of cultures, feelings of in-group/out-group differences, evaluations of groups with perceptions of superiority and inferiority, responses that demonstrate an attack-and-defend mentality, an atmosphere of keeping track of winners and losers, and forced decisions. These conditions operate at the expense of performance. Marks and Mirvis suggested that companies focus on selling the change to employees, hold merger sensitization seminars, constantly communicate using multiple methods, and demonstrate empathy for those experiencing the change.

One source of merger stress casually mentioned in several articles and books is a sense of loss (Cartwright & Cooper, 1990) due to a loss of identity (Bruckman & Peters, 1987; Buono & Bowditch, 1989; Cartwright & Cooper, 1996; Datta, 1991; Howard & Geist, 1995; Ivancevich et al., 1987; Marks, 1982, 1994; Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1988, 1993; Napier, 1989; Olie, 1994; Schweiger et al., 1987; Slama, 1991; Ulrich et al., 1989; Walter, 1985). This loss is also labeled an "identification crisis" (Levinson, 1970, p. 143) and the transformation of identities (Salk, 1995).

Losing Identity

Losing organizational identity is a cognitive state that impacts the individual's own identity. There is more than just a general sense of loss; there is a specific loss of organizational identity (Napier, 1989). It is like an anchor being taken away (Schweiger et al., 1987). "Previous organizational status, loyalty, commitment and hopes and promises for the future no longer count, or are considered unlikely to be honoured" (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996, p. 48). The loss of identity is one of the most common merger stressors, yet it has been treated indirectly in the mergers and

acquisitions literature. Nahavandi & Malekzadeh (1993) described this loss as

follows:

> Individuals often hang on to seemingly insignificant things: The
> letterhead of the old company is kept for many years. Name tags with
> the old logo are not discarded. Employees refuse to use the new name
> in private conversations. All these events represent resistance to giving
> up the culture of their company. That culture represents the shared
> values and norms of the employees. It is what makes the company
> unique, the glue that bonds people together. Giving it up is equivalent
> to surrendering one's identity, and consequently, employees often fight
> to preserve it. (p. 3)

Employees may find it difficult to feel a loyalty to a new company or boss if

they do not feel an identity with the new organization (Marks, 1982). An official

identity change does not always constitute a change on a human level for employees or

stakeholders (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992).

"Organizations facing merger seek to protect their respective identities and

basic survival" (Jick, 1979, pp. 233-234). When employees experience this loss of

identity and purpose, they can become disoriented because their own image has been

altered (Schweiger et al., 1987). A "we-them" (Jick, 1979, p. 119) syndrome

develops.

Mael (1988) identified some of the side-effects of mergers that are associated

with decreased identification with a group: reduced satisfaction, loss of organizational

distinctiveness, loss of mentors, increased turnover, increased intraorganizational

competition, loss of distinctive and sentimental props, and reduced job involvement.

Acquired firm managers may react defensively by holding onto beliefs and approaches

in efforts to preserve identity (Datta, 1991). Shaping a common identity is critical for

achieving unity of effort (Olie, 1994). According to Ulrich et al. (1989), this is a responsibility for all managers.

Identity changes usually result in changes in image and name, which are often quite political (Kanter et al., 1992). The renaming of a company can have significant impact on member identification (Shanley & Correa, 1992). Mirvis and Marks (1992) recommended using both companies' names and logos on official documents for at least the first few months after the sale. Symbolic signs of domination must be properly handled. Even perceptions of changes can have impact on organizational identification (Shanley & Correa, 1992). McEntire (1994) suggested that changing names is disruptive, especially if it is valued or replaced by a competitor.

McEntire and Bentley (1996) examined the organizational culture of a large U.S. travel agency that had a strategy of growth through mergers and acquisitions. Using qualitative methods, they studied the change process during which the premerger entities became one organization. One of the themes that emerged from their research was the change in organizational identity. They highlighted the use of history as a common frame of reference, and the disruption caused by the merging of two different companies that had been former enemies. Because the merged company had no clear identity, culture, or vision that was shared by all, a sense of confusion and lack of direction was expressed in the interviews. It was particularly disruptive for the acquired company when they had to give up their name. These researchers suggested that the acculturation process takes much time and work on the part of all.

Research by Slama (1991) focused on the period of transition following an acquisition. Her interviews revealed a loss of identity expressed as a loss of

individuality and a need to redefine oneself. It was like having one's history stripped away; it was like being a different person. Employees of the acquired company discussed feelings of fear, anger, helplessness, loss of self-esteem, loss of control, and loss of status. Their internal psychological stability had been taken away. There were no attempts by the acquiring company to recognize or deal with these feelings of loss. "When individuals can no longer identify with their firm and see the opportunities within it, they become frustrated and confused because their image of themselves as being successful has been shattered" (p. 128).

Influence by a more powerful group, as is common in a merger or acquisition, can result in conflict and resistance due to the perceived threats to self-esteem and one's sense of security (Salk, 1995). This discomfort is exacerbated by a lack of shared history.

The degree of identity change will vary depending on the integration process implemented (Salk, 1995). Preservation/pluralistic mergers and acquisitions allow old social identities to continue. Salk recommended an emphasis on categorized interactions as a foundation for positive relations. In contrast, absorption/unitary mergers and acquisitions present the greatest threat of loss, thus requiring a swift implementation. Old identities must be replaced with the new merged identity. In this environment, Salk recommended personalized perceptions and decategorized interactions. In symbiosis/federative mergers and acquisitions, Salk suggested that building an appreciation for differences might be preferable over seeking a new identity for the combination.

Rentsch and Schneider (1991) conducted a merger and acquisition scenario experiment. They found that the most positive postcombination expectations were from persons in larger organizations when the motive for combining was growth. The least positive postcombination expectations were from persons from smaller organizations when survival was the motive for combining. The researchers combined morale and identity items so they were loaded as one factor. Although they predicted that members of small organizations would have lower identity expectations and those motivated by growth would have higher identity expectations for postcombination life, the results showed no significant effects for the factor morale/identity. They suggested that this lack of statistical significance could be due to the fact that morale/identity is significant in all combinations studied.

Kanter et al. (1992) distinguished identity change from internal organizational changes. They described identity change as taking place when ties with constituencies or stakeholders are terminated or when the nature of activities with these groups has been altered. Internal changes do not constitute identity change. According to these researchers, only macro level boundary changes result in identity change. Mergers and acquisitions can produce sharp and dramatic identity changes for the acquiring and acquired companies. The degree of identity change depends on the number of stakeholder groups affected and the nature of the changes. Organizations have multiple identities. Plus, companies can have varying identities when viewed legally, operationally, or publicly. Identity changes typically involve legal activities, may be public events, and usually focus on tangible assets. Mergers and acquisitions are often times of unilateral action, where contracts are in flux and tensions are high. Expected

cooperation is not a reality, and implementation lacks order and a process focus. Such an environment results in a *"crisis of commitment and a need for people to reaffirm their membership"* (p. 217), at a time when the framework for commitment is unstable.

Research by Howard and Geist (1995) focused on the contradictions embedded in merger activities and what member discourse revealed about their ideological positioning in response to these contradictions. One of the contradictions revealed in discourse related to identification and estrangement. Strong organizational identification was being challenged by conversations revealing estrangement and coping with the merger. Employees simultaneously talked about a loss of identity and a strong commitment to and identification with the company. Member responses varied depending on their feelings of control on a continuum of active acceptance to passive rejection.

Actually a strong identification with the company can result in feelings of desertion after a merger. These feelings can promote a response of mobility and disillusionment. Employees feel that their long-term identification has been exploited (Levinson, 1970). It may be difficult to transfer loyalty to the new organization or leader (Marks, 1982). Some have become so embittered that they have threatened to never identify with their employers again (Mael, 1988). The distinctiveness of "junior" partners is undermined and mentor relationships may be lost (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). "The process of instituting new identities...is a delicate and time-consuming one" (Jick, 1979, p. 230). The loss of identity and pride can be critical for

long-term employees, especially if the acquiring company has a lesser public image than the acquired company (Ivancevich et al., 1987).

Deiser (1994) described the need to merge the "strategic chromosomes" (p. 370) of the two organizations in a creative way that produces a new "joint" meaningful identity with an agreed to strategic path. This researcher recommended an analysis of key questions prior to any implementation. Identification with the new organization and identity and self-perception should be part of the cultural matrix considered in the planning process.

Gunther (1997) described a troubled ABC after a recent $19 billion merger of Capital Cities/ABC with Disney. The author stated that ABC's strategy was faltering because its identity and vision were fuzzy. "What is ABC? If NBC is young, urban, sophisticated, CBS is warm and mainstream, and Fox is bold and edgy, ABC is...well, that depends on whom you ask" (p. 99). Igar, the president of ABC Inc., and Eisner, the chief executive officer of parent Walt Disney Company, gave two different answers to the identity question. At the time of the merger, Igar was six months away from being chief executive officer at Capital Cities, a hands-off culture. Eisner was described as a take-charge type, holding onto Igar through a lucrative, five-year contract with a discretionary annual bonus and options to buy Disney stock. This was an example of a merger that had problems in both identity and leadership.

A crisis can bring issues of identity to the forefront of one's thinking and stimulate sensemaking (Albert et al., in press). This can not only make issues of identity more conscious but also "jump-start the identification process" (p. 15).

Implications for This Research

With an array of how-to suggestions (Altier, 1997; Anslinger & Copeland, 1996; De Noble, Gustafson, & Hergert, 1988; Fisher, 1994; Fulmer, 1986; Galpin & Robinson, 1997; Gutknecht & Keys, 1993; Lubatkin & Lane, 1996; Pritchett, 1985) mixed in with scant systematic research that targets human issues, the mergers and acquisitions literature provides a confusing picture. Hogan and Overmyer-Day (1994) discussed the scarcity in systematic theory development and empirical research addressing the psychological aspects of mergers and acquisitions. Research is needed that relates to the process of merger implementation and how it can be best managed (Datta, 1991). Researchers must focus on implementation variables in their studies (Schweiger et al., 1994). There is also a need for more systematic investigations and better understanding of the dynamics and the impact of mergers in a variety of organizational settings (Datta, 1991; Greenwood et al., 1994; Napier, 1989). There is a paucity of existing research in this area (Data, 1991), especially considering humanitarian grounds alone so that the turmoil and stress might be better managed or avoided (Greenwood, 1996). Greenwood stated that findings must also have greater specificity so that applicability to particular situations is better understood.

Case studies indicate that the period immediately following an acquisition agreement can be a time of great organizational unrest (Walsh, 1989). More needs to be known about the effects of such change on the individuals and on the organizations themselves. David and Singh (1994) suggested case study research that highlights post-acquisition management strategies that have been used in successful or unsuccessful organizations.

Albert and Whetten (1985) suggested six life cycle events that can be particularly salient with respect to organizational identity. These events are as follows: "the formation of the organization, the loss of an identity sustaining element, the accomplishment of an organization's raison d'être, extremely rapid growth, a change in 'collective status,' and retrenchment" (p. 274). This research captured two of these events. There was the loss of an identity sustaining element with the departure of a key executive and founder who had contributed to the construction of the identity for this organization. There was also a change in collective status because this organization experienced a merger, which had the potential for affecting the company's mission, values, and identity. Albert and Whetten presented these events as "intriguing testable hypotheses at the organizational level" (p. 274). A merger or acquisition can "prompt the organization to question core facets of itself, impelling new iterations in the development of the identity" (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 27). This research uncovered a transformation in identity that was facilitated by enacting the merger.

Dutton et al. (1994) expressed the need for research on identity issues in a merger environment.

> We also need research on how changing conditions affect members' images of their work organization and the behaviors that result. Changes in structure, culture, organizational performance, organizational boundaries, or an organization's competitive strategy may induce members to revise their perceived organizational identity and construed external image. (p. 259)

Such changes can have psychological effects. Mergers and acquisitions often affect the structure and culture of an organization, and thus have the potential for altering the boundaries and content of a member's perceived organizational identity.

This research was framed in a merger environment so that human issues could be addressed and merger implementation strategies could be studied. This study covered the time period shortly after the merger announcement, through the time of the unveiling of the name and identity change, through the execution of the merger agreement, and continuing several months following the official change.

A merger is a time of change that tends to bring to one's conscious issues of identity since those issues are in flux. Ashforth and Mael (1996), when discussing issues of identity state, "Matters of the soul are inherently abstract, nebulous, arational, and potentially divisive...an organization's identity is most likely to be explicitly discussed when ambiguity, change, or disagreement impair the utility of routinized processes" (p. 29). The context of a merger would be an example of a time of change when identity claims are less taken for granted and more explicitly discussed. Such an environment can stimulate the organization to question its essence and deliberate alterations in its identity.

Rigorous, qualitative case study research was suitable for this study because issues of identity and loss of identity are quite sensitive. This methodology provided organizational members with opportunities to express and demonstrate their feelings. The choice of this particular site was extremely suitable because it was a unique chance to study an organization that was using a merger as a vehicle to lose identity. This merger was the company's final option in their struggle for survival.

Organizational Identity and Future Images Literature

Organizational Identity

The concept of identity has been studied on the individual level, the group

level, and more specifically on the organizational level (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

Based on Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal definition, the three necessary criteria

for organizational identity are central character, distinctiveness, and temporal

continuity. Organizational identity is the answer to the question, "What kind of

organization is this?" (p. 292). It describes that which is the spirit of the organization,

its meaning, it defining attributes. "Identity goes to the core of what something *is*,

what fundamentally defines that entity" (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 20). It is "a

member's theory of who the organization is" (Barney et al., in press, p. 8).

The central character criterion refers to the core or essence of the organization,

to that which "distinguishes the organization on the basis of something important and

essential" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 266). According to Ashforth and Mael (1996),

the central character criterion refers to the "system of pivotal beliefs, values, and

norms--typically anchored to the organizational mission--that informs sense-making

and action" (p. 24). These are the core attributes in a hierarchy of attributes. They

tend to be simplistic and idealized.

The criterion of "claimed distinctiveness" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 265)

refers to characteristics of the organization that are unique, that distinguish it from

others, even if the uniqueness is more perception than reality, a condition described by

Martin, Feldman, Hatch, and Sitkin (1983) as the uniqueness paradox. Distinctiveness

defines boundaries that serve as positive differences between themselves and relevant

other organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). These unique and positive attributes serve to justify the organization's existence in relation to others in a similar business.

The third criterion of temporal continuity is an essential aspect of identity that implies something enduring that has emerged over time and is resistant to change (Albert & Whetten, 1985). "Continuity is important because it connotes a bedrock quality, that the organization has sufficient substance, significance, support, and staying power to warrant the investment of one's participation and trust. Accordingly, continuity begets continuity" (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 26). The greater the consensus in perceptions of organizational identity, the more likely that the attributes will endure. Identity is a source of inertia (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996). It is a distinctiveness that serves as an anchor for its members.

Ashforth and Mael (1996) described various ways researchers have viewed this concept of continuity. Some described organizational identity as something that was stable and enduring, while others saw it as traits that fluctuate and that were susceptible to change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Exhibiting a fluid nature, a future image can be a driver for identity change. Collins (1997) described identity as a stable construct whose "manifestations change, but not the essence." Fiol (1991) viewed identities as drifting where a stable core gradually fuses with newly emerging identities. Thus, cultural renewal is achieved through this building onto the core. Ashforth and Mael (1996) viewed organizational identity as an evolving construct that was most significant and open to change at times of discontinuities. As all aspects of organizational identity, its meaning is in the eye of the beholder.

According to Ashforth and Mael (1996), the strength of the identity depends on the degree to which members agree on those attributes and how genuine they believe those attributes really are. They described organizations that lack a strong organizational identity as "rudderless" (p. 32). A strong identity provides a base for strategy and direction, which also impacts the identity.

Sharing a common identity is vital for achieving unity of effort (Olie, 1994). It is an important variable that is related to a number of important organizational outcomes (Mael, 1988; Mottola, 1996).

Research by Thomas, Shankster, and Mathieu (1994) suggested that strong group identities contribute to perceptions of issues as being strategic rather than political. The enhanced pride and sense of belonging felt by those with this strong identity appeared to offset differences and diminish what might be controversial in an environment of weak identities. A strong identity resulted in predictable ways of perceiving and acting that reduce the need for conflict. This research suggested a relationship between identity and issue interpretation in an organization. Strength of identity was measured using an adaptation of Milliken's (1990) six-item scale.

A case study by Dutton and Dukerich (1991) investigated how members of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey dealt with the homeless in their facilities. The research revealed six attributes that members used to characterize their organization. Only one of these attributes was described by all informants. The remaining four attributes were each suggested by less than half of the informants, ranging from 25 % to 44%. This revealed a limited number of identity attributes that were shared by most members.

Research by Gustafson (1995) on Intel also revealed a small number of shared organizational identity attributes. Of the twenty categories, only three included attributes that were shared by a majority of the members. From this research, he suggested that organizational identity is a shared construct. Even a few attributes that are global in nature can contribute to a powerful collective schema. These attributes for Intel focused on culture and values, customers, and quality.

Research by Gustafson (1995) suggested the validation of shared organizational identity attributes, but in a complex model of both shared and fragmented attributes. He stated that the "multiple distinct subidentities held by sizable minorities of members may be beneficial to organizations in hypercompetitive environments because they provide requisite variety that encourages change" (p. 185).

The construct of organizational identity is a powerful mental model. Issues of identity must be considered when dealing with change (Reger, Mullane, Gustafson, & DeMarie, 1994). Identity beliefs are resistant to change because they are embedded in the basic assumptions about the character of the organization. Issues of organizational identity become prominent at times of changes in an organization's status. Often, it takes events like a merger or acquisition to make people stop and reflect on their organization's distinctive attributes, thus enhancing their awareness of their connectedness with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Organizations that have ambiguous or divergent identities are conducive to conflict (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

Gustafson and Reger (1995) presented a model of the ideal organizational identity structure for organizations experiencing continuously and radically changing conditions. They focused on the structure and content of identity attributes. They

suggested that hypercompetitive environments demand both a relatively stable set of intangible identity attributes and another set of more changeable substantive identity attributes. The abstract, intangible components provide the stable, consistent, shared, and generalized core attributes of the organization. But the semipermanent, more specific, and concrete substantive identity attributes have a less rigid character and are connected to a particular time or environmental condition. There is also an outer ring of less important, fleeting, or nonunique attributes that enable the organization to respond to particular circumstances.

Based on their theory of organizational identity (Gustafson & Reger, 1995), identity attributes that provide a stabilizing core, yet are supportive of change, would be advantageous to organizations in a high velocity environment. Because these identity schemas are a source of cognitive resistance to change, an organization will be more successful in changing substantive organizational identity attributes than in changing the central and enduring intangible organizational identity traits.

Research by Foreman (1995) of two cooperatives revealed multiple identities in the organizations. His findings suggested that position within the organization, gender, status, and background can influence what attributes are considered most salient by the member. Thus, identity is something individually defined. These findings present a complexity of individually defined perspectives with the potential for conflict (Foreman & Whetten, 1994). Golden-Biddle and Rao (1997) also discussed the existence of hybrid identities in an organization and their potential effects on intra-role conflict. Fiol (1991) suggested that organizations manage culture by focusing on identities rather than solely manipulating behavior.

Organizational identity can affect individual's perceptions of and interests in issues. This shared identity can shape processes affecting agenda building. There are a plethora of organizational images (Alvesson, 1990), and perceptions of identity and particularly future image can critically link the organizational sensemaking context and issue interpretation (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Identities are key to managing behaviors (Fiol, 1991).

Organizational identity is important from a strategic perspective. It is a source of competitive advantage or an impediment for organizational action (Gustafson, 1995). By embedding one's sense of self in the organization, the member personally supports the strategy that sustains that identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

Although identity does not determine strategy, they are intimately intertwined (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Organizational identity affects what members notice, how information gets filtered, and what gets acted on. The very strength of an organization's identity can propel that organization to be blinded to critical needs for survival. Employees can exhibit a resistance to needed change if they believe that a new initiative directly conflicts with valued aspects of their current organizational identity (Reger, Mullane, et al., 1994). Their cognitive opposition can result in antagonism. Organizational identity supports the continuity of behavior of its members over time (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996).

Knowledge about people's beliefs about an organization's identity helps to divulge meanings, emotions, and views on the importance of issues (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton & Penner, 1993). Organizational identity (i.e., what members see as their organizations' distinctive attributes) and organizational image (i.e.,

insiders' assessments of what outsiders think) impact interpretations, and the

consistency or inconsistency of this identity and image affects motivation for action.

In the words of Dutton and Dukerich (1991),

> The idea that an organization's identity and image are central to
> understanding how issues are interpreted, how reactions are generated,
> how and what types of emotions are evoked, and how these behaviors
> are related to one another in an organizational context is very simple.
> It suggests that individuals in organizations keep one eye on the
> organizational mirror when they interpret, react, and commit to
> organizational actions. (p. 551)

In a later article, Dutton et al. (1994) labeled these two types of images that

affect a member's cognitive connection with the work organization as the "perceived

organizational identity" and the "construed external image" (p. 239). They described

perceived organizational identity as "what the member believes is distinctive, central,

and enduring about the organization" (p. 239). The construed external image refers to

"what a member believes outsiders think about the organization" (p. 239). These

images influence members' cognitions about the organization and their resulting

behaviors.

Elsbach and Kramer (1996) conducted research on how members respond to

identity threats. They conducted interviews with business school members from eight

schools about the results of rankings of business schools. This research suggested that

when presented with identity threats, members focused on positive perceptions in

selected alternative categories that had favorable identity dimensions or in areas not

compared in the rankings. This provided members a way to reemphasize positive

perceptions.

A clear sense of identity is a reference point for an organization and a source of independence from the environment (Wheatley, 1992). It is a necessary "cognitive structure" (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 20) that defines the organization providing purpose, direction, and the motivation to act.

Treadwell and Harrison (1994) focused on how interdependent members become connected cognitively. Using different criteria from Dutton et al. (1994), they described organizational image as a more transient and subjective construct while identity is more enduring and institutionalized. Treadwell and Harrison (1994) defined organizational image this way.

> A set of cognitions, including beliefs, attitudes, as well as impressions about organizationally relevant behaviors, that a person holds with respect to an organization...emerging from any interaction, planned or unplanned, persuasive or non-persuasive, mediated or interpersonal. (p. 66)

Images are important because they affect behavior, and when shared, promote interdependence and the maintenance and functioning of the organization. In their research, they found support for their prediction of positive relationships between similarity among images of organization members and organizational communication and commitment.

Ashforth and Mael (1996) described an organization's identity as "a *selectively* perceived pattern of behavior, abstracted from (or imposed on) specific encounters. To the extent that consensus emerges on 'the' OI (organizational identity), individuals interpret and recall instances so as to support that identity" (p. 30). This describes the malleability of organizational identity and the view that identity evolves and can vary with context. Identity claims are internally coherent and simplistic views that provide

a common perception of an idealized entity that is self-fulfilling. It is a blend of what

is and what could be. And a positive identity promotes organizational identification.

Construction of Organizational Identity

Organizational identity is typically defined at founding and is a product of the

motives, skills, experiences, and personality of the founders and the context of the

founding (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996). It is a reflection of the powerholders of the

organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). The type of people that a company hires is

often influenced by the background and experiences of its founders and their values

and vision for the organization (Kimberly & Bouchikhi, 1995). Hiring and promotion

practices serve to solidify this consistency not only in style but also in perceptions of

purpose and principles of the organization (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996). Although

founders define the organization's purpose, it becomes reinforced by members'

choices and activities that affirm the identity. In time, that identity becomes the

property of its members. Any extreme change in such a focus, in the core business, or

in core operating principles is difficult to accomplish due to barriers both within and

outside of the organization. According to Diamond (1993), organizational identity is

"a product of organizational culture and history, member psychology, and the

psychology of past and present leaders and followers" (p. 79). Hatch and Schultz (in

press) see organizational identity as emerging from both the influence of leadership

and the interactions of organizational members.

An organization's identity, on an individual level, describes what the individual

believes are core attributes shared by organizational members (Dutton & Penner,

1993). Thus, a member's understanding of organizational identity can be affected by peers in the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Individuals look for others in their primary group to affirm their perceptions and build confidence in their own views. As expressed by Ashforth and Mael,

> Individuals tend to view primary group peers as relatively credible social referents and come to interact and socially construct the organization with them. Members attempt to triangulate their perceptions, although the consensus, coherence, and depth of these perceptions are always problematic. (p. 38)

Although there will be some variability in how different members view their organization, they will see it more similarly than nonmembers (Dutton & Penner, 1993). Ashforth and Mael (1996) explained, "There are limits to how far identity claims can deviate from perceptions of either external stakeholders or internal members" (p. 40).

Hunt and Benford (1994) agreed that identities are constructed, reinforced, and transformed by interactions with others. In their examination of identity talk in peace movement organizations, they discovered that collective identities are products of social interaction and contribute to collective action. Their research also pointed to identity alignment as a theme in their discourse, which served to support consistent perceptions of the organization and cohesion within its membership.

There is a link between organizational identity and action (Sarason, 1995). Identity not only affects organizational action and strategic behavior but also is affected by members' perceptions of what the organization does. Members gain an understanding of the reality of the organization by observing its practices and activities on an on-going basis.

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Organizational identity is reinforced when its members align their actions with the attributes of that identity (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996). This can be accomplished through hiring practices, investment decisions, policies, and management systems. Identity is "a context for and a consequence of members' actions and interactions" (p. 30).

According to Ashforth and Mael (1996), the lack of a mutually understood organizational identity can be debilitating to an organization. Leaders must actively attend to it in order to give its members "a coherent and salient sense of what they represent" (p. 34). There are many barriers to achieving consensus to those features that are core, distinctive, and enduring. Perceptions can vary based on one's frame of reference. These attributes may appear idealistic or not all that unique. The attributes may appear as contradictions because divergent perspectives may allow reality to take multiple forms. Also, members don't dwell on aspects of identity if it is not a constant focus of top management and if it is not managed and presented as an integral, critical, and realistic picture of the heart of the organization.

Many managers don't understand the importance of building this community among its members (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Self-definition must be followed by choices that are wedded in that definition, and action that brings that definition to life. "An organization is always in the process of becoming" (p. 36). Management must also be consumed with the active symbolic management of that identity in ways that are mutually reinforcing and that propel that identity into the spotlight on a continuous basis. No member should be able to escape the language, setting, norms, stories, events, traditions, and rituals that support those identity claims, reinforcing identity

and providing consistent meaning. The ultimate aim of this activity is to create an environment where the goals, beliefs, and values of the organization and its members are aligned. Consensus among peers builds confidence in perceptions and brings enhanced life to those perceptions.

Ashforth and Mael (1996) see the heart of this activity as a key focus for human resource professionals. The human resource functions of recruiting, selecting, socializing, training, communicating, and supporting rewards and promotions of organizational members all contribute toward achieving strong identities that are mutually reinforced throughout the organization. This process of welding the person and the organization may be the critical link.

According to Ashforth and Mael (1996), symbolic management is used to portray an idealized organizational identity. These symbolic acts range from language to events to name and logo to traditions and rituals. These symbolic strategies combined with substantive practices produce an environment with structures and processes to support the organization's attributes.

Hatch and Schultz (in press) explained organizational identity as being "grounded in local meanings and organizational symbols and thus embedded in organizational culture, which we see as the internal symbolic context for the development and maintenance of organizational identity" (p. 6). They described this as "the intertwined symbolic texture of the organization" (p. 17).

Symbols serve both expressive and instrumental functions in an organization (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994). They communicate meaning in an organization and facilitate change. Symbols, such as logos, slogans, stories, actions or

nonactions, visual images, and metaphors, are socially constructed and pervasive. They not only create and sustain culture but also help in transforming culture. Through the proper manipulation of symbols, organizational members can facilitate sensemaking in a time of change which can encourage understanding and meaningful action (Gioia, 1986).

Often a change in identity is the result of the cumulative development of the identity where elements are added or removed in ways that are somewhat unnoticed (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 1996). An extension of the business or new elements to the purpose or operating principles produce change that appears neither radical nor threatening. Usually greater resistance to change occurs in situations where divergent forces demand change that results in members' feelings of loss.

"The images of organizations and their leaders are intertwined" (Sutton & Callahan, 1987, p. 406). In their case study research on computer companies that filed for Chapter 11, the researchers proposed that the spoiled images of its leaders are extended to the organization. Although top management is typically considered most blameworthy, the organization suffers, and there is an increase in the probability of organizational death. Typical reactions of organizational audiences include disengagement, reduction in the quality of participation, bargaining for a better arrangement than previously received, denigration through rumor, and confrontation. The researchers also suggested that the negative effects of filing bankruptcy can result in an increase in managerial succession.

Sutton and Callahan (1987) suggested that bankruptcy is not the only situation that can bring stigma to an organization and its leaders. "Events that cause mass

deaths and illnesses...may evoke stigma" (p. 432). And, according to Hatch and

Schultz (in press), "as the internal-external distinction collapses, organizational identity

is increasingly influenced by organizational image" (p. 6). According to Ashforth and

Mael (1996), organizational identities are affected by external impressions. Without

social validation, identities cannot sustain themselves.

Relationship Between Identity and Reputation

Fombrun (1997) described the link between identity and reputation. As he

explained,

> Identity constrains what actions a company takes, how it makes
> decisions, how it treats its employees, how it reacts to crises.
> Managers and employees tend to act in ways consistent with the
> company's identity. Identity is therefore the backbone of reputation.
> Identity develops from within and limits a company's long-run actions
> and its performance as benchmarked against rivals'. Identity explains
> the kinds of relationships companies establish with their four most
> critical constituencies: employees, consumers, investors, and local
> communities. (p. 111)

Reputation is "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future

prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when

compared with other leading rivals" (p. 72). Fombrun explained that images must be

rooted in these core attributes of the organization if that organization expects to

survive. Fombrun also suggested, "It's the companies with the most widely respected

identity traits that will build enduring reputational capital. They'll develop a kind of

Midas touch" (p. 111). To achieve a truly respected reputation, an organization must

have coherent and consistent images both within and outside of the organization,

demonstrating trustworthiness, credibility, reliability, and responsibility. The value of

a company's reputation is a piece of the complex puzzle for constructing competitive advantage (Rindova & Fombrun, 1997).

Grunig (1993) stated that organizations must focus not only on their symbolic relationships with publics that are directed at producing a positive image but also on their substantive behavioral relationships. He saw these as "intertwined strands of a rope" (p. 135). Embedded in the process is a need to first understand the organization's identity and then to use symbols to communicate that identity to others.

Hatch (1997) differentiated organizational identity from image in that identity is self-focused, the actual members' beliefs about their organization, whereas image refers to impressions by others of the organization. She suggested that both are neither consistent nor coherent, but they are intertwined. Physical elements are used to represent the organization's identity and to influence its image to the external public. Some examples include company logo, print material, and product design. Uniforms and other types of organizational dress can also serve as symbols of social identities (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). Findings by Pratt and Rafaeli suggested that these symbols can represent core values and beliefs as well as event-driven issues. Thus, they should be appropriately managed.

Chajet (1992) discussed shaping a company's image not only by focusing on the external audiences but also by paying significant attention to the company's employees and their perceptions of the organization. Employees convey an image to the public that is quite critical. Any successful change in image requires members' understanding, acceptance, and participation in making the change real.

Fiol and Kovoor-Misra (1997) discussed how a crisis or negative event can distort insiders' and outsiders' views of the organization resulting in misaligned perceptions of identity and reputation. They suggested that prior cognitive schemas influence the attention one devotes to stimuli, and people initially attend to aspects of a negative event that they perceive are central to the organization's identity. In the cognitive process of interpretation, insiders typically overestimate external factors and the event is labeled as an anomaly that does not impact their identity. In contrast, outsiders typically overestimate internal factors that discredit the organization's identity. Although organizations with strong and positive reputations prior to the negative event might initially be seen less critically, the researchers suggested that, over time, the negative event will be interpreted by outsiders as discrediting to the organization. A strong, positive identity prior to the negative event will make insiders see the negative event as an aberration. Thus, both insiders and outsiders signal distorted and misaligned views of the organization. The cyclical process of attending, interpreting, and signaling can intensify the discrepancy if insiders do not respond to the misaligned images; there is a linkage and interaction between identity and reputation that must be considered by organizational members, especially during times of negative events. The researchers suggested de-framing or actively undoing a negative event or its consequences in a situation where individuals perceive minimal justification for stigmatization while outsiders perceive higher stigma. In cases of intense stigma, more active, positive re-framing activities are necessary. These researchers advised that these activities must precede the identity and reputation management strategies of crystallization, compartmentalization, and redefinition or

differences in perceptions will be aggravated. Organizational members must actively work to see their organization not only from the inside out but also from the outside in.

According to Bouchikhi and Kimberly (1996), a negative reputation that exists over a period of time can cause members to choose to distance themselves from this negative public perception. Also, uncertainty in an organization and poor performance can exacerbate forces of divergence leading to organizational identity change.

Elsbach and Glynn (1996) suggested that a changing environment can require a company to deal with a "reputation gap" (p. 85). To close this gap, they proposed reputation-building activities that promote that new image, using members in that activity. Thus, changing organizational attributes can be simultaneously promoted both internally and externally.

Multiple Future Images

The concept of future images or visioning is treated frequently from a descriptive and practitioner perspective (Allen, 1995; Nanus, 1992; Wilson, 1992), yet has received less attention as the focus in systematic research. There is research that targets visionary leadership (Awamleh & Gardner, 1997), the importance of vision salience (Oswald, Mossholder, & Harris, 1994), antecedents of visioning skill and effects of visioning training (Thoms & Greenberger, 1995), the visioning process (Thoms & Govekar, 1997), and the content and context of visions (Larwood et al., 1995). According to Thoms and Govekar (1997), there is little empirical evidence supporting benefits of positive future images. Yet, producing a shared vision that

serves as a compass to guide organizational members has been the objective of many organizational activities in their effort to build community or enhance competitiveness. Some of these include future search activities (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995; Weisbord & 35 co-authors, 1992), search conferences (Emery & Purser, 1996), other large group interventions (Axelrod, 1992; Dannemiller & Jacobs, 1992), and learning organization practices (Senge, 1990), just to name a few.

Many of these interventions are based on a theory of preferred futures emerging from Ronald Lippitt's research on group dynamics in strategic planning meetings at the National Training Laboratories (NTL) Institute (Dannemiller & Jacobs, 1992; Weisbord, 1987; Weisbord & 35 co-authors, 1992). Lippitt discovered, while listening to audio-tapes of conversations during strategic planning meetings, that when people focused on problems, they typically sound stressed and depressed. Lippitt believed that listing and discussing problems made people feel frustrated and hopeless. The soft and weary voices on these tapes surprised Lippitt and made him realize that the process itself was painful and drained energy. Although this discovery was made in 1949, it was not until years later that Lippitt realized, through his work with Eva Schindler-Rainman, Ronald Fox, and later with Edward Lindaman, that envisioning what could be, was the better avenue for change. What Lippitt first described as visualizing "images of potential" and later as visualizing the "preferred futures" (Weisbord, 1987, p. 277) became a process of visioning that many feel is the energizing path to the future. This theory provides a basis for constructing future images for an organization.

Although the concept of visioning sounds somewhat simplistic, many caution on its complexity in execution (Weisbord, 1987). There are problems with consistent definitions (Larwood et al., 1995), and the implementation of this process has been a topic of research (Coulson-Thomas, 1992).

The concept of multiple future images for an organization could be analogous to the concept of possible selves for the individual (Markus & Nurius, 1986). For individuals, the possible selves relate not only to one's past self and present self but also to perceptions of one's potential and future. This includes a variety of other possible selves: the ideal of what one would like to become, what one ever considered, what one will probably be, and what one is afraid of becoming. Individuals, through the construction of these possible selves, are able to affect their own development. These possible selves have power because they are both an incentive for future behavior and a tool for evaluating the current view of oneself.

Image theory (Mitchell, Rediker, & Beach, 1986) provides a framework for the use of future images in decision making. There are actually two applications of the theory, depending on whether the decision is a personal one or for an organization.

Image theory on a personal level (Mitchell et al., 1986) is based on the assumption that decision makers have images not only of who they are but also of their pasts, their presents, and their futures; these images form the basis for their decision making. There is a connection between the individual's values and principles, their self-image, and the goals that they choose to pursue. The trajectory image is one's view of where one is ideally going, the appropriate ends, and the points along the way that must be reached to achieve that image. One's image of the anticipated future, if

the present circumstances continue, is labeled the projected image. The consistency between the projected image and the trajectory image highlight if the present path will lead one to their desired ends. The action image is the steps for achieving goals and fixing inconsistencies between one's self-image, trajectory image, and projected image.

Image theory (Mitchell et al., 1986), relating to organizational decision-making, proposes a similar set of connected images: the organizational self-image, organizational trajectory image, organizational projected image, and organizational action image. The organizational self-image is the decision makers' shared beliefs and values about the organization. The organizational trajectory image is the projected, desired, ideal, future image, including the landmarks to achieve it. The organizational projected image is the future image based on a continuation of present plans, the forecasted future. The organizational action image consists of the plans and tactics that can be viewed from a perspective of intended actions and implemented actions. The latter distinction reveals the potential for deficiencies in design or implementation.

According to these researchers (Mitchell et al., 1986), in strong-culture organizations, where beliefs and values are articulated, shared, and well-supported by social processes, the organization's self-image and trajectory image are quite important. With such a pervasive influence, it is critical to understand how these images are constructed, communicated, and shared. Founding principles and crises often shape these images, but leadership, selection, training, pay and incentives, special language and symbols, and ceremonies are critical in sustaining images. The consistency and degree of attention that the organization pays to these images can impact the strength of these images.

Beach (1993) defined vision as "this sense of direction, the agenda the organization perceives itself to be pursuing" (p. 49). These images can be combinations of verbal, visual imagination, visual memory, and affect (Beach & Mitchell, 1990). Beach (1993) explained, "Vision is a dream about how the ideal future might be. The actual steps necessary to realize the vision usually are quite vague" (p. 50). According to Beach, members of an organization have their own vision for the organization. The degree to which individual members' visions are consistent with each other and with the leader's vision determines whether or not there is consensus and the potential for unity in perspective. Evolutionary vision is a future that naturally evolves from the current perspective while revolutionary vision offers a profoundly different future.

Gioia and Thomas (1996) conducted research that revealed the power of future images. They studied strategic change in higher education and how members make sense of important issues related to the change. "One of the most pronounced findings was the intense focus on the projection of a desired future image as a means of changing the currently held identity" (p. 394). This compelling future vision was a catalyst for change, and the resulting changes served to propel the organization toward the future image. The researchers explained that "an influential avenue to a changed identity is a changed image...formulating a compelling future image that people can associate with and commit to eases the launching and eventual institutionalizing of strategic change" (p. 398). Change is facilitated by the desire to make congruent substance and image.

In earlier research, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) described the power of an overarching, symbolic vision. The vision of change offered by the university CEO served as the guiding image for which to gauge all actions. The CEO's effective use of this symbol was described this way: "This research also implies that a captivating vision is perhaps a key feature in the initiation of strategic change because it provides a symbolic foundation for stakeholders to develop an alternative interpretive scheme" (p. 446).

Gustafson and Reger (1995) discussed organizational identity gaps that represent the discrepancy between the present organizational identity and members' desired future organizational identity. They recommended the condition of moderate gaps that can provide sufficient, but not excessive, momentum for change. "The challenge is to continually renew the organization's identity while maintaining a stable sense of who we are" (p. 466). They labeled this type of change as tectonic, using a seismic analogy, where organizations destroy some substantive components of organizational identity, replacing them with new substantive attributes tied to existing intangible identity attributes which provide psychological comfort, stability, and continuity.

Wheatley (1992) acknowledged the importance of maintaining focus through clarity in purpose and vision rather than through control and rules. A self-organizing system demands a consistency within itself in order to grow and flourish. A consistency of purpose and meaning provides a nucleus for action. It is meaning that people seek through their lives and in their work.

Zohar (1997) described vision as often unconscious and at the spiritual core. She characterized it as the organization's "sense of identity, its aspirations, its sense of itself in the wider world, its deeper, motivating core values and long-term strategies" (p. 19). Any fundamental transformation is described as a change in this spiritual level. A quantum organization is centered with this vision and driven by its values.

Morgan (1997b) stated that autopoiesis is a useful metaphor when thinking about how organizations work. He suggested that the theory of autopoiesis adds insight to how to achieve change in a social system. According to this biological model of a living system (Kickert, 1993), created by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, relationships with the environment are structured to sustain a sense of identity. Rather than adapting to the environment, the autopoietic organization focuses solely on maintaining its self-identity. The organization sees the environment as a projection of itself, and change can best be understood as an evolution of self-identity. Morgan (1997b) stated that changing goals in order to change the system can be fruitless; rather, members might be more effective if they focused on manipulating the system's basic sense of identity. The system must reorganize its perspective to the environment in order to align its actions with its essence. As Morgan (1997a) explained,

> Human systems, like organizations, have a special character in that they are able to reflect on their identities and on the processes and practices that sustain them. In doing so, they can often initiate meaningful patterns of change. By learning to 'see themselves' and the way they enact their relations with the broader 'environment,' they create new potentials for transformation. (p. 261)

The challenge for organizations is to rethink possibilities by creating pictures of their identity to be transformed in the future.

Schein (1992) added that visions for organizations serve as a safety net allowing the organization to move ahead. Especially in times of trouble, people more readily grab onto and connect with the needed transformation.

Collins and Porras (1997) described a visionary company as one that creates an environment that consistently supports and nourishes the company's core ideology and vision. With this internal compass, organizational members are guided in a unified direction, bound by common values and purpose and shared future image. When all elements work together within this framework, Collins and Porras labeled such a visionary organization as being built to last. They described the key finding of their research this way.

> The fundamental distinguishing characteristic of the most enduring and successful corporations is that they preserve a cherished core ideology while simultaneously stimulating progress and change in everything that is not part of their core ideology. Put another way, they distinguish their timeless core values and enduring core purpose (which should never change) from their operating practices and business strategies (which should be changing constantly in response to a changing world). In truly great companies, change is a constant, but not the only constant. They understand the difference between what should never change and what should be open for change, between what is truly sacred and what is not. And by being clear about what should never change, they are better able to stimulate change and progress in everything else. (p. 220)

Marks (1994) discussed the need for a clear future focus that is shared by all. As a critical step in "revitalizing individual spirit" (p. 207), he described the role of a vision in uniting organizational members. The vision "must become animated and integrated into people's actions on the job, not merely spoken about or pointed to" (p.

222). With practices connected to a clear vision, mission, and principles, spirits can be revitalized and faith and hope can have direction.

Implications for This Research

This research was a unique opportunity to study issues of organizational identity. Identities can change by either adding or deleting identity categories or by even shifts in characteristics previously attributed to an identity category. All of these issues warrant further study (Deaux, 1993).

No qualitative research has been identified that examines the organizational identity construct (Albert & Whetten, 1985) or identity structure (Gustafson & Reger, 1995) in a merger context. There is minimal empirical evidence on the construct of shared organizational identity (Gustafson, 1995). Do individuals in the organization share a collective organizational identity? Is there an identity structure of intangible identity attributes, semipermanent substantive identity attributes, and nonunique attributes? What contributed to the construction of organizational identity? What changes in organizational identity have been perceived by its members as a result of the merger? How have members responded to changes in perceived organizational identity? What has the organization done to construct a new identity? What has the organization done to develop a shared collective identity? What could the organization do to develop a shared collective identity at this time of change? This research investigated many of these questions.

Research by Elsbach and Kramer (1996) revealed how members respond to identity threats. An extension of this research would be to examine how members

respond to identity threats caused by a negative event such as the crisis that this company experienced. The added complication in this case was that the best solution to this threat was a merger that is, in itself, another potential identity threat. This research focused on these threats.

There has been limited research located that studies identity and image alignment from a systemic perspective. What are the consequences of consistent or inconsistent identities and images by individuals inside and outside an organization? Dutton et al. (1994) stated, "Our model suggests that researchers...should consider how the images created for outsiders shape the experience, attachments, and behaviors of insiders" (p. 257). No research has yet been located that focuses on what a member believes others in the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization. This would be very relevant research in the context of a merger because emotions and tensions are often heightened, which can precipitate productive and nonproductive communication about the organization among its members. This research builds on the work of Dutton et al. (1994). Do members have perceptions of how others view the organization? How have members responded to changes in construed external image? What is the impact of alignment or the lack of alignment between construed images and one's perceived organizational identity?

There is limited research on future images of organizations. This study can contribute to the understanding of the multiple future images that exist in an organization. It can also provide a way of discussing issues of future images within the context of organizational identity theory.

Organizational Identification Literature

Organizational Identification

Influenced by a world in conflict, Tolman (1943) described the feelings one gets from identification with a group.

> *Its* fortunes are *his* fortunes; *its* goals become *his* goals; *its* successes and failures, *his* successes and failures; and *its* prestige becomes *his* prestige. And, in the extreme case, the continued life and immortality of such a group comes to be felt to be the equivalent of and a substitute for his own personal life and immortality. (p. 143)

Simon (1976) stated that "a person identifies himself with a group when, in making a decision, he evaluates the several alternatives of choice in terms of their consequences for the specified group" (p. 205). He presented identification as being connected to either an organizational objective or to the conservation of the group. Simon related identification to administrative decision-making processes.

Burke (1984) stated that it is normal for man to identity "with all sorts of manifestations beyond himself" (p. 263), and in particular, "it is *natural* for a man to identify himself with the business corporation he serves" (p. 264). He described identification as a *"function of sociality"* (p. 267).

Long (1978) defined identification as organizational integration, involvement, and commitment. This view includes perceptions, feelings, and support of the organization. Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, and Williams (1986) developed an instrument to measure identification that was based on three aspects: awareness of group membership, evaluation, and affect. These relate to issues of self-definition and self-esteem. Based on their use of this instrument and interviews, the researchers determined that identification included interpersonal relationships that imply behavior

in addition to cognition. They found that identification alone was not a sufficient predictor of differentiation.

According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), social identification "is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate" (p. 21). It is an individual's perception of we-ness, sharing a common destiny with others (Mael, 1988). It is a shift from "I" to "we" (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), the "extended self" (p. 84) whose boundaries are redefined to include significant interpersonal relationships. Organizational identification is "an individual's willingness to extend the boundary of self to embrace organizational membership" (Albert et al., in press). When members identify with an organization, the members internalize that identity as a description of themselves (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

> To faithfully enact the organization's identity and strategy in thought, deed, and feeling is simply to be true to oneself. By extending the concept of self to include the organization, the concept of self-interest also comes to include the organization. The distinction between one's own welfare and the organization's welfare is reduced so that helping the organization becomes tantamount to helping oneself. (p. 44)

Identification is "the *process* by which the organization's identity becomes the individual's" (p. 48).

Based on this perspective of identification (Mael, 1988), organizational identification is not classical identification, behavioral, partial goal acceptance, nor positive-only attachment. It is also distinguishable from both internalization and commitment (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Mael & Tetrick, 1992). According to Mael and Ashforth (1992), internalization refers to one's beliefs. An individual could identify with an organization yet not with its values and beliefs, or an individual may

feel aligned with the organization's values and beliefs yet not have a sense of belongingness to the organization. Instruments on commitment, such as the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, measure internalization of beliefs and values and behavioral intentions and feelings on behalf of the organization, but not the sense of belongingness that is meant by identification. Also, internalization and commitment can be transferred to other organizations with similar values and beliefs, yet identification is specific to an organization. Organizational identification is distinguished from occupational identification, which also is not organization specific.

"The perceived organizational identity...can serve as a powerful image influencing the degree to which the member identifies with the organization" (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 244). Individual definitions affect one's strength of connection. According to these researchers, "When a person's self-concept contains the same attributes as those in the perceived organizational identity, we define this cognitive connection as organizational identification" (p. 239). Organizational identification is "the cognitive connection between the definition of an organization and the definition a person applies to him- or herself" (p. 242). Although the classification is categorical, the intensity or strength of identification is a matter of degree (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

Dutton et al. (1994) offered two conditions which indicate a member's strong identification with an organization: "when (1) his or her identity as an organization member is more salient than alternative identities, and (2) his or her self-concept has many of the same characteristics he or she believes define the organization as a social group" (p. 239). Deaux (1993) suggested that claiming identity is significant, but the

position of an identity within an overall hierarchical structure can be important in predicting one's attitudes and behaviors.

Organizational identification is not only a cognitive process but also an affective one (Albert et al., in press). Emotions can motivate one to increase or decrease identification. Emotions can also signal the extent of the value and significance that one puts on the object of one's identification.

If cognitive attachment is affected by what one thinks others feel about the organization as well as what one thinks about it, then identification is both a personal and a social process (Dutton et al., 1994). And members will be motivated to preserve an organizational image that they perceive is positive and modify an organizational image that they perceive is negative (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

A proposition offered by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) stated that "the more central a given role or group is to one's identity, the stronger the association between one's emotional well-being and the perceived successes, failures, and demands of the role or group" (p. 106). They suggested that the individual's identification can make one emotionally vulnerable as well as function as a source of meaning and belonging.

Identification is critical because it acts as a force that binds employees together in support of the goals and mission of the organization. It operates on an emotional and symbolic level in aligning the organization. Individuals who strongly identify with this focus are more likely to dedicate themselves to achieving it (Brill & Worth, 1997). Identification operates as an important emotional connection that has potency in achieving alignment in organizational action. Because members do identify with

organizations, it is worthwhile for managers to think strategically about strengthening

the identification bond (Bhattacharya et al., 1995).

Albert and Whetten (1985) described holographic and ideographic

organizations. In holographic organizations, units within the organization have the

properties of the whole. This environment is supportive of identification through both

organization-wide and unit activities. Intimacy and consistency are fostered. In

contrast, units in ideographic organizations do not reinforce organizational identity,

and organizational identification is not easily fostered. These conditions can produce a

fragmented view of the organization, which can detract from identification with the

organization. According to Ashforth and Mael (1996), the appeal to downsize, place

entities in their own empowered divisions, and implement other delayering actions is

based on the perception that members can develop coherent organizational identity

and a strengthened identification with a smaller unit.

When individuals see themselves as a representation of the organization, it is

like a "person-organization merger" (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 44). Being true to

the organization is a path to being true to oneself. It is a conduit for trust and the

appreciation of differences. The desire for both consistency and self-enhancement

motivate action that is not always in the best interest of the individual or the

organization.

According to De Geus (1997), one of the four key factors that are common to

companies that have demonstrated long-term success is a cohesiveness with a strong

sense of identity. This belongingness and sense of community where one identifies

with the achievements of the organization is essential for survival in an environment of change. Successful companies do not sacrifice their corporate identity.

Cheney (1983a) described identification as a process, stressing the need to study the ways members identify or come to identify with their organization. He explained that previous research focused on identification as a product, and research primarily concentrated on the existence, strength, importance, and targets of identification. In his research, Cheney investigated influences of organizational identification on the decision-making process of its members. Cheney's research, as well as research by others, supported the belief that identification is attributed with positive consequences.

Consequences of Identification

Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that identification strengthens support for and commitment to the organization; facilitates intragroup cohesion, cooperation, altruism, and positive group evaluations; results in both loyalty and pride; promotes internalization of group values and norms; encourages similarity in attitudes and behavior; and reinforces the antecedents of identification. Mael and Ashforth (1992) found organizational identification of alumni of a religious college was associated with support through rankings of financial contributions, advising others to attend the college, and some participation activities.

Adler and Adler (1988) studied intense loyalty in a college basketball program for the purposes of understanding what contributes to this strong bond. Their data suggested that identification is one of the elements essential to the development of this

organizational loyalty. They added, "Thus, to the extent that people identify with a group or institution, every act supporting the whole is one of self-realization. Loyalty to the whole is equivalent to loyalty to one's self" (p. 408). This fusion of one's self-concept with that of the group can inspire devotion and organizational loyalty. Bhattacharya et al. (1995) also described loyalty that results from identification: "Anecdotal evidence suggests that identification in the customer arena also has desirable consequences of high brand loyalty and positive word of mouth" (p. 46).

Kramer, Brewer and Hanna (1996) discussed the relationship between identification and trust. They suggested that the processes associated with identification can produce consequences for the organization in the area of trust. Identification, grounded in the perception that others also share that identification, can motivate members to trust others in the organization on collective issues. But, members may become vulnerable if they overestimate others' mutual trust, react with reduced urgency because they assume that others will respond, or reduce how much they challenge others in the organization, resulting in deficiencies in decision making and the capacity for learning. Also, members may react inappropriately if they automatically consider outsiders as untrustworthy.

Bullis and Tompkins (1989) found that those with higher identification made decisions based on organizational value premises and considered as primary any potential consequences to the organization, when making decisions. Tompkins and Cheney (1983a), building on the work of Simon and Burke, demonstrated that organizational identification served the organization. Its consequences can be quite positive both in "guiding us to 'see' certain 'problems' and alternatives" (Tompkins &

Cheney, 1985, p. 194) and in implementing practices and making decisions. Tompkins and Cheney (1983) also expected that such identifications result in a more committed role in implementing the decisions.

Cheney (1983b) described identification as a union of the voices of the self and the organization. He stated, "Identification is directed toward the organization, but it must have its 'source' within the individual; the employee makes his or her 'own' contribution through making decisions in accord with the organization's interests" (p. 157).

Kramer (1993) focused on organizational identification as an antecedent to cooperative behavior. Based on his research on group identification, he stated, "People's motivational orientations are affected by the salience of different identities" (p. 246). As he expressed, "When organizational identity is salient, individuals are more likely to take into consideration the collective consequences of their actions. Accordingly, they are more likely to adopt cooperative orientations during decision making" (p. 246). This is consistent with a proposition by Dutton et al. (1994) that stated, "The stronger the organizational identification, the greater a member's cooperation with other members of the organization (in-group cooperation)" (p. 255). This cooperation feels like a decision of choice, providing an internal control system for the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1996), a type of "social control system" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996, p. 157). "The more complete one's identification, the greater the sense that cooperation is freely chosen. In this sense, a strong OI (organizational identity) simultaneously empowers and constrains the individual" (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p. 49). Shamir (1990) also suggested that identification can

increase the importance of collective outcomes thus enhancing cooperation and action as a means of expressing support of the identity. According to Ashforth and Mael (1996), identification results in a member's actions, thoughts, and feelings being automatically linked to the identity and strategy of the organization. Thus, identification can be a source of individual motivation to contribute to the organization.

A strong identification typically results in more favorably biased perceptions of one's group (Ellemers, Van Rijswijk, Roefs, & Simons, 1997). Dutton et al. (1994) also proposed that strong organizational identification will increase member perceptions of identity and image attractiveness and member contact with the organization

Research supports affective preference of ingroup over outgroups and the resulting competitive behaviors (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This is consistent with the Dutton et al. (1994) proposition, "The greater the strength of organizational identification, the greater a member's competitive behavior directed toward out-group members" (p. 255).

The degree of identification can also influence a member's reaction to a threat to the group. Identification can nurture feelings of significance even in a context of failure (Seiling, 1997). Spears et al. (1997) conducted four studies focusing on the relationship between identification and self-stereotyping and the possible moderating role of identification at times of threats to identity. Results suggested that self-stereotyping was higher for high identifiers rather than low identifiers. Their meta-analysis showed that when group members are threatened, low identifiers set

themselves further apart from the group while high identifiers tend to move toward the heart of the group.

Researchers (Dutton et al., 1994) have suggested that organizational identification may also be a predictor of organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988). Organ defined this as "behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (p. 4).

By the very nature of identifying, one enhances one's intensity of identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, a solidifying process takes place as the power and strength of one's identification acts as a stimulus for greater intensity of identification.

On an individual level, identification has positive consequences as well. Research has suggested that these cognitions of belonging with an organization can enhance an individual's self-esteem, self-continuity, and feelings of distinctiveness (Dutton et al., 1994). Shamir (1990) supported this by suggesting that members may be motivated to perform for the collective because that clarifies and affirms their own identities.

Ashforth and Mael (1996) cautioned against an extreme identification with an organization. By exclusively identifying with an organization, the individual risks myopia and can lose an independent sense of self. Such focused identification restricts openness and flexibility. Identification that fuses self and organizational interests puts member's self-esteem on the line if the organization is at risk. In an environment of great change, it might not be healthy to risk one's view of self on something that is vulnerable to fluctuation.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) warned against the emotional risk of burnout that can result from identification by service workers. When one's work identity becomes central to one's self-concept, there is the potential for increased risk of one's emotional well-being that is dependent upon the successes, failures, and demands of work.

Construction of Identification

Kramer (1993) stated, "Empirical research on the determinants of organizational identification is, unfortunately, rather sparse" (p. 256). He saw the need to better understand the structures and processes that contribute to the construction of identification.

Tolman (1943) discussed the role of identification in establishing a post-war World State. The five characteristics that he believed evoke strong identification are as follows: common characteristics differentiating members from those not in the group; unique group symbols and rituals; a common group goal, instilling a sense of mission; traits similar to a family relationship and structure; and common enemies.

Research by Bullis and Tompkins (1989) focused on control practices and identification. In their study of the U.S. Forest Service, they tested claims in Tompkins and Cheney's (1985) theory of unobtrusive control: 1) unobtrusive control practices are associated with organizational identification, and 2) members who report higher organizational identification use organizational premises in their decision making and consider the organization as they consider the consequences of their decisions. Bullis and Tompkins (1989) found an association between a decrease in

concertive control practices and a decrease in organizational identification. Tompkins and Cheney (1985) labeled concertive control as "one that stresses teamwork and coordination at all stages of production, flexibility and innovation, 'flat' hierarchy, blurring of line and staff distinctions, intense face-to-face interaction concerning nonroutine decisions, and relative value consensus" (p. 184). In this environment, people are anchored to the values and mission of the organization.

The propensity to identity with an organization can be affected by one's experiences prior to organizational membership (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Mael and Ashforth suggested that a person's earlier behavior and experiences, captured in biodata, can influence one's propensity to identify with an organization. The four biodata categories that were related to organizational identification in this study of the U.S. Army were as follows: "perceived congruence of personal interests and organizational activities; internalization of or conformity to institutional expectations; a preference for group attachments; and cognitively ambitious, achievement-oriented pursuits" (p. 328).

The construct of person-organization fit, which can be viewed from multiple perspectives, has been the focus of much research (Bretz & Judge, 1994). When personal needs are satisfied by organizational membership, a member is more likely to feel connected to that organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). The organization becomes an avenue for expressing oneself. Such a match can contribute to identification, but with the potential manifestations of identity, such a match may not be sustained.

According to Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994), members' actions must be grounded in a broader organizational purpose in order to enhance capacity for emotional connectedness. As they explained,

> Institutions like churches, communities, even families, which once provided individuals with identity, affiliation, meaning, and support, are eroding. The workplace is becoming a primary means for personal fulfillment. Managers need to recognize and respond to the reality that their employees don't just want to work for a company; they want to belong to an organization. More than just providing work, companies can help give meaning to people's lives. (p. 86)

The key is for the company's purpose to have personal meaning to each member. Bartlett and Ghoshal described the primary responsibility of top management as clarifying and communicating organizational purpose. Identification can be fostered by nurturing a connection between individual purpose and organizational identity through its purpose.

Using a broader perspective on organizational identification than presented by Mael (1988), Long (1978) suggested that employee ownership influenced identification. He found that it favorably affected his identification categories of integration, involvement, and commitment.

Adler and Adler (1988) discovered that college athletes felt like they represented the team and the university and spent time serving the organization through public activities. These activities not only gave them a sense of pride and prestige but also strengthened their identification with the program.

The identification process can start prior to being in a new role (Albert et al., in press), during what Feldman (1976) labeled as "anticipatory socialization" (p. 434). In anticipation of this change, potential members can begin their own process of readying

themselves for entry by internalizing attributes and initiating activities that promote a connection with the organization (Albert et al., in press). This "pre-identification" (p. 32) period can set the stage for the identification process.

Research by Ashforth and Saks (1996) suggested that institutionalized socialization tactics are positively related to organizational identification and thus have more pervasive effects on the organization. Newcomers not only perform their jobs more effectively but also more clearly understand the organization. Ashforth and Mael (1989) described a direct effect of socialization on the internalization of values of the organization and an indirect effect of socialization on internalization through identification.

According to Cheney (1983b), organizations facilitate identification through a socialization process by communicating the organization's values, goals, and other relevant information through guidelines and other forms. In his research of corporate house organs (in-house periodicals designed for employees), Cheney uncovered techniques used to promote identification. These included the common ground techniques of expression of concern for the individual, recognition of individual contributions, the espousal of shared values, the advocacy of company-sponsored benefits and activities, praise by outsiders, and employee testimonials. These tactics promote an association between the organization's concerns and the employees' concerns. With the technique of identification by antithesis, identification is promoted as more than a desirable feature; it is necessary to combat outsiders' threats. Another technique is the use of "we" as a subtle and effective identification strategy. The final technique revealed in this research is the use of symbols such as name, logo, and

trademark to promote identification. This is consistent with Ashforth and Mael's (1989) discussion of the importance of symbols that can be used by management to enhance member's images of the organization and their feelings of attachment to it. Shamir (1990) also stated the importance of managing the symbolic environment to stimulate feelings of uniqueness and promote identity salience in members' self-concepts.

Vaughn (1997) conducted research on the use of communications in the socialization process to analyze value-based identification strategies. Through interviews and an examination of documents from eight high-technology organizations, she identified five values espoused in the corporate communications of those organizations. The results suggested that these communications not only socialize members but also build, foster, and preserve member identification through the promotion of shared values.

Organizational rites and ceremonies also foster identification (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Rites of passage, enhancement, renewal, and integration illuminate one's social identities and build personal connections with the organization. Regularized markers in the form of rituals are also critical in sustaining that identification (Albert et al., in press).

There have been numerous experiments that suggest that self-categorization processes can contribute to group identification (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). These processes can also contribute to organizational identification (Kramer, 1993). Organizational symbols are potential objects to support development of that self-

categorization process. Developing an attachment to these symbols with organization members can facilitate the identification process.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that antecedents of identification include the following: being categorized as a member, seeing the group as being distinctive in its values and practices, group prestige, out-group salience and the existence of intergroup competition, and factors connected to group formation. These group factors such as interaction, similarity, and proximity can support the construction of identification but are not essential based on the social identity theory perspective.

Self-enhancement can be facilitated by membership in a group (Kramer, 1993). In order to protect and enhance self-esteem, individuals prefer membership in organizations that can support a positive identity. Research by Mael and Ashforth (1992) suggested that organizational distinctiveness, organizational prestige, and the absence of intraorganizational competition support the construction of identification. Propositions offered by Dutton et al. (1994) suggested that attractiveness and distinctiveness of organizational identity relative to other organizations, an attractive construed external image, and enhancement of self-esteem strengthen member identification. Kramer (1993) suggested that when organizations experience positive outcomes or events, organizational members identify more strongly with those organizations. Research by Bhattacharya et al. (1995) indicated that organizational prestige is positively related to identification.

Also, on an individual basis, tenure, satisfaction with the organization, and sentimentality promoted member identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Research by

Bhattacharya et al. (1995) supported the positive relationship between tenure and identification.

Frequency and intensity of contact can affect identification. Research of art museum members by Bhattacharya et al. (1995) found that frequency in contact was positively related to member identification. This was consistent with the proposition by Dutton et al. (1994), "The more contact a member has with an organization (in terms of intensity and duration), the greater the attractiveness of the perceived organizational identity and the stronger the organizational identification" (p. 248). This is consistent with research by Hunt and Benford (1994) suggesting that member interaction through discourse can intensify identification. Dutton et al. (1994) also suggested that visibility of affiliation can influence identification, although in research by Bhattacharya et al. (1995), visibility through membership categories was not significantly related to identification.

Building an organization's strategic reputation through visible involvement can facilitate member identification (Elsbach & Glynn, 1996). Elsbach and Glynn suggested that member identification is embedded in the organization's strategic reputation. Employees become implanted with the attributes, which they display while promoting the organization's strategic reputation. This is based on the propositions that organizational attractiveness and visible employee involvement are antecedents for member identification. If a member's social identity is enhanced by the organization's reputation, and that member participates in reputation-promoting activities, then that member's organizational identification will be strengthened and impressions of the organization by external audiences can also be enhanced because of the heightened

credibility of those activities. Members who participate in reputation-building activities tend to internalize the company characteristics that are promoted in those activities, and they tend to feel more positive about the company image. These researchers described this as "believing, as it were, their own 'PR' about the firm" (p. 82). Thus, the organization is achieving two significant functions in support of the organization: strengthening organizational identification and external reputation.

Elsbach and Glynn (1996) suggested three reputation-building tactics that can influence a member's organizational identification and align internal and external perceptions of the organization. First, reputation-building activities that put employees in aggressive or predatory activities increase the reputation for toughness and promote member identification with that attribute. Second, those activities that involve employees in socially responsible projects for the organization promote not only a company reputation for high quality but also member identification. Third, when a member's daily activities at work actually model a distinctive competency of that organization, then that activity will both promote that company's distinctive reputation and member's organizational identification. All of these tactics illustrate ways to embed organizational identification in the reputation-building process. By actually involving employees in these activities, the strength of organizational identification as well as the effects of the reputation-building activity are enhanced. All support the packaging of a social identity. This research suggested a relationship between participating in strategic reputation-building activities and positive organizational effects on employees and a significant relation between theories of social identity and impression management.

Identity-threatening events can have a serious impact on member identification. Although research indicates that internal organizational audiences often distance themselves from the stigmatizing event and those connected to it (Sutton & Callahan, 1987), the outcome is actually more complex. As explained by Kramer (1993),

> If threats are attributed to factors beyond the organization's control, organizational identification may actually increase. The threat may be perceived as a collective problem increasing attraction and cohesiveness among those threatened. Moreover, repairing the damage to the organization's image may be viewed as a superordinate goal, binding organizational members more tightly together as a group. (p. 258)

This focused urgency tends to enhance interaction which can promote feelings of we-ness which then contribute to further strengthening the cohesiveness (Sherif, 1966). As research on intergroup conflict suggests, if a threatening event is associated with a conflict with another group, then this intergroup conflict can increase ingroup solidarity and cooperativeness (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1988).

In studying threat-rigidity effects in organizations, Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981) suggested that individuals respond to a threatening situation by limiting information to that which is consistent with prior cognitions. They proposed that when the threat is from an external cause rather than an internal deficiency, then cohesiveness is the more likely response. There is a pressure for unity and uniformity. Cohesiveness can be affected by whether or not success is a likely outcome for the organization. Success tends to support a high level of cohesion. The researchers warned that cohesiveness is temporary if outside challenges cannot be met, and if this is the case, then the members' myopic focus on the group, in response to the threat, may actually stimulate a reduction in cohesion.

Crises can provide the context for strengthening identification (Albert et al., in press). They can "shake up mindlessness" (p. 19), making identities more salient and identification more embedded. "In times of crises, however, we cannot just fake our identification. Thus, if we act to defend our organization in times of crises, then we are clearly demonstrating a strong level of identification" (Albert et al., in press). A devastating crisis can activate a calculated examination of identity, resulting in reaffirmation or reformulation of the identity (Barney et al., in press). The reformulation options are to choose an anti-identity, what the organization is not; a coercive identity, what the organization has to be; or a new free will identity, what the organization wants to be. With any of these options, the organization must consider survival issues as well as the maintenance of member identification.

Identification and Leadership

The issue of organizational identification can be related to the role of cultural leadership (Trice & Beyer, 1993). According to Selznick (1957), institutional leadership serves four critical functions: definition of organizational mission and roles, institutional embodiment of purpose, defense of institutional integrity, and control of internal conflict. Schein (1990) discussed modeling by leader figures as a mechanism of culture creation. When members identify with the leader, they internalize the values and assumptions of that leader. Founders play a particularly significant role in building shared values for a new organization. Organizations often mirror the personality of its founder (Nahavandi & Malekzadeh, 1993). The role of the leader, who is a symbol of an organization's identity, delivers a clear message in the merged organization.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) "suggest that organizations often seek to generalize identification with an individual to identification with the organization through the routinization of charisma" (p. 22).

Research by Adler and Adler (1988) revealed the importance of individuals' identification with both the group and its leader. This identification enhanced group loyalty by putting members in a position of representing the group and rewarding them for it. Adler and Adler discussed the importance of self-identification with the leader, in this case the head coach. The leader's familial atmosphere, loyalty to group members, and position as a personal role model can promote this identification.

Manz, Bastien, and Hostager (1991) described visionary leadership, which facilitates involvement through identification with the leader and vision. From their research, they suggested that in times of organizational change, identification must be two-way: leaders must identify with the organization members, and the members must identify with the leader and vision. Participation in constructing the vision also supports identification.

Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) developed a theory that connects leader behavior and follower effects through the self-concepts of the follower. They argued that the effects of charismatic leaders on followers are the result of leader actions that implicate the follower's self-concept and thus motivate action. The follower chooses a leader to follow based on the identity that the leader is perceived to possess. Visions, which are identity and value laden, serve as a vehicle for satisfying the values and identity that an individual holds but is often unable to express.

Organizations have collective identities that are articulated by its leaders

(Dutton et al., 1994). Organizational identity is expressed in many cultural forms

ranging from stories and symbols to rituals and ceremonies.

Social Identity Theory and Organizational Identification

A central focus in social psychology has been the relationship of the self to the

collective, the interplay between psychological functioning and social structure

(Turner, 1996). The concept of organizational identification is rooted in social identity

theory, labeled by Turner (1982) as the social identification model. Much of the

research on social identity and social identification has been conducted by Henri Tajfel

(1978, 1982) and his research student John Turner (Turner, 1978, 1982; Turner,

Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Although the first published paper on these ideas

was distributed in 1972, the initial research by Tajfel and his colleagues had begun

earlier (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

Rather than focusing on the traditional perspective of the individual in the

group, the social identity approach studies the perspective of the group in the

individual (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). According to this social psychological

perspective, people categorize the world into groups. As Hogg and Abrams

explained,

> The central tenet of this (social identity) approach is that belonging to a
> group (of whatever size and distribution) is largely a *psychological*
> state which is quite distinct from that of being a unique and separate
> individual, and that it confers *social identity*, or a shared/collective
> representation of who one is and how one should behave. (p. 3)

People perceive themselves as members of certain social categories that vary in their relative power and status. There is value and emotional significance attached to membership. This perception of group membership is quite functional because it both creates identity and generates behaviors that result in important evaluations of oneself. Social identities are descriptive, prescriptive, and evaluative (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Underlying this theory are the two basic processes of categorization and self-enhancement (Hogg, 1996). The self-categorization theory is an elaboration of the categorization process that views identity at various levels of abstraction, ranging from a superordinate perspective of the self as a human to in-group/out-group views of the social self, to personal views of the unique self (Abrams, 1994). This social categorization process highlights intergroup boundaries and is affected by needs for self-enhancement. In order to preserve a positive view of oneself, the norms and attitudes of the group favor the in-group over relevant out-groups (Hogg et al., 1995).

One's social identity is extremely important because the self-concept is a hypothetical cognitive structure consisting of two major components: personal identity and social identity (Turner, 1982). This view is consistent with Gergen's (1971) definition of the self on a structural level. Personal identity is one's personal attributes, such as bodily attributes, and other intrapersonal characteristics. One's social identifications, defined as social identity, include psychological belonging to a particular gender, race, nationality, occupation, or any formal or informal groups. One's notion of self is largely derived from the groups to which a person feels they

belong. The self is a unique combination of identities shared with others. Social identity rather than personal identity is the focus of the social identity approach.

Because social identification is the psychological perception of oneness with or belongingness to a social category, it is a cognitive state, not dependent on mutual interaction as is defined by the social cohesion model (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). It does not constitute the behaviors that may be the consequences of those perceptions. Random assignment to a group can foster a feeling of oneness with the group. Identification can persist even when group affiliation is personally painful, when other members are disliked, or when group failure is predicted.

According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), organizational identification is a type of social identification. It is specific to the organization, and the person "perceives a shared destiny with the organization" (p. 23). In-group favoritism does not require strong leadership or interdependence, interaction, or cohesion between members. When people identify strongly with an organization, the attributes of that organization become a part of their own self-concept. Because of the motivation to have a positive self-concept, people establish in-group favoritism and out-group bias. Through social comparison with other groups, individuals magnify intergroup differences and intragroup similarities (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Labeling imposes meaning and status; it contributes to the construction of a shared code (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1997).

Social identity theory has provided a framework for much research in intergroup relations. Much of this research has suggested that in contexts of ratings or allocations, members treat other members more favorably than those not in the group.

Social identity theory views one's social identity as dynamic and responsive to environmental conditions (Hogg et al., 1995). The degree of cooperation among group members increases when group identity is salient (Kramer, 1993). Identities can vary in terms of centrality and in their psychological status. Identification in organizations can vary based on the context in which the individual is embedded. Negative events can lead a person to either reduce their identification with the organization in favor of another identity or if the threat is perceived as a collective condition, then it might heighten one's organizational identification.

Social Identity Theory, Organizational Identification, and

Mergers and Acquisitions

A change in an organization that can take place due to a merger or acquisition can result in a change in behavior producing consequences for the organization. As described by Dutton et al. (1994),

> If members believe that the perceived organizational identity has been altered either in content (e.g., in what attributes distinguish this organization) or in its evaluation (making it more or less attractive), members are likely to modify their behavior. This change in members' behavior does not require interacting with others, altering employees' jobs and rewards, or changing bosses. Rather, if members think of their employing organization differently (by changes in the perceived organizational identity or construed external image), we argue they will behave differently. (p. 256)

Elsass and Veiga (1994) viewed the processes of social identification as a theoretical foundation for examining the cultural blending of organizations in a merger. They saw this environment as a natural setting for in-group/out-group bias, discrimination, and an array of problems. Perceptions of in-group/out-group

differences and the structure of intergroup relations can contribute to differentiation. During the acculturation process, effective blending requires organizations to address the opposing forces of cultural differentiation and organizational integration through the removal of restraining forces.

Studies have examined in-group/out-group identification and biases (Ellemers et al., 1997; Spears et al., 1997). Some research has been conducted in laboratory groups where individuals were recategorized or merged (Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989). According to social identity theory, people want to think positively about their group memberships because this affects their view of themselves. When people view their own group more favorably than others, this indirectly implies the existence of in-group/out-group biases (Messick & Mackie, 1989). In the studies of recategorized or merged groups, individuals showed weakened in-group/out-group bias when subjects were recategorized.

Haunschild, Moreland, and Murrell (1994) conducted research on mergers from a social identity perspective by investigating sources of resistance displayed by strong in-group/out-group biases. They conducted an experiment involving mergers between small task groups. The results indicated that more successful groups were less enthusiastic about merging and displayed stronger biases. Relative success was a good predictor of merger resistance. Consistent with social identity theory, this demonstrates the member's concern about the relative rather than absolute quality of the merged group.

Limited research has been located that connects social identity theory with organizational identification as a basis for research in mergers and acquisitions (Bachman, 1993; Mottola, 1996). Two dissertation studies examined merger effects using survey data, with individuals who had experienced a merger (Bachman, 1993) or who had read merger scenarios (Mottola, 1996).

Bachman (1993) surveyed banking executives to evaluate a proposed model of intergroup processes associated with post-merger integration. Surveys were sent to banking executives who had participated in a graduate banking program. Of the 1,112 surveys mailed, only 156 could be used because the sample had not been prescreened as to whether or not they had experienced a merger. Identification was measured twice: for the premerger organization and with the merged organization at the time of the survey. Bachman used four out of ten items taken from Mael's (1988) dissertation to measure identification. Bachman expected that to the extent that organizational identification is strengthened, positive behaviors supporting the organization will follow. Path analyses results indicated that the inclusionary variables of the model reduced intergroup differentiation, reduced threat, and increased commitment and identification with the merged organization. These inclusionary variables consisted of the conditions of contact derived from the Contact Hypothesis (equal status contact, positive interdependence in achieving common goals, opportunities for intimacy and the disconfirmation of stereotypes, and egalitarian norms or fairness) and the socioemotional variables (participation, managerial communication, and considering and supporting employees). The variable of threat consisted of loss of self-esteem at work, loss of authority, fear of job and benefits loss, role ambiguity, and intergroup

anxiety. Threat and group differentiation had a significant negative relationship with commitment and identification. Threat and commitment had direct effects on turnover intention, and group differentiation negatively impacted cooperation and feelings of merger success. Although this research included the variable of identification, the author focused more on the concept of commitment in the discussion of the results. These results indicated the importance of the socioemotional orientation of the merged organization. These variables produced the most significant direct effects on commitment and identification. This research supported other research that has described the importance of good communication, showing support and consideration for those involved in the merger, and allowing genuine participation. The research suggested that better career opportunities decreased threat and promoted organizational commitment and identification. This supports social identity theory because career opportunities can be motivating and can enhance self-esteem.

Mottola (1996) examined how merger participants respond to corporate mergers using a scenario methodology developed by Rentsch and Schneider (1991). The independent variables consisted of four status groups, the extent of identification with the pre-merger group, and merger group membership (acquired or acquiring). The four status conditions were high status, low status, equal status with superiority on different dimensions, and equal status with comparable performance on the same dimension. Identification was measured using six items from Mael's (1988) scale. The most favorable pattern of identification was for equal status groups, based on each group's superiority on different dimensions. These participants were least likely to hold onto their pre-merger identities and most likely to identify with the merged

organization. Members of the acquiring group had more favorable merger

expectations than members of the acquired group. Surprisingly, participants who

identified highly with their pre-merger companies prior to the merger had more

favorable merger expectations than participants who did not strongly identify with

their pre-merger companies prior to the merger. Mottola explained this unexpected

finding by suggesting that organizational identification may not be company specific as

suggested by Ashforth and Mael (1989). Mottola suggested that certain individuals

may have a dispositional propensity to identify with an organization and can shift

organizational identity, as needed. Also in this research, the participant's level in the

organization (worker, middle-level manager, and upper-level manager) influenced

identification. Higher levels resulted in greater identification. Prestige, effectiveness,

and pay had a similar relationship.

Implications for This Research

According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), the concept of organizational

identification based on social identity theory has not been a focus of organizational

behavior research. There has been little research on the construct of social

identification as "a shared identity" as a "perceived oneness with the organization" (p.

23).

There is a need for research on issues of organizational identification in the

merger and acquisition context. Although it is assumed that people experience threats

to their social identities, there is little empirical evidence to support this, especially in a

merger context. Very little research exists on the shifting of group identities and

specifically on how pre-merger organizational identification influences identification with the merged organization (Mottola, 1996).

Research also needs to focus on the issues of reconstruction of new identity (Olie, 1994). It is critical for the acquiring company to help acquired employees cultivate identification with the new organization (Ivancevich et al., 1987). This is also true for a merger where the dominant company is the one losing aspects of its identity.

Because identity patterns and behaviors become disrupted, managers need to create a set of symbols and build identity in the new organization (Ulrich et al., 1989). Corporate names, appointment of key managers, location of the head office, board membership, and leaders are critically important symbols (Olie, 1994). The perception of common purpose emanating from strategic fit can support this effort (Olie, 1994), as well as a crossed organizational structure. The use of symbols to reconstruct identity and promote identification was a focus of this research.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested an interest in "the mechanisms by which identification with leaders becomes generalized to the organization" (p. 34). Because one's identification with the organization can be influenced by one's identification with its leader, the issue of the departure of executives as a result of a merger is extremely important. Mergers and acquisitions research has focused on executive departures but not individual identification changes in the employees working for that executive. This would present a different type of integration concern.

Another area for research is the antecedents or consequences of identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The dynamics of this process, viewed from a social identity

perspective, have not been extensively researched. This study focused on both construction and consequences of identification in this organization.

There has been no research located from a qualitative perspective that has targeted the issue of organizational identification as the primary focus of study in an actual merger context. Although studies have made references to these issues and to this area for study, no research has been located with this focus.

According to Dutton et al. (1994), an approach to assess strength of organizational identification would involve "assessing the level of overlap between the characteristics that a member believes typify him or her as an individual (i.e., are enduring, central, and distinctive) and the characteristics that typify the organization. High levels of overlap between the two lists of central, distinctive, and enduring attributes would indicate strong organizational identification" (p. 258). Also, strength of identification is indicated by salience of organizational membership. No published research on organizational identification in the context of a merger or acquisition has been located that applies the Dutton et al. conditions in studying strength of identification. What impact has the merger or acquisition had on member identification with the organization? How consistent are attributes of organizational members and the attributes they use to define the organization? How important is one's identity with the work organization in relation to other social identifications? What can the organization do to cultivate member identification with the organization?

Conclusions

There is a lack of research that specifically examines organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification in the context of a merger. This research focused on these constructs in a unique setting where the company was using the merger as a means to eliminate a damaged identity. This study provided an opportunity to hear the voices of those immersed in this change event in order to explore the reality of this experience as viewed by its members. This research examined the structure and sharing of identity attributes by organization members. The presence of future images of the organization and the construction of identification were also investigated. And by examining this organization during a merger, this research provided a clearer picture of what this organization could do to support its members as they experienced this change event.

Because issues of identification are cognitive perceptions, a qualitative methodology provided structured experiences to capture thoughts and meanings held by organization members. Previous qualitative case study research in mergers and acquisitions integration has exposed issues of loss of identity, but has not examined the constructs of organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification. Although several of these questions could be studied using a quantitative methodology, I believed that an inductive inquiry might best expose the issues that were most meaningful to the organizational members.

It is critical that human resource development (HRD) researchers investigate these important human issues that impact performance. It is equally essential that HRD practitioners step into their strategic roles by being integral participants in both

planning and implementing organizational change. Mergers and acquisitions must be

studied from both the critical perspective of enhancing value and supporting

performance for the organization and from the human perspective of providing

meaning and a genuine sense of self-esteem, self-distinctiveness, and self-continuity for

its members.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Qualitative methods were used to study organizational identity, future organizational images, and identification in an organization experiencing a merger. This research applied a case study approach, a form of naturalistic inquiry.

In this chapter, the rationale for using qualitative methods and the case study design are presented, followed by a description of the setting, the role of the researcher, and participants. Data are discussed from the perspective of sources, collection, management, and analysis. The chapter concludes with an overview of techniques used to establish rigor in this research.

Rationale for Using Qualitative Methods

The naturalistic paradigm is an alternative perspective to the more traditional positivist approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rooted in phenomenology, this paradigm is based on a worldview that supports multiple realities, multidirectional relationships, and complexity. Reality is socially and experientially based, "the products of human intellects" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Rather than understanding the world through a lens of simple cause and effect relationships, this paradigm views actions as part of a complex web of interconnected activities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In contrast to the mechanical model, this alternative approach supports indeterminancy.

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With a relativist response to the ontological question, this paradigm supports a subjective and transactional response to the epistemological question (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher and the object of the research are interactively linked and discoveries are *"literally created"* (p. 111) as the process unfolds. Disciplined inquiry is value-bound, where the "knower and known are inseparable" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Engagement is critical to achieving the perspectival view of this paradigm. A suitable method for this paradigm must enable understanding through interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for certain purposes (Maxwell, 1996). It is useful for understanding meaning from the viewpoint of those participants studied, "the meaning people have constructed" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Using this emic (Pike, 1967) perspective, the insider's view is the key to understanding. This requires face-to-face interaction to achieve "the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being" (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 12).

Qualitative research is holistic, interpretive, and empirical (Stake, 1995). With a holistic focus, the researcher describes and understands the environment as a system, with its own unique set of relationships. As Stake explained, "Its contextuality is well developed…it resists reductionism and elementalism" (p. 47). It is interpretive in that variables are defined experientially; understanding evolves from interaction between the researcher and the people in the field. Data is derived from observations not only of the researcher but also of the people observed. The reality is best understood through a lived experience in the most natural setting (Merriam,

1998). It is a way to study situations as they naturally unfold at a particular time. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained, "Inquiry must be carried out in a 'natural' setting because phenomena of study, whatever they may be—physical, chemical, biological, social, psychological—*take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves*" (p. 189).

This type of research puts huge demands on the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher's role is to promote discovery through the accumulation of tacit and explicit knowledge. The researcher is the primary instrument for both gathering and analyzing data.

Qualitative research uses an evolving and emerging process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because of the unpredictability of the data to emerge, it is essential that the design unfold in response to the researcher's experience. A predetermined path could deny understanding the unique reality under study.

Qualitative research is an inductive process. Findings in the form of themes, tentative hypotheses, and grounded theory can emerge from the research. Questions of "how" focusing on discovery of meaning and understanding are predominant rather than questions of "how much" or "how many" (Yin, 1994). This focus yields exploratory data that can support further research. As Stake (1995) explained, "The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it" (p. 43).

The purpose of this research was to discover and explore issues of organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification in

the context of a merger. Because these areas were relatively new and prevailing research was limited, the qualitative approach was extremely suitable.

In my desire to explore shared organizational identity attributes as viewed by its members, it was necessary to understand what participants individually perceived as being core, distinctive, and enduring about their organization. Also, since issues of organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification are complex and emotional, this qualitative approach was suitable for understanding meaning from the perspective of the organization members. My interest in tacit knowledge as well as propositional knowledge was best served through qualitative means. By serving as an empathetic listener, my role in this process was consistent with the need to gather sensitive data at a time of unrest in the organization.

Because I did not know what issues were most relevant to organization members prior to my research, it was critical that I use a methodology that allowed the emic perspective to emerge rather than force my expectations on those studied. This provided me with data that targeted what members thought was important rather than what I assumed would be important. I was able to hear the subjective descriptions and interpretations of the organization members and see practices and behaviors that might be difficult to verbalize. Because there is a "fit of paradigm to focus" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 229), these issues supported the use of a qualitative approach. This focus of study was also consistent with my view of a complex reality where meaning is understood through an intensive and holistic study of the characteristics of the unique setting.

Qualitative research is a label that encompasses many types of research based on this naturalistic framework or worldview (Tesch, 1990). One type of qualitative research is the case study. Case study research can be qualitative or quantitative, depending on the researcher's perspective and the questions asked. Grounded in the perspective of the naturalistic paradigm, the research design for this study was a qualitative, case study.

Case Study Design

Case studies can be a useful design for understanding an individual case, an "intrinsic case study," to acquiring insight into an issue or phenomenon through an "instrumental case study" (Stake, 1994, p. 237). According to Dyer and Wilkins (1991), the essential feature of this design is the careful study of a single case in order to see new theoretical relationships and question others previously considered.

Case study is the selection of a target of study (Stake, 1994). It is "not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied" (p. 236). This bounded system is chosen because it exhibits characteristics appropriate for the focus of the study. In this research, the bounded system was an organization experiencing an identity change through a merger. The research covered the time period preceding the identity change, through the identity change experience, and after the merger became official. Usually there is "a more or less vaguely defined temporal, social, and/or physical boundary involved" (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 440).

Because my initial purpose was to understand issues of organizational identity in a changing, merger environment, case study methodology seemed ideal. Company

A was a bounded system experiencing a merger to lose identity in an effort to remove the stigma attached to its name. It was a contemporary event where phenomena and context were interwoven.

Often thoughts about organizational identity are buried in one's unconscious and thus not as easily described (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). With a change in collective status (Albert & Whetten, 1985), members are more aware of these organizational images (Ashforth & Mael, 1996) and are more likely to reflect on their organization's distinctive attributes (Dutton et al., 1994) than in a more stable period.

Because my data collection took place immediately before, during, and after a major identity change in the organization, it was a suitable time to study issues of organizational identity. By limiting the research to this setting, I was also able to study the phenomenon of interest in depth. My goal was to gain insight on issues that can affect organizations, by studying the complexities of this case with concentrated inquiry. Because of its uniqueness in losing identity through a merger with a smaller organization, this case offered an interesting collection of events impacting organization members. The purpose was not to assume the case represented the universe, but rather to concentrate on conducting research that represented this case. This research appeared to be a rich avenue for understanding identity and identification in a merger environment.

According to Merriam (1998), qualitative case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. With the specificity of focus on a particular event, the researcher produces an end product that is a rich description of a phenomenon. The purpose is to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study. This case study

research focused on a specific company experiencing a merger and with that merger, the loss of identity. The results of the data gathering produced a rich description of the complexities of the situation, revealed through many sources, over a six-month period. The product of this research can contribute to understanding the phenomenon of organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification within the context or a merger.

Yin (1994) suggested the use of case study research when the focus is on questions describing contemporary events. It is particularly suited to environments where the phenomena and the context are clearly interwoven, as is the case in this study. Merriam (1998) described the strengths of case study research this way:

> The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. (p. 41)

Yet limitations of this approach do exist. The researcher must understand issues of time, especially in data collection, which is quite labor intensive, as well as costs, prior to conducting the research (Stake, 1995). This approach, as in any qualitative method, is limited by the capacity of the researcher to be competent, effective, and ethical in this work.

This case study provided a bounded system that was suitable for studying loss of identity within a merger experience. It was unique in that company leaders chose to merge with a smaller company for the purposes of losing a tarnished identity. With these changes, it was also an appropriate site for talking to members about their

perceptions of the company's future. Issues of identification emerged as another critical element in the description of this change experience.

Context of the Study

The setting for this research was a company that I shall label as Company A. I agreed with the company key informant to exclude the real name of the company from any written documentation about this research. The Senior Vice President granted access to all departments of the organization and provided contacts in each section to arrange interviews and observations. All interactions with this key informant were informal and relaxed. He granted me the use of his organization for my research with no requests for anything in return other than an executive summary. The organization was open to my research needs. Throughout the process, there was minimal bureaucracy to deter my work.

Company A was a public company in the business of commercial air transportation. It was known for offering low-fare, passenger air service. The company began service in the early1990s and was extremely profitable and growing until its accident. This was followed by a massive reduction in service and a furlough of employees. Scheduled service resumed, but losses continued to accumulate. In an effort to regain its profitability, the airline tried to attract customers back to the company. After continuing declines in profits, the company announced a merger. This merger was specifically targeted as the best vehicle for transforming the company's identity that had been damaged as a result of intense and unrelenting negative media exposure since the accident. The merger went into effect in the fall of

1997. Two months prior to the official merger, the company enacted a name change that would be consistent with the upcoming merger.

This research coincided with these events. Data collection began after the merger was announced, continued through the time of the identity change, and was completed a couple of months after the merger went into effect, totaling a six-month period. The timing of this research coincided with heightened emotions about issues of identity in this organization. Attitudes and comments of interviewees were reflective of the point in time of the interview. This period was a time of change and transformation for the organization, requiring the researcher to be empathetic and sensitive.

Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher is critical in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) confirmed, "The instrument of choice in naturalistic inquiry is the human" (p. 236). Actually, "the naturalist has no choice because only the human instrument has the characteristics necessary to cope with an indeterminate situation" (p. 193). The benefit of a trained person in this role is adaptability, flexibility, and the capacity to view phenomenon holistically. Humans also are able to experience tacit knowledge and process information swiftly, allowing for prompt opportunities for clarification and summarization. All of these characteristics enhance the capacity for collecting meaningful data. This data gathering function also requires certain styles and skills to be effective: tolerance for ambiguity, sensitivity, and good communication skills (Merriam, 1998). In addition, the researcher must be experienced at interviewing and

observation, techniques that are not easily learned without reflective practice.

Analysis is dependent on consolidating, reducing, and interpreting by the researcher

(Merriam, 1998); multiple levels of coding and sharpened abilities in creative and

abstract thinking are inherent in the process. Also, without clear understanding of the

requirements to support rigor in this methodology, a researcher can conduct extensive

work that lacks credibility, transferability, dependability, or confirmability.

Stake (1994) described the researcher's role in determining the case study

story. He expressed it as follows:

> Even though committed to empathy and multiple realities, it is the
> researcher who decides what is the case's own story, or at least what of
> the case's own story he or she will report. More will be pursued than
> was volunteered. Less will be reported than was learned. Even though
> the competent researcher will be guided by what the case may indicate
> is most important, even though patrons and other researchers will
> advise, what is necessary for an understanding of the case will be
> decided by the researcher. It may be the case's own story, but it is the
> researcher's dressing of the case's own story. This is not to dismiss
> the aim of finding the story that best represents the case, but to remind
> that the criteria of representation ultimately are decided by the
> researcher. (p. 240)

Issues of ethics are also critical. As Stake (1994) described, "Qualitative

researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be

good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 244). The interests of the human subjects

involved should be paramount. Ethical issues exist throughout the research process

(Miles & Huberman, 1994). They range from early decisions on the worth of the

project, competencies of the researcher, and informed consent to later decisions on

harm and risk, privacy, advocacy, research quality, ownership, and use of results.

These ethical issues were constantly in my thoughts and expressed in my

actions throughout the research process. The worthiness of this project was grounded

in my literature review and the gaps in research related to the human aspects of loss

during a merger, organizational identity, future organizational images, and member

identification. I spent considerable time studying the strategies to be used in order to

feel competent in the research process. I received training in the qualitative software

used and conducted research several times, prior to this study, providing opportunities

to hone my interviewing skills. I discussed informed consent with each participant

prior to any data gathering. I understood that the quality of my data was dependent

on participants feeling comfortable and safe with my research. Confidentiality was

explained, and all information was presented in a way that ensured privacy. I was

constantly aware that any of my actions should not harm the people involved. I used

vocabulary that would not be threatening and presented questions in multiple ways to

offer participants comfort in their responses to my focus of study. Although issues of

subgroups emerged in the data gathering, I explained my research focus and stated

that my role was not to advocate for a cause or issue. Only when the data revealed a

strong need for more communication did I advocate this issue when talking with my

key company contact person. I understood that my presence was an intervention so I

tried to be aware of the impact of my words and actions. Research quality is critical;

thus, I was always concerned about meeting standards of rigorous qualitative

research. By transcribing and coding data using qualitative software, I was able to

ground any conclusions in the data. The issue of data ownership was not a major

concern since the company looked at my research as an opportunity to help me do

this dissertation. They expected little in return in spite of all the time they gave me

for conducting my research. The only product that was requested was a brief

summary of my results. There was no commitment to using the findings. I was always aware that I had the obligation to keep the company name disguised in any published reports.

Gaining Access

Gaining access in order to conduct the study was a critical stage of the process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Lofland and Lofland (1984) described it as "the first truly *social* moment of naturalistic investigation: **getting in**—gaining the acceptance of the people being studied" (p. 20). The key gatekeeper was the Senior Vice President. I called him and then met with him the following week. Everything started up so quickly. Negotiating the steps for the research in a way that was acceptable to both parties was extremely easy. In order to ensure that I would be able to complete the project, I provided a memo of agreement that we both signed at our first meeting (see Appendix A). Only three requests were made by the gatekeeper and were included in the agreement: (1) to keep the company name confidential in any published reports, (2) to explain to each interviewee that this project was being conducted for my own research, and (3) to explain to each interviewee that I was not being paid by the company. After signing the agreement at our first meeting, the gatekeeper immediately took me to one of the functional areas to begin my data collection. Within less than a week from my first phone conversation with the gatekeeper, I was already beginning my interviews and observations. Such openness in allowing my research was characteristic of my relationship with the gatekeeper and others in this organization. There was a lack of bureaucracy that could have delayed or

complicated my work. I was immediately experiencing what my data would also reveal about the nature of the organization and the people in it.

Gaining access on other levels of the organization was necessary throughout the study. With each functional area, I was handed over to a director, manager, or administrator who then served as my point of contact for research activities in that area. This was not a difficult process, but it did require getting to know and building trust with the contact person in each area. There was a continual process of negotiation and building trust that was necessary for developing relationships to support the research (Maxwell, 1996). On each day of interviewing or observing, I would begin with a brief meeting with the contact person for that functional area in order to maintain the relationship and the rapport that had been developed. I also indicated to two of the contact people that I would provide general feedback from my data gathering in their area. Although little was requested by this organization in return for allowing me to conduct my research there, following the reciprocity model (Patton, 1990), I tried to offer general feedback and listen when members wanted to talk about issues.

Building rapport was not only a part of the entry or access processes but also critical for my interview and observation experiences. Establishing trust and respect were critical to these data gathering strategies.

Participants

Thirty-six employees were included in the initial round of interviews. According to Patton (1990), "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative

inquiry" (p. 184). He stated, "The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size" (p. 185). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "If the purpose is to maximize information, then sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units; thus *redundancy* is the primary criterion" (p. 202). This is quite similar to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) term "theoretical saturation" (p. 61) where the data collection process is dictated by whether or not it provides new information to add to the properties of categories. When additional informants provide no new data, it is time to terminate this level of data collection.

Sampling in qualitative research is purposive rather than random or representative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and theoretically driven, which Glaser and Strauss (1967) label as "theoretical sampling" (p. 45). Following the framework of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), individuals were chosen on the basis of criteria. The intent was to study those who would be information-rich and would provide data that enhanced my understanding of issues of organizational identity, future organizational images, and member identification in a merger environment. The criteria were as follows:

1. The participant was an employee of Company A.

2. The participant had been employed at Company A prior to May 1996, the time of the accident. This criterion was chosen predominantly because of the enduring nature of identity. In order for employees to assess whether or not attributes were enduring, they needed to have experience with the

company over a period of time. After consulting with members of the organization, I decided that the interviewees did not necessarily have to be with the company from the beginning, but that they should have experienced both the good times, prior to the accident, as well as the times of struggle for survival, after the accident. The first 31 employees met this criterion. The remaining five interviewees were selected specifically because they were "new" (six months or less in employment) to determine if there was a significant difference in their perceptions. These employees could be part-time or full-time employees. The decision to expand the sample was made after completing the 31 interviews. As explained by Miles and Huberman (1994), "Samples in qualitative studies are usually not wholly prespecified, but can evolve once fieldwork begins. Initial choices of informants lead you to similar and different ones" (p. 27).

3. The various functional groups in the organization—pilots, in-flight, maintenance, customer service, and reservations—were fairly equally represented in the sample: 5 pilots, 6 in-flight, 5 maintenance, 14 customer service, and 6 reservations. A larger number of customer service employees were interviewed because that category consisted of several subgroups: ticketing, gate, baggage, ramp, transfer, and operations employees. This was an effort to achieve purposeful random sampling (Patton, 1990). Using a process that enabled the selection of members from each functional group, I was able to use a small sample of 36, yet increase the credibility of the results.

Participants were selected based on meeting the criteria and being at work on the days that I conducted interviews. Several interviews were scheduled in advance, but most participants were selected if they were present when I was at their site. By being at the locations from approximately 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., I was able to interview employees in two shifts. In several cases, I asked to interview individuals because I saw that they were available, or, in one case, because the employee said she wanted to be interviewed. In most cases, the director, manager, or administrator selected names off a computer printout of those who met the criteria. As employees walked by my interview location, several were stopped and asked if they would participate. People seemed quite willing to help, and only refused if they had a flight to be serviced or a trip that was leaving soon. Several flight attendants who had returned from overnight trips that allowed only minimal sleep time, gladly participated and stayed for a full hour, in spite of the fact that they were not being paid by the company for this time. Several other interviewees indicated that the interview was a nice break from their normal activities that required sitting at one spot for long periods of time. One interviewee, after the interview, took me to her area and showed me how she did her work.

In addition to these 36 interviews, I talked with numerous employees in informal, non-taped conversations. Notes from these were included as memos. Although some state that "the general rule of thumb here is to transcribe only as much as is needed" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 30), I chose to transcribe the 36 interviews to ensure that all interview data were preserved and checked by each interviewee, enhancing credibility through member checks. This is consistent with Strauss and

Corbin's other suggestion of "better more than less" (p. 31). My goal was to triangulate my data through multiple sources and methods.

In my second round of interviews which concentrated on mini-tour questions, I began by interviewing the Senior Vice President who was my key informant. This two-hour interview was not taped and transcribed, although I did take notes. Then, after further analysis of all data, I conducted 15 additional interviews. Ten of these interviews were with employees included in the initial round of interviews, two from each functional area; these interviews were tape recorded but not transcribed. Five of the 15 interviews were with employees who I had not previously interviewed; three of these interviews were tape recorded but not transcribed. Thus, for this research, I formally interviewed 42 employees of Company A.

Methods for Data Collection

Data were collected using the typical techniques in qualitative case study research: interviewing, conducting observations, collecting documents, and observing physical artifacts. Lofland and Lofland (1984) described the "prime sources of data—words and actions...a combination of *looking, listening,* and *asking*" (p. 47) and supplementary data such as documents and other materials. These sources, each with their own strengths and weaknesses, are complementary and corroborate to build credibility for one's research.

One of the most important data sources is the interview (Yin, 1994). In the style of the ethnographic interview, the focus of the interview is to learn from people rather than study them (Spradley, 1979). By seeking the knowledge of ordinary

people, the researcher can build on their shared experience. To discover this insider view, the researcher is the student while the interviewee is the teacher. The focus of this process is to listen for the meaning of actions and events as perceived by those who experience it. A multiple interview design includes "grand tour questions" (p. 62) offering rich descriptions, followed with "mini-tour questions" (p. 63) focusing on smaller units of experience.

Gaining trust is essential to one's success and is quite fragile. As Fontana and Frey (1994) explained, "Any *faux pas* by the researcher may destroy days, weeks, or months of painstakingly gained trust" (p. 367). Each interview requires developing rapport (Spradley, 1979). Interviews begin with uncertainty but move through exploration of the relationship to cooperation and participation.

Interviews can provide targeted and insightful information yet be biased due to the construction of the question, limited recall, response bias, and reflexivity. The quality of the questions is critical in gathering genuine data.

Observation allows the researcher to cover events in real time. Although time-consuming, this method is critical in providing data and supporting or contradicting other information gathered. Observation has much complexity because it requires the researcher to focus on the physical setting, people, and activities (Spradley, 1980).

There are varying degrees of participant observation ranging from nonparticipation to low participation to moderate or active participation to high or complete participation (Spradley, 1980). As a participant observer, it is necessary to not only engage in the activity but also observe its complexity. Being explicitly

aware of that which one usually discards from one's attention requires a skill that

must be developed. This "insider/outsider experience" (p. 56) is complicated and

must be managed by the researcher. In addition, the process requires reflection and

record keeping to preserve thoughts about observations and feelings. As Adler and

Adler (1994) explained, "Observation produces especially great rigor *when combined*

with other methods" (p. 382).

Documentation is another valuable source of data in case study research (Yin,

1994). These can range in form from letters, memos, reports, and other company

documentation to newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and other mass media

reports. They are useful because they can be repeatedly retrieved, can cover a range

of events and topics, and are preexisting products not created for the research. These

data sources are helpful in supporting and augmenting evidence from other sources.

It is important to understand the intended audience for these documents and evaluate

their contents within this context. Due to problems in getting access, a sufficient

range and volume of documents may not be made available to the researcher.

Documents as well as physical artifacts are mute evidence that endure physically.

They are important to "qualitative researchers who wish to explore multiple and

conflicting voices" (Hodder, 1994, p. 395).

Physical artifacts, although limited in some case studies, can provide

insightful data. These objects of evidence can be observed and examined in relation

to other data collected. Artifacts can provide clues to intensity and significance of

events and symbols. Although sometimes limited in availability as well as potential

relevance (Yin, 1994), they can be valuable data sources in case study research (Merriam, 1998).

These methods of data gathering were used in this research. Each technique was researched prior to implementation. Over half of the time spent in the field was gathering data through interviews.

Data Collection

The purpose of this research was to understand what employees perceived as being core, distinctive, and enduring about their organization. In addition, I was interested in the construction of those identity attributes, merger feelings, and future images that members had for the organization. Since some of these areas required making explicit those ideas that might be only rarely expressed, it was critical that the interview process be well planned. My role was to be sure that interviewees were relaxed and comfortable in their interview environment.

The interview guide is included in Appendix B. It was used for each interview. The interview guide was piloted with several individuals not in this organization in order to test out the questions and develop some comfort in the process. The guide was modified as new issues emerged and because some questions were not producing rich data. As stated by Huberman and Miles (1994), "Unlike experimental studies, changes in observational protocols or interview schedules in a field study usually reflect a better understanding of the setting, thereby heightening the internal validity of the study" (p. 431). Using a semi-structured interview process,

I was able to efficiently use the time allotted, and I had the flexibility to follow leads that emerged in the interview. As explained by Bernard (1995),

> It demonstrates that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your informant to follow new leads. It shows that you are prepared and competent but that you are not trying to exercise excessive control over the informant (p. 210).

Prior to interviewing, I compiled a folder for each interviewee. Each folder contained a consent form, an address form, a microcassette, and a regular cassette. All materials were labeled at the completion of each interview.

Interviewees entered the interview experience with some degree of apprehension since many knew very little about my purpose or even my focus. Some were just told that I would interview them about the upcoming merger, and this research was for my dissertation. In order to build trust and rapport, I began with conversation focused on how I appreciated the opportunity to speak with them, and then I explained the purposes of my research. Issues of privacy and confidentiality were discussed in detail prior to the interview. I also explained that I was not doing this for the company and was not being paid by the company, but that the company was allowing me to conduct my research as a favor to me. A consent form (see Appendix C) was signed after I explained the purpose of the research and the rights of the interviewee. I also explained my methods for collecting the information in a way that I could later code it for analysis. In most cases, I used two recording instruments: a microcassette player and a regular cassette player. This was necessary as a backup as well as to provide flexibility in using transcribers; different transcribers had different equipment. Interviewees were also asked to complete a form indicating an address where I could send the completed transcription (see Appendix D). Although

the option to turn off the recorder was provided to all interviewees, only one chose to do this during the interview. No one refused to participate in the research.

To begin the taped part of the interview, I asked each interviewee to tell me what they did for the organization and when they began their employment at Company A. The purpose for using these questions was to confirm their function and tenure since these were my criteria for participant selection. By initially discussing content that was neither complicated nor threatening, the interviewee was able to get used to talking with the tape recording.

The ethnographic interview is characterized by an explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations, and ethnographic questions (Spradley, 1979). Conversations were semi-structured yet focused, allowing a relaxed opportunity for discussion. I also offered explanations as we moved to different topics in the interview guide. I used descriptive, structural, and contrast questions in the interview. An example of a descriptive question was, "How do you picture the organization two years from now?" Structural questions are often used to complement descriptive questions. An example of a structural question was, "You've described the organization as friendly. Do you mean members are friendly to each other or to customers? In what ways are they friendly?" An example of a contrast question to elicit differences was, "Do you think customers see this organization the same as the media?" Responses were often followed by questions asking for examples or use.

The questions were initially structured around the topics of interest in the research: organizational identity attributes, construction of identity attributes, merger feelings, and future organizational images. Although questions were predesigned, the

order and sometimes wording fluctuated depending on the issues discussed by the interviewee. The questions in the interview guide changed as the number of interviews progressed. Several questions that produced minimal data or that appeared confusing to the interviewee were removed. As issues of identification emerged in the discussions, I realized that I needed to expand my focus to include member identification since signs of identification were so strong. Additional questions on signs of identification, strength of identification, construction of identification, and consequences of identification were added. This is consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) description of naturalistic inquiry.

> While the naturalist starts with a focus ...the focus may very well
> change. If the focus determines the procedures, at least in the sense
> that procedures must be consistent with it, then it is quite possible that
> the procedures will also change....The design must emerge, develop,
> unfold. (pp. 224-225)

I often used probing techniques throughout the interviews. Sometimes it was just silence; other times, I echoed the last comment of the informant, or I made short affirmative comments. My goal was to keep the interviewee talking.

The extensive grand tour and mini-tour questions (Spradley, 1979) provided rich data. The process allowed multiple questioning to collect data and enhance my understanding. Following the extensive series of questions in the initial interviews, a mini-tour was also conducted with the gatekeeper and 15 other employees to confirm or alter my tentative conclusions (see Appendix E for analysis diagrams and questions). Two employees from each of the five functional areas, who had participated in the initial interviews, were included in the mini-tour interviews several months later. Five other employees who were not part of the initial interviews also

participated in this later stage of data gathering. Additional interviews were not necessary; by the time of the last few interviews, no new information was being provided. Since the gatekeeper had indicated an interest in studying the discrepancy between perceived performance in customer service and customer service complaints, I included this issue in my mini-tour interviews.

Initial interviews were conducted at the employee's work location in a small room that ensured privacy. They were tape recorded and later transcribed. Interviews lasted approximately one hour although a few were only 20 minutes and several lasted for around 90 minutes. All transcriptions were mailed to interviewees for review (see Appendix F for the cover letter that was included with each transcription). To facilitate the response process, I included a stamped, pre-addressed return envelope with each transcription. I received mailed responses from 27 interviewees; nine of these made minimal changes in their transcription. I called those who did not respond by mail. Eight interviewees gave me permission to use their transcription data over the phone; only one indicated a small change. In total, I obtained responses from 35 of the 36 interviewees. These member checks were important for establishing credibility in my data.

During each interview, I took notes on the interviewee's comments. When the interviewee left the room, I then jotted my comments and reflections on the interview. Reflections often covered not only thoughts related to comments expressed but also statements about content not mentioned. I also noted any suggestions for process changes, specifically evaluating if my questions were leading me to rich data. In some cases, I would record the need to move in a different direction with my

questions or delete a question if I felt it was not useful in the study. Although the transcriptions were critical to my process, I was constantly aware of the importance of preserving the living conversations (Kvale, 1996). All interviews were coded using NUD*IST software (see Appendix G for listing of nodes).

Mini-tour interviews were conducted in a manner similar to the initial interviews except the tapes were not transcribed or coded. Instead, I took notes during the interviews, and I later listened to each tape, while reviewing my notes. At that time, I added to my descriptive data and made alterations in my analysis diagrams. During the time immediately prior to and during the time of conducting the mini-tour interviews, I listened to 18 audiotapes from the initial interviews. This allowed me the opportunity to think through the earlier data with the benefit of hearing again the members' voices. This experience also gave me a clearer picture of any changes between the initial and final interviews.

A second data source was observations. Observations took place in the natural setting where I was able to experience firsthand life in this organization. Approximately 21 hours were dedicated to observing activities in Company A. Observations began in a more general descriptive format where I focused on general behaviors, activities, and the environment (Spradley, 1980). This was an excellent opportunity to observe how people interacted with each other since the atmosphere and interpersonal relationships were central to their descriptions of life in this organization. Some of the activities observed were reservations, gate activities, ticketing, baggage service, and activities in the various offices and break areas. It

was especially easy to have multiple opportunities for observing some of these activities because they were in public areas.

As I moved further in my data gathering in the interviews, I also proceeded to be more focused in my observation activities. I proceeded to identity specific events to observe because they related more directly to my research focus. These included a news conference to announce the name change and present the new flight services, a tour of the new plane, and an in-flight open house. All observations were either at the corporate headquarters, the training center, or the airport. Most of the observations were moderate participation although the news conference and the tour of the airplane were active participation experiences.

Observations focus on many elements of the setting: the physical environment, participants, activities and interactions, and discussions (Merriam, 1998). I was also conscious of the subtle aspects of the event, noting not only what was happening but also what was not happening, and what was being said as well as what was not being said. I was always cognizant of my own behavior and how that might affect others in the environment.

I recorded my observations in the form of field notes. Sometimes notes were taken while observing; other times notes were taken in a more private environment away from the site. Notes included direct quotes, descriptions, and my comments. I also took notes on the research process. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), notes should include reflections on analysis, method, ethical dilemmas, the researcher's frame of mind, and points of clarification. Notes were typed, coded using NUD*IST software, and analyzed with the interview data.

A third data source was documents. Company printed materials consisted of annual reports, press releases, brochures, promotions, advertisements, and flight-related documentation. Numerous documents from the newspapers and magazines were also available. There were articles, almost on a daily basis, in the local paper prior to the merger. Television news reports were also frequent. This company was known for getting a lot of media coverage. This form of data was especially important in this research because issues of reputation were connected to perspectives on identity and identification. Documents included in this research were authentic. These documents were also useful because they grounded the research in events that were real-time relevant to the organizational members. Also, on-line data sources available on the company's web site as well as at other Internet sites provided additional data for analysis. These documents were not entered into the NUD*IST software. Instead, they were organized and reviewed for the purposes of establishing the history of the company and seeing how the company presented itself to the public. Newspaper and magazine articles were targeted to better understand the history of media exposure that this company had received, especially over the past year and a half. This was especially important since these documents offered opportunities to triangulate the data collected from other methods. Issues of identity, image, and reputation, as well as the merger, were central to these documents.

Opportunities to observe and review physical artifacts were particularly critical in this research. Because one of the areas of study was loss of identity during a merger, it was quite revealing how the company logo was handled before and after the name change. There were numerous artifacts related to the logo prior to the name

change, yet they were almost totally removed on the day the change went into effect. The transformation was quite revealing. Also, visual material, such as photographs and signs, were also coded in the NUD*IST software. These included photos of different types of company celebrations and signs related to safety. These artifacts served to support data gathered through other strategies.

Data Management

According to Huberman and Miles (1994), data management is defined in this way.

> As the operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval. These operations are aimed at ensuring (a) high-quality, accessible data; (b) documentation of just what analyses have been carried out; and (c) retention of data and associated analyses after the study is complete. (p. 428)

With so many interviews, I knew that a data management system was critical in data storage and retrieval. My first decision was whether to use a software program designed for qualitative research or to use only word processing software. After seeing that the lengths of many of the transcribed interviews were over 40 pages, I quickly decided that software designed for qualitative data analysis would be the more valuable tool. I reviewed descriptions of several computer programs for qualitative data analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Richards & Richards, 1994; Weitzman & Miles, 1995), spoke with other qualitative researchers, and selected the NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing) 4 software. It has been described as "the most extensive and powerful set of code-based retrieval operators around" (Weitzman & Miles, 1995, p. 248). An interesting

and appealing feature of this software is the capability to input reflective data into the system, typically in the form of memos, allowing for a more iterative and interactive process. Thus, ideas that emerge from analysis become a part of the data that can be used in constructing new ideas. This capacity supports the philosophy of qualitative research.

Effective computer-aided software supports carrying out qualitative tasks yet does not limit thinking. As expressed by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), "The use of software should not be allowed to dictate all the ways in which a researcher interacts with his or her data. Software should always be subordinated to general analytic strategies and not allowed to dictate them" (p. 192).

Data Analysis

Huberman and Miles (1994) define data analysis as the three processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. "These processes occur *before* data collection, during study design and planning; *during* data collection as interim and early analyses are carried out; and *after* data collection as final products are approached and completed" (p. 429). According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996),

> Coding usually is a mixture of data reduction and data complication. Coding generally is used to break up and segment the data into simpler, general categories and is used to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation. (p. 30)

The results of coding are a reflection of the content of the data and the researcher.
Decisions on what to code and the degree of generality or detail to use are not
mechanical.

Analysis involves multiple levels of coding. In open coding (Strauss &
Corbin, 1990), data are conceptualized by giving them labels. Then, the concepts are
grouped into categories that are more abstract in nature. Their labels can be taken
from the literature, created by the researcher, or even lifted from the words of the
informants. Categories can be viewed by their properties or attributes and their
dimensions—or location of the property on a continuum.

During and between each interview, I continually focused on analysis. After
the first five interviews, I began this process of labeling and categorizing data in order
to have a better idea of focus for future interviews and observations. This coding was
by hand in an effort to think about the data and not become rigid in my categories.
This process of talking through the data and comparing it with other data helped me
think through the categories and clarify their meaning. As the interviews progressed,
I became clearer on categories that would be most appropriate for the initial levels of
coding using the software.

Data collection and data analysis are iterative, tightly interwoven processes.
"Inductive and deductive analyses are mixed. When a theme, hypothesis, or pattern is
identified inductively, the researcher then moves into a verification mode, trying to
confirm or qualify the finding" (Huberman & Miles, 1994, p. 431). Using the
constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) while coding data, it is critical
that one also compares data with previous data coded in both the same and different

groups. This method of continuous comparison encourages reflection and facilitates

analysis. By also periodically stopping and writing memos of one's thoughts, one is

able to work through one's thinking, shedding light as well as assessing conflict.

Stake (1994) described the brain work involved in this process as reflective and

interpretive. Through the better understanding of category properties, one can more

effectively think.

Stake (1994) described instrumental case study that uses a case to provide

insight into an issue or to develop theory.

> The methods of instrumental case study draw the researcher toward
> illustrating how the concerns of researchers and theorists are manifest
> in the case. Because the critical issues are more likely to be known in
> advance and following disciplinary expectations, such a design can
> take greater advantage of already-developed instruments and
> preconceived coding schemes. (pp. 242-243)

Such was the case with issues of identity, identification, and merger feelings.

The second level of coding is axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this

component of the analysis, the researcher "puts those data back together in new ways

by making connections between a category and its subcategories" (p. 97). Categories

are specified with enhanced precision "in terms of the conditions that give rise to it;

the *context* (its specific set of properties) in which it is embedded; the

action/interactional *strategies* by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the

consequences of those strategies" (p. 97). Through a complex analytical process of

deductive and inductive thinking, the researcher not only relates subcategories to a

broader category in a set of relationships but also connects these relationships to data.

The process of proposing and verifying patterns against data, produces patterns that

are grounded in data. The search is for repeated instances of verification; otherwise, the study is limited by the aspects not supported by actual data.

Selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) is the process of identifying the essence of the story revealed through the data and analytically formulating the story line by relating other categories to the core category. This is a complex integration process that relates categories in ways that can produce theory that is grounded in the research data.

Establishing Rigor for the Inquiry

The critical issue in any research is the trustworthiness of the data and findings. In the positivist tradition, research is assessed by criteria labeled internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Many researchers believe that trustworthiness must be assessed within the framework of the philosophy and assumptions of the researcher's paradigm in a way that makes it congruent with that worldview. Because the criteria for rigor in positivist research are inappropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), alternative criteria are used to demonstrate "truth value" (p. 296), applicability, consistency, and neutrality. These alternative criteria for trustworthiness are labeled credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. With these new criteria are accompanying techniques that are consistent with the qualitative tradition. This study was conducted using these techniques to support the trustworthiness of the findings.

Credibility

Issues of credibility center on what Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as "the crunch question: truth value. Do the findings of the study make sense? Are they credible to the people we study and to our readers? Do we have an authentic portrait of what we were looking at" (p. 278)? In contrast with the conventional criteria of internal validity, the criteria of credibility are based on the assumption of multiple and intangible realities. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer several techniques for establishing credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checks. All except referential adequacy were used in this research.

Prolonged engagement refers to spending the necessary time in the field to learn, build trust, and work through distortions that may come from the researcher as well as the organizational members. This research allowed this type of engagement because the data collection was spread over six months, totaling 85 hours in the field. During this period, I spent much time not only conducting initial and follow-up interviews and specific observations but also just hanging around the airport site informally talking to employees and observing a variety of everyday type activities. I spent time at all Company A locations in City A.

In addition to prolonged engagement, my activities also exhibited persistent observation, another technique for credibility. This refers to the depth rather than the scope of the activities. My visits day after day to the primary site provided depth to my experiences, as I became almost an expected visitor. This allowed me "to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the

problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304).

Triangulation can be carried out through the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories (Denzin, 1970). I triangulated the data using multiple and different sources and methods. This research involved multiple sources because I gathered data from over 42 different employees in several functional groups of the organization. As Stake (1994) described, "Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 241). Understanding the phenomenon from different perspectives aided in clarifying meaning. Multiple methods involved my use of interviews, observations, documents, and physical artifacts in the collection of data.

Peer debriefing is an opportunity to probe for biases in the researcher's thinking prior to and during the research. A frame interview was conducted prior to interviewing as a means to reveal any biases that I had. The biases that were identified were as follows:

1. Organizational members have images of their organization.

2. Members will be able to articulate organizational identity attributes because a crisis and merger have brought those ideas to their conscious, allowing them to be more easily discussed.

3. The change in the organization's name and logo with the merger might impact feelings of loss by organization members.

4. Members of the organization, who were employed prior to the crisis, might have a better sense of organizational identity than members employed within the past year.

5. Perceptions of the organization, by its members, might be affected by others' perceptions.

Also, throughout the research, I periodically posed questions to peers; one served as a devil's advocate concerning process issues as well as my analysis, and the other gave me feedback on working hypotheses that emerged.

Negative case analysis is used in efforts to rethink themes in response to exceptions that might not fit one's thinking. The importance of dealing with negative evidence is central to establishing credibility. Throughout my data collection and analysis, I consciously identified exceptions and followed up on them to enhance my understanding of the meaning behind the exception and its impact on the themes that I felt were emerging.

Member checks are critical opportunities to have those who provide data also sign off on the accuracy of that data. In order to check the accuracy of transcriptions and their consistency with the overall feelings of the person interviewed, I mailed a copy of the transcription of each interview to that interviewee and requested that they sign off on its accuracy or make changes where needed. Return envelopes addressed to me and stamped were included with the transcription. Of the 36 interviews transcribed, all except one were reviewed and returned to me through the mail or by responding in a phone conversation. I waited to analyze the interview data in the NUD*IST software until I received these responses. Any changes that interviewees requested were errors typically in spelling and rarely affected content.

Member checks also can involve taking tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are reasonable. In two functional areas, I met with a manager or director and reviewed how I was interpreting data in their area. This was an excellent opportunity to get feedback and also to pose follow-up questions for my own clarification. I also met with the Senior Vice President after coding most of my data in order to present tentative findings and get his reaction. Finally, during my mini-tour interviews, I asked 15 members for feedback on my interpretations.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "It is, in summary, not the naturalist's task to provide an index of transferability; it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (p. 316). Thus, through "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6), the researcher enhances the capacity of others "to determine how closely their situations match the research situation and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (Merriam, 1998, p. 211). It is the participants' perceptions that serve as the basis for judgments of transferability.

Dependability and Confirmability

The issue with dependability is "whether the process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). The focus of confirmability is whether or not the study

exhibits "relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases—at the minimum, explicitness about the inevitable biases that exist" (p. 278).

The audit trail, analogous to maintaining fiscal accounts, is the collection of records of raw data, analysis, process, and any other documentation in the research process. A record of such detail allows someone other than the researcher to make a determination if the analysis and interpretation are supported by the data. I maintained an audit trail throughout the study that would permit an outsider to make such a determination. All interview transcriptions, audiotapes, observation notes, memos, documentation, and coding results were stored in an organized manner. Also, NUD*IST maintained rawfiles and coding results.

Summary

This research, couched in the naturalistic paradigm, enabled me to understand the meaning of events, situations, and actions related to the merger from the perspective of the employees of Company A. The focus was cognitions about identity and identification and the construction of those perceptions. Because hopes and dreams for the future were a part of this research, my role as a trusting and competent interviewer was critical. Throughout the process, issues of rigor served as a guide for my activities. This case study provided an opportunity to refine theory and suggest areas for further research.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter includes a description of the data categories that emerged from the interviews, observations, documents, and physical artifacts. The nodes for the categories selected for NUD*IST are listed in Appendix G.

Descriptive data are separated into the following broad categories, as shown in Figure 1: (a) identity, image, and reputation; (b) merger issues; and (c) organizational identification. A more detailed overview is presented for each category at the
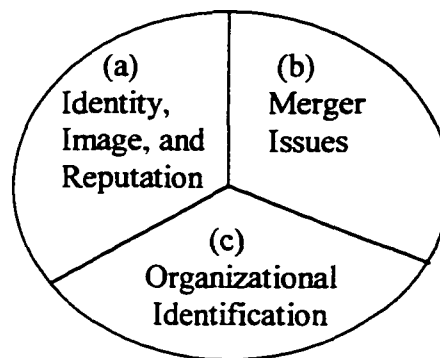
Figure 1. Three broad categories for descriptive data.

beginning of each section. Data from all data sources and methods—interviews, observations, documentation, and physical artifacts—are interwoven within the descriptions. Negative instances in the data are presented at the end of each topic.

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Identity, Image, and Reputation

This section presents data collected in the following subcategories: (a) identity

attributes, (b) identity and reputation, (c) construction of identity attributes, and (d)

multiple future images (see Figure 2).
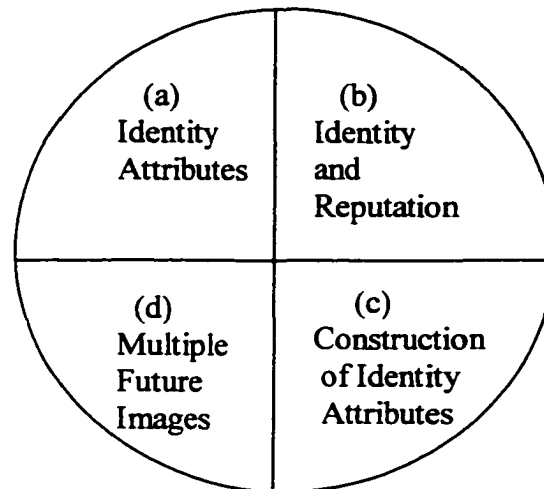
Figure 2. Subcategories in Identity, Image, and Reputation section.

Identity Attributes

Using a series of questions, I asked interviewees to describe what they

considered as core, distinctive, and enduring about Company A. To determine what

attributes were considered core, I asked several questions:

1. When you think of Company A, what words would you use to describe this

   company?

2. What does this company stand for?

3. What values are important in this company?

4. What do you feel as an employee is most important at this company?

5. What is the thing most emphasized here?

To determine if these attributes were also distinctive, I asked this question:

6. What do you feel makes Company A different, special, or distinctive from other

companies (in the airline industry)?

To determine if the attribute was also enduring, I inquired if the attribute existed in

the past and also continued to be core and distinctive through the changes that

resulted from the accident and the merger. The following questions targeted this

information:

7. If I had asked you these questions two years ago, would you have used the same

words or different ones to describe this company?

8. What do you think will be changing?

The next sections describe the responses given by the participants. Responses

fell into the following areas as shown in Figure 3: providing affordable air

transportation, family atmosphere, customer service, safety, teamwork, and fun and

casual. These results are presented in order of strength of agreement as to whether

the attribute was shared by the members. Attributes are presented in the order of

most shared (providing affordable air transportation), to a majority shared (family

atmosphere, customer service, safety, and teamwork), to those attributes previously

shared but no longer considered enduring (fun and casual). Because the family

atmosphere is the foundation for customer service, safety, and teamwork, it is

embedded closer to the core of the organization's attributes.
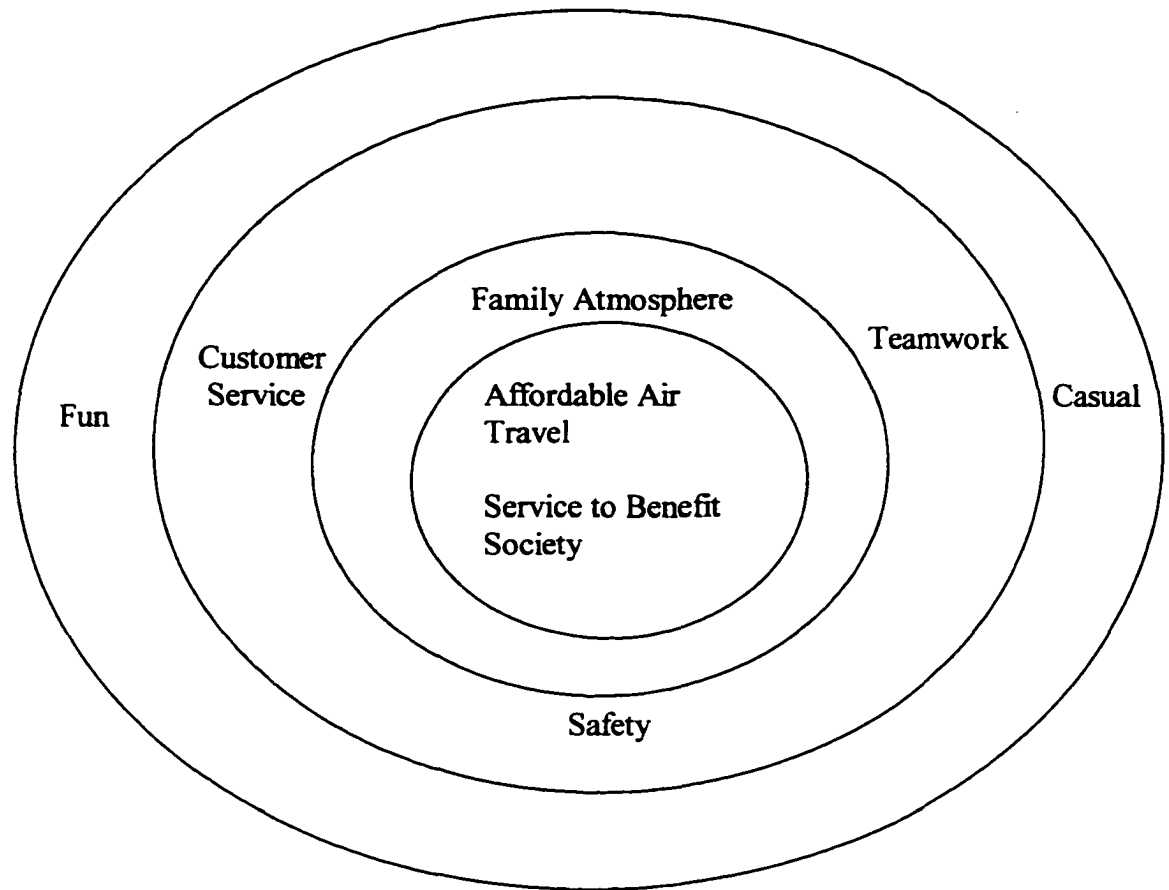
Figure 3. Results of responses to questions on identity attributes.

Providing Affordable Air Transportation

Over two-thirds of the interviewees described the role of their company in

providing affordable air transportation. This purpose was also presented as a

meaningful service that benefited society. Affordable air transportation was

described as an organizational identity attribute that was core, distinctive, and

enduring. This attribute was shared by most members interviewed and triangulated

with data gathered through observations and documentation. As one stated, "That's

at the core. That's the reason the company was started." And another said, "That's the centerpiece." And one interviewee explained, "That's the basis of the business—to provide a service at a price that has been and hopefully will continue to be considerably less than what most of the competitors can deal with." This attribute was consistently understood as the business this company was in, and interviewees expressed a pride in it. It was quite obvious that many shared the thoughts presented by one interviewee: "It makes me feel good that we can offer a lower price than one of the other airlines."

There was some variability in how interviewees described the way that this service benefited society. Interviewees explained it in one of three ways, as shown in Figure 4.

Perspective 1	Perspective 2	Perspective 3
The American Dream	Doing What Is Right	Economic Impact
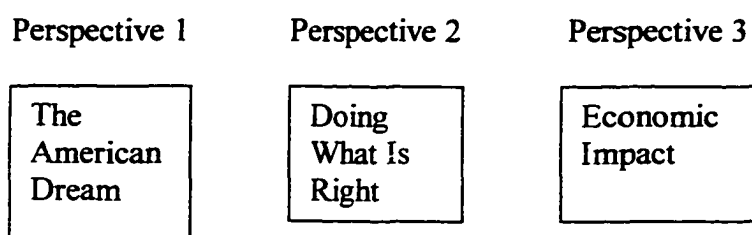
Figure 4. Three perspectives on how providing affordable air transportation benefits society.

Most interviewees described Company A as a vehicle to achieve the American Dream. They saw providing affordable air transportation as a special service that was directed particularly to those who otherwise might not fly. One interviewee stated, "Travel has become so affordable; it has afforded a lot of people who otherwise could not afford to travel via air to have the experience and exposure of air travel." This

message was often grounded in an emotional base. As some stated, "We're out there fighting for the little guys." One interviewee described it this way:

> We get the greyhound crew. We get a lot of first-time flyers, and that's one of the joys that I have now. We can see families; they are middle income, you know lower/middle, lower, but now they can afford to take the whole family to Disney World whereas before if you weren't affluent, you couldn't fly five people to Orlando and pay $85 a head to get in and stay in a hotel. I mean that is expensive. Everyone should be able to go see grandmother. Everybody should be able to take the family on trips, and I enjoy being able to be a part of a company that now affords the family to be able to do those types of things.

Another commented,

> We have an awful lot of first-time flyers. This company has probably generated a great deal of new air travel because it has become affordable enough that those individuals who previously would not have considered air travel, due to the cost, are now able to give it serious consideration.

As another described,

> Company A stands for the American Dream. To provide a service and take care of needs. To be down to earth, friendly, and fun. To provide a service for those who cannot afford it, for those who have never flown before. They are thankful we are here. We have a price they can afford. This job is like family.

And another explained,

> Company A came about with a cause for everybody, not just that five or six figure person. It came about for the everyday average person that has to get up every day, clock in eight hours, that also deserves and needs to have a break just like anybody else. So they made travel affordable to where everyone can travel. Where the average everyday person can not only just take them, but they can fly and take their family versus driving, cause most people have to drive everywhere they go. That takes half of your vacation right there if you want to go from here to Florida; eight hours when you can just hop on a plane with no advanced notice and catch a special, and you can zoom down there for almost nothing. To be able to have affordable travel. Now I do believe that within my heart. I believe that was their intentions and that was their goal to have affordable travel for everyone.

One interviewee explained, "Company A was designed for the family so they could afford to travel." Another explained, "It lets grandmothers go visit and lets little kids go visit people that ordinarily they wouldn't be able to do." As one explained when describing the new dual class, "I want to treat everyone pretty much alike." And another stated that, even with the new dual class, there should not be an elitist attitude.

Many described it as the principle of doing what was right—the second perspective. This view was based on the belief that prices for air transportation are not fair. As an interviewee expressed, "Company A is still out there saying it doesn't cost that much to fly a person from this city to that city." And as another added, "I just really think that the whole idea of Company A was a good thing. Let's just cut through all of everything. Let's just get the people where they want to go as cheap as we can get them there." Employees were proud that the company had stuck to its low rates serving as "a niche as a low-cost carrier operating out of City A."

A third perspective, the economic impact Company A provided to communities, was mentioned by fewer interviewees but was included in the marketing materials. One interviewee commented that the service to society had generated new air travel business and had a real positive economic impact on communities. By providing low fares to cities, a city's volume of air travel had increased. And when Company A offered flights out of a new city, it had an impact on that location because air travel was more affordable, and thus, business development as well as leisure travel were enhanced. As the marketing materials suggested, "We (Company A) serve in a broad effort to attract new business,

conventions, tourism, and to stimulate employment. We believe what's good for the community is good for Company A."

When discussing the enduring nature of this attribute, several mentioned that prices might be somewhat higher in the future than in the past but would probably still remain less than the competition. Many thought that the costs of appearing more professional might result in higher fares; appearing more professional was often defined as increased pay and benefits and more expensive uniforms. Employees still put the leisure traveler at the core of their business; only a few thought that this would be affected by the implementation of a business class. Although one commented, "The business traveler now seems to be the constant. A business traveler has to go." Although interviewees did not see a radical change in the type of customer they served, the marketing materials were definitely focused on this new feature of providing affordable air travel for the businessperson.

Documentation and observations triangulated the presence of this attribute. A map of destinations on a wall in one functional area read, "affordable service to over 30 destinations." During the press conference for the name change, company representatives frequently referred to "affordable fares." Marketing materials for the company also supported this attribute. According to the brochure distributed with the name change, the company described its mission this way: "To continue to provide the highest quality travel experience at affordable fares for the cost-conscious flyer." It described "expanded affordable service" so "families can get together more often and business people can actually shake hands face-to-face." The new focus on the business traveler was highlighted in this brochure. It also described the role of this

affordable fare carrier in "encouraging more people to fly, benefitting the economy as a whole."

Family Atmosphere

A unique attribute that interviewees described was a family atmosphere throughout the organization (see Figure 5). They described the feeling of being like a family, the closeness, genuinely knowing people, and sharing enduring friendships. Members were described as open and caring. And members of the organization considered Company A as being small, even with 2,000 employees. This attribute was shared by a majority of the members although there was concern as to whether it would survive anticipated changes from the merger and future growth.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Family Atmosphere  │
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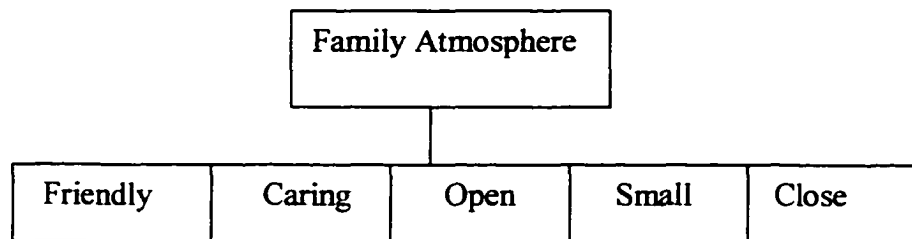
Figure 5. Components of the family atmosphere.

One interviewee stated, "This job is like family." One explained, "It really is like one big, happy family. Other airlines don't seem to have that closeness that we do." Another said, "Everything is so sincere and tight-knit." One stated, "We're like a team, a family." When describing activities at work, one employee stated that it made him feel "right at home." When one compared the atmosphere at Company A

to another airline, she explained, "There was nothing to compare with the family atmosphere that we've had here. It is very unique here." One interviewee explained that in the past the term *home base* rather than corporate headquarters was used to describe the offices of their leadership. As another interviewee said, reflecting on her first days at the company, "When I came in (to work here), it was like 'welcome home.' It was almost like going to my new family. It's almost like I was adopted." As another person said,

> It's just a good company to work for. Like I said before, we all just take care of each other. It really is like one big, happy family. Even though the company's grown, you really feel like you know everybody—at least you know everybody's face, and we all speak to each other even if you don't personally know someone.

Another interviewee stated, "I mean, I've been here two and one-half years, and we're right around 2,000 employees now. I can safely say that around 700 or 800 people, I know their names. I mean that's incredible, and it wouldn't happen at other airlines." Another explained, "It's got a family type atmosphere to it and everybody knows everybody." One explained, "I like 99+% of the people here." Another described it this way: "Whenever I walk down the hall, it's rare that someone would pass you and not speak." One interviewee stated, "The flight crew and the flight attendants—I know most of them by name actually." Another interviewee expressed proudly, "My son is part of the Company A family." An interviewee explained, "It feels like a family. Because it's small, and people try to stick together. You know everybody." One stated, "It's just a closeness. That's the main difference (from other airlines). When I was with another airline, I was just a number. Here I feel that I am somebody. People know me. There is a bonding with the company and

myself." This feeling of being treated as a person rather than a number was expressed by a majority of the people interviewed. And another said, "It's a family and you don't want to move away from the family." Some described it as a "Mom and Pop" organization.

People described "a special camaraderie among staff" and a unique "attitude." One interviewee explained an environment of selfless support.

> We've got one lady that is in the state beauty pageant. And all of us kicked in money to sponsor her in the pageant. We had a pilot that went out on sick leave; of course, we don't have an extended long-term disability policy here so people kicked in and flew his trips so he could still get paid for them.

Also frequently stated was the thought that, "We take care of each other here." Members described the warm feeling that they have for each other. Another said, "I know them on a personal basis. We don't just discuss work; we talk about life." As another explained when describing how she interacted with those she supervised,

> I come in and say, "Good morning. How you doing?" And I try to get to know people to a point to where as to let them know that I'm concerned about you as a human. Not as a Company A employee, but as a human. So if you tell me something's wrong, I like to follow up on it. Like, "How is your mother doing today." You'd be surprised just by communicating with them about something else other than work, sometimes, how it makes a difference. I just try to communicate with people to make them feel like they are just as important to me as an individual other than as a worker.

As one explained, "We have a very caring environment and can get together and shoot the breeze and talk about issues and things like that." This caring atmosphere permeated the organization.

> As gate agents we care about each other; as gate agents we care about the passengers. As gate agents we care about getting the flights out on time. As gate agents we care about the growth of the company. And

the "we" helping each other just gets bigger and bigger and bigger toward everything else.

Many referred to a genuine openness in the company where they felt comfortable speaking with anyone in the company on a first-name basis. As one stated, "Employees speak on a first-name basis. They're not intimidated. They're not awe stricken by titles." One explained, "We were small and everybody knew everybody. Not only did I know them, but they knew me. And that made a difference." This comfort extended to being able to walk into the office of the CEO at any time. As one described,

> That gives you confidence in the company when you can go and just walk right in and see upper management. If you were an employee of Company Z and you wanted to go in and see the CEO, there is no way. You'd have to make an appointment three months in advance and maybe you'd get to see him.

Another stated,

> You can walk into his (CEO) office as easy as you can walk in the supervisor's office. It's easy to work here. Anytime you are interested in voicing your opinion, there is somebody that will hear you. And they don't make you feel bad for having said it. They may not do everything you say, but that doesn't mean they don't listen to you.

And as another commented, "There's always somebody you can talk to if you have a problem, whether it be personal or whether it be company-related." In describing a supervisor, one said, "There's nothing he won't help you with."

One interviewee explained, "It was relaxed-fun and friendly, almost like at home here." As another said, "It's friendly out here. Even after work, people still hang around each other." As one described,

> I remember one month last year in May, our crew was such good friends that even after we'd get off work, we'd go out together. All five of us. We'd meet at my house and go out. And one of the girls

was living in Memphis but based here, and she stayed with me for the month. It's just everybody got along really well.

As another said, "When I came in here, I was overwhelmed with people being nice."

Many celebrated not only company events but also special moments in their lives such as baby showers and weddings. And as one interviewee compared her present job with work at a different airline, she said, "I have more friends here. I had more acquaintances there." And another described,

> I have treasured friendships. One of the agents gave me a phone book when I left (the department), and in the cover of the phone book, she says the best value of Company A was making a friend like you. And then they sent it throughout the department, and everybody put their name and number and address and birthdays in it.

The presence of this attribute was triangulated through my observations.

When observing employees in the Company A halls at the lower level of the airport terminal and throughout the public areas of the terminal, there was a consistently warm and friendly manner expressed among the employees. People regularly said hello to each other as they passed in the halls, and there was much hugging when they greeted each other. I observed luncheons and heard plans of other events for members to celebrate being together.

One interviewee said that it took time to feel like a part of the family. His statement that contrasted from others was that at first he did feel like a number until he learned what the company was about.

Another interviewee explained the family atmosphere this way, although she implied that everyone does not necessarily share this feeling.

> Yeah, you feel like you're in a family. You know when you're in the family or just a part of the family. I have a small family, but I know with some of my relatives that I'm in their family, and some of them

are just part of the family. You know that. And that's how they feel. Some of them are just part of the family; they come in and they go, swipe in and swipe out; they do the work; they go home. They're just a part of the family. And then there are some in the family; they can talk to each other about anything, their own families at home. They go out with each other. They have dinner together. They're in the family.

Although this attribute appeared to be central to this organization and very important to most interviewed, its continuation was unclear. Just in the six months of my fieldwork, the strength of this family attribute had diminished. Several described, usually with sadness, the changes that they had seen in this short period of time. Some indicated that they were not sure if the family aspect would continue as it had been in the past. As one stated, "I think if we continue to grow, it probably will change. But it's still there now." Another commented after the corporate move, "The family feel has changed. You're not going to have the smallness anymore because we're growing too fast. You do have the caring with some people. There's not the closeness that was there since many have been dispersed. It's hard to be friendly because the turnover is so bad." And another explained, "The larger the company gets the more people become numbers. When I don't know all the managers in all of the stations, I can't be as close and friendly as I was when I knew every one of them two years ago." One commented, "We've increased in size a good bit. Some groups are merging together. Since a lot of this (family atmosphere) had to do with the smaller size of the company, I don't think it will stay as family-like as in the past." As another explained, "Now that corporate has moved, it seems less like a home feeling—with management over there." One explained, "I see things as changing in scope. I think they'll still be closeness within each department, whereas, there was a point in time that it was possible to know virtually everybody in the whole company.

That's not really possible anymore." Another explained, "It's not going to be this small little airline; it was so fun, we were all small in this little building together. We're going to keep moving up." One interviewee described a reduction in company celebrations when comparing things to the past: "We haven't had that (celebrations) in awhile." Another stated, "They have fallen below what has been. We had a Christmas Party this year; not very many people went. They were having a hard time getting even 150 people to go. It's just people not wanting to be involved." One explained, "We have gone to a more formalized corporate structure. The old family feel is not the same." And one explained, "This is a new chapter; this is a new organization. We're going in a new direction. We're moving on."

At the point in time of this research, the organization's plans for any changes in the family atmosphere were unclear. With the different union contracts in question, feelings of uncertainty about the future, and other changes taking place in the company with the corporate move, the new focus on professionalism, and the many new faces due to expansion and turnover, some members saw a reduction in the family atmosphere. As one explained,

> Right now with the merger, there are faces we have not seen before. Before the merger at corporate, I knew everybody's face. Now, (with the move), I didn't know everybody's face. Everybody was still very friendly. But there were a lot of unfamiliar faces. This was unusual. It felt more like a big company.

This point in time was described as a transition period, and to some, the family atmosphere, although historically a defining part of this company, was somewhat in question.

<u>Customer Service</u>

The friendly atmosphere, rooted so strongly among the employees, also extended to the customers. The attribute of providing distinctive customer service was described as a priority for the company by a majority of the interviewees. One explained that the nature of the employees and the fact that they had pride in their product made them want to provide special service. An interviewee described how the customer was central and explained, "I think that's been our root philosophy ever since we started." As another explained, "We want each customer to feel like they've been treated with personal service, that they were the only person on the flight." Another interviewee said, "We value the customer and treat them as friends not a number." Employees were described as going out of their way for a customer. Interviewees expressed a sensitivity to and caring for first-time flyers. One described a real family focus to her customer service.

> I really try to treat somebody as if they were in my home, you know, like after I do service, I don't just do service once. I usually go back through the cabin three or four times, not with the cart or anything but just walk back through and ask, "Is there anything I can get you?" Because I know if I'm somewhere, and I'm looking for customer service, I appreciate the person that goes the extra mile, so I try to do that myself, too.

And another stated, "I take a lot of pleasure in making people happy." One employee described how she wraps strollers or car seats before sending them through baggage: "We just go out of our way to take care of that stuff, treat it like it's ours."

Many described their personal interaction with the passengers. They described a friendly, courteous service with "a smile on our face and a smile in our

voice." One even suggested that the job was often like being a bartender. "They come up and they talk and talk and talk. They tell you everything."

Several described the necessity for having this unique customer service focus. As one practical comment indicated, "Do what you can to make the customer want to come back because if they don't come back, we don't have a job. We don't have a business." One interviewee explained, "When I get one (passenger) that's been bumped off another airline, I'm going to be extra nice. Cause I want you to come back. We need them." And another stated, "They'll bend over backwards for a customer."

> Many stories of selfless customer service were offered.

> I volunteered to take a person who didn't have the money for taxi fare, and we thought it was going to be a really long time for the taxi to get here anyway, so I drove him home, and he lived, gosh, it was about 45 minutes away, and I took him home.

And another story was described.

> A child got sick on one of our flights who was an unaccompanied minor. They had to take the child to the hospital. The father was on the other end waiting for the child and Company A had a representative stay with that child the entire time they were there. And they flew the father in to be with the child and then flew them both back. For the father, there was no additional charge at all. He didn't have the money.

Another explained, "One night this lady came in and had misconnected, and she had a baby. They had sent her to a hotel. She couldn't get her bags, and she didn't have a jacket for this baby. I gave her my coat."

This focus on customer service was often related to safety. As one stated, "Providing a safe environment for the customer is part of our customer service." And another explained, "We teach that safety and customer service go hand and glove."

The presence of customer service was observed at the selected sites where employees interacted with customers. Although warmth and a friendly nature were often present, a laid-back and casual style could be interpreted by some as lacking the sophistication needed for the public and the experienced traveler.

Everyone did not agree that Company A excelled in customer service. One interviewee explained that customer service was not what it should be. He described a customer who asked to be upgraded, but the gate agent responded that the agent could not upgrade the customer because there was not enough time.

Although there were clear perceptions of distinctive customer service, some described a need for more rigorous hiring and training to be able to offer the customer service that should be the product of this company. The greatest potential negative impact on the delivery of distinctive customer service was, according to many, the high turnover and inexperienced staff. As one commented, "There are not enough seasoned agents on the floor." And as another added, "You don't have a strong core of experienced personnel that you bring a new employee into. When you bring a new employee in, that individual may be working alongside someone who has perhaps been here for only six months." Also, with the introduction of more traditional services to the customer, such as business class, assigned seating, and potential tickets from reservations, there was the concern that there would be more stress and less time to provide the extraordinary customer service that they took pride in. This caused many to question if customer service, although a genuine focus to most, would also be a reality in practice.

A few mentioned that, in upcoming months, a more intensified focus on customer service training would be provided to employees. With the merger, the company had identified customer service as an area to be enhanced so that both customers and employees would perceive it as being truly distinctive. According to one interviewee, the focus on customer service was critical.

> There is a definite market of people who want affordable airfare, but they also expect a very friendly, congenial, can-do attitude when it comes to customer service. It's not a deal if they're treated poorly. It's not a deal if they don't get there on time. It's not a deal if they don't get their bags. We have to exceed the expectations of the customers.

Safety

Safety has been a focus of this business, and, with the accident, it appeared to be more visible and have a greater emphasis. Many indicated a real commitment to safety, especially after returning from the furlough.

> This was a different airline all together from top to bottom. We are focused on the integrity of our operation, that running a good, solid, on-time safe operation is everyone's biggest responsibility and goal in this company.

One interviewee explained,

> The condition of that airplane is still paramount. Now we won't have any reservation about pulling an aircraft out of its line and putting a new one in because we'll maintain a spare. We have different departments now that are more dedicated toward making the whole thing happen. We didn't have inter-department relationships previous to the accident. Now it's much more prevalent. You can go two, three, four places to get an answer.

Another explained, "Safety is a very integral common goal. We have no margin of error. It is a driving force."

There was mention of upgraded maintenance practices as well as safety banners, safety signs, safety memos, safety newsletters, and safety committees. And as another explained,

> The most emphasized and most important both are a clean operation. On time, no problems of course, no accidents, no incidents. That's a requirement and a must in our situation. Put out a good product. Producing a product that people want to buy, of course, is the bottom line in all of this.

One explained, "Everything about this company now is all contingent on the accident. Unfortunately that's our label. We can't make a single mistake." Several qualified by saying that safety, right now, was the number one focus. Many stated, "Safety is in the minds of the passengers right now." Another explained, "We're under the microscope constantly because there are people out there trying to shut us down. We have been singled out." One interviewee said, "We have to go the extra mile to prove ourselves."

One commented, "We're held to extremely high standards that other carriers are not held to." And another explained,

> We're held to a different standard. For example, Company Z has had six accidents since our accident, three of them directly attributable to pilot error. And they're still in business. If we had done that, we'd be shut down. So it is a different standard, and there is a different level of safety that they hold us to.

One interviewee commented about the rules of safety as applied to Company A, "They're applied probably more stringent (to Company A) than to any operating carrier in the free world." And as another explained,

> If we have one more incident, it's over. Well, it intensifies our safety perspective, but we're not going to hurry it up and impress somebody by how fast we can do something. It goes back to our original point. We're going to be pretty much step-by-step, by the book.

And the interviewee added, "We're constantly re-inventing. There's so many checks and balances now it's a wonder we get any of them (planes) out." Members described the additional resources that they now have to help maintain safety that they didn't have before. Departments were described as more synergistic, with new systems in place to support maintenance.

One interviewee explained that Company A was held to a different standard from the beginning because they were a new airline. "I believe that we were held to a different standard even the day that we started, because at that time, we were an upstart airline. They looked at the little guys a lot harder than they looked at the big guys." Another explained how safety had always been an issue, even with the airline prior to the accident: "Because we are a low-fare airline, we felt more pressure to be more safety conscious because of the public's perception of us because we are a low-fare airline." The interviewee stated that this was not where a company cuts costs or saves money, but that was the perception that many outsiders had. Another explained, "There are many factors totally unrelated to a safety aspect of the operation that keeps the costs down. But someone who is not familiar with or who has the perception that the more it costs, the better it is, it's easy to see where they could make that conclusion."

But most felt that safety was really just a unique attribute since the accident. They did not feel that it was treated the same way in the company's earlier days. As one explained, "We were providing such a wonderful service that was so needed by the public that it was just overlooked (by the public). It just hit. We had something that people wanted, and we were providing it."

The focus on safety was triangulated through documentation. Safety banners, safety signs, and safety newsletters were visible throughout all parts of this organization. I also observed the focus and attention given to safety in the maintenance area. Discussions and action on properly servicing the airplanes were a driving force in their activities.

But a few felt that safety was nothing unique for Company A. One stated, "It's the same safety. It's just that for a period of time there we were so scrutinized unnecessarily." These few employees stated that all airlines have an equal concern for safety and are treated similarly now. Also, some employees indicated that safety had not always been treated the way it was being treated at the time of this research. As one explained, "Safety is always an issue and always a concern, but this emphasis has not always been there. It will be enduring now, but it's not unique. The stigma was the result of the media." Another explained, referring to how safety has been viewed in the past, "It was important, but it was a part of our routine. I don't think outsiders looked at it that much before the media started bringing up the safety issues (after the accident), and blew it up out of proportion and put it on the spotlight."

Teamwork

Employees often described a genuine team effort. As one stated, "You have to have teamwork to do customer service." One explained, "As a team, you have to be friendly, caring, and open, listening, willing to do whatever it takes to solve the problem." Another described the closeness of employees working to get a plane out on time.

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> That's why their bond is so strong with each other, because my partner
> over here has my best interest, and we're going to make it happen.
> That's why they're so strong together, because they know when they
> work together, side-by-side, they make it happen.

One interviewee stated, "We take care of everybody here." Another commented,

"The people identify with each other. It's a team effort." Another explained, "Well,

we try to help out; like when somebody can't be here or needs to be off, we pitch in,

try to work for them."

Numerous situations were given of helping others in their work, without being

asked. One described how her supervisor had helped find a replacement for her when

her relative had died, even though it is the employee's responsibility to find a

replacement, not the supervisor's responsibility. As one said, "You see they're

swamped, and you help them out." And as another described, "We chip in and help

each other out. If we're slow and they're busy, we come back and give her assistance

in getting her schedule changes made." As one interviewee labeled the cooperation

among employees, he stated, "Team is the perfect word." They talked about that real

team effort that is part of their daily activities.

> We all kick in and we help each other. I've been walking by and saw
> an agent had a lot of bags at the gate. I was on my way out the door. I
> missed my bus to go help her take bags down.

Another explained, "If you're trying to pick up a real heavy bag, someone will come

running and say, 'Here, I'll help you.' Without asking or anything. Everyone works

real well together." All groups in the organization described this team effort. One

interviewee described a situation where the pilot helped board the plane.

> He came up and I was waiting on the flight by myself and it was
> getting hectic, and it was one of those where the inbound was late. He

said you want me to board. I'll board your flight for you. It just tickled me so much.

Another interviewee described pilots she had worked with: "They're doing their paperwork, and if they have time, they start picking up; they start crossing seat belts, you know, 'Let us help you.'" And as one interviewee explained, "Everybody is pulling the rope in the same direction. There is nobody that ever says that's not my job." Another interviewee stated, "That's why their bond is so strong with each other, because my partner over here has my best interest, and we're going to make it happen. They know when they work together, side-by-side, they make it happen." Several statements were frequently made: "We help each other;" "We stick together;" "We cover each other;" "We care about each other." When asked what was so special about the company, one response was, "We've got a good working crew; everybody works good together. Everybody likes where they work, so it's just a good feeling to work here." As another described, "It's like a puzzle with pieces that go together, and when that puzzle's complete, you've had a good flight." She even included the passengers as pieces of her puzzle when she added, "And even our passengers. 'We need your assistance, too.' We bring them into it."

This teamwork was triangulated through observations and documentation. Frequently I heard and saw people helping each other out. And they did this without question. Also, signs in the offices often were labeled "teamwork." Many spoke of its importance in this business. It was clear from observations and informal discussions that many believed that teamwork was an important attribute for this organization.

One interviewee described an environment where some employees were not willing to help. She said, "They have no interest to do a little bit extra, or they are saying, 'Well, I could care less if she needs help with that bag. I'm going to stand here and finish talking with my buddy here instead of helping pick up a heavy bag that someone has.'" Although she also stated, "You do see a lot of us that really do care and go over and above and do something extra than what they're supposed to be doing."

The friendly nature of employees that resulted in a team effort that had been so common and special to this organization continued to be present but not quite as strong as it was during the earlier stages of this research. Many explained that this was a reflection of the changes in the family atmosphere.

Fun and Casual

A final attribute that, according to some, had been core and distinctive about Company A was their fun approach to travel with a casual, laid-back style. This was carried out predominantly through their casual dress (e.g., shorts, khakis, golf shirts, and sneakers) and the games that they played in the gate area and on flights. It was rooted in and reinforced by the friendly attitudes and fun focus that the employees shared with each other. As one described, "You can joke with them (passengers) without hurting their feelings, and you can make their life a lot easier and their flight experience much better by treating them as a person, joking with them, talking to them." Another described it this way, "Because we're so relaxed and casual, we're more open with people. Most of our customers are everyday people. If they see us as

everyday people, they're going to be more comfortable, and we can be more friendly

with them." One interviewee stated, "We don't have first-class and coach; we have

fun class. It's a fun airline." And as another explained,

> Our motto—Good times, great fares. They want you to have a
> remarkable and enjoyable time. From the first time you pick up the
> phone and speak to someone in reservations until we put you on the
> plane, and we take you to your destination. They want it to be
> pleasing, relaxing for the customer. Our flight attendants are very
> casual; you know they wear the khaki pants and like a polo shirt and
> things of that nature, but yes, we can provide you with the relaxed
> atmosphere but not once sacrifice our professionalism or our safety.
> Not once. And professionalism and safety has nothing to do with the
> outer attire.

But another commented in support of a more professional looking uniform,

> A lot of times the way you dress is how you feel that day. If you put a
> nice, clean uniform on that day, that's come from the dry cleaners,
> pantyhose, and a pair of heels, you act professional. If you look like
> you're going to the ballpark and drink beer and eat peanuts, then that's
> how you act. And a lot of the way you look is how you come across to
> passengers.

According to most interviewees, this fun and casual nature, that had been

characteristic of Company A and key to the organization in the past, would not

endure. Most in top management and many throughout the organization were

concerned that this fun and casual style might not represent the serious and

professional manner that was important for winning passengers back to the airline.

As one described a more casual culture, "It's an initial attraction; it's also a liability,

particularly since the accident." And another explained that if you look more

professional, it wouldn't look like you're scrimping on issues of safety if you are a

low-cost carrier.

Some described a reduction in the playing of games as attempts by members to be more professional. As one explained,

> I think the whimsical nature of the games we play, the trivia that went on during the flight, the camp counselor attire from the flight attendants, I think that had its place but the accident kind of put an emphasis on the seriousness of air travel. Now we're catering more toward gaining a higher up business traveler instead of just focusing on the vacation traveler.

And another explained, "Now you don't play games with the customers on the airplane like we used to. The reason they've done that is to get a more professional image." Initially, members were choosing, on their own, to cut back in their use of games. Management initially supported using only trivia games and only on the flights, rather than the more playful activities of the past. Specific guidelines were not totally clear, yet a reduction in these playful activities was definitely taking place.

There was concern about moving to a less relaxed atmosphere, although only a change in uniforms had been discussed. As one commented, "Casual is definitely not a goal anymore. Things will be more formal." Managers were asked to dress more professionally (e.g., men wear ties), just before the name change. Although members had only received new golf shirts at the time of the name change, new uniforms of a more formal nature were being planned. It was not clear if this uniform change would have an impact on the fun attribute, although many anticipated change. Some rumors about new uniforms suggested a more professional look, but not requiring hose and heels for women. This degree of change was seen by many as quite acceptable. One interviewee stated, when talking about the change in dress,

> I think it will change some of their attitudes, but hopefully in a positive manner. We have some agents who are real relaxed because of the dress. Too relaxed. I think with the dress, though, we'll remain as

courteous to each other, but I think they will be more professional to each other, have a different outlook on professionalism. I really do.

Another explained that changes were needed because clothing affects perceptions.

They (the public) perceive Company Z to have a better customer service image than we do because of how we're dressed. And I tell them all the time, "You may have on golf shirts and khakis, but you're going to have the level of customer service as if you had on a suit, just like you had on a shirt and tie." They're (the public) not expecting it, but that's what they're going to get. But they're going to judge you by what you have on. They're definitely going to do that.

Another explained that flight attendants from other airlines had looked down on them because of the way they were dressed.

It was clear that an attempt was being made to move from a fun and casual focus to a professional and competent focus. One described it as "a transformation from a fun and whimsical past to a more serious nature." This meant, "taking things up a notch or two toward a more traditional environment." Some believed that the change to dual class configurations, targeting the business market more aggressively, would require a different persona. As one explained, "They have higher expectations."

In the interviews after the merger, many described how the fun and casual had already changed. An interviewee said, "There's no more fun." Another stated, "The fun and casual are gone." One explained, "To be perceived as fun doesn't quite work now." And another commented, "The fun—it's there sometimes." Another quickly responded, "It's gone, absolutely. This doesn't mean we don't have fun working with each other." One interviewee indicated power struggles that have made things less fun than in the past. Thus, the enduring nature of the fun and casual attributes was in

question at the time of the initial interviews but was clearly being replaced with a

more professional image and focus by the time of the final interviews several months

later.

Attributes Sacrificed

So what attributes had already been sacrificed (see Figure 6)? Many, in the

early stages of the research, only spoke of image changes, leaving key attributes of

the organization, as they knew them in the past, fairly unaffected.
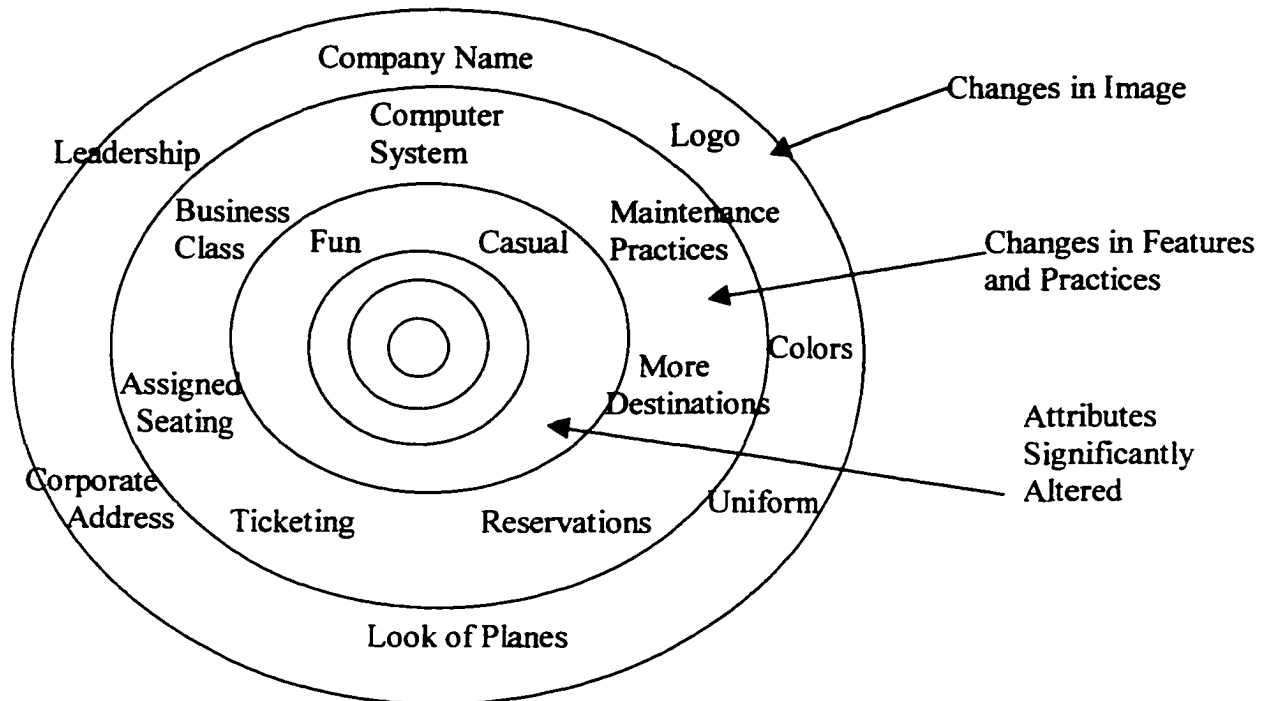
Figure 6. Attributes sacrificed or altered in early stages of research.

As one described it at the beginning of this research,

> Look at the analogy of the airplane. Everything's changed on the
> outside of the airplane, but if you sit on the inside, you can't tell the
> difference. The same thing is with everybody here. Sure, we wear a
> different uniform and all that—it's superficial. It's the guts—they're
> still the same. Only now we have a little more hope because we're not
> being dragged down by the company name. That's my perception of
> it.

And another explained, "The name change, the paint job on the planes, the uniforms changed, but to me, it was the same people, and there was a real upbeat feeling about it all. Everybody saw positive things for the future. So, to me, the family atmosphere is still what it is." Maintenance practices and a new computer system have been implemented, and new features such as assigned seating and business class have been added to company services. But, at this early stage in the merger, employees mainly spoke about superficial changes to impact reputation. As one explained when referring to the organizational identity attributes versus those attributes that were not enduring, "This (organizational identity) is what the company is, and this (non-identity attributes) is what the public sees." It appears that image changes were implemented more quickly than changes to organizational attributes that had defined the true spirit of the organization. Of those attributes, only fun and casual were confirmed as casualties.

The leadership clearly expressed support for the purpose of providing "the highest quality travel experience at affordable fares for the cost-conscious flyer." But without a clear statement by the leadership concerning the durability of the family atmosphere that was a key component of members' perceptions of organizational

identity, these family attributes showed signs of weakening at the time of the later interviews.

Identity and Reputation

The changes described by the members in the early interviews and advertised in the media were predominantly ones of image rather than identity (see outer circle in Figure 6). As one explained, "The media killed the Company A brand." As another said, "It is a super success story that went bad." Descriptions used by the media in reporting on Company A were either directly referenced to the accident or labeled with adjectives like "tragedy-stricken."

At the early stages of the merger, the focus was directed at affecting reputation. As one interviewee explained, "It's not respected like it was." Important aspects of the organization were changed: company name, address (with the move of corporate headquarters to a different state), logo, colors, paint job on the airplanes, and uniforms and employee dress. As one explained, "The major reason for changing all of this is hopefully to start with a semi-clean sheet of paper to overcome all of the negative coverage that the former company received since the mishap. It just seemed to never go away. This was a very good business decision." The leadership was also changed. As one explained, "Like it or not, the CEO is tied to the accident." And the services were altered to a more conforming model: business class, assigned seating, and ticketing. As one employee said, "They're trying to dress us up differently." Another stated, "We're a low cost version of the big carriers." The package was

described as being more sober. And as another described, "You're just taking a different company and making it the same."

For some, there was a tremendous loss with the change of the name and the logo. But there was agreement that the changes were necessary to present a more desirable image to the public. At the time of these changes, the real insides of the organization were considered by many to be relatively unaffected.

The marketing of the company through newspapers, television, and radio was aimed at presenting an image of being a totally different company. As the logo line read, "It's something else." Initial ads talked about reinventing the company. With the merger, the ads described, "It's much more than a new paint job. It's a brand new airline." Another ad stated, "We decided to change everything. (Well, almost everything.)" The focus of the changes was the new features that "turn air travel you can actually afford into air travel you actually like." These features included assigned seating, business class, new planes in 1999, expanded service, and the ability to use your travel agent's computer reservation system. The purpose of these changes was labeled to make air travel "more civilized." The attempt of these ads was to show a different type of innovativeness—a new slant on affordable air travel. As one interviewee explained, "We're still promoting affordable air transportation, but we are trying to give the consumer some of those amenities that they want."

Ads also described new management with both a CEO who was a veteran in the airline industry who could not only run a company but also fly and a new Senior Vice President of Maintenance and Engineering with extensive experience. And, with new leadership and new thinking, the impression was that systems had been

analyzed and evaluated. As the ads describe, "Every system was challenged. Every paradigm questioned." Changes appeared so extensive that ads implied that the only thing that the public might recognize was those affordable fares. The key organizational identity attribute that had been publicized was "our commitment to affordable fares."

Ads did not talk about a family atmosphere or friendly and warm customer service by employees who cared for each other and also the customer. The closest they got was their reference to high ratings in customer satisfaction, baggage handling, and on-time arrival records. Early ads at the time of the name change only mentioned issues of safety in reference to new smoke detection systems to be incorporated in 1998 and new leadership in maintenance and engineering.

Ads did not focus on the leisure traveler; rather, they put an emphasis on the business traveler and providing affordable and civilized service needed for that part of the flying public. People could make sudden trips on this airline and could afford it. Although not clearly explained, the new rules gave the full-coach passenger the priority in getting an assigned seat so that the one who paid more got a benefit for that additional cost. This typically benefited the business traveler over the leisure traveler. And there was also no mention in any of the ads about fun. Now the focus was affordable costs and features. Plus, with the merger, they now offered more destinations.

Construction of Identity Attributes

After interviewees discussed those attributes that they perceived as being core, distinctive, and enduring, the next questions focused on what had made them see the organization that way. Data were collected by asking the following questions:

1. What has the organization said or done to influence how you see the organization?

2. How do other people in the organization describe the organization?

3. How does this make you feel? In what ways does this influence how you see the organization?

4. How do others outside the organization describe the organization?

5. How does this make you feel? In what ways does this influence how you see the organization?

Throughout the discussions of each attribute identified in the earlier series of questions, there was also some discussion about what events, activities, people, or practices contributed to making the organization have the attribute described. Thus, some of this data were collected in the questions on organizational identity attributes.

Responses to these questions fall into the following categories (see Figure 7): founders, hiring practices, previous employment in airline industry, size, training, systems, celebrations, and personal experiences. According to the members interviewed, these contributed to the construction of this organization's identity attributes.

Founders

Hiring Practices

Previous Employment in Airline Industry

Size   Identity Attributes

Training

Systems

Celebrations

Personal Experiences
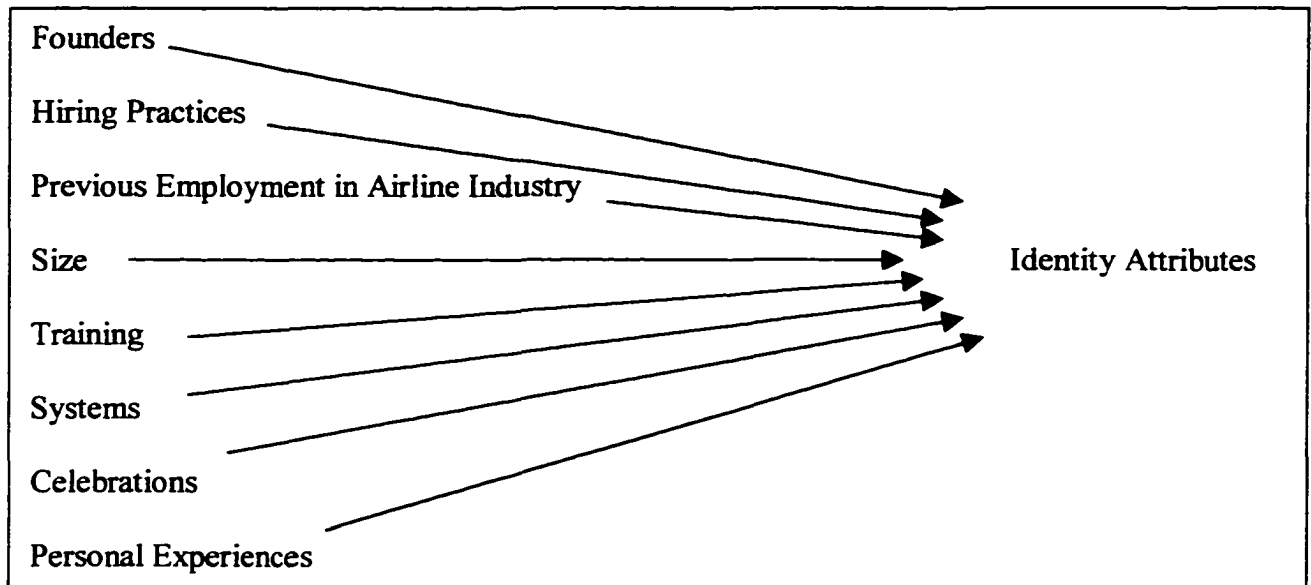
Figure 7. Construction of identity attributes.

Founders

A strong influence in the development of the identity attributes was the company founders. One interviewee explained, "They operated an airline on the West Coast. They operated in a fairly casual manner there in terms of attire, personnel, and office staff. And they transferred it to here." According to an interviewee, "They started the company with that in mind, low-cost transportation out of City A, and that's been the theme all the way through from the very beginning and still is." As one described it,

> It's not a rules and regulations type thing as much as it is a culture and atmosphere that was begun by the founders that has been, I mean, it's been upheld by senior management, and of course the junior and middle-level management have fallen in place with that.

The former president and CEO of the company, who was one of the three founders, was described as having a critical influence. One interviewee stated, "He

was a very approachable individual, and he made himself very available. Employees were on a first-name basis with the CEO, and he promoted that." As one interviewee explained,

> He is the type of person, he wants to shake everybody's hand in the room, and he's always very positive, and he not only presents himself as being sincere, but I think he is very sincere. You can see the emotion and the caring there when you speak to him. And I think he has played a major role in steering the company in that direction over the past four years now.

And as another described, "He shook everybody's hand; he took time to talk to everybody he could possibly talk to." Another interviewee stated, "He cares about the people that work for him." One interviewee explained, "He would come down and be a part of the lowest, the reservation center; he often came down and showed his face and said hello and shook people's hands. He was always touchable, always there." Many described him as, "charismatic--people were drawn to him; they liked him, and they wanted to do things for him. He had a powerful personality." His dedication and inspiration were voiced with emotion by many of the employees.

Probably the ultimate exhibition of dedication to an organization and its people was demonstrated after the company's publicized accident. As one stated, "His dedication. He could have given up. Very easily. It probably would have been a lot easier for him. But he didn't. He had faith in the company, and I have faith in the company. He has been an inspiration to me, as well as a lot of others." Descriptions of the CEO's behavior, after the accident, showed his influence.

> He was backing the company and fighting with everything he had, that will show people he cares about this company, and we are his company. We are a team effort, not a lot of upper management; we work as a team. It's like we do run our own company with guidelines of course.

And as another described, "He was always down there on the front lines. He was very open and honest. I just really believe in him." And another expressed, "I think maybe the way he handled it made it feel more like family. The fact that he showed concern that we have our jobs back and get up in the air."

When describing the laid-back, relaxed, family atmosphere, members indicated that it could be attributed to the CEO. As one said, "I think that's what started it, and then, of course, as he chose other people like that, and they chose other people like that, and it kept on that way." Another explained, "When he (the founder) comes through here, he speaks to everybody. He gets on those planes just like anybody else. The familiness." Others attributed the open-door policy to him. As one indicated, "When he came here he brought his values with him, you know, that's what started all this."

Even with his departure from company activities, members still felt his presence. As one described,

> I feel like he's like a little guardian angel up there, and if anything happens, he'll say, "No, we're not going in that direction. Let's talk about this." So I really feel like somebody's back there. I think he loves this company too much, and he's close to a lot of the employees that are here, and we think too much of him to ever let him go.

And as another stated, "He's my idol. He's my idol of this company; he really is."

Although most described the founder and CEO this way, a few did not see him this way. As one said,

> He's not warm and caring. He was a shrewd businessperson. He came across as appreciating employees. Well, if you appreciate us, then pay us, treat us right, and give us benefits. They were making lots of money, but would not give back to the employee group.

Hiring Practices

Participants often attributed the family atmosphere, characterized as friendly, warm, caring, with a team spirit, to the hiring practices. The selection process appeared to promote this culture. As one indicated, "I think they really look at your personality during your first interview, and I guess would lean more toward the ones who are real bubbly and enthusiastic. I think they really look for it here." As another explained, "They try to get people like me who are caring and concerned." Many confirmed, "They definitely, actively recruited a certain type of personality." One described the kind of people that were hired: "Those people that would make you feel welcome." Another stated, "I know for a fact that they were looking for energetic, outspoken people cause in the interview you had to do a lot of talking, standing up, talking in front of groups, and you had a lot of people that have a hard time with this." One interviewee described the hiring experience like this.

> We had to get up and talk a little bit, and the people that spoke openly
> or didn't really have a problem with it were the ones getting hired.
> They are hiring older ladies and most companies won't. I think they
> try to get a good range of ages and types and background. A good
> mix.

Another interviewee remembered being asked, "Describe when you worked in a group effort or you worked as a team." She stated, "They wanted to hear examples of a group effort."

There seemed to be a real effort to recruit those who would fit in. As one interviewee explained when she saw an enthusiastic and friendly employee at the grocery store, "I even recruit agents that I think are right for our organization when I see someone that I know will work well with our company." One interviewee

explained, "I try to get people who I think can work in a high stress area and that I think are full of life, excitement, motivation." Another described it this way: "There was this one group that kind of stuck together and as the company grew, you saw the people picking people that are more like themselves, and we just kind of grew that way."

Those in one particular part of the organization described a selection process used in the past where the prospective employee remained an employee of a temporary service for months. They did not become a Company A employee until completing a probationary period ranging from three months for a full-time to six months for a part-time employee.

One of the first steps in the selection process for new flight attendants was an open house. Data gathered from my observation of an open house were used to triangulate the relationship between the hiring practices and the construction of identity attributes.

At the open house, one of the signs on the wall read, "We are all one family under the same sky." The initial two-hour session was friendly and interactive. Employees talked about the company in a fun, laid-back style interacting with the potential recruits. As one employee explained at the open house, "We want people who can talk to the wall." At the end of the presentation, each participant was given the opportunity to stand before the group and introduce themselves, giving their name, where they lived, what they were doing then, and other comments. The open house experience promoted and modeled the friendly, interactive style needed for their distinctive customer service. As one in-flight interviewee explained,

Actually, I was supposed to go to two open houses—Company A on Monday and another company was on Tuesday. I came to the Company A one and did not go to the one on Tuesday for the other company, just because of the fact they (Company A employees) were so personable and nice and seemed so family, caring-oriented. And I just really didn't expect that from the major or bigger airlines. I really feel like they are looking for people who are warm and caring and really genuinely care about the passengers and not just so caught up in herding them (passengers) in like cattle.

Another stated, "It (open house) was really open. You can ask anything you want from the get go." And the environment of the open house was described as "so family oriented." One employee involved in hiring described it this way.

We've gotten many compliments. At the open houses that we did in another city, several of the people that attended then went to one of the major airline's open houses. They (the prospective employee) were a number; they did not feel the warmth and the friendliness. They (the other company) did not treat the people like they were people. So when we talked to them again, in the final interviews, they (the prospective employee) said, "I'd much rather work for this company; you made me feel at home; you called me by my name. I was number 28 over there, and I did not feel comfortable with that." In our open houses, we give them an opportunity to stand up and introduce themselves. They are nervous, but they can pretty much say something. And the group will laugh if they say something funny. It kind of puts them at ease. One gentleman said at ours he felt comfortable, but at the other, he was tense and nervous.

One interviewee explained that not everyone was suitable to be a Company A flight attendant. This warning was expressed to prospective flight attendants at an open house.

They tell you what your job responsibility is as a flight attendant so that if you don't think that's what you want to do—if someone gets sick on the plane, that's hazardous, you need to take care of that. If that's not appealing to you, then you might not want to do that job. If you don't want to handle and help out a mother with crying babies because you don't have the patience, then it might not be the job for you.

A few interviewees suggested that the friendly attribute of most employees could be connected to hiring younger people. As one explained, "Maybe it's because it's a younger group. The flight attendants are all kind of young. Maybe that's why they're friendlier. I don't know."

Company A was implementing a new program in selection aimed at hiring individuals more consistently who would be suited for the company's focus on customer service. With this effort, the goal of providing distinctive customer service would be supported.

Previous Employment in Airline Industry

Some thought that the closeness and family atmosphere might be partially caused by the closeness that employees had because many worked together in a previous job for Company E. One interviewee explained, "Sixteen of the first eighteen (pilots) were all formerly with Company E." In describing the former Company E employees at Company A, an interviewee explained, "It's almost like a Mafia; they are so tight. A lot of our core people that started when it (Company A) started had worked for Company E." One explained how teamwork was very important at Company E. And another explained, "After the strike at Company E when we were trying to rebuild the company, it seemed like the whole world was against you. So you had to become closer knit." Another stated, "There was a very, very strong sense of togetherness and let's get it done that we brought with us. It gave us stamina." As one interviewee stated, "After the demise of that company (Company E), they probably had a strong desire to make this (Company A) work."

This interviewee explained how the loss of Company E impacted a critical factor in this industry—seniority.

> The one thing that is most paramount for flight personnel is seniority. It governs the type of equipment they fly, when they fly, where they fly, and obviously their compensation. And regardless of their experience level, they may not be able to duplicate that someplace else even though they are still the same people possessing the same talents and abilities. In the airline industry, you start at the bottom again. At Company A, there was the opportunity to come in as captain, and there was the opportunity for quick advancement with the expansion of the company, even if they came in early not as captains.

And as another explained when they came together at Company A, "It was like a reunion." One former Company E employee commented, "I shut the lights out down there." Another explained, "Being laid off and unemployed, it makes you learn to appreciate things better." And another added, "The Company E factor is definitely there. It was a driving force. If things are perceived as bad, they (former Company E employees) are able to keep things in perspective." As another commented, "We were so glad to be back in the arena again."

Some also indicated that there was also a closeness of employees previously working for other airlines that reunited at Company A. As one explained, "Two of the founders were from another airline." Also, people from several other airlines had found a new home at Company A.

Size

The perception of smallness in size had also contributed to the construction of the family atmosphere and a focus on teamwork. As one interviewee explained when talking about the impact of the size of Company A, "It's quite easy for people to be

personally acquainted with others even in areas that they are not assigned or work."

Another stated, "We felt like one little small family, really working hard and striving

to do the best we could." One interviewee explained, "Due to the size of the

operation, I can see that there's more of a closeness of the public contact people with

the customer simply because, in many cases, you see the same customers again and

again." As one said, "Everybody kicks in. It's still a small company so we can do

that." Most stated that you don't feel like a number here. As one commented, "Here

it's a little bit more personal." Another commented, "When you're just a number on

a computer run, it's difficult to feel warm and fuzzy or feel like you can impact the

organization. Also, having easy access to the senior staff (at Company A), being able

to offer input and feel like it is actually received will make people feel more like a

part of the team." And another explained, "You get to know people in a company

that's small." Others related the feeling of smallness to the relatively recent start-up

of Company A that many participated in. As another described,

> I guess maybe because we are a smaller company, and you see a lot of
> the same people. Like in a month we get the same schedule, and you
> might not be flying with a friend of yours, but they may have a similar
> schedule, and you see them in in-flight all month or at an outstation.
> You always run into people you know. And also people who used to
> work for other airlines know each other, and they're real friendly
> toward each other. I think our captains, our pilots are very friendly
> compared to other airline pilots.

One interviewee explained why teamwork was common at Company A: "Probably

due to the size of the operation and the ability to know people personally, creates that

desire to want to help someone who you know." And, as another explained how

things were by being a part of a start-up and small in number, "You really did know

everybody by name. And the newcomers became a part of that."

Training

Another aspect of the organization that promoted the construction of the identity attributes was the training function. Members described the content and methods of delivery that contributed to the attributes promoted in the organization.

Interviewees discussed initial and recurrent training programs and hazardous material training for in-flight personnel that were heavily focused on safety. One interviewee described this training:

> Currently they go through a 15-day initial training program that is very focused on safety. And each flight attendant also is required to once a year—on the anniversary month of their hire date—to attend a 15-hour recurrent training program, and that's also primarily focused on safety.

Another explained that customer service was included with safety in recurrent training. Also, a Crew Resource Management experience developed the interaction, teamwork, and communication between the captains, first officers, and flight attendants through structured environments that supported discussion on different issues.

Many described that the content of training at Company A directed the potential employees to be "relaxed but not too relaxed" and to provide a "more friendly, hands-on type" experience. One interviewee explained, "They teach us on customer service that they want us to go above and beyond. I really expect that no one should get any less." Another explained that in training they told you that you were empowered so that "anything you can think of to satisfy our customers," you (the employee) have the power to do.

The trainers were credited with providing a relaxed and fun environment in training that developed a warm and comfortable setting. Another explained, "in

training they teach you to work with each passenger as an individual" and "treat people the way you want to be treated." A frequent comment was "I think most of us don't want to be treated like a number."

It appeared that training activities promoted the team environment at Company A. One interviewee described it this way:

> In the supervisory training class, we had puzzles that were given to us that each table had to put together. They would slip a couple pieces in that weren't part of that puzzle and belonged to another table, and they wanted to see who, first of all, discovered it wasn't a piece to their puzzle, and second of all, would you have the team effort to go and help someone else out, or would you keep the puzzle hidden aside to not let them get finished before you were because it was all about who gets done first.

One trainer stated,

> We train them as one big team. The whole class is a team, and we promote really working with one another, helping one another, and keeping a good attitude. We also push good customer service. It's promoted throughout the week, and there is a training module on customer service skills on the last day after they graduate.

Another described it this way, "I think it starts out in training. We kind of form that bond in training with each other." Another commented when describing the Company A person responsible for training, "Whenever I see her now, we hug; it's like she inducted you into the company."

Some also mentioned on-the-job training provided to agents by their supervisor. Agents received direction in how to handle customers properly through the support and guidance of their supervisors. As one stated, "This is where you're taught how to handle customers."

Future training will also enhance customer service provided by employees. With this additional customer service training, one interviewee explained the positive effects that should result.

> Each person feeling better about what they do will raise the standard so that everybody will feel more professional, and they are going to feel more connected. They're going to see the response (from the public) will be more positive, the airline will grow; that will give them more security, and they will feel even more closer and tighter. (Through this training) the standards will be raised and we hope to pull everybody up to another level.

Systems

Several interviewees described systems that fostered the closeness, the friendliness, and the team spirit. The scheduling of trips for pilots and flight attendants promoted a family and friendly atmosphere. As one described,

> We used to fly with the same people the entire month. Now it's changed a bit in the last four or five months because we can fly more than pilots can fly. But it depends on what you have. I fly three-day trips, so I have flown with the same people each month. That did help to develop a family atmosphere because you would have the same three flight attendants and the same pilots for a whole month. And particularly if you do a lot of layovers. This is different from the major airlines, too, and anybody with a major airline will tell you this. If you are on a layover and are with a major carrier, you go to your room, and you won't ever go out to dinner with the people you're flying with. Not even the flight attendants. Because you don't even know them from Adam. You're just all put on a trip. You don't even fly together twice during the same month. With us, we are on a layover, and your entire crew almost always goes out and eats together. And if you don't, it's like, "Why aren't you going with us tonight?" Always your entire crew goes. And if it's not your entire crew, at least it's three or four of you. You never get that in a major airline. Ever. You don't even know the people you fly with.

As another explanation why scheduling was beneficial to the caring and friendly team spirit, one described, "When I fly with a pilot for an entire month, there's a lot of

consistency that comes in learning that pilot's idiosyncrasies—how he likes things done as opposed to flying with a pilot one day or one leg." The open break area for the crew also promoted interaction between pilots and in-flight.

Many described an open-door policy that promoted the closeness that the people felt for those they worked with and in management positions. As one described,

> We have a very, very strong open-door policy. Our chain of command is not so rigid. I personally sit there and seldom ever close my door. People come in; we've been very interactive. The vast majority of people still are very comfortable speaking with anyone in the company.

As another confirmed, "I can walk right into someone's office and talk to them."

And as another described,

> There's just a closeness you feel with the people. Especially when you have an open-door policy. How many other companies has anyone ever been able to walk into the CEO's office and said, "Hey, I need to talk to you for a minute." I don't know of any. I've never seen that before.

Another explained how the open-door policy helped her out during a stressful time: "There's always somebody you can talk to if you have a problem. I lost my dad and it was very hard. My supervisor was right there for support. It was very uplifting to know she was there." She explained that people at this company care about you.

The openness also was demonstrated in a management that was visible. As one described, "He walks around; he looks; he sees; he listens; he's totally unbiased." Management was described by one interviewee as being "visible, not tied up in a bureaucracy."

Many described a new computer system that had recently been implemented. Although members initially did not feel comfortable with this change, it was expected to provide more information to the employee when working with the customer, allow interface with the travel agencies, and thus enhance customer service.

Some mentioned evaluations as a way to support these attributes. As one stated, "You're evaluated by your hard work, your dependability, how you work in groups." Another explained, "Every month we're evaluated. They listen to our phone calls to make sure we are giving the best service we can give, but it's really to show each employee what they need to work on and where they're doing well."

To promote safety, systems were put in place to support maintenance. Employees described better communication across departments, especially with engineering, which enhanced their capacity to get information needed for their work. Some also described less pressure in getting the planes out, and real commitments to reliability and safety. As one explained it, "We have more resources now to maintain a reliable piece of equipment." As one stated, "We now have a Director of Safety. We have a complete safety program in place."

Celebrations

The celebrations, picnics, cookouts, dinners, and parties promoted the feeling of family, friendship, and caring. One interviewee said, "We always had potluck lunches together, and we just did everything together, and that's where it came from. We had Halloween contests. We'd divide the stations up and do decorating contests."

Another described, "We have popcorn day. They cook during holidays. We decorate

for Halloween. Christmas time." One interviewee explained,

> We had a picnic not too long ago, and they spare no expense. They
> have door prize drawings; they have lunch; they have these blow-up
> castles where the kids can jump in. They have a lot of things to do.
> It's a time for everybody to kick up their heels and have fun and laugh.

Another stated,

> On holidays, they would do special things for us. Like on Labor Day,
> they ordered Blimpie sandwiches for us, and as we checked in, gave us
> sandwiches, chips, and a chocolate chip cookie. And they had the
> room decorated with "End of summer." And for Thanksgiving, they
> had dinners at two different times for the people who did have to work.
> They are still doing the little things for us to say, "It's the holiday, and
> we know you're working." They also do a Christmas Party and they
> do the summer picnic every year.

As another explained, "Oh, anytime anybody has a baby or a birthday or a shower,

it's cake and balloons, and when we have that, all the supervisors come down here. I

like that. That means a lot to me personally." Several employees talked about the

celebration when the company came back from the furlough.

In one section of the company, the walls of the halls were filled with posters

covered with photographs of company celebrations. The photos covered a range of

fun events, and often included family members as well as employees. Many were

labeled with titles connected to the company's logo. A memo on the wall for

employees stated that in celebration of the new name, there would be ice cream with

toppings for the agents. This was typical of how this group celebrated events

together, and these celebrations promoted a family atmosphere among employees.

Personal Experiences

Others described experiences with caring supervisors and fellow employees. As one said, "I was overwhelmed with people being nice, knowing when to have fun and when to be serious." Others described an environment led by people who work together and care about others. As one explained, "The supervisors are all really nice and approachable. And if you have any problems, they care about you." These personal experiences seemed to strengthen the attributes that were promoted throughout the organization. One interviewee explained,

> My perception internally of the organization is based almost totally on personal experience; I mean experiencing first-hand some things that have happened. I experienced the extreme uncertainty and anxiety last summer, and I have experienced the excitement when we re-started and hopefulness and then the excitement when the merger came out.

Construed organizational images. In addition to personal experiences, members also described others' perceptions of organizational identity. Members of the organization had perceptions of what others inside and outside the organization thought about Company A. Those perceptions could also influence how a member saw the organization.

Most interviewees replied that others saw the organization similarly to how they described it. People seemed to have a perception of what at least some others in the organization thought about the company and these were based on their personal experiences with other employees. Conversation among employees appeared open, frequent, and friendly. As one stated, "You get to know people real well out here." And as another said, "I think most everybody here understands what the basic concept of the company was from the beginning, and they see it the same way." One

commented, "Well, I talk to people at the ticket counter when I go on my lunch break.
And then on breaks, I see others when I'm coming downstairs, you know." And
another stated, "I've heard people talk the same way I have." One responded this
way when asked if they thought others in the organization saw things the same as
they did:

> Oh, very much so. I think that is one of the reasons that a lot of the
> people came to work for this company, was the fact that they knew
> what its niche was and what it was going to do, and it was going
> toward that end. The people that came on board, all came on board
> with that in mind, knowing that they could make a difference.

Another interviewee responded that approximately half of the people in the
company saw the company as he did. A few described some individuals who saw
things differently. One interviewee talked about some members of the in-flight union
who saw the organization differently. Another explained, "It depends on what level
of employee you're talking about." Another talked about employees who considered
this job a second or temporary job; they did not always see things the same as the
more full-time employees. As one described,

> For some people, this is just their second job, or they're just here to
> pass the time, and they are always trying to—like some people out on
> the ramp, you go out on the ramp, and they'll disappear; you won't be
> able to find them. But that's very few people, and now that we're
> merging, we are letting some of those people go. So, I think that will
> change.

Another compared some who "look at it on the big picture scale and some look at it
on the microscopic level. They just look at their daily functions more than the long
term."

Although employees tended to know what some others in the organization
thought about their company, there was a mixed response to whether others' opinions

influenced how they felt or what they thought about the company. Some stated that they did not let others influence them. But some said that it was not that simple to keep yourself from being affected by others' opinions. As one explained, "That's human nature. We try not to let others influence us, but it does." As one stated, "When you hear negative things, the attitude is going to deteriorate." Another explained, "If you are constantly in an environment where the workgroup thinks something is horrible, and they are constantly negative, it has to affect how one feels."

Employees gave more complicated responses when asked how they thought people outside the company, such as customers, the general public, or the media, saw the organization. When it came to customers, interviewees responded, "They see the way we react to each other." Another explained, "I get a lot of positive feedback out of people. They say that people here are very friendly." One explained that the public thought the company was such a wonderful thing, and it made you feel good knowing others thought such good things about your company. But, according to this interviewee, the accident changed all that. Another stated, "The typical customer is a leisure traveler. And I think they look at us strictly as an inexpensive means of air transportation." But the general public was described with mixed feelings because of the negative influence of the media. One interviewee stated, "I don't think they (customers) would have remembered this incident if it wasn't pounded in their head over and over (by the media)." As one explained,

> A person who has never traveled us? I don't know. Unfortunately,
> they probably believe the media. I mean, we get gobs of positive
> letters from people. I know that the people who fly us are pleased with
> us. But unfortunately, the media has killed us in City A, and there are

some people who don't think for themselves. They just listen to the media.

And, as many stated, "Every time they (the media) talk about Company A, they've got to go right back to the crash." One interviewee explained, "As far as the external image, with the hatchet job that the media did, it's not hard to believe that the external image of the company is not real good." Another thought offered by an interviewee and shared by many was, "They took something that was totally not the fault of Company A and destroyed our name." It was clearly expressed by many employees that the changes now taking place in the company were in response to the negative perceptions of the public that were rooted in the severe media criticism that began after the crash and that had continued. As one interviewee described,

> If we were to go down on the street and say, "Hey would you fly an airline that had an engine come apart and went through the fuselage and killed a passenger and the passenger's daughter and a piece of the airplane fell off on landing one in Dallas, and they hit a wall up in New York, would you fly that airline?" That happened within a two-month period. People would say, "No I wouldn't fly that." That was Company Z. It happened. With our crash, boy it was on the front page immediately.

One described her experiences this way:

> People would come up to me, "So you work for the people who killed those people on the airplane." Because we have the Company A T-shirts and stuff. People were real cruel. We had to deal with this mentally. It's not the kind of thing you could just brush off. It kind of stayed with you. Just for my own recovery, I stopped wearing it (Company A clothes) in public so I wouldn't have to deal with that.

And as another explained, "We have to be better than everyone else. We have to be as perfect as humans can be. That's the hand we've been dealt." And as one described, "We must work as a team." Thus, perceptions of what others outside the company thought were at the heart of the changes. Many people in Company A felt that the

merger was necessary for the company's survival. Another interviewee commented

on how the public's perceptions affected how he felt about the company and how he

behaved:

> People outside of the organization have and will put down the
> company, so I have to be strong towards the company. I think it's the
> way that the people do act outside of the company which makes you
> feel like you do have to defend the company more than you normally
> would.

As another explained, "What the public thinks they take to heart." One interviewee

stated that because Company A's customer base was largely inexperienced air

travelers, then the effects from the media criticism were even more damaging on their

customer base. Most understood that the opinion of those outside the company could

make or break a company. Thus, interviewees felt that what outsiders thought about

Company A did impact their own images of the organization.

Multiple Future Images

Several questions were asked about employees' future images of the

company.

1. What do you picture as the future for Company A two years from now?

2. Is this what you expect for Company A's future? If not, what words do you think

   you will use two years from now to describe how you *expect* to see this

   organization?

3. Is this the ideal future for Company A? If not, if you were describing the *ideal*

   Company A two years in the future, what would it look like?

4. What has the organization presented as its anticipated future?

5. How important is it to know what the organization is planning for its future?

6. Do you think others in the organization see the future of the organization as you see it?

7. Do you think others outside the organization see the future of the organization as you see it?

The data revealed multiple future images that employees held about their organization (see Figure 8). They described their expectations for the future, their dreams for the ideal future, their fears that they held about the company's future, their perceptions of what others inside and outside the company saw as the company's future, and their knowledge of any stated or documented company vision for the future.

Expected Future Image

Interviewees were asked the following question about their *expected* future image of the organization: As for the future for Company A—two years from now— what do you expect to see for this company? Most employees quickly responded with an optimistic description of a bigger airline due to not only the upcoming merger but also rumored future mergers. As one replied, "In the future, it's absolutely going to be a lot bigger." Multiple mergers appeared to be the path to survival. As stated by one interviewee, "In the merging process, all of that negative stuff will be lost. And I think that's feasible to happen in two years...."

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│ Expected │      │ Ideal    │      │ Feared   │
│ Future   │      │ Future   │      │ Future   │
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│ Company  │  │ Perceptions of│  │ Perceptions of│
│ Future   │  │ What          │  │ What          │
│ Image    │  │ Others Inside │  │ Others Outside│
│          │  │ See as Future │  │ See as Future │
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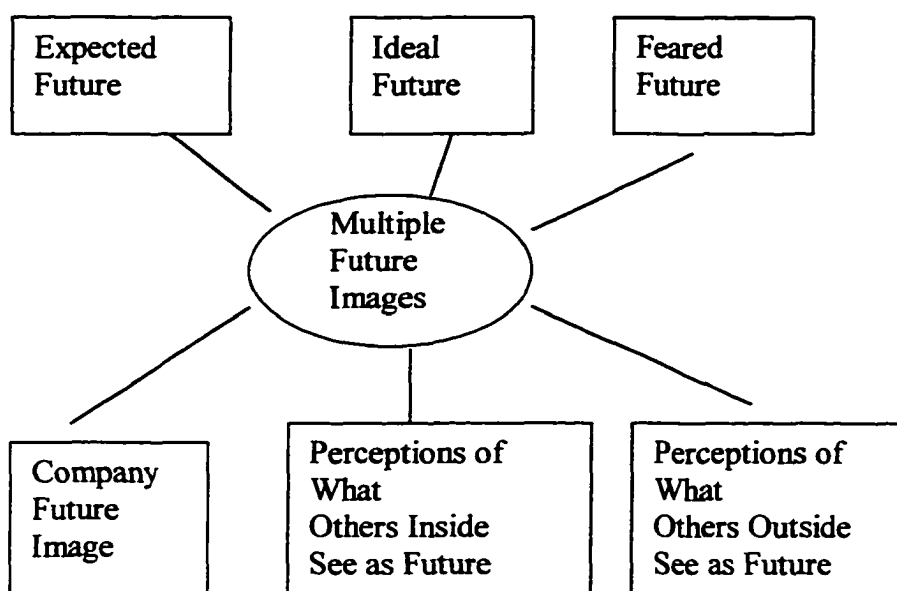
Figure 8. Multiple future images of an organization.

The bigger airline description included more flights, more planes, more destinations, and more employees. The anticipated purchase of new aircraft in 1999 was often described as a real upgrade for the company. Employees expected profits to be modest compared to their early days. But growth was still expected by many to move the company to a higher level—number one in delivery of low-cost air transportation in the region or possibly in the position of being a moderate size national carrier. Interviewees mentioned some changes in features but none that would alter their niche in providing affordable air transportation for the leisure traveler and the business traveler on a budget. As one stated, "If they forget where they came from, then they won't be able to be distinguished from others in the industry. It was the right concept with the right ideas." Some anticipated an erosion in their present friendly image to a more stuffy, conservative one in their efforts to look more professional to the public. But as one stated, "It shouldn't affect how

employees act with each other." Others also felt that this would have a minimal

impact on what they described as core and distinctive, and anticipated changes might

even add poise and more polish to their product. Interviewees offered words of

concern for survival.

> Like I said, the next year is going to be very critical as to how people
> respond to us because even though we paint the airplanes, people are
> going to know that underneath the plane, it's still Company A. Same
> planes, same pilots, same ramp people, same gate agents; we're still
> Company A, so it's a really hard question to answer.

Yet feelings of hope and opportunity were constantly expressed. People

offered expectations that the company would be in a position to start giving back to

the employees through increased pay and benefits and improved work rules. Growth

would also provide new opportunities for individual advancement and security.

Only in one area did members appear to be concerned about losing their job.

With those members, responses about the future were much more uncertain. One

interviewee described their perspective of the future this way: "We've been in two

modes. We have been in a huge growth mode and we've been in a survival mode.

And I think whenever you're in those kinds of situations, you concentrate closer and

closer in."

Ideal Future Image

Interviewees were asked to describe their ideal Company A: If you could

describe the ideal Company A in two years—if you could make it be whatever you

wanted it to be—what would it be like? Although many described conditions similar

to their expected future, they also added to it one of the following three features: (1)

the vision of being number one—rising above Company Z, their competition; (2) achieving the excellence of Company W, their ideal; or (3) a desire to be like things were in the past at Company A.

One interviewee stated, "I hope we'll be number one." Another said, "I would love to see us stick it to Company Z in years to come." Another comment that many shared was as follows: "I hope it's bigger than Company Z. That's my biggest goal— to defeat Company Z, I guess."

Many compared their ideal future to what had happened at Company W. One interviewee described it this way,

> For this to be the equivalent of going to work for Company W in 1975 and to be a powerhouse carrier before my retirement, and I'd like to be right here when it happens. I'd like to retire from here. Those guys that went to Company W in '75…are quite happy and working for a good organization that makes money, sets the standards in the industry.

Another expressed a similar ideal.

> People used to think they (Company W) were a joke. To this day, they still wear casual uniforms; they fly short hops to cities most people have never heard of, and a long time ago people thought, "This carrier is never going to make it." Twenty-five years later, they're one of the most highly respected airlines in the business. And I guess that's the way I'd like people to see us go.

Several described their ideal as being something very similar to the company's own past, prior to the accident. Some expressed it this way: "It (the ideal) would be Company A in 1993." One interviewee stated, "I would love to see Company A stay like it is; I mean, improve, but be the same fun, low fares, no frills airline just have more cities and passengers." Another said, "I would love to keep the logo." And one described, "What I would have hoped for was to see Company A

with the original logo. But realistically that isn't going to happen. The logo's gone. Company A (the original name) is gone." And another expressed her ideal as, "Back to the way we were in the beginning. Growing, adding more cities, doing the low fares." Many also wanted the closeness of employees and the focus on friendly customer service to remain.

One employee, who was not worried about losing his job, explained that he could not see past six months because based on what happened in the past two years, he could have never predicted that. But he expressed a hope of having half of the success that the company had in the past. He explained, "We were wildly successful."

There was also a common concern for Company A to provide job security, pay, and benefits to attract and keep career employees. As one commented, "I would like to see it be a company where people are coming here to stay for a career."

Several stated a concern to grow more gradually than in the past. One commented, "Get things smoothly running before you bite off another chunk of anything."

Feared Future Image

Employees also had an image of their organization that could be described as a feared future image. Although this was not directly asked for in any of the questions, comments referring to what employees feared might happen were often dispersed in their responses to the questions on future images. As several stated, "I hope it makes it." One interviewee commented, "I hope Company A is still around

(in two years), you know. We definitely need to get some more passengers. Some days, it's like I don't know if we're going to make it or not." Some compared this feeling with the reality they experienced at Company E: "We were the biggest airline in the world and six years later we were out of business. There's always a fear of going out of business." As another explained, "This is just realism. There are no guarantees." One commented, "You don't know if this place is going to be here a year from now; you just don't know." And another stated that things have changed since the accident. Before the accident, "we weren't afraid." One interviewee commented, "It's going to be a rough ride. It's not going to be easy if they stay alive."

Several commented on a fear of losing aspects of Company A that they had cherished. As one stated, "If they forget where they came from, then they won't be able to be distinguished from others in the industry." Another explained, "As far as the closeness of the employees, I hope we don't lose that. I hope it doesn't become like some of the bigger airlines where we just really don't know each other; I don't want to lose that." One interviewee stated, "I've never felt like a number. With the merger, I feel like it will be lost. That close, family oriented togetherness. You'll get lost in the shuffle." One stated, "I hope that with all these new changes that the attitudes won't change." Another feared, "They're not going to know you by face." And one interviewee expressed it this way:

> The corporate culture is likely to change as we absorb these other corporate cultures which is hopefully not going to be a bad thing because I really enjoy our corporate culture. Hopefully, since we are kind of the driver of this whole thing, hopefully we can infuse our basic culture into these other organizations without upsetting them, which I know is a real problem with mergers.

As one explained, "I would like the friendly part to stay." Many employees voiced a concern for losing some of the values that had been expressed as being fundamental to this organization.

Others In the Organization

Interviewees were asked about their perceptions of what others in the organization think about the future of the organization: Do you think other people in the organization have similar or different expectations and dreams for the future of Company A? As many stated, "People talk about that (the company's future), definitely." One interviewee explained, "You hear rumors about who's going to buy us out, what cities we're going to next. Yes, that's all the time. We talk about how the stock is doing. We talk about everything." And most people believed that others in the organization saw it as they saw it. As one explained, "I think if you weren't expecting that (a positive future) then you would have gone on to bigger and better things, and I think a lot of people have." Although some described limitations in their knowledge of what some others think, they generally described a unity in excitement and a general positive outlook by most. One commented,

> I would say the general consensus is positive. I think the fairest way
> to put it would be cautiously optimistic. Though we do have hope for
> our future, we also—none of us have forgotten what has happened in
> the past. I think even ten or fifteen years down the road, it's always
> going to be there.

One described it this way.

> I think most people think once we can get the change completed, the
> name and get a new logo and new recognition factor out in front of the
> public, put the past behind us, press on with the game plan we had
> originally, and grow the airline, and then try to do what we were on

our way to doing originally. Just have to do it a little differently. Rather than just internal growth—you know, merging with another company was the way to get onto that level.

Another stated that it would be logical that others in the organization think positively about the future because, "It's their bread and butter."

Many also indicated that what others in the organization thought about the future did affect their own thoughts about the future. One interviewee stated, "It makes you feel like you're not the only one seeing the same picture, and it does make you wonder a little bit more what is going to happen." As another said, "If you hear too much of the same stuff, you start to believe it." One interviewee explained that if some employees thought the future was not going to be good, then these employees might start looking for another job and leave the company. If enough qualified people did this, it could have a damaging outcome for the company. Thus, according to this interviewee, what others in the company thought about the future could make a real difference. Another interviewee commented on the fact that a large number of employees in their functional area had left Company A just in the last two weeks. As he explained, "It makes me wonder what I should do, if that is how they (those who have left) see the future." Then he stated, "Too much turnover affects things." Another explained, "You see people leaving and it makes you wonder more what you should do. It makes you think. Maybe he (the one who leaves) knows something I don't know about the future here." Another agreed, "If you have people providing poor customer service, and the employees have a negative attitude, you know that's going to affect the company's future."

Others Outside the Organization

Interviewees were also asked about their perceptions of what others outside

the organization thought about the future of the company: Do you think others outside

the organization share your expectations for the future? Interviewees typically

seemed more perplexed about what the public thought about the future of their

company. As one explained,

> People who travel with us want the low fares to stay there. It's really
> enabled a lot of people to travel who might not otherwise. Can't shell
> out hundreds of dollars to go somewhere, but they can come up with
> the small amount it takes to fly on us. I think that's what outsiders are
> mostly hoping for is it'll just stay a low-cost airline, and a safe one,
> which we are. I think that's the concern of most outsiders—safety and
> low-cost.

Although interviewees described good feelings from their customers, there

was less confidence in their knowledge of what the public, in general, expected for

their future. As described by one employee, "There's so much negative, and there's

so much positive, it's really a hard thing to try to figure out what goes on in the

public's mind." One stated,

> I think there is a distinct difference in people that feel Company A will
> succeed and some feel that it will fail. They just feel that there are too
> many things going against them that will make it fail and those people,
> I will accept what they want to say, but they don't affect me. I'm only
> going to let things that I can do something about, worry me.

Another indicated that he did not think that others outside the organization thought

about the future of other organizations.

Several felt that the media had tarnished many outsiders' future images of

Company A. As one explained, "I don't know. I think it's kind of a mixture there.

Some of the public still have a little bit of reservation about whether or not we are

safe because of the way the news media came and crucified the name." One

interviewee explained, "I think a lot of people don't want Company A to go on, so

they may not think that this (the merger) may work." And another commented this

way.

> Most outside the organization want to see us die, and why I cannot
> figure. I cannot figure out the animosity that the media, especially the
> City A media, has against us. It is just so amazing that the product that
> we can deliver to this town, and that the media is so rabid against us.
> It is just the most frightening thing I've ever experienced as an
> American.

An interviewee explained her reaction to positive thoughts by the public: "It

makes me feel good that the people on the outside are more or less our cheerleaders.

And that's good because we need a lot of cheerleaders—a lot more than we have right

now."

> When other employees stated that their future images were affected by what

outsiders thought, they often focused on whether the public continued to fly with the

company. Their support was imperative. To many, that was the critical issue.

> Some referred to the damaging effects of more recent negative publicity and

how it impacted how members saw the company's future. As one commented,

> After that recent newspaper incident, we kind of lost our spirits a little
> bit there. We changed the name for nothing because anytime the
> media gets a hold of us, it refers to the accident. They want to destroy
> us, I guess. This gave me insecurity and made me think that I might
> should look for another job. It's worn me down.

Another commented,

> There are a whole lot of people who maybe will or maybe won't fly
> us, and they see a negative article, then it's going to add to their
> nagging doubt. It helps them make up their mind in a negative
> direction. This (negative article) has an effect on the stock that is real.
> And it does impact your thoughts about the future.

Company Future Image

Interviewees were asked about the company's plans for the future: Has the company presented a future image for Company A? What do you think the company is expecting as a future vision? Have you heard or read anything describing this? The almost unanimous response to this series of questions was that they had no idea what the company was planning. One comment was,

> It would be nice if I even knew what their goal was for the next five years. Give me the company's short-term goal. What is the long-term goal? So I could know if their goals coincide with mine.

Another explained, "They don't share with the employees, 'This is where we want to be in a year; this is where we want to be in five years.' It just basically feels like you're going to a day-to-day operation. What is the future going to hold for us?"

Many described a climate of limited information.

> You already have that (loyalty) so to me you would cultivate that and nurture that because of all the stress. So to me I would communicate in order to keep that feeling with you so that you could stick with me to make it on through, cause I would want a seasoned veteran as opposed to somebody new that wouldn't have a clue. Just tell me what it is we are shooting for. I don't even know where we are going. I don't even know where to focus.

Employees described a real need for this information. As one said, "Seems to be important to a lot of the employees from what I hear and what I see." As one employee suggested,

> I would like to see us come up with a clear, not just a market strategy or image to the public, but an internal, say a mission statement-- something simple but that not only pertains to where we are and who we are right now but where we're going. We should all have a clear, defined common goal of where we're going.

A simple, clearly defined, shared mission and vision for the company appeared to be

lacking and desired by these employees. As another stated,

> If you let us have a little future vision. Keep us informed on where
> we're going. What are we doing to increase our load factors? What
> new markets can we expect? If you give us a little bit of your vision
> for the future, let us share in it and try to see what we can do about
> making a go at it.

One interviewee was able to describe a future vision expressed by the

company. He expressed it this way:

> They see growth. They're planning to keep expanding. We have no
> figures on how many airplanes, but they still indicate they plan to
> continue growing. They want to get things put together and operating
> smoothly and then just gradually keep expanding.

Merger Issues

To discuss merger issues, several questions were asked related to this change:

1. How has this merger affected your view of the company?

2. How do you feel about the changes (of name, logo, etc.)?

3. What has the organization done to support you during this change?

4. What could the organization do to support you during this change?

Responses to these questions are grouped into two categories: merger feelings and

merger support.

Merger Feelings

Responses to questions about merger feelings fell into the following

categories (see Figure 9): (a) positive and hopeful, (b) uncertainty and lack of

information, (c) opportunity for improved pay and benefits, and (d) loss of identity.
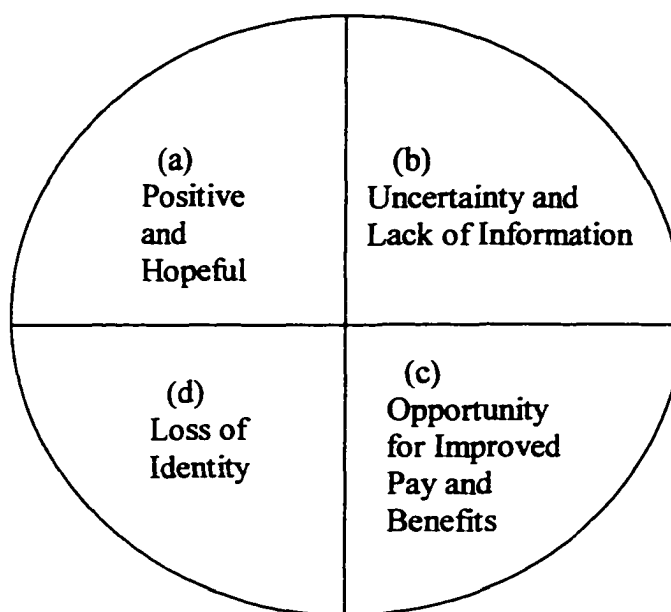
Figure 9. Merger feelings.

Positive and Hopeful

Most of the interviewees were both positive and hopeful about the merger. They described it as a good move "heading in the right direction." One described it this way: "It's like new life. The image is changed, but the guts are still the same. We have more hope." They saw the changes in the best interests of both the company and the employees; they considered it "a new opportunity to grow." There was strong agreement that this was the right thing to do. The interviewees seemed very realistic in their appraisal of the company's health and the need for this change as a hopeful remedy. People showed positive anticipation and excitement. As one indicated, "I think it's going to be exciting to work here. I'm one of those people that turned down another job to stay here cause I think things are going to turn out good." And as another commented, "It's exciting that we're getting an opportunity to grow again."

Uncertainty and Lack of Information

The excitement appeared to be mixed with feelings of uncertainty. A few

mentioned concerns about immediate job security, but it was predominantly limited to

the administrative headquarters and one department physically connected to this

corporate site. One interviewee commented, "Where am I going to be next week or

tomorrow?" Even months later after corporate had moved, the department located

near corporate still had uneasy feelings. As one said,

> We're there by ourselves. To watch them move and leave us behind is
> scary. And a lot of people that we cared about and thought the airlines
> cared about have lost their jobs because they could not move. It's
> been a bad scary feeling again. And you hear rumors. It's more
> rampant than ever.

Most, especially at the airport, had been assured that employees would not

lose their jobs due to the merger. The greater concern was the uncertainty about the

future of the company. As one described,

> It's uncertain what's going to go on here, as far as your future with the
> company. Where is it going to be? There's not enough
> communication since the transition. There's very little
> communication. They're sort of evasive when you ask them a
> question. It's like I ask you for a white piece of paper and you give
> me an orange piece. That's not what I asked for. Just tell me you
> don't have a white piece of paper.

Another explained, "We don't know what's going on as for future plans at the

company. As far as merging the seniority list together, there's still not a lot of

communication going on." One described it like "going into a tunnel, and you don't

know what's on the other side." This description contrasted with the way it used to

be: "A roller coaster only going up." As another described, "There is a lot of

hopefulness. But with that hopefulness is this uncertainty which creates some

anxiety." And one stated, "The hardest part is not knowing. Not knowing anything. You don't know what tomorrow's going to bring." As one employee explained,

> We're working for a company that is going through tremendous flux right now, tremendous transition. If you are up for that, it's going to be great, hang in there. If you're not up for that and it's terribly uncomfortable for you, you have to think if this is where you want to be.

This uncertainty, rooted in the lack of information, appeared to have negative consequences. One stated, "We try to keep those smiling faces but sometimes it's hard because you're unsure." An interviewee commented, "You got them feeling insecure about themselves and about the company." As one said, "We have to speculate on everything, you know." And as another described, "Just tell me whatever, but this walking around not knowing anything—it's stressful." Another said, "We don't feel appreciated" and there is a need to "build up trust again." Issues of honesty and trust were expressed. One interviewee stated,

> Even though we talked about it, I really don't think they realize how much that (lack of information) is a burden to all of us because it's not just me; it's not just my department; it's everybody. And when we feel like we're left out, it makes you feel unimportant. It makes you feel like you're not an important part of the team. We're all trying to meet one goal, so why can't we all be a part of it.

One interviewee explained her need for information this way: "I want to have as much knowledge about the merger and the new airline as I can because I definitely don't want to feel inadequate up there and not know my job."

Members frequently made comments like one interviewee who said, "Communicate. Just tell us anything." And another described, "We don't even know what they are working towards." And one expressed, "Seems to be important to a lot of the employees from what I hear and what I see. I'd like to know where we're

going and what we're doing. And most of the people would like to know where

we're going and what we're doing." Another commented, "I know they can't tell us

about the merger, and when that was happening; I heard about it on the news. That's

the way I expected to hear about it. But my uniform? They can tell me. It's that kind

of thing—the things they can tell us, I think they should."

Because employees frequently did not find out information until they heard it

on the news, there was an added negative impact. As one interviewee said, "It's just

the way it is." But another described its effect on her in a personal way.

> One of the most disrespectful things that have ever been done to me in
> my workplace was done when I found out that we were laid off. I
> found out over the television and my friend from Dallas called and told
> me. And to me that was the most humiliating, disrespectful thing.

One interviewee suggested, "They should try to have a general meeting with

employees and say, 'This announcement is going to be made in a couple hours.'"

And as one interviewee stated, "The other day I just read what was in the seat backs

on the plane. That was the first time I had seen any printed stuff. Which was very

well done, as a matter of fact."

Some contrasted the lack of information now with a different environment in

the early days of the company. As one explained, "We used to have so many

meetings together. Our families were even invited to the meetings."

Another described the differences in the types of information that certain

groups received.

> There are chief pilot notes, and he gets a rundown on all the safety
> issues and general company business. We get something from in-
> flight, and there's a recipe on there. There's everybody who is having
> a birthday that month. There's who made the hundred-dollar club—
> sold that much liquor. Why don't we have something that's business?

> We have a must-read book, and that's little issues that come up—
> safety or getting new water bottles on the airplane or this and that. But
> it just seems silly that we're getting recipes, and they're getting chief
> pilot notes. I don't need to know specific things the pilots should
> know; I'm not doing a pushback, I'm not flying an airplane, but they
> are getting company business, and we're getting birthdays.

With the lack of information, interviewees often talked about rumors as the source of information. As some said, "The rumor mill is just unbelievable." As another explained, "They don't know what's happening, and that's only because management knows what's going on, but management does not communicate what is going on to people under them which leaves the door open for rumors." Rumors were described as "flying around" and many have been on the topic of possible, future mergers. Several indicated a need to pay more attention to stopping these rumors.

Only a couple interviewees indicated that they had received sufficient information. One said, "They've been real helpful answering any questions we've had. Everybody's real helpful telling us everything they can."

Opportunity for Improved Pay and Benefits

Opportunity for improved pay and benefits was the focus of some members' feelings related to the merger. Many described the low pay and benefits that resulted in the frequent loss of good, dedicated, career-minded people. One commented, "Improved pay is needed to keep good people." As one described,

> There is no real retirement package. We have a 401-(k) program, but
> the company doesn't match it. They pay the administrative cost.
> There are no defined benefits in a common plan. There are no pass
> benefits after retirement. There are not medical benefits after
> retirement. I would like to see some of those things implemented
> because it would keep the employees here.

As another expressed, "There are a bunch of people leaving because of medical benefits. I'm single right now, so it doesn't really bother me, but people that are married, they need it. A bunch of people just left to go to another airline just for medical benefits." There was a frequent reference to a need for an increase in pay, and that the merger might help make that happen. As one expressed, "We've lost a lot of very good flight attendants because people couldn't pay their bills."

One interviewee expressed problems because new employees got about the same pay as the older employees:

> They have changed the starting salaries for new hires, but they did not change the salaries for the senior people who have been here. So they upped the new hire people by 75 cents an hour, but the senior people who have been here since, for a while, they have not changed their salary. So, their upgrade in the starting salary and the senior people's salary—they're almost equal. Just a few cents difference. And that plays a part in the morale of the employees.

Some referred to a pay increase that was given after the merger was completed. As one explained, "That has come up a little bit, but there are still a lot of uneasiness about promises that have not come true yet. Raises for supervisors, things like that which have not come about."

Loss of Identity

With the merger, there were also some strong feelings of loss, specifically connected to issues of identity. With the loss of the company name and logo, there were intense feelings. As one stated, "It's like losing part of your history." The attachment to the logo character was quite strong for many of the employees. The logo was often described as a real thing, like a person. One explained, "It was almost

as popular as a Disney character. It stood for fun and friendly." As one described, "It's going to be different. That's like your baby. You know, you grow with it. And it's gone. It's like the death of a best friend." As another expressed, "It is sort of like you are losing part of a family. Even though you are still in business, you are losing part of the identity of it. I would've liked to have seen them keep it, but reality is you can't." And another stated, "We hate losing the identity; we hate losing the logo; we hate losing the blue and yellow." She described a lot of loyalty to the logo. One described the loss as "giving in to the media and all the powers against us." Another explained, "That whimsical logo on the side of the aircraft was how we wanted to make things—light and enjoyable, instead of like cattle cars. The logo had its place."

On the day of the name change, one employee showed the face of her watch with a picture of the logo on it. Even though employees were not supposed to be wearing the old logo, it was hard for some to give it up. Another stated that she was not going to remove it from her office. One employee had at least ten items in her office with the logo on it. On the day of the name change, all items had been removed.

With the loss, most people expressed an understanding for the reason behind the change and the need for such an action. As one indicated, "Personally, I always liked it, but I can understand the business implications of continuing on with the name and the logo. I think it's a business decision that had to be made." Another stated, "Kind of eerie to see that smiling cartoon on the side of the airplane a day after the accident, but you can't really go and change that. It seemed sort of out of place after that." And as another expressed, "I don't know if Company A would have

continued to survive without doing something. In fact, I'm sure it wouldn't have."

One interviewee commented, "It's like they're stripping me of something. It's sad,

but it's something that has to be done, and I understand why they're doing it." It was

also suggested that the media was responsible for redefining the logo to represent

death rather than fun and friendly travel.

Several commented that the change in identity and uniform was an

opportunity to look more professional, and thus was a positive change. As one

described, "In a way they want to keep the old but they want the new. They

understand the new and want it, but they've got that security blanket and are so used

to it (the old)." Dealing with this change was a struggle for some.

Merger Support

Support Provided

When members were asked what support the company had provided them

during this merger transition, most responded that little to no support had been

provided. One did indicate that the company let them (the functional area) know that

there would not be any layoffs due to the merger.

Support Needed

When members were asked what support they would like to have, the

responses were all connected to sharing information. As one stated, "We need to be

kept informed on what is happening because right now everyone is pretty much in the

dark." They asked for communication preferably through face-to-face meetings and

second through memos. One interviewee commented, "I think the biggest thing, just coming out being around the people listening to them. Letting them hear what's going on; let them see first hand what's going on in your mind!" As one stated, "Just try to communicate more, even if you're not communicating anything. If you communicate that you don't know anything, it's better than nothing at all." As one explained, "People like information." Many described an environment of more frequent meetings in the past that had been discontinued or reduced in frequency. There were also recommendations to bring back town hall meetings and rallies and to keep the President's Line updated regularly. One added, "Even if they told us they don't have anything to tell us because of FTC rules...at least to know that they are thinking about the troops in the trenches." As another expressed,

> Don't just brush it off. At least come to me and say, "Well, at this point, this is where we are. We don't have any answers for you but just to let you know we are concerned that you're concerned about the company." Just to let us know something. Don't just brush it off where we don't know anything.

Another suggested, "The only thing that they could tell us is their intention: This is what we would like to happen; this is what we are working towards. In most cases, we don't even know what they are working towards." One described an environment where information was being tightly held by just a few.

Organizational Identification

Interviewees expressed strong feelings of identification with Company A. These comments were frequent and offered even when issues of identification were not a part of the question. After hearing such repeated expressions of connection with

the organization in the earliest interviews, I began asking questions related to signs of identification and strength of identification. Because responses to these questions also suggested that interviewees were strongly identified with Company A, I also asked about consequences and construction of identification. Thus, the organizational identification component of this research was focused on four areas (see Figure 10).

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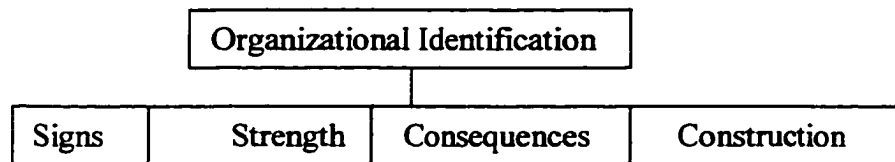
Figure 10. The four areas of research in the organizational identification component.

Signs of Organizational Identification

The questions on signs of identification asked in the interviews were taken from Mael's (1988) dissertation as well as from research on identification by Dukerich and Golden (1997). Responses to these questions supported the signs of identification expressed in the earlier interviews. These questions are listed in the Interview Guide in Appendix B. Signs of identification fell into the following categories: feeling of belonging in the Company A family, use of "we" instead of "they," interested in what others think about Company A, company's successes are my own successes, praise feels like a personal compliment, pride in Company A, company's problems are one's own problems, response to criticism, wants a career at Company A, wears company clothing, and spends time with employees after work.

Feeling of Belonging in the Company A Family

As one stated, "I don't think I would have this feeling of belonging this much anywhere else." One interviewee remarked, "I can't imagine working any place else. I don't think I'd be as happy with any other airline." And as another expressed, "Oh, this is my home. Sometimes I consider this place as my real home. It's like, which is my home? It's like both ways. This is where I belong, and I feel real good about it." And another stated, "It was my past; it's my present; it's my future. It's very important to me."

Use "We" Instead of "They"

When talking about the company, interviewees described it as "we are a small company" or "my flight" or "I'm part of Company A" or "it's my company." There was a strong feeling of ownership and being a part of it all.

Interested in What Others Think About Company A

Employees showed interest in what others thought about the company. As one stated, "I get real excited when I do hear people really saying positive things about it (Company A). But I just get mad if they say anything bad."

Company's Successes Are My Own Successes

Employees saw the company's success as their own success. As one indicated, "If the company doesn't succeed, I'm not going to succeed. So anything I can do to save a few dollars or maybe win a few customers, it's well worth it."

Praise Feels Like a Personal Compliment

They also indicated that praise for the company felt like a personal compliment. As was commonly said, "If someone really praises Company A, it really makes me feel good." And as another commented, "It's personal in the sense that it's the company and you're part of it." One interviewee stated, "If someone compliments Company A, I feel happy as if they said to me that I look nice today or whatever. I guess it really is the same feeling. It makes me feel good." Another explained, "A lady stopped me in the grocery store; she just loves Company A. She smiled, and I smiled, and I beamed. I was part of what she loved."

Pride in Company A

Employees exhibited a strong sense of pride in their company. As one indicated, "I take pride in the company and in my work." One employee described her pride in the company this way:

> We have gone through the best of it and the worst of it together. And we have brought it back. We're still here. Other airlines have not accomplished that. We did. I think that's awesome. Do you know how proud I feel about this company? It's amazing. I feel so much a part of the rebirth of this thing. And I can't let go.

There was a common desire "to be the best airline out there." And as another declared, "To me, if they're insulting the company's work or whatever, then I take it personal. I'm the one or people I know are the ones who are doing the maintenance, so it's a sense of pride in my work."

Company's Problems Are One's Own Problems

They definitely expressed that the company's problems were their own problems. As one stated, "I think people feel accountable and responsible for what goes on here." When describing the crash, one interviewee explained, "I think we all feel some type of sense of responsibility even though there is nothing that we could have done. But I will for the rest of my life. It is something that will affect me for the rest of my life." And another said, when describing the crash, "When I see the adults getting on; that's one thing. But all I could picture on the flight was just little kids....To this day that drives me crazy; it bothers me. It really does." Another added,

> It makes you feel good when people have such a high regard for your company. I think that's what was very hard for a lot of the employees who were here at the time of the accident. It was kind of like they really took it personal. People really took that to heart because they felt a part of the company.

Response to Criticism

When others criticized Company A, strong emotions emerged. As one person said, "I get really defensive; I get upset. I get too upset. If I overhear someone talking, I'd have to bite my tongue to not say something to them. It really makes me mad if someone says anything negative." As one stated, "I felt like the media lied." Another explained, "I feel like I have to stand up and defend what's mine." Several compared it to what it is like if someone talks about one's mother, sister, or other family member; outsiders cannot talk about one's family without making one angry or act defensive. And another explained that it made him "angry, because it's my

company." Most interviewees described their response as being angry rather than embarrassed, although some stated that they stopped wearing their Company A clothing in public, and if someone asked them where they worked, they often said at the airport rather than for Company A. But they stated that angry was more descriptive of how they felt when they heard criticism. Many commented that they had found themselves defending the company, and it should not be that way. As one said, "I've done it a lot in the grocery store." Another stated, "I want to prove myself to them, even if it's my own personal challenge. I feel like, 'Well, you can't knock me down, so I'm going to keep on fighting you.' To me, if they're insulting the company's work or whatever, then I take it personal." Another added when describing her response to criticism, it made her "more determined to make us look good. To prove all the allied voices wrong." And another interviewee expressed the pain that she felt from some of the criticism,

> It hurts because Company A has always taken care of me since I've
> been here. So it does. It leaves a mark on me, and I remember exactly
> what they say, and who it was that said it. That's how much it hurts.
> There's a lot I turn my cheek on, but I will make a little remark.

Many stated, "I take it personally." As one comment expressed, "That's why it makes me angry, when someone says something bad. Kind of like they're talking about me." And another commented, "The way you get wisdom is by going through trials." Many employees took what happened at the company personally even when it had nothing to do with criticism. As one stated,

> I think that a lot of us take what happens at this company very
> personally. I do take the job home with me. It's not—I don't walk out
> the door at 5:00 and forget about it. It's something that's with me; it's
> part of me. Company A is part of my identity.

Wants a Career at Company A

Employees often said that they wanted to work for Company A for their career. As one said, "But if I'm going to fly, it's going to be for Company A, or I don't fly at all." A few indicated that they wanted to be with the company for their career, but some changes needed to take place, referring to issues of pay and communications.

Wears Company Clothing

Many employees expressed the importance of their Company A clothing. One commented, "Everything I have is Company A: T-shirts and sweatshirts and sweaters." And as another described, "Most of the people ...probably each have, if they've been here for two or three years, probably have about five or six different articles of clothes at least with the logo on them." To many, wearing the clothing was a sign of their identification with the organization. One interviewee described that just before the name change, the store selling the logo merchandise was almost sold out. She explained, "The day they announced the merger, everybody went to the store and bought up everything. People from the public were coming over and buying stuff with the logo on it. So that went real fast. I was trying to buy everything for keepsakes." In one individual's office, there were at least ten items with the company logo. As one explained, "The logo had a life of its own."

<u>Spends Time With Employees After Work</u>

Several indicated that the closeness among the employees extended to time outside of work. People frequently went out together after work. An employee arranged a farewell party the evening before the name change. Everybody was invited and a large number attended.

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<u>Strength of Identification</u>

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Because of the frequent comments by interviewees indicating signs of identification with Company A, I also asked two questions on strength of identification. One question was taken from the survey used by Dukerich and Golden (1997). Both methods were suggested in an article by Dutton et al. (1994).

> A person is strongly identified with an organization when (1) his or her identity as an organization member is more salient than alternative identities, and (2) his or her self-concept has many of the same characteristics he or she believes define the organization as a social group. (p. 239)

First, I drew two separate circles, labeling one circle as "who you are, your self-concept" and the other circle was labeled "Company A, who Company A is." I then asked them, "How close of an overlap is there between who you are and who Company A is? Are they two separate circles with no overlap? Is there a slight overlap? Is there a greater overlap? Is there a total overlap?" The responses were quite strong in the degree of overlap. Most indicated an overlap of 75% to 100%. This revealed an extremely high degree of identification. As one described, "Company A is just very much a part of my life and something I really care about." And as another explained her total overlap, "I live Company A. That's all I know."

As a second indication of strength of identification, I asked the interviewees to think of all the groups that they considered themselves to be a member of (although membership did not require anything more than cognition). Then I asked, "How important is Company A compared to other groups you are a member of? How high would you rank Company A compared to all other groups?" Interviewees consistently ranked it very high. As one stated, "My family is number one. Company A would have to fall just right below that. It's high up. I mean, when it's your past, present, and future, you've got to put that in a high priority." Another explained,

> It (Company A) was the second family. And to me, almost, it's just as important to me because at my time in life, this company is my other lifestyle. I'm like two people. When I get here, this is my life. This is what I want. This is what I enjoy. This is where I feel so important and get such gratification.

And as another expressed,

> That's the only group I'm a member of! I'm the president of the club! This is how bad I've got it. I went to one of those street fairs. You know how they have those bottles you can fill with sand? I had a Coca-Cola bottle, and all I put was the Company A colors. I have every uniform they ever came out with. I have every T-shirt and jacket they've ever come out with. The kids have sweatshirts and jackets and toys, and that's all we know. My mother has Company A clothes. I gave Company A clothes for Christmas. That's it; that's all I know.

One employee indicated that Company A would come third in his ranking, after his family and his church. As he explained, "Even when I bid my schedule, I bid for Sunday mornings off. And if I end up with a trip working on Sunday mornings, I drop those trips. Even for no pay." When discussing the impact of income on identification, most commented that money did not make one identified.

Consequences of Identification

Although I had several questions that targeted consequences of identification (see Appendix B), most responses to these issues had been offered in an earlier part of the interviews. Interviewees often mentioned behaviors that naturally flowed out of individuals who felt identified with an organization. Members indicated in their discussions the following consequences of identification: loyalty, dedicated and hardworking, citizenship behaviors and cooperation, confidence in company, and competitiveness against other companies in the airline industry.

Loyalty

Many stated, "I'm real loyal to this company." As another described, "If they came back after all that (the furlough), I think that goes beyond saying that they are loyal." And another said, "I'm the first to say that I work for Company A."

Dedicated and Hardworking

Another trait common to these employees was hardworking. One interviewee said when describing a hopeful future, "I'll do everything I can to try to get us there." One interviewee described the time that he devoted to his work after the workday was over. "I even do stuff at home. I print it up on my computer and bring it in here and get it approved for changes and stuff like that. Ways of improving it." Another described the common behavior of calling in on her day off to see if anyone needed her to help. As one summed it up, "These are dedicated, hardworking individuals working toward building an airline and being proud."

Citizenship Behaviors and Cooperation

Their citizenship behaviors and intense cooperation were also demonstrated in their supportive team efforts. As one said, "We work as a team." And another explained, "There is nobody that ever says that's not my job. I'll pull bags if I need to. I'll help the gate agents if they need it. Same with anybody else in the organization as far as I can tell." And one described it this way, "This is the lowest level of BS that I've ever experienced in terms of co-worker interaction."

Confidence in Company

Members also shared feelings of confidence in the company. One indicated confidence in the safety of the airline by saying, "There is no way in the world I'd fly on a plane or an airline that I really truly felt was unsafe. No way in the world." And as another stated, "It's going to work. It's worked before, and it will work again." Quite frequently, interviewees stated that they trusted that the decisions that the company was making were the right decisions. The confidence and support of the company were displayed when the company was able to send off their first plane after the furlough.

> Everybody was united. They had an open house just before we got our okay to start service again. The first day back, it was like a re-open house. It had a Dixie band playing in the airport launching that first flight. Company A employees went down on the tarmac, waved the plane off. It was absolutely exciting.

Competitiveness Against Others in the Industry

In contrast with that strong cooperative spirit, there also existed a competitive spirit against others in the industry. Many appeared to take on the role of underdog

and focused on proving that some day they would again show Company Z how strong and successful they could be. This competitiveness was in response to the severe media treatment that Company A employees felt was caused by Company Z and its connections.

Construction of Identification

With such frequent statements indicating interviewees' strong identification with Company A and knowing the organizational benefits of identification (Dutton et al., 1994; Kramer, 1993; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), I then proceeded to ask employees what contributed to this sense of connectedness. I asked this in several ways: What created that closeness? What do you think has made you care so much? What has made you feel so connected? Responses fell in five main categories (see Figure 11): being a part of a start-up and having a sense of ownership with opportunities for growth and seniority; the family environment; positive sense of self resulting from company's success and distinctiveness, job satisfaction, and earned employment; personalities and backgrounds that make one identified with the airline industry; and sharing a crisis and the media attack.

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Start-up
■ Ownership
■ Opportunities

Family Environment

Positive Sense of Self                          Identification

Personalities and Backgrounds

Crisis and Media Attack
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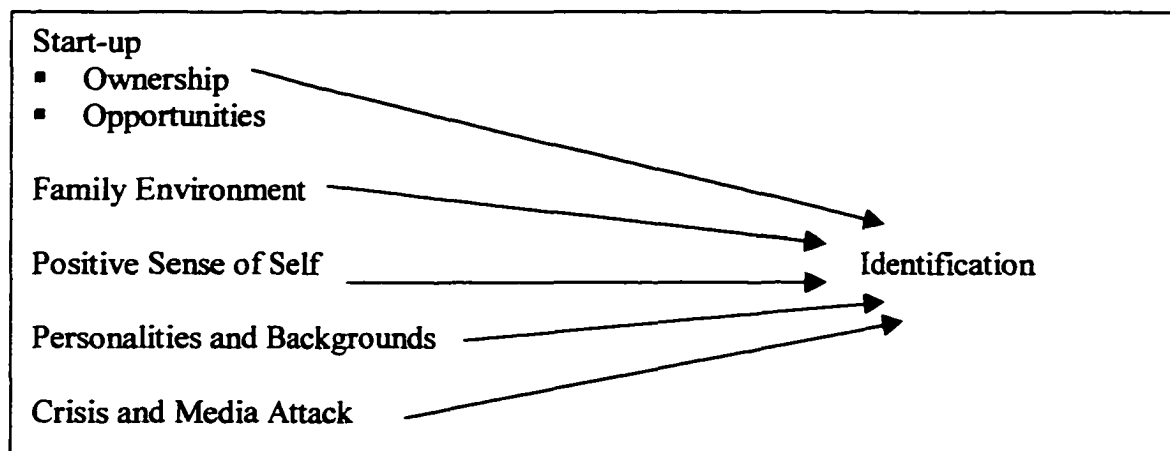
Figure 11. Construction of identification.

Start-up, Sense of Ownership, and Opportunities and Seniority

Start-up and sense of ownership. For many, the connectedness was due to

their being with Company A from the start or almost from the beginning. As one

explained, "There's an entrepreneurial excitement with a new operation." One

interviewee stated that this company started as an underdog.

> The chances of this company making it—I would have given it only
> 30% at the beginning. We were the underdog because it was
> something new. It gave you a desire to want to make it succeed. To
> show people that even though we were the new guy on the block that
> we are going to still be successful.

Others described Company A as being in a class all their own—not really being an

underdog. As one stated, "We were an airline unlike any other airline. We were

separate and apart. We were in a league of our own." Another explained, "We saw a

dream; we helped build it from the ground up." Another stated, "I felt like it

(Company A) was a part of me because I've been here from the beginning. And I've

always wanted to see Company A make it." As one interviewee said, "It was new,

and I had a part in helping to build the company, and it was like, you know, giving birth to a newborn baby. You feel like you're a part of that person. You belong."

Another said, "I've just grown with the company." One interviewee explained,

> I was an integral part of creating it. I was here from the beginning, and I know a lot of the reasons and the whys and the wherefores of what we did and why we did it. Whether they were right, wrong, or indifferent, I know the reason. I know the thought process that went behind it.

When describing the feeling one gets from the company's success, one commented, "It's pretty exciting to be a part of something like that from the ground floor." As another confirmed, "Just being here to watch it grow and change and going through the ups and downs." Another explained,

> I think there is a natural tendency, people like to feel that if they can get in on the ground floor of something that they have extra opportunities as opposed to coming in to a well-established operation. I think that causes people to have a greater sense of belonging.

One interviewee described it as a sense of ownership and a commitment to the mission.

> I guess it's pride of ownership. There are still a lot of people that worked here when Company A first started that agree with the philosophies, that knew there was a niche for a carrier in the market like ours, and whatever form it takes, they don't want to leave that. They believe in the product.

And as another described the feeling of self-worth and its connection to being a part of a start-up, "You feel like you can really have a hand in things, that when you talk to people, that people listen to you." And as many expressed, "We saw a dream; we helped build it from the ground up." And as one interviewee explained, "Coming here from day one. You just grow together, you bond." One described it this way.

> I was here within the first year. It's almost like watching it hatch. It's almost like my baby. I've watched it grow. I think that's why I feel so strongly about it because I've seen it grow. I've seen it slow back down; I've seen it go through bad times and good times and seen people come and go. So, I think that's why I feel that way about it.

And another expressed,

> It's just so exciting to see not just you growing, but watching the company grow at the very same time. That was an experience that does not happen often, and for the ones that were here that didn't just watch it happen but made it happen, that is something that is ideal. That you can get a small idea and turn it into a profitable experience that you'll never forget.

Being a part of a start-up also gave members the opportunity to feel close to the founders. Some developed a loyalty to the company because of their loyalty to the key founder. Many liked him, believed in him, and followed him. He was described by some as their idol and guardian angel.

Being with the company from its early stages also gave people a sense of ownership, and this feeling of ownership seemed to enhance members' sense of connectedness. As one said, "I've made Company A what it is." Some developed this feeling from actually constructing their own workstations. As one interviewee described,

> When we opened the office, it was just an empty building. We hired 15 people, and when they walked in the first day, there were these piles of wood. And we had them sanding them and painting them and start to build their positions. Those people remember that. There wasn't an elevator, so they carried everything upstairs—tables and chairs and computers. Yeah, that gives you a sense of ownership.

And as another described, "I helped build the partitions they have up; we made our house." Another stated, "I helped formulate and write the rules for our group department that are still there today." Others described stock options given to those

who stayed with the company for three years. As was explained, "When we went public, they gave ten shares of stock to everybody that was here, but the trick was you had to be here three years from that date to get it. So, the pool was all those ten shares, but as people left, everybody's part got bigger and bigger." Ownership was especially promoted in airline captains. They were considered part of management and took a lot of responsibility and were rewarded with bonuses and stock options.

Ownership also grew out of a feeling of empowerment by the employees. As one described,

> The gate agents and supervisors have been given the authority to make decisions like, how much money should we give them for meals, how much money should we give them for hotel, should we give them a car, that sort of thing. They've always been allowed to make that decision.

And gates were often compared to one's house.

> The gate area is their house, and you don't want anyone walking through your door without calling first, so you leave the alarm on. You don't want anything missing out of your refrigerator or your bedroom, so you lock the cabinets up when you leave. That is your house. When you're working that gate, that's yours. And when somebody walks up and picks something up, they're stealing from you.

It was further described, "I want them to feel that when they're there and assigned to that position, they're in charge of that position. They've got full control of what goes on....That's what I want, that ownership. Because when they own something, they take care of it." And another interviewee explained the immediate reinforcement that one got in their job, providing job satisfaction and a sense of ownership.

> We have the luxury in our job here as mechanics to gain immediate satisfaction with our jobs. That doesn't happen in a lot of jobs. You've got to work and work and after six months you can see the fruits of your labor. Here an airplane comes in broke, you turn it

around, you fix it; airplane's ready to go out. There's your satisfaction. And it happens once an hour all day. There's really a sense of pride that you get from that. That's the glue that keeps a lot of these mechanics here.

Also, a sense of ownership grew out of a feeling described by one interviewee, "We are a team effort, not a lot of upper management; we work as a team. It's like we do run our own company with guidelines of course." Another expressed, "My boss pretty much leaves me alone."

Opportunities. Others described the opportunities for promotion that are more available in a young company. As one described, "I started out with a dream and then I lived it. I knew if I put the time in, it would pay off. To me, it was a golden opportunity and I took advantage of it." Others described it as "any opportunity to grow." One said, "You can take on as much responsibility as you want here. The opportunities are limitless. I was afforded every opportunity that I was even remotely interested in." Many shared expectations that the company would be growing and as one said, "I can grow with it." Another interviewee explained,

> I've been afforded every opportunity I could ever have in here. It's not like a big, giant company where there's one person for every little job. You can pretty much take on as much responsibility as you want here. You could literally do and go anywhere you want because we know we're growing.

One explained the capacity to grow with new job opportunities at Company A:

> Here employees have the capability to move between jobs or in the same area. If they go to another airline, they probably would be doing the same task without the opportunity to change that, just due to the sheer numbers and the structure. It's not uncommon to have movement here even between departments. The opportunity is there if the person wants it.

Another explained, "I've been through a lot with the company, and I personally see a lot of opportunity for myself with the company getting larger. I specifically chose Company A because of the opportunities there." The capacity to make a job whatever you want it to be promoted feelings of individual control, enhanced one's sense of ownership, and supported feelings of connectedness with the company.

Seniority. The positive sense of self seemed to be related to the size and age of the organization and thus the ability to get seniority more quickly than in the larger airlines. Many employees stated, "You don't feel like a number here." Another explained it this way:

> With Company Z, you're on reserve for years, and it's more like you're just a number; whereas, this is one that's smaller, and I can grow with it because it's going to be growing soon. So I can just kind of grow with it, and I'll be on up there. So, once we start expanding and getting larger, hopefully I'll be toward the top and a senior flight attendant.

Another explained,

> If I left and went to a major carrier, I probably would not see the flight line for years. You'd be put in a hanger. You have to work your way up cause it's such a gigantic company. It would probably be 25 or 30 years before you'd get a weekend off. Here at Company A, it's a flight-line operation. And you can get some decent days off.

This perception enhanced their feelings of self worth and satisfaction with the job.

Also, some described a feeling of equality at Company A. As one explained, "Everybody's equal. Nobody's any better than anybody else." Also, no one had been at the company for more than around four years. As one stated because of the fact that this was a young organization,

> The lack of time that most of the employees have here, it's not like you have a brand new person coming in here with a lot of 20 year employees where they are extremely junior. The other folks, even if

they have been here a few years, they're not that much senior to them (the new employees) as far as their involvement or time with the organization. So they (the new employees) feel more like they're on a level playing field.

Thus, with no great variance in seniority, many members described a work environment of equality.

Family Environment: Caring, Friendly, Small, Close, and Open

Interviewees often identified the close, family-like environment as a factor in their feelings of connectedness. This identity attribute was also described as a facilitator of organizational identification. As one said, "It makes me feel good because I'm a part of such a close-knit group." Another responded to why she had stayed through the hard times, "It feels like family. It feels comfortable, and it's fun, and it's exciting." They often described the connectedness as being due to the "people, really—how you are treated." As so many said, "I just love the people." One interviewee stated, "Who you work with and the type of people you work with matters a lot, but I never knew I'd love it this much." Another stated, "The people that are employed here. I can't explain the positive feedback that you get everywhere in every department. Everyone is so nice and so welcome." Another explained that she rarely saw any intraorganizational fighting. And as one interviewee described, "Company A has always taken care of me, and I'll take care of Company A to the best of my ability." One expressed it this way: "I think the agents were loyal because of a sense of family with each other, not so much with corporate, it's with each other. That's where that comes from--that they're so loyal to each other." This supportive, almost egalitarian environment where people were friends with their bosses and

everyone chipped in to help was frequently described. As one explained, "We were small, and everybody knew everybody. Not only did I know them (the Vice Presidents), but they knew me. And that made a difference." Just knowing fellow workers on a personal basis seemed to nurture a connectedness that was valued by most. As one explained, "I've been here through a lot, and when I walk in, people know my name and say, 'Hi.'"

The open-door policy appeared to support this atmosphere.

> You can go and talk to the Vice President of anything, like you work beside him every day. There's not the hierarchy that you can't penetrate certain doors like in other companies. You can walk into the CEO's office as easy as you can walk into your supervisor's office. It's easy to work here.

And another explained, "How many other companies has anyone ever been able to walk into the CEO's office and said, 'Hey, I need to talk to you for a minute.' I don't know of any. I've never seen that before." When describing a recent application of the open-door policy, one interviewee explained, "I talked to him a little while. He shook my hand, asked me how I was doing, how's everything going. Just so open. That's the kind of people I like to work for--people who recognize who you are."

Also, this family atmosphere incorporated celebration into its process to promote unity and connection. Parties, picnics, and luncheons were common and appeared to be an avenue for promoting connectedness among the members.

Another commented on the importance of being in an organization that felt small. "If I worked for a major airline, I would be thrilled about my paycheck and my benefits, but I don't think I would have as much connection to the airline and to its success because I would be like one in five billion people. Here I'm one in two

thousand." One interviewee described "a feeling of belonging due to the small size of the operation." Another expressed, "It's still small enough now that your input does make a difference."

Positive Sense of Self Resulting From Company's Success and Distinctiveness, Job Satisfaction, and Earned Employment

Company success and distinctiveness. Many interviewees described a positive sense of self and self-worth that Company A provided them due to its success and the distinctive, innovative services that it provided. As one said, "We were very popular." One stated, "People loved us. I got stopped in the grocery store; they just loved us." Another explained, "In the beginning of '96, you couldn't pick up a paper without reading about us in the business section (implying positive publicity)." And another described, "It was like being swept away with the activity." Another stated, "It was like being on the winning team." One explained, "We were a rapidly rising force." As one stated, "Everybody likes to be associated with a winner." One said, "We tried to do things differently and it worked. We were so successful." Success was also noted when describing how well the stock performed. One interviewee described it this way: "Before the accident, we could walk around in our company clothes, and it was almost like being a celebrity. Everyone wanted to work for Company A." Although knowing that the explanation was not a simple one, another interviewee described a possible reason for the almost cult-like bonding by explaining, "It must be because we did so well through '94 and most of '95." As one interviewee described,

> We were the golden image of what any airline ever wanted to be. We
> had money, and the flights were full in and out of every city; every
> city wanted us to come there. Our agents were happy and relaxed, and
> the best you could get with attitude with willingness and loyalty and
> dedication. You couldn't pull one (an agent) off the floor in '94 and
> '95. Letting one go would be like murder.

And another stated, "We were wildly successful. At the beginning of '96, you

couldn't pick up a paper without us leading the business section." Another stated,

"We were so successful. You just get so wrapped up in that." As one explained, "In

'94 and '95, we were in the limelight. Anything you ever wanted to be. That's what

we were."

Many described a distinctiveness that also contributed to their own positive

sense of self. "I remember one of the guys in training said how good it felt to be a

part of a company that was in the newspaper weekly because it was doing so well.

And that was definitely unique." And as another interviewee said, "If it weren't for

us, there would be no low prices."

Others explained how this organization was distinctive in its positive

attributes. As one stated, "This is an unusual organization from my experience and I

like it here."

It appeared that being a part of growth and success was more important and

fun than making a lot of money. As one explained, "I took a 50% pay cut for this

job." As another explained when describing the outcome of having low pay in the

organization,

> There are no golden handcuffs here. So the people that are here want
> to be here. Big difference. Look at the other major airlines that make
> a fortune and all of them are just so unhappy all the time. If you don't
> want to be here, you're not going to stay cause the money is not there.

<u>Job satisfaction.</u> Another described how the job enhanced one's feelings of importance and job satisfaction. For many, their work involved constant challenges with immediate feedback.

> When you work under certain conditions, I believe this type of work is so different from any other because of work conditions and the level of stress and the level of anxiety, and everything they go through— getting a flight together and turning it around and getting it out of here. They only have so much time to do this. Their blood pressure is boiling and everything, and they're just making it happen. And the sense of how important they are, because without them it doesn't happen.

One commented, "I get such gratification here." And another described the satisfaction they received from helping others.

> So, it's just incredible the bonds you make with people just by getting them on a flight they needed to be on or making sure things are going to happen the way they need for them to happen with their travel arrangements or fixing their return where it was wrong or being able to print them a receipt and explain to them what the charges are.

This satisfaction grew out of the multiple opportunities that one had helping, fixing problems, and taking control of a situation. These situations appeared to enhance confidence and feelings of power and importance, and thus, self worth and connectedness with the job.

> I'm a servant, I am. I can walk into any situation and just handle it. The hostility goes away immediately. It's just unreal once you go in and talk to people who just found out their flight was cancelled or delayed four hours or whatever the case. When you go in—I try to have an aura of being calm, cool, and collected. I've got their options together. I always have my game plan ready. When I go in, I'm ready to do some serious business. And I can talk with the serious businessmen, and I can talk with the housewives. You get a level of respect from passengers that you can't get working in an office with a limited amount of people where you may never see the public.

One explained his sense of connectedness with the organization as being due to his ability to contribute to it: "On a day-to-day basis, I make decisions that affect (benefit) the company." He also explained, "I like to be in the decision-making process. They look to me for answers or guidance."

> You feel like you're contributing. Maybe you're helping some of the younger guys here to form a mindset what is expected of them in the company. Instead of me just sending them out there to fend for themselves, I feel like I'm molding people to be a better employee, not just another number.

And another explained their contribution to the company's success this way: "I've played a fairly large role, in my eyes at least, at this company."

Earned employment. Several described a strong identification that they could attribute to the fact that the ground personnel had to earn the right to be an employee and team member. As one explained, "Initially, the company had some preconceived ideas that you make people become proud of being part of the company rather than just bringing them on board and paying them a little more money. If you are given something, it is not as valuable as if you earn it." As one described, "It was a big deal to get hired." Another stated, "It's like they had been accepted into the fraternity." One interviewee explained the process.

> In the beginning, we tried to develop a lot of employee loyalty by hiring through a temporary agency. It wasn't until you were through probation that we made you a team member, and we made a big, huge deal of it. We only did it four times a year, once a quarter. We evaluated these people. We went through an elaborate evaluation to decide who was going to be a team member and who wasn't. And people had to be here three, six, or maybe even eight or nine months before they became a team member.

The act of being a team member and being given an employee number was described as a real passage. As one explained, "We gave them pins and had cake and a big

celebration when they became a team member. We made it this huge deal, and people bought into that. People were crying if they didn't make team member." As one team member described, "You felt special!" And as another explained, "It's something you've worked for, and you've built up for, and it was nice. You liked it. That was the big thing, to be a Company A employee." Achieving membership gave employees a positive sense of self and a feeling of accomplishment.

Personalities and Backgrounds That Make One Identified With the Airline Industry

Personalities. There was something special about the personalities and background of the employees interviewed that seemed to support their feelings of connectedness. There was a frequent description given of how working for this company matched their needs. Many described how they were very people-oriented and that they "get a lot of pleasure out of serving people, doing things for people." As one explained, "I thrive on it. Maybe it's more the motherly instinct. This position lets me help somebody. Not just check them in and they're another face going through the gate, but the people I come in contact with, I physically have to help them." Another said that she enjoyed "meeting new faces all the time and getting to talk to a wide variety of personalities." And as one commented, "It's almost like I need to do that—to do something for someone else." And another explained, "My personality is a friendly personality, and I enjoy people."

Love of travel. Many also indicated that they "love to travel and go to new places and see new things." Some indicated that it helped them go places that otherwise might not be affordable. As one described,

I'm a single parent, and I can't afford to fly; I wouldn't be able to afford to fly my kids. Right before we shut down, I had the chance to take them to California and meet some cousins of mine that they've never met my kids, and I've never met their kids. But I was able to do that last year because I work for an airline. And to be able to go down to see my sister and surprise her for her birthday. I was able to zip right down there and zip right back. It is important.

Flexibility. This work tended to attract those who liked the flexibility that it offered. One interviewee stated, "I would much rather be with Company A than a bigger airline because you wouldn't believe the flexibility that we have." It seemed to work for those who did not like the typical "nine-to-five" job, for those wanting part-time work, for those with older children or spouses who were retired, and even for those with young children because the location where they were based did not require additional travel. As one described,

You can fly one or two days a week or you can fly almost every day, as long as it's legal as far as the government goes in getting your rest periods in and everything. You can do what you want to do. You can make it what you want. But then trying to go back to an office is like being penned in or something.

Another explained, "I can swap with my co-workers. I don't want to come to work today. You're off today. Do you want to make some extra money? Come on in." Company A offered overtime and undertime (i.e., can leave early without pay) policies and opportunities to take time off. Job sharing was described. Flexibility also was afforded to the customer. As one explained, "I think we're more flexible than some of the other carriers. Even though we're non-refundable, we do give you your money back, and you know, we do bend the rules."

Interest in aviation career. Others made comments like, "I've always wanted

to be a flight attendant." As one explained,

> Some of the older ladies that get hired and know they wouldn't get
> hired someplace else, they love the fact that they can be a flight
> attendant. And some of them may be divorced after 20-something
> years, and now they like, "I'm a flight attendant. I love it. I always
> wanted to do this." And I'm like, I'm only 26, and I've always wanted
> to do this.

Another interviewee explained how this job was allowing her to fill a high school

dream.

> When I got out of high school, I interviewed at two companies back
> then, a long time ago, to be a flight attendant, and they weren't hiring
> at that time. Well, by the time one of the companies called me to hire
> me, I had gotten married and was pregnant, and then the kids started to
> come, so I just never got a chance to do it. So now that we live fairly
> close, I decided to go ahead and just work part-time. It was something
> I always wanted to do.

Many described where "aviation has been a hobby of mine" or "growing up in

an airline family." An interviewee explained, "I love the airline industry." One

explained, "It's in my genes." An interviewee stated, "Aviation has been in my blood

ever since I can remember." Another explained, "It's in your blood. Once you work

for the airline industry, I don't know why—it sticks with you." One explained, "It's

just hard to get it (love for aviation) out (of your blood)."

Many had relatives and friends working in the airline industry. Also, many

had previous aviation experience. It appeared that the personalities and backgrounds

of many of those interviewed matched the way of life at Company A.

Sharing a Crisis and the Media Attack

Being a part of Company A during the crisis of the crash was truly a bonding experience. One stated, "Adversity bonds people. As long as the adversity is something that those involved have a support for, they'll definitely bond. That (the crisis) just cemented the bond that they already had." One explained, "With the accident, they (employees) took it personally." As one described, "Through the hardships we've endured together and then came back, even though the future is uncertain, it's kind of bonded the work force together." And as another explained, "Going through struggles together, it draws you closer together. The people who stuck around were the ones who were working together, and therefore they became closer." Another interviewee explained,

> It's just like any family. They never get together until something happens. It's either a wedding or a funeral, and they really never get together. They may have dinner occasionally with each other. They may never really get together until something happens. It was a tremendous outpouring (support from other airlines), and our agents accepted that graciously and pulled together as a team to show they're strong and can weather the storm.

And one interviewee stated, "During the shutdown it really affected all of us. The support was just incredible. Everybody was real close. There were meetings and get-togethers during that time. Everybody was really upset and rooting for the company to get started again." One described it this way: "Everybody was in it for the same thing--wanted to do what they could to get us back in the air." It was more than just experiencing a crisis, although that in itself promoted organizational identification. Some described it like a family that bonds even more tightly during a crisis. As one explained, "It was a 180 degree turn from a euphoric atmosphere to depression, from

one emotional level to another overnight. Associations intensified because there was

the struggle for survival." As described by another, "Everybody was in it for the

same thing—wanted to do what they could to get us back in the air." And another

commented when describing all the inspections, "We've kind of weathered a lot of

stuff here." One described an intimate closeness that many employees felt for the

victims and for their company.

> All of the managers had to go to Miami. We were assigned families of
> victims, and I had to be with them around the clock for a week—hand
> and foot. No other airline had done that. They let the Red Cross come
> in and take care of it. They don't even get involved. Their agents
> never get involved. Maybe their CEOs and VPs come out but that's
> about it. Their managers do not get involved. I cried just like they
> did. Like it was my family.

But feelings from the crash were affected by the heavily publicized criticisms

by the media and the FAA. There was almost distinctiveness in how severely the

media treated them. As one explained, "I don't think the public would remember this

incident if it hadn't been pounded into their head over and over (by the media)." This

experience made employees feel "like the underdog fighting against the big lion." As

one described,

> The big guys had to get the government to come in and help to shut us
> down last summer so that they could compete with us. You know that
> made us all get that much closer together I think rather than tearing us
> apart. Now the guys, I hate to say a common enemy, but we've got a
> common goal.

And as another described, "We felt like the little kid on the playground that got

picked on. I think we all came back with our heart trying to make it work." Another

explained, "After the crisis, we felt like an underdog. You had to fight to get back up

again. We were scrutinized; we were the underdog. Other airlines weren't treated

like this. It was a good case of discrimination." One stated that they had to

constantly prove how good they could be. As one explained,

> We couldn't take off because there weren't any ashtrays in one of the
> seats, and the airplane is a non-smoking airline. So we couldn't
> understand why are you delaying our plane for an ashtray when they
> can't smoke on the doggone plane anyway. So you start taking a lot of
> things as being very, very personal.

And another commented, "I feel like, 'Well, you can't knock me down, so I'm going

to keep on fighting you.'" Another described the company leaders as "fighters—

they're not going to give in; they're going to make it." One stated, "During the

shutdown, it brought us quite a bit closer together." And another stated,

> The external forces of mostly the media and the FAA and having
> various powerful voices plot against us which we think is unfair tends
> to pull people together. We were (connected) to begin with, but it just
> increased it. I don't know how you quantify that.

This whole experience brought out a range of emotions as one interviewee described.

> I was here to experience the chaos almost after the accident happened
> until the point we shut down. I experienced the extreme uncertainty
> and anxiety last summer, and I have experienced the excitement when
> we re-started and hopefulness and then the excitement when the
> merger came out.

The intensity of the media attack was described by many.

> For the first several months that we reoperated, it didn't matter if the
> article was about us putting any cooking on our airplane, it was always
> something about "Company A flight X killing all 110 on board." It's
> almost like a mantra.

As many stated, "The news media kind of crucified the company's name." This made

people "work harder together" and feel the need to defend the company. Another

stated, "We can't control the media like that cause we don't have all the big

advertising dollars to give to them that they (the competition) have. That's why the

employees stick together more." And another said, "We all felt so slighted and so violated by the way we were totally raked over the coals through the media. It was total media manipulation." And when describing the accident, one interviewee said, "It personally affected everyone here." And when describing the experience, one said, "I've stuck it out this long; I'll stick it out until the end, I guess." And another commented, "To me that's a challenge. I want to prove myself to them, even if it's my own personal challenge." Another responded to the question about what makes them feel so connected by saying, "I think it's all the problems we had that—all the challenges. I like a challenge."

In addition to sharing this crisis, a large group of employees had been Company E employees who had experienced the crisis of the loss of their airline. As one stated, "I stayed (with Company E) to the bitter end." Having experienced the pain of that loss and sharing a common history, their new life at Company A was like a second chance at life. This opportunity strengthened their closeness with each other and their connection with Company A. As one explained,

> Having been at Company E and knowing that somebody can come in
> and turn the lights off, and it's over with, and I never thought it at
> Company E. We were always losing money and it was just like, we'll
> go on forever, we've been here forever—we'll go on forever. And
> then someone hands you a piece of paper saying, "It's over with."
> And it's like, I've been through this before. I know what it's like. To
> be separated from a job and not want it. You know, not want to be
> separated. I don't want that to happen to these people here at this
> company. I don't want them to experience what I did, and the people
> that it has happened to that are here—we don't want it to happen to us
> again either!

This was for most a battle to survive. And this battle promoted organizational identification.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The focus questions for this research served as the heart of the research

design. The data described in the previous chapter sheds light on these issues. In this

chapter, I shall discuss my interpretations of the data using the framework of the

focus questions.

Organizational Identity

How Do Members Describe Organizational Identity? What Attributes Are

Shared?

Providing Affordable Air Transportation

Members consistently described the purpose of Company A as a central,

enduring element of organizational identity: providing affordable air transportation.

This purpose was presented as a meaningful service benefiting society, although there

was variability in how members described this benefit.

Most members saw this as a unique and needed service directed to those who

otherwise might not be able to fly. Members felt that because Company A provided

reasonable fares for air travel, then those with smaller budgets could fly. The tone in

which members described this mission was often emotional and even patriotic in

nature. They stated that it was not fair that high prices should be demanded for the

privilege of visiting a relative or spending vacation time with one's family. It was

almost like an issue of being fair in a world of inequality. This organization chose

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not to participate in ordering society into castes of privilege and those of reduced opportunity. This company was taking a stand, in spite of the bigger competition, to do what was right for the public. In the past, affordable air transportation had been directed primarily at the leisure traveler; at the time of this research, it was being expanded to include the business traveler who was concerned about a budget. Thus, the service of providing affordable air transportation was targeted to an even larger audience with the expectation that more could benefit by this company's existence, and fairness could be applied to an even greater portion of the public.

Others described the benefit to society as doing what was right. These members explained that airfares for anyone should not have to cost the high prices that the traditional airlines charge. Thus, these members agreed that affordable airfare was Company A's significant contribution to society, and it allowed all travelers the option to pay a reasonable price for air travel.

A third perspective on the benefit of affordable air travel was offered by a smaller number of employees, yet it was a purpose that was included in the company marketing materials. This was the benefit that this company provided to communities and to economic development. Company A had generated new air travel business. By providing low fares to cities, the volume of air travel had increased. And this had a positive economic impact on communities. When Company A offered flights out of a new city, it had an impact on that location because air travel was more affordable, and thus, business development as well as leisure travel were enhanced.

Family Philosophy

In addition to affordable air travel, a majority of the organization members described Company A as a family with attributes of being caring, close, friendly, open, and small. This family philosophy was the second component of organizational identity. This nurturing environment supported enduring friendships and provided the warmth of feeling comfortable and at home. Members shared a bond that tied them to the organization and to each other. Many described the comfort of knowing almost everyone. This made people feel special and like a part of a group whose members truly cared for each other. Having friends at work who shared both good and bad times provided support to and a special camaraderie among the members. Work for many was not a place to clock in and clock out. Rather, it was like going home to those who cared about you and were there for you. Although the organization had 2,000 employees, members felt like they knew each other and had a comfort in communicating with anyone at any level of the organization. This open atmosphere gave members a confidence in their management because they genuinely felt that all doors were open and their concerns and thoughts were valued. This relatively small size gave members a feeling of not being a number like in the bigger airlines.

Customer Service

Members also saw their organization as providing a unique customer service that was a direct outgrowth of their family philosophy. Customers became part of the family while flying with Company A. This distinctive customer service was

described as an answer to the cattle car treatment that other airlines offered. By treating customers as they want to be treated, members felt that their service was special and superior to their competition. And they took pride in this. Customers were not viewed as numbers but rather as individuals with specific needs. It was the duty of each employee to determine these needs and satisfy them to such a degree that customers would not only want to fly with Company A but would also tell their friends about this distinctive service. Because many first-time flyers travel with Company A, members were sensitive to these customers' needs and the special efforts that were required for them. It appeared that this type of service came effortlessly to many of the members; they described a pleasure in interacting with passengers, helping them, and making them happy. This type of customer service focus was a significant organizational attribute and a natural application of the family spirit that permeated the organization.

Safety

Safety might not be considered a part of the organization's identity because safety is not distinctive in this industry. Passenger air transportation cannot afford accidents. But safety was an important organizational attribute for Company A not only because of the importance of safety in air travel but also because of the severe consequences of an error for this company in relation to other companies in this industry. For Company A, at the point in time of this research, any safety problem could destroy the company. It was a unique environment because employees were in the position where they could not make a mistake. With other airlines, a comparable

error would not be devastating. It might not even be noticed. But this was not the unfortunate position of Company A. The doors of Company A could be closed if they found themselves in the spotlight again. Based on the company's history with the media, it was obvious that the media would not allow them to survive. This position was quite unique. Systems had been implemented to enhance their capacity to make an accident as preventable as possible. Safety was more than a concern for members at Company A. It was a necessity. Thus, safety from the perspective of Company A was a requirement for survival, and thus a significant attribute of the organization.

Prior to the accident, safety was a concern as with any airline. But most employees did not believe that Company A had always been in such a vulnerable position. According to some, being a new company and a low-cost carrier put this airline in a category that might demand more scrutiny. To the public, low-cost was often interpreted as cutting back in areas that the major carriers did not neglect. Although this perception was not based on fact, it was a bias that some people held. Thus, some believed that this organization had to pay special attention to issues of safety because any mistake was interpreted within the context of being low-cost. But this feeling was not shared by a majority of the members. Most felt that Company A was providing a product that communities needed, and the public was so excited about their services and prices that issues of safety were downplayed or assumed by the public.

The members described safety as a natural application of their family philosophy. They treated their customers as an extension of the Company A family,

and good customer service demanded a safe flight. As many indicated, safety and customer service were intertwined. Thus, safety, like customer service, was also a natural application of the family spirit that was transferred to the customer with a focus on both an enjoyable trip and a safe one.

Teamwork

Distinctive customer service was accomplished because the members also believed in working as a team to accomplish their goals. This teamwork was another application of Company A's family philosophy. Members described numerous situations where they helped each other in their work. This support was received without having to even ask for it. It appeared to come naturally for these members. They described a type of connnectedness to each other that made it an automatic response. When other members had a need, they were there immediately to respond. This was an extension of the family attributes where caring for each other was central.

Summary

This family philosophy with attributes of being close, caring, friendly, open and small that offered affordable air transportation that benefited society was at the core of this organization. These two components—affordable air transportation and the organizing family spirit—served as the foundation for their business and the framework for how it was conducted. These constituted the essence; they defined what was core, distinctive, and enduring about this organization. These were the

elements that if sacrificed or significantly altered would constitute such a dramatic change in the organization that it would actually be a different company. These components served as the nucleus for what this organization was all about from the perspective of its members.

Customer service, safety, and teamwork were key attributes of this organization that were applications of organizational identity to how they did their business. They were the standards for action that guided the path to achieving that identity. These priorities were critical for defining and practicing what members held dear. These applications were like walking the talk—to act differently would constitute incongruity and deception. These members found a comfort and a fit in what constituted the core, and thus, its application was what came naturally. There was a pride in delivering not only a needed service but also delivering it in a unique manner—through distinctive customer service supported through teamwork with a focus on safety. These were key organizational attributes shared by a majority of the members. They did not constitute organizational identity, but they did constitute key organizational attributes that kept the identity alive.

Thus, the two components of purpose, the focus of their business, and the organizing spirit, the philosophy behind the way they conducted their business, constituted organizational identity. These core attributes described what had been and continued to be distinctive and enduring about this organization as perceived by its members. These components were the essence of the organization, the source of their distinction in the industry, and the soul of the people working there. These core

attributes were strongly shared by the membership of Company A. And I suggest that any significant alteration in these components would constitute a new organization.

How Has the Merger Influenced Organizational Identity?

According to the definition of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985), the criterion of enduring demands that organizational identity attributes have a constancy that is not manipulated by events or time. For this organization, the purpose of delivering affordable air transportation was the constancy for these members. But is constancy in purpose sufficient to constitute organizational identity? I do not believe that a purpose alone makes an organization. A purpose delivered in a distinctive way (as perceived by its members) constitutes organizational identity. For Company A that distinctive way was the family philosophy that they shared. A significant change in that philosophy could damage that identity, producing a new and different organization.

The family philosophy, which was the basis for delivering a distinctive customer service, through teamwork with a primary focus on safety, had been affected by the changes over the six months of this research. This family philosophy, which had been core to this organization, the foundation for its distinctiveness, and the spirit behind its purpose, had been weakened. At the time of the final interviews, members shared a concern that the family feeling was not as it had been only six months earlier. Members appeared confused as to what was the intent of the company's leadership. They initially expected that a more professional appearance would affect issues of dress and some playful activities like games, but they did not

expect the warm, family feeling to be damaged. Six months later, they expressed doubt as to what to expect for their company.

The initial changes in fun and casual were expected. I do not mean to imply that working at Company A or flying with Company A was no longer fun. Rather, there was a new standard that redefined how members did business and what image they projected to the public. Fun was, in the past, a part of their company description of being "fun and friendly." Fun would have to be moderated in its application in efforts to look professional. Thus, decisions would have to be made on how to have fun yet appear both professional and competent. Members were trying to reduce the activities that might appear too playful. There appeared to be some delay in redefining fun for the airline and how to look serious and professional to the public.

The casual, laid-back style, which was most obvious in the uniforms of the employees, presented an image that this company could not afford. This perception of not being serious had to be altered in order for passengers to come back and the company to survive. That transition was being managed and had not yet been completed at the time of final data gathering. Company dress standards for managers had been implemented, and changes in the employees' uniforms would soon take place. A completely different look was being planned for uniforms that would present a more professional appearance.

The data revealed that this fun and casual style that were key attributes of this organization would have to be significantly modified. Thus, these attributes did not constitute organizational identity, but were instead expressions of how the

organization represented itself and provided its services. These key standards of the organization were being modified to respond to the demands of the public.

In addition to the changes in fun and casual, Company A was making significant changes in its features and practices. Where the focus of their business and their advertising was the leisure traveler, the new target was the businessperson who traveled more frequently. A new business class with assigned seating and ticketing through travel agents constituted some of the new features and practices available through this airline. These changes were significant alterations to how this company did its business. These changes provided a new customer base to the previous focus on the leisure traveler in their efforts to regain passengers at a level that would keep them in business. Also, practices such as maintenance changes and computer systems had altered how they did business so that capabilities were enhanced. These features and practices were aspects of an organization that were always open to change in efforts to be competitive with changing events. These did not constitute organizational identity as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985).

The most obvious changes that were most easily noticed by the public were the changes in the leadership, company name, logo, colors, look of the airplanes, and corporate address. Prior to the merger, changes in leadership were implemented. The organization could not survive with a leader who represented the memory of the crash, a memory that needed to be extracted from people's minds. This particular leader was the key founder and the source of much of Company A's organizational identity. But the organization was at the point where survival of that identity was dependent upon removing that key individual from the public's eye. It was part of the

price that the organization had to pay. This leadership change was coupled with changes in another key leadership position in maintenance and engineering; both changes were critical in presenting an image of experience, competence, and professionalism. But these positions did not constitute organizational identity, even though the new CEO had the power to impact that identity. These changes were directed at affecting the image of the organization.

With the merger, the company name, logo, colors, and look of the planes were transformed. These changes were also critical for survival because the media had so successfully transformed the company name and image from one of fun and friendly travel to one of a horrible death of a plane filled with passengers. The media had successfully tarnished this image. Some passengers have a fear of flying; this fear was converted to reality as the public viewed over and over again the pictures of the crash site and the stories of the victims. Thus, Company A used the merger as an opportunity to eradicate this image of death and replace it with the look of something else—a new airline. This required a total image transformation so that name, logo, colors, and the exterior of the airplanes no longer would be connected to the accident. Such changes were quite radical for an organization that had developed its culture around these images. But the members knew it was necessary for the company to survive. These changes, which were quite transformational from the perspective of public image, required an emotional detachment by Company A employees. But the members' loyalty and commitment to the organization made this change possible. Thus, these changes, although considered by many as being the identity of the organization, were really just symbols and representations of the organization.

Although they stood for what was important to the organization, they were not what was core to it. It was their distinctive purpose delivered by a family of workers who treated each other in a unique way and carried that over to their customers that was important; these symbols were merely the organization's way to express itself. Thus, these were changes in symbols and images of the organization that did not constitute organizational identity.

In addition to these changes, Company A also chose to move its corporate headquarters to a neighboring state. Although City A continued to be the site of Company A's major hub, it was considered in the best interests of the organization to locate its corporate headquarters at the site of the merger partner. With the media in City A being the source of their negative treatment, this move was an attempt to diminish future efforts to damage the company. This was also not a change in organizational identity. Rather, it was a symbolic change in seeking a new environment that might give them a better chance to stay alive.

Thus, the merger did not have to affect aspects of organizational identity, although it totally altered its image to the public. Changes were implemented in how the company did its business, but the core family spirit and the purpose of providing affordable air transportation as a service to society was initially left intact. How the organization looked did not constitute organizational identity. This was the packaging, a nonpermanent representation of the organization.

This packaging is important because it must be constantly evaluated in a company's efforts to be competitive. These are the elements that are image. They are not those elements that are core, distinctive, and enduring. At the heart of this

organization is a philosophy that is the heart and soul of the organization. This core attribute is something that the public rarely considers. Yet, this philosophy coupled with the purpose is the reason a product is viewed as a success or failure. Although these attributes constitute the buried gems of the organization, they are the everyday reality and the understood way things work in the organization as viewed by its members. They are the essence that must survive if the organization, as it has been in the past, is to endure.

The organization was at a pivotal point related to organizational identity: Would the organization continue to have its identity of the past, or would it become a new company? To preserve its purpose yet sacrifice its family philosophy would mean that Company A would no longer be what it was. Its essence would be altered. If this were the case, then a replacement for this family spirit would surely, on a short-term basis, affect its distinctive capacity to provide the services it prided itself at offering—distinctive customer service provided through a caring team effort with a focus on safety. Such an identity transformation could be difficult for its members who felt connected with the organization as they had known it in the past. But what appeared to be almost equally damaging was the lack of a decision in what identity this organization would have. At the point in time of this research, that decision had not been communicated to its members. And this period of transition was difficult for many. This delay not only gave members an environment of uncertainty that contributed to diminished productivity but also produced a climate of high turnover that could be the real villain in this transformation. Because high turnover in an environment of extended transition could be devastating to an organization.

Construction of Identity

What Contributes to a Member's Perception of Organizational Identity?

Organizational identity attributes define the essence of the organization. Members clearly cited individuals, practices, experiences, and events that contributed to the development of the unique identity of Company A. They cited founders, hiring practices, previous employment, company size, training, systems, celebrations, and personal experiences that had contributed to the construction of organizational identity.

Founders

The founders of Company A were clearly responsible for what this organization was all about. The CEO and founder was mentioned by many as a source of the family spirit and distinctive market niche. He always wanted people to speak to each other on a first-name basis. He embodied those values and served as the symbol to the public of both the mission of the organization and how its members related to one another. He not only spoke those ideals but also lived them. He was described as the model of warmth, friendliness, and caring. His office was always open, and people shared a closeness with him that permeated the organization. According to the organization's members, this founder truly cared for the people of this company; the emotion was clear. The company's purpose to provide low-cost transportation was his theme from the beginning. His dedication to the cause and these values were evident not only within the organization but also to the public, after

the accident. As a central player in the construction of this organization, this founder provided the foundation and framework for Company A's organizational identity.

Hiring Practices

Hiring practices also contributed to the construction of this organization's identity. The selection process was focused on hiring people who could provide this distinctive customer service. The degree of caring and concern for customers was so important that they could not afford to leave it to chance. Thus, selection activities were directed at spotlighting those who were energetic and enthusiastic, who enjoyed talking with people, and who were genuinely warm, friendly, and caring. The hiring process selected individuals with these traits, and then those people continued to hire others like themselves.

Previous Employment in Airline Industry

Many of the people who started up this company had previously worked together at other airlines. Thus, when Company A was created, it provided an opportunity for former airline industry employees to work together again in an industry that they loved.

Because many Company A employees, especially in the beginning, were former Company E employees, there was a closeness that they brought to this company. This Company E group had experienced the closing of their airline, and there was a special relationship that many of them shared. For some groups, the loss of the company had meant a loss of seniority; thus, to join any other established

airline, if they would be hired, would put them in low seniority. But with Company A, they had a second chance at life. They could start with Company A and have the seniority that they had been accustomed to or at least something close. Company A gave many the opportunity to do what they loved again and the chance to do it with dignity. These employees also brought with them their focus on teamwork that was central to their Company E experience.

Size

Many refer to a perception of smallness of this organization. Even with over 2,000 employees, there was a relative sense of being small. People felt like each individual was unique and special; it was typical to not only recognize people but also know their names. It appeared that this concern for not being treated like a number was very important in this organization. Because seniority was based on hiring date and each person had their date and their corresponding number, a relatively small and young organization like Company A afforded one the opportunity to move up quickly in seniority. Thus, the smallness offered a genuine feeling of being part of the Company A family and the opportunity to move more quickly to a position of seniority than in the larger airlines.

Training

The training experience was an opportunity to confirm and put into practice the attributes of organizational identity by offering experiences to strengthen what this organization considered as important. Members described the effects of the

training content and methods of delivery that contributed to the attributes promoted in the organization. The focus of much of the training was on safety and customer service. The attribute of teamwork was embedded in training activities to promote this emphasis. Trainers had a warm and caring style. Throughout the training process, members were reinforced with the standards that served as the priorities for this organization.

Systems

Systems were also vehicles for promoting organizational identity, and Company A had systems and practices in place that supported the closeness, friendliness, open feeling, and team spirit. Members described how the scheduling of in-flight encouraged the bonding of the crew. Being together for weeks at a time instilled a true team effort because members not only knew each other but also were partners, over and over again, in serving their customers. Systems and practices that supported segregating pilots from in-flight were not considered relevant in this organization. The crew appeared to function as a team without the airs that could deter communication.

The open-door policy was a system practiced from the organization's beginning and considered applicable as well at the time of this research. The understanding that an employee's door was open and a member could approach and speak to anyone was felt throughout the organization. This gave members a confidence and a feeling that each individual was considered important in this organization.

Evaluation systems also promoted aspects of the organization that were important. Members were evaluated for how well they transferred that warm and friendly manner to their customer through competent, courteous, and friendly service.

Celebrations

Celebrations were also times to promote the warmth of this organization and unify the workforce. People cared about each other and celebrations such as picnics, parties, luncheons, and other special events provided experiences to celebrate their common purpose and come together like a family sharing good times.

Personal Experiences

Personal experiences also contributed to a member's perception of organizational identity. Members experienced warm, family-like feelings on a daily basis with caring supervisors and warm and friendly employees. These daily experiences were the actions that made these beliefs real. In addition, members had perceptions of what others both inside and outside the organization thought about their company, and this could affect perceptions of organizational identity.

Conclusion

At the time of the final interviews, the influence of some of these factors had been reduced. The founders were no longer actively running the organization. And with the merger, the size of the organization was increasing. Members mentioned fewer celebrations than in the past. Personal experiences were also less reinforcing

because this period of transition had produced feelings of uncertainty and confusion as to the future direction of Company A. It appeared that hiring, training, and systems were becoming the predominant vehicles for constructing and reinforcing identity. At this time, a clear statement on that which was core, distinctive, and enduring—other than providing affordable air transportation—had not been communicated in a uniform manner to all members.

Leadership had not yet replaced the role held by founders in the past in giving direction and focus to what this organization was about and where it would be moving. These issues were in question at the time of this research, and thus, the future of organizational identity for Company A was not clear.

Merger Feelings

How Can the Organization Support Its Members During This Merger?

Although the merger, for most, did not result in the loss of jobs or even a fear of such a loss, the employees still described the typical merger feelings of uncertainty and loss. The uncertainty was rooted in what they described as a lack of information. With information confined to the top of the organization, even members who typically had been kept informed in the past, were not included in discussions. Due to concerns about leaks that could violate regulations or reveal information too early to the public, those who held information kept it confidential. Thus, even minor information that could be discussed to relieve some of the tension was not shared. Members repeatedly stated that they understood that some information must be kept

privileged, but more trivial information, such as what was changing with their uniforms, could have been shared.

With official communications shut down, the rumor mill took over. Thus, fears were stirred up due to a lack of hard information. It appeared that members had questions, and the people who they reported to did not have any information that could relieve this tension. Knowledge stayed at the top and did not filter down. And with minimal official information, members felt totally left out.

All they wanted was an opportunity to meet face-to-face with their leadership and hear anything. Even to be told that they could not be told certain things at this time would have been sufficient. They did not expect a lot. They just wanted to be included. To many, being left out made them feel like they were not important. It made them think that the leadership of the organization did not care about them as people.

Even though most were told that job loss should not be their concern, these employees still had the stress and burden of just not knowing the future of the company. Many described feelings of insecurity. Members talked about previous experiences where Company A revealed information to the public prior to informing employees. These experiences hurt those who gave their hearts and souls to this organization.

Thus, the primary request by members to support them through this change was connected to sharing information. Most felt like the organization had done nothing to support them, yet all they really requested was to be included. The future of the company was considered quite important, because the company's future was,

for many, also their own future. But to exist in an environment where the future was a void was difficult and stressful. They understood that people do not always know what the future will bring. But at least to have a glimpse of what the leadership hoped for would give them the opportunity to share collectively in that dream.

Members wanted basically two things. First, they wanted to be included. They wanted the leadership of the organization to show that they cared about the people. They wanted to feel like part of the team. This did not require a lot; just meetings to share whatever could be shared. Most suggested face-to-face meetings. Others also recommended town hall meetings and rallies, the use of memos, and keeping the President's Line updated regularly. And secondly, they wanted to have a future vision of the organization—where it was going and what it was working toward—so they too could share in that vision and help make it happen. Because these members' futures were tied to this organization, they needed an understanding of the company's vision in order to provide for themselves purpose and direction. With their dreams tied to the company, this void produced stress and uncertainty.

In addition to uncertainty due to the lack of information, many members also expressed a sense of loss. This loss was connected to the loss of the company name and especially the logo. Although some had never gotten attached to the logo, many felt extremely connected to it. It was almost a lifelike symbol of their organization that had become so much a part of their lives. The organization had done a successful job at building loyalty to this symbol. People bought clothes and other items to express their commitment to it. It was like wearing their loyalty on their backs so the

world could see that Company A was their organization. And now this attachment would have to be severed.

The transition of going from the original logo to the new look literally took place overnight. Where you saw the logo on one day, by mid-morning the next day it was almost totally removed. Yes, some kept their watches with the logo on it, and some did not totally discard all paraphernalia with the logo; but to the public, the transformation needed to appear complete. A fresh start required a totally different look. Thus, at the press conference for the name change, everything changed from the standpoint of the name, logo, and colors, and this change brought out emotions of loss in many.

With the loss of these elements of the organization, there was an understanding. This change was necessary—even critical—for their survival. The employees understood that there would be no future if this change did not take place. They realized that the media had transformed their image from one of fun and friendly, affordable travel to one of death. And they understood that a company cannot stay in business if people have a fear of flying on their planes.

Associated with this name and logo change were several events, company sponsored and employee sponsored, to make the transformation more bearable. The company sponsored a farewell luncheon for its employees at the airport, and one functional group, not located at the airport, had their own celebration. Also, a farewell party, planned separately by some employees, was held the night before the name change as a way to come together and celebrate the symbol and retire it to their memories. Although informally planned, many employees attended. That appeared

to be the way the employees did things. It was not unusual for them to spend time together after work. Thus, these events helped mark the change and support the members through it.

Although many experienced this emotional loss, several indicated that the old logo was not appropriate for this business. They preferred a more professional look. Thus, for these members, this change in name and logo was a needed and desired change.

What was most interesting were the responses of many employees when the changes went into effect. At the press conference, many employees who were not working showed up to attend and show their support for their company. There was a feeling of excitement and new life in their reactions to the events. They demonstrated hopeful expectations for a bright future. With the upcoming merger, they anticipated a renewal and opportunity to move ahead. This was a chance at a new life and an opportunity to grow, and this was what they hoped for. Thus, although the change was dramatic that day, it was met with enthusiasm. These members were ready to grab onto a new look and a new logo because that would provide them a second chance at life. Because to them, although the sacrifice was great, the inner core was still intact. Their feelings of family and connectedness were undamaged, and their purpose was still their focus. So whatever it took from the standpoint of image management, they were willing to sacrifice because what was really important was their organizational identity, and the guts of the organization, at the point in time of the interviews, were still present.

With these changes, members felt hopeful that things would improve. They specifically talked about desired changes in pay and benefits that the merger might allow. Without these improvements, many said that valued employees would be forced to leave the organization. They would leave, not because they wanted to, but because economically they needed to. Thus, the merger offered hope that these improvements would be accompanying this merger event.

Multiple Future Images

How Do Members Describe Future Organizational Images?

The data revealed multiple future images held by employees of the organization. It appeared that future images were important barometers for people to use to stimulate motion in their lives and provide meaning and direction to their actions. Members described expectations for the organization's future, their desired or ideal images of the future, images that they feared for the future, perceptions of what others inside and outside the organization saw as the company's future, and their lack of knowledge of what the company officially had as its plans for the future.

Expected Future Image

Most members clearly had images of what Company A would look like two years ahead. Members' expected future images were fairly consistent. Not only did they foresee survival but they also pictured controlled growth for the company. Many described more flights, more planes, more destinations, and more employees. They expected modest profits in comparison to their fabulously successful past but still the

opportunity to be number one in the delivery of affordable air transportation. They also described new opportunities for advancement and improvements in pay and benefits that would offer more security.

Throughout this discussion of expected future images, members described a consistency in what they saw as the organization's identity. Company A would still be the provider of affordable air transportation for the leisure traveler as well as the business traveler on a budget. Although there may be changes due to the need to look more professional, they did not foresee that this would have to impact how they acted with each other and the family spirit that permeated their organization.

The only members who had some difficulty in discussing a future image were those whose jobs were uncertain. For those employees, the future was like a void. And this was not easy to manage. It appeared that members needed some picture that they could feel personally connected to in order to have direction and purpose in their lives. The lack of that image appeared quite damaging.

Ideal Future Image

Employees also clearly provided an ideal image of what they would like to see as Company A's future. This ideal had two unique features. First, to many, the ideal was to be like they had been in the past—wildly successful. It was as if they had experienced the ideal and then it was abruptly taken away. If only they could have that once again. To others, the ideal was a new experience; it was gauged against others. Members expressed the desire to be number one and beat Company Z, their competition, or achieve the excellence of Company W. Their ideal was clearly

expressed in competitive terms against their rival and what they perceived to be the source of their difficulties. Yet many could also see themselves as being like Company W, another low-cost air carrier that had achieved respect despite a difficult start. Thus, their ideals were images that were clear in their minds. These images were not abstract dreams, but images that they could picture and understand. These vivid images disclosed the way they saw the world and how they hoped to see Company A in the future.

Feared Future Image

Members also spoke of fears that they held about the future of their organization. They worried about whether the company would be able to make it in the years ahead. Some described a concern that Company A might lose the family philosophy that was so important to them. They did not want to forget their history or lose aspects of closeness and feeling like a person rather than a number; this was something unique about Company A that gave meaning to their lives.

Perceptions of What Others In the Organization See as the Future

Members typically felt like their images of the future were consistent with others within the organization. They could not speak for everyone in the company, but they usually could express some knowledge of what others, who they interacted with, thought about the company's future. Members did not think that they were isolated in their expectations and dreams for the company.

Perceptions of What Others Outside the Organization See as the Future

Members appeared to be more uncertain about what others outside the organization thought about the future of their company. Although many described the positive feedback that they received from their passengers, they rarely could speak to what others outside the organization saw as the company's future. It appeared that either this was not a concern of most members or that the perception was that most outsiders don't worry about a company's future. There was also the added complication of the media, which they described as having a negative impact on what outsiders thought. For some, there was confusion as to why the media would work so hard at trying to destroy them. This was upsetting and perplexing and considered a unique obstacle for their company.

Company Future Image

There was almost a unified agreement that members had no idea what the leadership of their organization had as its future image for Company A. There appeared to be a void in this information. This was quite disturbing to many because the employees described the desire to share in the company vision so that they could help make it happen. By not knowing leadership's position on the continuation of the organizational identity of the past or leadership's plans for the future, the members felt frustrated both as employees and as individuals.

Organizational Identification

How Can the Organization Cultivate Member Identification?

Signs of Identification

When talking to and observing the members of Company A, it was quite apparent that they expressed in many ways a strong sense of identification with this organization. Using the criteria taken from Mael's (1988) "Identification with Psychological Group Scale," (p. 123), these members repeatedly made remarks or acted in ways that demonstrated this identification. Members stated that they were interested in what others thought about the organization. Company A was their company, and they were sensitive to any comments about it. The company had been the object of much media attack, and the employees took this criticism personally. Emotions were quite strong. They got defensive, angry, and felt pain with these attacks. It had not been easy because the criticisms had been unrelenting. These members stayed with the company throughout its ordeal and had a personal commitment to making things work. Thus, any attack on Company A was considered a personal attack.

Members also considered the company's successes as their own success. This was because they felt like they had played an integral role in the organization, and for them to be successful, the company had to be successful. They described praise for the company as feeling like a personal compliment. Since they felt like a part of the company, they shared in the praise it received.

Although they sometimes referred to the leadership as "they," these members typically thought of the company in terms of "we" because they felt so much a part of

it. Many described it as their company; there was a strong sense of ownership and connectedness to it.

In addition to these signs of identification, members expressed their sense of belonging to Company A in many other ways as well, that were not included in Mael's instrument. The amount of clothes that employees bought and wore with the logo on it was quite unique. They loved expressing their attachment to Company A through their clothing so others could see it. The only time members stated that they chose not to wear the company clothes outside of work was because of the harassment and questions that they received due to the accident. It appeared that many gave these clothes and other logo items as gifts, and they were proud to demonstrate their love for the company this way. Many also indicated an interest in having a career at this company. To retire with Company A was a hope of many. Members also described their company's problems as their own problems. With the accident, many took it very personally and felt responsible for any actions that carried the company name. The feelings of loss and the pain that they experienced from the accident would be with them forever. Members also spent a lot of time together, not just at work but also after work. Employees had genuine friendships that were treasured. These employees felt like a member of the Company A family. It was their company and an integral part of their lives.

Strength of Identification

In order to discuss strength of identification, using Dutton et al. (1994) criteria, members were asked to measure the overlap of their own identities and the

attributes that defined the organization. To this question, most indicated in the initial interviews a 75% to 100% overlap indicating a strong identification. To discuss salience of identification in comparison to other groups, members were then asked to rank order the groups to which they felt a sense of connectedness with. For most, Company A ranked second only to their families. This also suggested a strong identification.

Consequences of Identification

In their discussions about the organization, members often made reference to the positive consequences of their identification. Members indicated that they were loyal, dedicated, and hardworking. As previously discussed under the attribute of teamwork, members also indicated that they were cooperative with each other, and they described many citizenship behaviors that were part of their everyday activities. When describing their ideal futures, they often expressed competitiveness with another airline. They also asserted a confidence in the company that they believed was demonstrated by their faithful devotion to it.

Construction of Identification

In explaining what had made these employees feel so connected and identified with this company, members gave a variety of responses. It appeared that constructing an environment of such identification was not a simple formula. Rather, it was a complex collection of conditions and circumstances that together produced such perceptions of belonging. This strong sense of connectedness was possibly the

result of the following components: (1) being a part of a start-up and having a real sense of ownership with opportunities for growth and development, (2) a nurturing family philosophy at work, (3) conditions that have cultivated a positive sense of self for its members, (4) certain personalities and backgrounds, and (5) the experience of a crisis and the severe media attacks. Although organized in these five categories to facilitate discussion, there is overlap in these elements because the complexity of this process is neither linear nor cleanly separated into these component parts. It is a systemic collection of conditions that contributed to a sense of belonging with the organization.

Start-up, sense of ownership, and opportunities and seniority. Being a part of a start-up put company members in a special position. They were not only employees of the company but also its creators. Seeing a company grow from infancy and contributing to many aspects of its success gave employees a special relationship with the organization. It was a real sense of ownership; they took part in creating how things worked, and they were there to experience its successes and failures. By being there from the early stages, members developed a sense of connection where the organization was their baby. They had extensive knowledge as a result of being a part of the decision making; this knowledge was quite empowering. They knew why rules were or were not created; they knew the history, the legends, and the good and bad times. The founders were their friends, not names on annual reports or pictures on walls. They were real people who they had communicated with and felt connected to. The dream of these founders had been directly conveyed to these members not through memos or reports but by being individually touched by the message as

expressed from the lips of the founder himself. And the emotion, the energy, and the excitement were communicated with the message. Being able to grow with the company as it grew was quite rewarding. The lives of the individuals and the lives of the organization became connected almost in a way that was inseparable. And this connection contributed to member identification.

With this sense of being a creator was also the feeling of ownership. And, based on these interviews, a sense of ownership can encourage identification. In one group, they literally constructed their workstations. They built it and then made it all happen. They truly felt like work was a team effort, and they were an integral part of the team. They felt a sense of control over their lives at work.

An environment of opportunity can also promote identification. Members felt like they had every opportunity to contribute; all they had to do was volunteer. This feeling of unlimited opportunity was quite empowering and stimulating to someone who wanted to grow and develop through their work, and it contributed to a positive sense of self.

Also, a young organization offered something highly regarded in the airline industry: seniority. With no one more than four years senior to anyone else, an environment of equality was nurtured, and opportunity was real.

Family philosophy. Members described this family philosophy of being caring, friendly, and open where they felt a sense of closeness with each other, almost like they were part of a small group. Work felt like family. It appeared that this nurturing environment facilitated member identification. This organizational identity

attribute was the spirit of the organization and was also the impetus for perceptions of genuine connectedness with it.

An environment that supported such relationships of caring and closeness was not something that members felt was common to organizations. Members saw this unique setting as being quite satisfying, and the warmth it provided was captivating, gratifying, and comfortable in this world of change. This organization offered its members a place to call home. And in return, they felt very connected to it. To feel a part of an environment where members' thoughts mattered and where they could go to anyone and express how they felt gave them a confidence and a feeling of satisfaction. Also, in the attempt to find purpose in life, having an organization that felt small, where they didn't feel like a number, added meaning to their presence and their existence. It supported their sense of humanity and capacity to contribute to a larger picture. This family worked together, played together, celebrated together, and suffered together. This was what built a sense of devotion in these employees and made their work more than an individual expression. It made work an opportunity to join together with friends to offer a service that was needed by society.

Positive sense of self. Working at Company A contributed to a member's positive sense of self because of the company's success and distinctiveness as well as the satisfaction that it afforded its members. Being a part of this company prior to the accident was an experience that many described as quite unique. Company A was so successful in its first few years that being a part of that success made its members feel good about themselves. The company was also distinctive in the services it was offering and the way they delivered their product. This distinctiveness also made

employees feel good about being a part of such a special organization. They felt like celebrities; the company made lots of money; the stock kept going up. Everything that they did turned to gold. They felt like they were contributing to a service to benefit families who otherwise would not be visiting relatives or taking trips with their family. They could identify with these needs, and they were proud to be making that happen. This gave them a heightened sense of gratification that made work really pleasure and made life at Company A quite satisfying.

In addition, many in a particular functional area described a process that they had to go through in order to earn the right to be an employee. To achieve this position as a team member and as a Company A employee was considered an accomplishment. They worked for months to achieve the right to be an employee and by earning this status, they felt good about themselves. This passage was a celebration that was officially marked so others could honor this achievement.

Personalities and backgrounds. Although personalities and individual backgrounds didn't ensure that members would be connected with this particular organization, they could help determine if there was a match between the individual and a life in the airline industry. It appeared that many of these employees shared some common past experiences and preferences for what they were looking for in their work. Many described their love for helping people, serving people, and doing things for others. This was a critical requirement for someone in a service industry. Members also expressed a desire for travel. This was also satisfied in their employment with an airline and the flight benefits that were offered to employees. Members voiced a need and desire for a flexible job, not the traditional nine-to-five

commitment. This industry allowed this type of flexibility in days as well as hours for work. Some also revealed an unmet desire to be involved in this type of work, a goal that they had contemplated in their past and had never extinguished. It was often portrayed as a dream of what they wanted to do some day in their lives. Many also referred to relatives—mothers, fathers, sisters, and uncles—who also worked in this industry. Several explained this interest in aviation as being in their blood. This personal connection to this type of work was a match that made work more satisfying. It did not ensure identification with a specific organization, but it supported a match with the way this industry operated.

For Company A, the organizational identity was extremely appealing to its members. It anchored members' sense of self to something larger that had a similar essence. This gave members a natural avenue for expression, and it provided the organization with identified members.

Sharing a crisis and the media attack. The identification that these members exhibited was further strengthened not just by positive experiences but also from their experience with the tragedy of the crash. Being with the company during those events and staying with the company through all the criticisms, the furlough, and beyond sent a clear message of identification. If an employee stayed with the organization through all that, there was more than a warm feeling that one had for the company. These members were so bonded that they could not always explain the intensity of their devotion. It appeared that the severity of the bad times brought people together in a way that no other experience could have duplicated. There was a deep feeling here, not a superficial connection. Members in the organization felt pain

together, cried together, feared for their futures together, and stayed together for

support. Although others were aware of the trauma of these events on the

organization's members, only the members could truly understand how all this

impacted their lives.

With the severe media criticism and responses of the FAA, members clung to

each other for support and emotional strength. They were united as the underdog

who was trying to provide a valuable service to society. They had to stand strong in

spite of those outside the organization who were trying to destroy them. The options

were simple—either give up or unite in their strength of their love for their company

and what it offered the public. They understood the influence of their competition,

and they could not let themselves give in. It was not just their jobs at stake; they were

making the American Dream a reality. They were working for a higher purpose, and

they had each other to keep them strong. The attacks were unrelenting, yet those who

truly knew that this company was special, hung on with firm determination. Many

hated the fact that the company had to give up its name and its logo. They knew that

the media had the power to force those changes. But they would not give up

everything; they would not give up that which was their true identity. This part of

their essence was something that no one, outside the company, could take away as

long as they could stay in business. So their focus was to stay alive and make it work.

Eventually they would be able to regain their status. They were willing to make

sacrifices because what was important was the home they had created, and the

customers that they so devotedly served. This crisis allowed a greater strength to

emerge, and this strength endowed them with resilience and the capacity to endure.

Thus, this crisis further strengthened member identification with Company A.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

Introduction

This research was designed to explore members' perceptions of organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification in the context of a merger. The purpose of this study was to contribute to theory and the existing literature in these domains and offer suggestions to support HRD practice.

Mergers have become a common vehicle for organizational growth and change, yet their success is often dependent on how well the human aspects of the process are managed. This research addresses the human aspects of mergers and offers suggestions for managing and implementing such a change. The HRD professional should be the "agent of continuous transformation" (Ulrich, 1998, p. 125), taking a lead role in helping the organization enhance its capacity for change. This requires that the HRD professional focus on the critical levers that provide stability for its members during times of transition. By viewing productivity through the lens of both the leadership and members of the organization, the HRD professional can be the key to achieving the excellence needed to be competitive.

This research also contributes to future research on identity and identification issues in a merger or acquisition. Previous research has dealt with issues of loss of identity and identification, yet it has lacked a theoretical framework. Without clarity in definitions, even rigorous research may not be bounded in a way that contributes to theory development. Organizational identity theory ~nd organizational identification,

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based on a social identity theory perspective, offer a theoretical basis for future research and discussion.

Mergers inherently cause instability in organizational life; therefore, such changes may induce members to think about how they view the organization and their identification with it. Thus, this setting was also suitable for studying organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification.

This research was designed to investigate how members constructed their perceived organization identity and how it was reflected in a collective, shared organizational identity. Because this study spanned a six-month period, it provided an opportunity to investigate the attributes that not only were core and distinctive but also could endure such a major change event. This research was also designed to investigate members' perceptions of the future of the organization, factors that influenced those perceptions, and the relationship between those perceptions and the merger process.

The members of this organization exhibited a strong identification with this organization; therefore, it was a suitable site for examining the factors that helped cultivate such intense organizational identification. Reflections on signs of identification and items for measuring organizational identification are also discussed.

The language of organizational identity is in its infancy. This research contributes to expanding the labels and definitions that are part of organizational identity theory so that a common language can promote further research and theory development.

This chapter provides a review of the findings. This is followed by a discussion of the study's implications related to theory and the existing literature, implications for HRD practice, and reflections on qualitative case study methods used in this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research. As a final note, I am including an extensive compilation of suggested propositions that emerged from this research that can serve as a basis for future research on the domains of organizational identity, future organizational images, organizational identification, and the human aspects of mergers.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research are grouped into the following areas: shared organizational identity attributes, structure of organizational identity, construction of organizational identity, multiple future images, future organizational images and a merger, language of organizational identity, signs of organizational identification, strength of organizational identification, construction of organizational identification, and the human aspects of a merger.

Organizational Identity and Future Organizational Images
Shared Organizational Identity Attributes

Data revealed that a small number of organizational identity attributes constituted organizational identity. Although five attributes were initially identified as being core, distinctive, and enduring by a majority of the members interviewed,

only two attributes constituted organizational identity based on the follow-up interviews and an analysis of attributes that had already been lost.

Most members agreed that the purpose of Company A was to provide affordable air transportation. Members believed that this was the core business of this organization, and that business had not been influenced by the fact that their customer base was expanding to include not only leisure travelers but also business travelers.

Company A remained in the business of providing air transportation at a reduced price in comparison to the major airlines. If this business should significantly change, I suggest that the organization would then have a new identity and the previous organization would no longer exist. At the point in time of this research, this purpose was intact. This component of organizational identity had been officially and publicly supported by the leadership and communicated through speeches, marketing materials, and advertisements. The purpose of the business was clear to the members, and even with the modification in customer base, the purpose remained constant.

The second component of organizational identity apparent in this case study was the family philosophy of being friendly, caring, open, close, and small. This philosophy permeated all aspects of the operation. It colored how members behaved with each other as well as with the customer. It was not only the essence of how they did business but also the framework for behavior.

If there is a major alteration in how this family philosophy is viewed by its members, I suggest that the organization would have a new identity. A minor alteration could be managed. But any significant change in what members have

defined as the friendships, the caring and closeness that they share for each other, plus the open feeling that they had within the organization that made it feel so small, would alter that identity.

Although the attributes of customer service, safety, and teamwork were shared by most members, I believe that they did not actually constitute organizational identity. These were significant attributes of this organization, applications of that family philosophy to how they do their work. These application attributes were priorities for Company A. They were the standards for action that supported organizational identity. These attributes were a natural byproduct of the family philosophy and the purpose of the organization.

A previous component of the attributes that resulted from the family philosophy was a fun and casual style in doing their work. These priorities had been significantly altered with this merger. Fun and casual were being replaced with a more professional image. Although this was a major change for the members of this organization, it did not constitute a change in how members dealt with each other. They could still have fun with each other; work could be fun. But how they presented themselves to the public required a different tone that could be managed with appropriate tools and training. It was similar to putting on one set of clothes to go to a ballgame and another set of clothes to go to a wedding. People were accustomed to making such adjustments to suit what was appropriate behavior. This was a relatively minor alteration in the minds of the members, which did not alter their purpose or their family philosophy. Thus, it did not alter the essence of the organization.

In summary, this organization had a purpose of affordable air transportation and a philosophy that could be metaphorically defined as a family. Any significant alteration in these would constitute a change in organizational identity, which would have tremendous repercussions. Its members would have to reexamine the new purpose and philosophy to determine if it worked for them, and the organization would have to evaluate changes needed to promote the transformation. This would require a major adjustment for the members of the organization, extensive work for the leadership, and dramatic changes within the organization. With any changes in organizational identity, there would be numerous systemic changes that must be made to ensure that all facets of the organization were in alignment with the new identity.

The shared organizational attributes of customer service, safety, and teamwork were the priorities that supported organizational identity. These attributes could be altered while leaving organizational identity intact as long as the altered attributes were in alignment with that identity.

Structure of Organizational Identity

The findings of this research suggest that organizational identity is composed of a purpose and a philosophy. The purpose is the organization's fundamental reason for being in business, and the philosophy is the framework and guiding spirit for how members do that business. These two components are organizational identity as viewed by its members. It is the basis for what members do at work and how they do it. Because this is the core and essence of the organization and the foundation and framework for action, it is the heart and soul of the organization.

Surrounding these organizational identity components are priorities, practices, and projections of the organization. This is what outsiders see and what insiders do naturally if their behavior is inherently aligned with the identity. An organization typically has priorities or standards for action that are more enduring although they are not organizational identity. These attributes are a direct application of the purpose and philosophy to work. Outside of those more enduring attributes are practices and features that fluctuate with the needs of the organization in its attempts to be competitive as well as projections or images of the organization that are a reflection of the organization to the public. These images, although extremely important to the organization, are also not part of organizational identity. They are typically symbolic representations of the organization. Included in these images are the company name, logo, colors, location of corporate headquarters, and, in this case, even the image of the leader. I do not mean that these are nonessential elements. Rather, these are elements that are relatively easy to manipulate in comparison to organizational identity. Although these are the aspects of the organization that are most visible to the public, most are symbols that are used by the organization to influence impressions.

Leadership is a unique component of these image attributes. The leader is an organizational image for the public; in addition, the leader can have the power to create and change organizational identity and thus produce systemic change. Organizations can use a leadership change as the force to transform organizational identity as insiders have known it and replace it with a new purpose or philosophy thus altering its identity.

Construction of Organizational Identity

Findings indicate that organizational identity is a product of multiple elements, and those elements can also be used to maintain those attributes. Although organizational identity attributes are core, distinctive, and enduring, both leadership and members of the organization must preserve them if they are to endure. All facets of the organization should be in alignment with that identity to ensure organizational stability and continuity of purpose.

Based on this research, the following have contributed to the way this organization constructed its organizational identity: founders, hiring practices, previous employment of organizational members, organizational size, training, systems, celebrations, and personal experiences. Personal experiences are influenced not only by what a member sees and does related to work but also by what others inside and outside the organization say and think about the organization. The term *construed internal image* refers to what a member believes others in the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization.

The consistency in how these factors support organizational identity can impact the organization. Fragmented activities that do not contribute to the preservation of organizational identity could eventually lead to the organization's destruction. At the same time, flexibility in action is easily supported as long as actions do not violate organizational identity. This provides members with the potential for operating in an empowered environment with the purpose, philosophy, and priorities as their guide. The findings of this research suggest that another

element is critical for organizational success—a clear picture of the organization's future.

Multiple Future Images

According to the findings of this research, members had multiple future images of their organization: expected future images, ideal future images, feared future images, perceptions of what others in the organization saw as the organization's future, and perceptions of what outsiders saw as the organization's future. The content of these images was neither original nor innovative. Members gauged their visions by what they had experienced in the past as well as what others in the industry had accomplished.

The perceptions that members had of what others inside and outside the organization thought about the future of the organization influenced member's own perceptions of the future. It mattered what others in the organization thought because without consistent positive efforts and expectations, members' own pictures were dampened. One critical insider vision that could have a tremendous impact on a member's perception of the future was the vision expressed by the leadership of the organization. In this organization, this image was missing for most employees interviewed.

Future Organizational Images and a Merger

This research also suggests that uncertainty during a time of organizational change is often based on two unknowns—the potential loss of one's employment and

the lack of a clear picture of what the future will be for the organization. A message clearly expressed by most members was for information that could be shared. And most of this information was directed at being able to picture what things would be like for them in this changed environment. Even basic questions like new uniforms were a concern for employees because they needed information to construct a picture not just of the company's future but also of their own futures. Without this knowledge, there was a void in understanding not only who the organization was that one was a part of but also where it was going.

The future is a journey shared by the organization's members. This future picture does not have to be overly detailed to have sufficient substance for members to construct a mental image. The lack of such an image for an indefinite period of time can potentially damage the organization. Without clear direction, members construct their own future images that may or may not be consistent with the plans of leadership or with the images of others in the organization. Without unity in direction, it may be more difficult to achieve organizational goals.

Language of Organizational Identity

This research includes several new terms to expand the organizational identity language and support enhanced communication and research in this area.

Application attributes are priorities, practices, and projections that are applications or representations of organizational identity.

Application attributes gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and future organizational image where organizational identity is left intact.

Construed current organizational images are the images that members have of what others inside (construed internal image) and outside (construed external image) the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization.

Construed external future image is what a member believes others outside the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Construed future images are the multiple future images that a member has of what others inside (construed internal future image) and outside (construed external future image) the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Construed internal future image is what a member believes others in the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Construed internal image is what a member believes others in the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization.

Construed organizational images are images that a member has of what others inside and outside the organization see as core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed internal image and construed external image) and see as the future attributes of the organization (construed internal future image and construed external future image).

Organizational attributes are organizational identity and application attributes. The components of organizational attributes are purpose, philosophy, priorities, practices, and projections.

Organizational identity gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image where application attributes and organizational identity must be significantly altered to achieve that future state.

Perceived expected future image is what a member believes will be future attributes of the organization.

Perceived feared future image is what a member fears will be future attributes of the organization.

Perceived future images are the multiple future images that a member has of the organization such as perceived expected future image, perceived ideal future image, and perceived feared future image.

Perceived ideal future image is what a member believes would be the ideal future attributes of the organization.

Philosophy is the spirit of purpose and the framework for how members do business. It is the guiding spirit and organizing principle behind working practices in the organization. It is a feeling understood by members that serves as the source for the distinctive way members do business. It is understood best by insiders. The philosophy is one of the two components of organizational identity.

Practices are application attributes. They are the features or ways of doing business that put purpose, philosophy, and priorities into action.

Priorities are application attributes. They are the key standards for action that support organizational identity. Priorities guide the path for applying purpose and philosophy to practice.

Projections are application attributes. They are the images of the organization to the public.

Purpose is the organization's reason for being in business (not to be defined as making money); it is the service that the organization is providing. Purpose is broad in scope and lasts over time. Purpose is one of the two components of organizational identity.

Organizational Identification

Signs of Organizational Identification

Although this research was not designed to measure organizational identification, members expressed comments that supported many of the items included in the Mael (1988) instrument "Identification with Psychological Group Scale (IDPG)." Based on my determination that the members of this organization were strongly identified with Company A, I suggest an alteration in this instrument in one of the items in the Shared Experiences factor. The item suggests that an identified person will feel embarrassed by media criticism. Members of this organization had experienced much media criticism, yet strongly identified members reacted most frequently to media criticism with anger. In the later interviews, I asked whether anger or embarrassment better described their reaction, and all replied that anger was the better choice. Only one indicated that it was a little embarrassment, too, but she would not have indicated as strong a response to embarrassment as she would have to anger.

These members indicated additional signs of their identification. Although these signs suggest affect as well as perceptions or cognitions of belonging, I propose that they are also signs of organizational identification using a social identity theory perspective. These include the following: expressions of a feeling of belonging with the organization, feeling that the company's problems are one's own problems, wanting a career with the organization, pride in the organization, competitive feelings against out-groups, loyalty, and supportive feelings for the organization in response to threat.

Members of Company A also indicated that they socialized with employees and wore company clothing outside of work. Because these are behaviors, they do not constitute organizational identity using the social identity theory perspective.

Strength of Organizational Identification

Two methods have been suggested to evaluate strength of identification: (a) salience of identity among alternative identities and (b) the degree of overlap in how one characterizes oneself and the organization. When using these two methods to determine strength of identification, I realized that members interpreted my questions in various ways.

When members were asked to rank their membership in Company A in its importance to other identities, they consistently ranked Company A high, typically right below their family. Because I did not have each interviewee begin by providing a thorough listing of groups that one had a sense of connectedness with, I do not know if that would have achieved a different response. Also, salience can be judged

by the amount of time one spends with the organization rather than how important it is in one's definition of oneself. Therefore, I would suggest that a clarification in how to determine salience be provided when asking this question.

Another complication in this technique for determining strength of identification relates to issues of choice in membership. Some groups that one identifies with are ones where membership has been chosen, such as Company A. Other groups involve little to no choice such as gender, ethnicity, or citizenship. Should this variable of choice be considered when asking for salience of identities? Should only groups of choice be considered?

Although the definition of organizational identification based on the Ashforth and Mael (1989) perspective requires only a perception of belonging without behavior or affect, I believe that people will typically include behavior and affect. Thus, this salience technique may not measure strength of identification based on the social identity theory perspective.

The other technique for measuring strength of identification is the overlap in characteristics that define oneself and the organization. Responses varied depending on how interviewees interpreted the instructions. If the person is asked how much of an overlap there is in how one defines oneself and the organization, there is no clear understanding of the criteria that the person uses in making that evaluation. As alternatives, one could ask the degree of overlap in how much the organizational identity attributes define oneself or one could also target the overlap in priorities of the organization and one's own priorities. One could only look at the positive aspects of the organization, or the negative attributes could also be included. Clarification in

these instructions is necessary to produce consistent measurements of strength of identification.

Construction of Organizational Identification

The findings of this research suggest that constructing a sense of connectedness and belonging is a complicated process. There is no simple formula for producing a collection of identified employees. Rather, it appears that multiple factors and conditions support the creation of feelings of belonging.

This study revealed five broad categories of responses to the construction of organizational identification. Although clustered in this format to facilitate discussion, I believe that elements can be pulled from various categories to produce an environment conducive to constructing organizational identification. This research provides no formula for producing this sense of belonging. Rather, it offers suggestions that members offered as explanations for why they felt connected to Company A.

The first category that members felt was most significant in constructing identification was being a part of a start-up and having a sense of ownership in the organization. Being a part of a start-up provided opportunities for growth and seniority. These conditions also contributed to a positive sense of self.

Being a part of the creation of something produces in itself a sense of ownership. It is the ultimate example of being on the ground floor and creating something from scratch. This critical sense of ownership appears to be at the heart of

this category. Conditions other than a start-up could replicate this condition as long as the environment cultivates in its members a sense of ownership.

Being part of a start-up was defined as hard work, requiring extensive time and energy; at the same time, it was very rewarding. Members had the power to create the rules, and they possessed the knowledge of how and why things worked as they did. If things did not work, they knew why. They had a sense of not only knowing the purpose and dreams of the organization but also hearing those dreams first hand from the people who founded these thoughts. There was an excitement in feeling that they could make things happen. This entrepreneurial spirit was energizing; thoughts so quickly became actions and success. It was like having a dream and then realizing it. The feeling of ownership provided opportunities and challenges, and being with a start-up company offered individuals the chance to move up quickly if they desired the challenge. If someone wanted responsibility, they could seize it. Such an environment of empowerment, opportunity, and challenge was what Company A offered, especially in its early years, and this promoted a sense of identification in its members.

For many, the second category—the family philosophy—contributed to their strong identification with Company A. The comfort, the caring, the closeness, and the friendships that members had for each other supported a connectedness with the organization that had brought them together. The organization became the people and the people were what mattered. Thus, success for the company meant working not only for one's own success but also for the success of the people who were their Company A family.

A third factor that contributed to organizational identification was the positive sense of self that members had because they were connected with a successful and distinctive company. This company was not just successful; it was fabulously successful. Members felt like celebrities. The public loved them, and the company made money. Being a part of a winning team was fulfilling, and that success prompted feelings of connection. They loved their jobs and could grab onto new opportunities when desired; thus, there was much job satisfaction that supported a positive sense of self. Those who earned the right to be a Company A team member also felt that they had accomplished something just by being hired.

A fourth category—certain personalities and backgrounds—contributed to satisfaction working in the airline industry. Many employees shared similar past experiences and preferences for what they were looking for in their work. Many described their love for helping people, serving people, and doing things for others. This was essential for someone in a service industry. Members also expressed a desire for travel, which was satisfied because flight privileges were offered to employees. These employees were not the nine-to-five types; they liked flexible schedules, which this employment allowed. For many, this was a job that they had dreamed about since an earlier period in their lives. Now they could achieve it. And there were a vast number of employees who had relatives in the industry; it was almost as though being in the airline industry was in their blood. These personalities and backgrounds did not ensure identification with Company A, but they did indicate that there was a person-industry match that could contribute to the construction of

identification. In addition, certain personalities and backgrounds could contribute to one's propensity to identify

Certain personalities and backgrounds were also factors in creating identification with Company A. Members were emotionally connected to the purpose and philosophy of Company A. Due to their personal histories, employees had a bond with the unique services that this company offered and the family atmosphere that provided the context for their work. The purpose and philosophy met these members' needs in a way that was satisfying. These indicated a person-organization fit.

And finally, sharing a crisis and the public reaction to it further strengthened the identification that members had for Company A. Those employees who experienced the trauma of the accident and the activities that followed and remained with the company were employees who were identified with the organization prior to the accident. Sharing these experiences brought them even closer together and made them more connected to the organization. Indeed, for these members, identification was cemented by the crisis.

Human Aspects of a Merger

In addition to member's concerns about the future of the organization, members have other needs during such a major change. Timely and regular communications are critical for relieving uncertainty. Such communications provide information and demonstrate that the employees are important to management and to the success of the organization. Face-to-face meetings with the leadership

demonstrate that the leader cares about the people and that they can trust that leader with their futures.

Stability during such a change can be achieved by clarifying the new organization's identity and application attributes. This gives members an anchor to support them through the change, giving them knowledge of what is constant and direction and insight into their future.

Symbols can be used in both expressive and instrumental roles to represent the new organization and promote identification with it. Such a process may include a ceremony to close one stage in the organization's life and celebrations to welcome the new. The management of such symbols could be consciously planned in order to help members make the emotional change from what they have been a part of to the new entity.

Research Implications

The discoveries from this research have theoretical and methodological implications for the study of organizational identity, future organizational images, organizational identification, and the human aspects of mergers. In order to facilitate future discussion and research on organizational identity, I have also suggested new concepts to expand the language initiated by Dutton et al. (1994).

Organizational Identity Theory

This research contributes to the development of organizational identity theory that has grown out of research based on Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organizational identity. Based on this definition, the three criteria of core (central), distinctive, and enduring are each necessary and collectively are sufficient to constitute organizational identity. The organizational identity construct has received limited theoretical development and even less systematic examination (Gustafson, 1995). No qualitative research has been identified that examines the organizational identity construct (Albert & Whetten, 1985) or identity structure (Gustafson, 1995) in a merger context. There is a need for research that examines how changing conditions influence perceived organizational identity (Dutton et al., 1994).

This case study presented an opportunity to apply qualitative research methods to issues of organizational identity and to reveal inductively the complexities of organizational identity from a perspective of content, structure, and process. Given limited research in this area, this case study contributed to the discovery of propositions that could serve as a foundation for future research. This research not only examined organizational identity theory but also provided new insights that both alter and extend current theory.

Shared Organizational Identity Attributes

There has been limited research on shared organizational identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gustafson, 1995), what Dutton and Penner (1993) have labeled as "the collective version of organizational identity" (p. 104), from an organizational

identity theory perspective. A case study by Dutton and Dukerich (1991) revealed six attributes that members used to characterize the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. All informants described only one of these attributes—a professional organization with a uniquely technical expertise. The remaining five attributes were each suggested by less than half of the informants. Research by Gustafson (1995) also revealed a small number of shared organizational identity attributes; only three organizational identity attributes were shared by a majority of the respondents, although two of these may have been biased upward because they were related to elements used in the instrument. The three attributes were attitude toward customer, quality, and culture/values.

This research on Company A revealed two basic components of organizational identity shared by a majority of the members interviewed: the organization's purpose of providing affordable air transportation that benefits society and the organization's family philosophy, characterized as friendly, caring, small, open, and close. Because I did not provide a list of attributes in the initial interview process, it was likely that even a greater percentage might have agreed that these described what was core, distinctive, and enduring about Company A. During my follow-up mini-tour interviews when I presented my tentative findings, all members agreed that these accurately defined organizational identity for Company A.

There were also three additional attributes shared by a majority of the members—customer service, safety, and teamwork. Although highly shared, I suggest that they did not constitute organizational identity. They could potentially fluctuate over time while leaving organizational identity intact. These attributes were

priorities of this organization; they were applications of that family philosophy to how they did their work. Growing out of the family philosophy was a distinctive customer service, teamwork, and focus on safety. These were key standards for action that supported organizational identity.

This research supports previous research in suggesting that members of an organization do share a small number of organizational identity attributes (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gustafson, 1995). This supports Gustafson's (1995) initial test of the veracity of collective identity and provides the first examination of the presence of collective identity in a merger environment. This research also presents the first systematic investigation that has identified the two components—the purpose and the philosophy of the organization—that constitute organizational identity, while adhering to the criteria of the Albert and Whetten (1985) definition.

At the time of this research, most members agreed that these organizational identity attributes—the purpose of providing affordable air transportation that benefits society and the family philosophy—existed in the past and continued to be present. Because this research spanned a six-month period of extensive identity transformation, it became clear that organizational attributes can be shared at one point in time but be eliminated only months later. Prior to the accident, fun and casual were truly descriptive of what this organization was about as well as how it stood apart from the competition. The accident initiated a rethinking of these attributes, and the merger was an official notification that fun and casual needed to be extinguished as quickly as possible. What had appeared to be so core and distinctive was not enduring because those were application attributes not organizational

identity. Even with the loss of these attributes, the purpose and family philosophy remained as the essence of the organization.

Prior efforts to understand the meaning of "the essence of the organization" (Albert and Whetten, 1985, p. 265) often included values or practices as organizational identity rather than honing in on the most central core that impacts everything else. The findings of this study indicate that if one or both of the components of organizational identity significantly change, then this condition would constitute the end of the organization as members knew it. The organization might still exist, but its essence would be dramatically altered in the minds of its members. Either the business would be a different business or the framework for what members perceive to be how they do business would be significantly altered. The framework for how members do business does not constitute practices; rather, it is a philosophy for how members view work and the guiding spirit that makes the organization distinctive to its members. It is a mindset that cannot be significantly altered without severely impacting what the organization is and how its members relate to it.

Evaluation at a single point in time can easily distort clear perceptions of what is truly core, distinctive, and enduring. By observing transformations of organizational attributes over a six-month period, I was able to see that what looked permanent to members at one point in time might look radically different even months later when experiencing a change.

The questions to determine organizational identity might be the following: What is core, distinctive, and enduring about this organization that defines how members do work in a special way? What is the key business that this business is in

(not to include making money) and the business it will probably be in decades from now? What is the purpose or reason for the existence of this company? How does this company benefit society? What is the philosophy for work that serves as the framework for members' work behaviors? What is the driving spirit that permeates the organization that naturally produces the organization's priorities and most critical features and practices? How does this organization accomplish its purpose in a way that is distinctive from other organizations in the same industry?

The purpose and philosophy are at the core; they are the heart and soul of the organization. The rest is just the organization's way of applying that purpose and philosophy. I suggest that the components of organizational identity are the organization's purpose and the philosophy that serve as the foundation and framework for work. In order to remain consistent with the Albert and Whetten (1985) definition, I suggest the following propositions:

Proposition 1: Organizational identity consists of the organization's purpose (the reason for being in business) and the philosophy (the guiding spirit and organizing principle for how members do that business). They serve as the foundation and the framework for the organization (see Figure 12).

Organizational Identity = Purpose + Philosophy
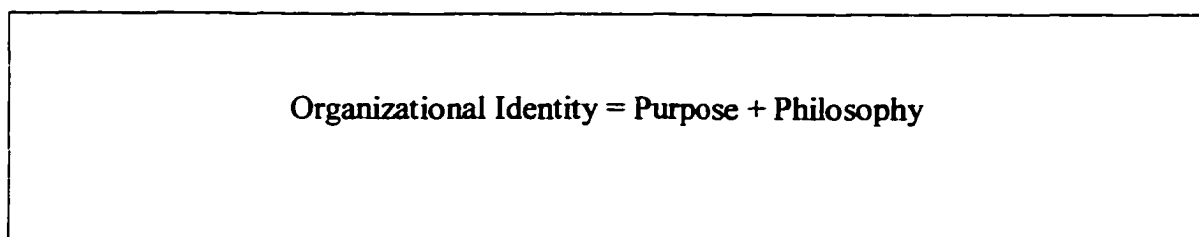
Figure 12: The components of organizational identity.

This definition is similar to the definition by Collins and Porras (1997, p. 73) of core ideology (core values and purpose), although their work was not framed in the organizational identity theory perspective. Also, philosophy is presented in a different manner in this research than how core values was presented in the work of Collins and Porras.

Philosophy refers to the guiding spirit and organizing principle that serves as the framework for how business is conducted. This philosophy and the purpose are the basis for everything else. Organizational identity, based on the research of Company A, is not as comprehensive as an organizational creed or statements of objectives and values. This research presents organizational identity as the true essence from which other attributes emerge. Organizational identity is also distinctive in the minds of the members; it is a unique product of circumstances in an organization's history. The findings of this study are consistent with the viewpoints expressed by Collins and Porras (1997) that this core is something that naturally emerges from within the organization, strongly influenced by the nature of its founders, not something that can be copied from others.

Based on this perspective, organizational identity attributes are small in number. I would also suggest that the long-term success of the organization could be influenced by how widely these organizational identity attributes are shared.

Proposition 2: An organization has few organizational identity attributes.

Proposition 3: The long-term success of the organization can be negatively influenced if the components of organizational identity are not widely shared among the organization's members.

Enduring Organizational Identity Attributes and Application Attributes That Are Not

Enduring (and Are Not Organizational Identity)

There has been some controversy as to whether organizational identity attributes can really be enduring because change is required to be competitive (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Albert and Whetten (1985) considered the temporal criterion to be essential to the definition of organizational identity. Company A was experiencing extensive change; some key facets were eliminated, some were in transition, and the durability of others was in question.

Based on this research, I recognize that application attributes of an organization can be eliminated or modified to suit the survival needs of the organization. It is not organizational identity that is fluid; rather, application attributes are fluid. These application attributes may be considered significant and distinctive by its members, but they are not organizational identity. The transformation of these attributes does not change the essence of the organization in the minds of its members; instead, they are applications of organizational identity. Only when one or both key components of organizational identity are significantly changed in the minds of the members—the purpose of the organization or the philosophy—does the identity of the organization change, constituting the formation of a new organization. Because the philosophy or guiding spirit of the organization is best understood by insiders, the extensiveness of an alteration to organizational identity is best judged by the members rather than by outsiders.

Proposition 4: If a significant component of organizational identity is altered, the organization will, by definition, have a new identity and be a new organization.

Proposition 4a: An organization that redefines itself with a new purpose that is significantly different from its previous reason for being in business constitutes an organizational identity change.

Proposition 4b: An organization that eliminates or significantly alters the framework for how members do that business, their philosophy, constitutes an organizational identity change.

Proposition 4c: Any modification that does not alter members' perceptions of their business (the purpose) and the philosophy (guiding spirit and organizing principle) that serves as the framework for their behavior does not constitute organizational identity change.

For Company A, the organization had lost its fun and casual past. Even with these significant changes (fun was part of its slogan), insiders did not feel that the essence of the organization had changed. But at the interviews six-months later, there was concern about the loss of the family philosophy. This change was having a significant impact on members. If the organization was to be redefined as something significantly different from a family according to the perceptions of its members, then I suggest that the organization's identity would no longer exist. If any aspect of organizational identity is changed, then there is a funnel effect that can potentially impact all aspects of the organization. Company A retained its commitment to affordable air transportation. Even with an alteration in how that was defined (affordable for the businessperson as well as the leisure traveler), the purpose was not tarnished in the eyes of its members. Thus, I offer the following propositions.

Proposition 5: Application attributes are priorities, practices, or projections that are applications or representations of organizational identity (see Figure 13).

Application Attributes = Priorities, Practices, or Projections

That Are Applications or Representations of

Organizational Identity

Figure 13: The components of application attributes.

Proposition 5a: Application attributes may require modification and change to satisfy long-term competitiveness.

Proposition 5b: Any change in organizational identity will have a funnel effect and thus potentially impact application attributes (see Figure 14).

Proposition 5c: Priorities, practices, and projections vary in their significance to the organizational identity core.

Organizational Identity   Impacts   Application Attributes
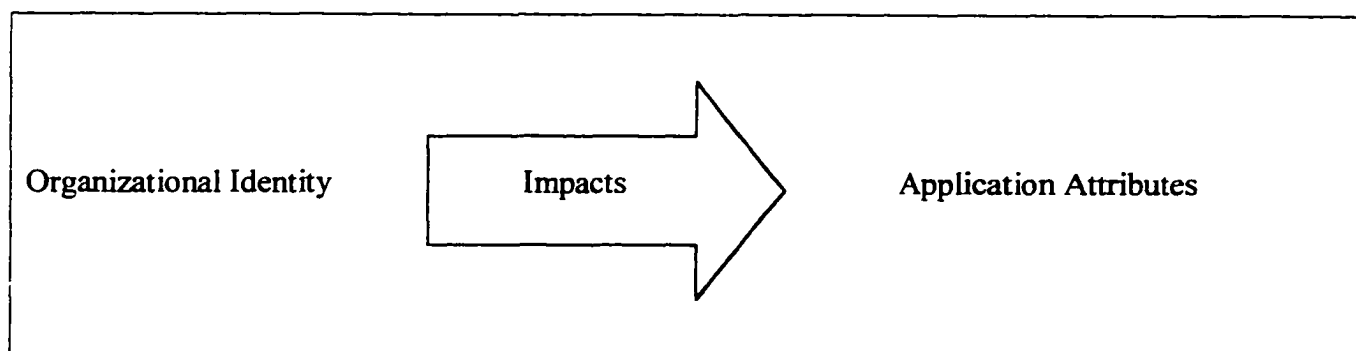
Figure 14: Changes in organizational identity impacting application attributes.

Structure of Organizational Identity and Application Attributes

Gustafson (1995) offered a preliminary classification of organizational identity attributes for organizations in hypercompetitive environments. He suggested that there are a limited number of intangible identity attributes that address "why and how things are done" (Gustafson, 1995, p. 180) and many more specific substantive identity attributes that deal with "what things are done" (p. 180). Based on this classification scheme, not all identity components are central, distinctive, and enduring, which differs from the Albert and Whetten (1985) definition.

Research on Company A indicates a different structure for organizational identity. First of all, the data indicate that there is a structure to organizational identity and a structure to application attributes. Organizational identity consists of those attributes that if lost would constitute a redefinition of the organization. I suggest the following proposition.

Proposition 6a: The structure of organizational identity consists of the purpose and philosophy of the organization that are understood by its members as their business and the framework for how they do business (see Figure 15 for the structure of organizational identity).

Proposition 6b: At the core of the structure of organizational attributes is organizational identity. In the structure of organizational attributes, those key standards that are most critical to organizational identity—the priorities—are located closer to the organizational identity core. Those attributes that are practices and features that support the purpose, philosophy, and priorities are located further from

the core (see Figure 16 for the structure of application attributes and Figure 17 for the structure of organizational attributes).
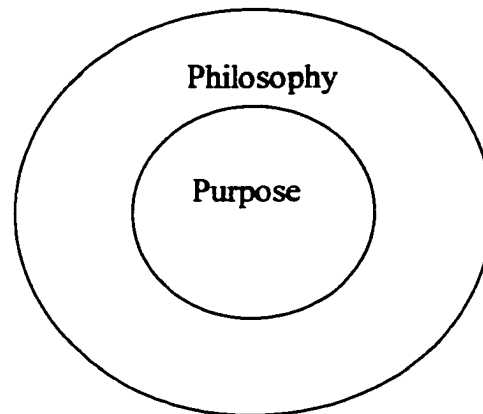
Figure 15: The structure of organizational identity.

Proposition 6c: Those application attributes located closer to the organizational identity core are more enduring than those application attributes located further from the organizational identity core.
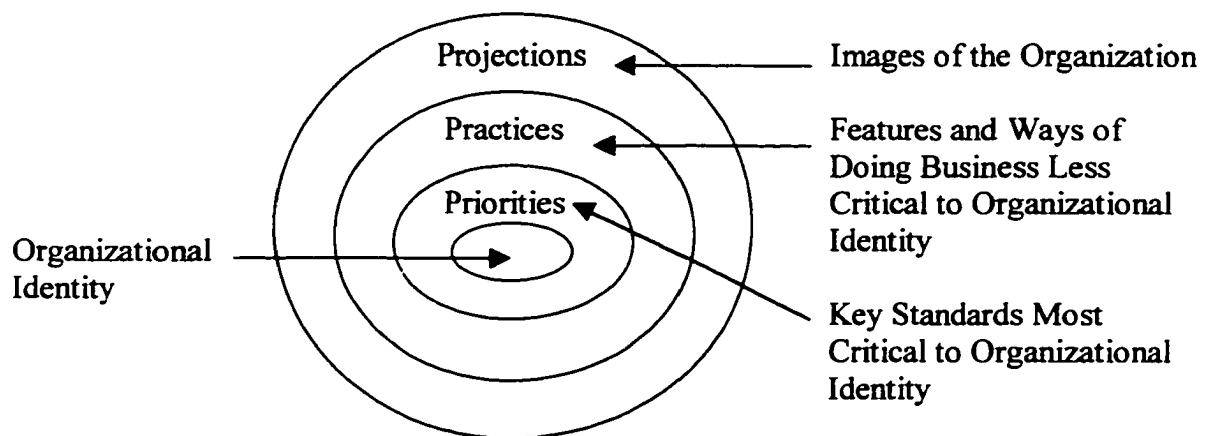
Figure 16: The structure of application attributes.

Proposition 6d: Those attributes that are the images of the organization such

as company name, logo, and colors are application attributes that are most visible to

outsiders (see Figure 16).

Proposition 6e: Those attributes that do not constitute organizational identity

can be changed by the organization to be competitive yet still retain its identity.

The labels of intangible and substantive identity offered by Gustafson (1995)

to define the structure of organizational identity attributes do not appropriately

differentiate identity from that which is not identity. According to Gustafson,

substantive identity is the label for those things that could be changed if needed to

remain competitive. Based on the research of Company A, organizational identity
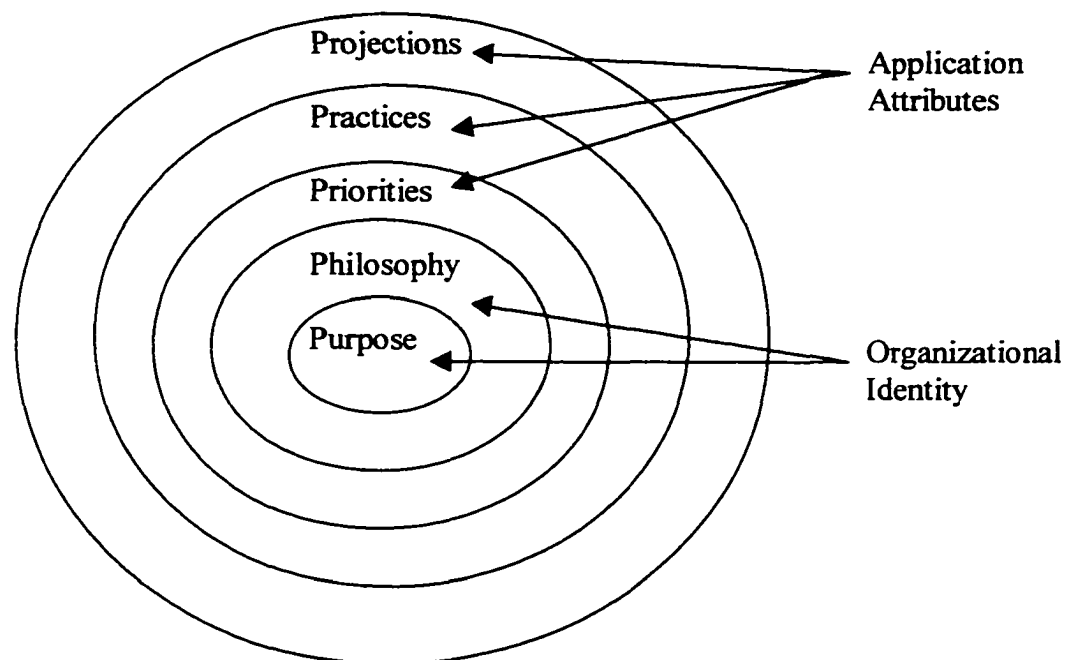
Figure 17: The structure of organizational attributes.

attributes are core and distinctive in the eyes of the members and should include only those attributes that are enduring. Organizational identity attributes are both intangible and substantive. Everything else is a manifestation or application of that identity or a projection of an image. Over time, new identities do not emerge; rather, new application attributes evolve as different conditions require different behaviors. These application attributes do not constitute what Albert and Whetten (1985) have suggested as being the essence of the organization.

Construction of Organizational Identity

Presently, there is no published research on the construction of organizational identity attributes. This is understandable because there is little agreement on the construct itself. In an effort to develop this aspect of the literature, however, it seems reasonable to propose that the construction of organizational identity is in many ways similar to the construction of culture (Schein, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Similar levers contribute to their construction and, thus, serve as tools for their management. For example, leadership often has the critical role of creating, managing, and changing the organization (Schein, 1992). Based on the research of Company A, I suggest the following propositions on the construction of organizational identity attributes. These levers can be used for either constructing or altering organizational identity as well as application attributes (see Figure 18).

Proposition 7a: An organization's founders and leaders can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7b: An organization's hiring practices can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7c: Previous employment of organizational members can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.
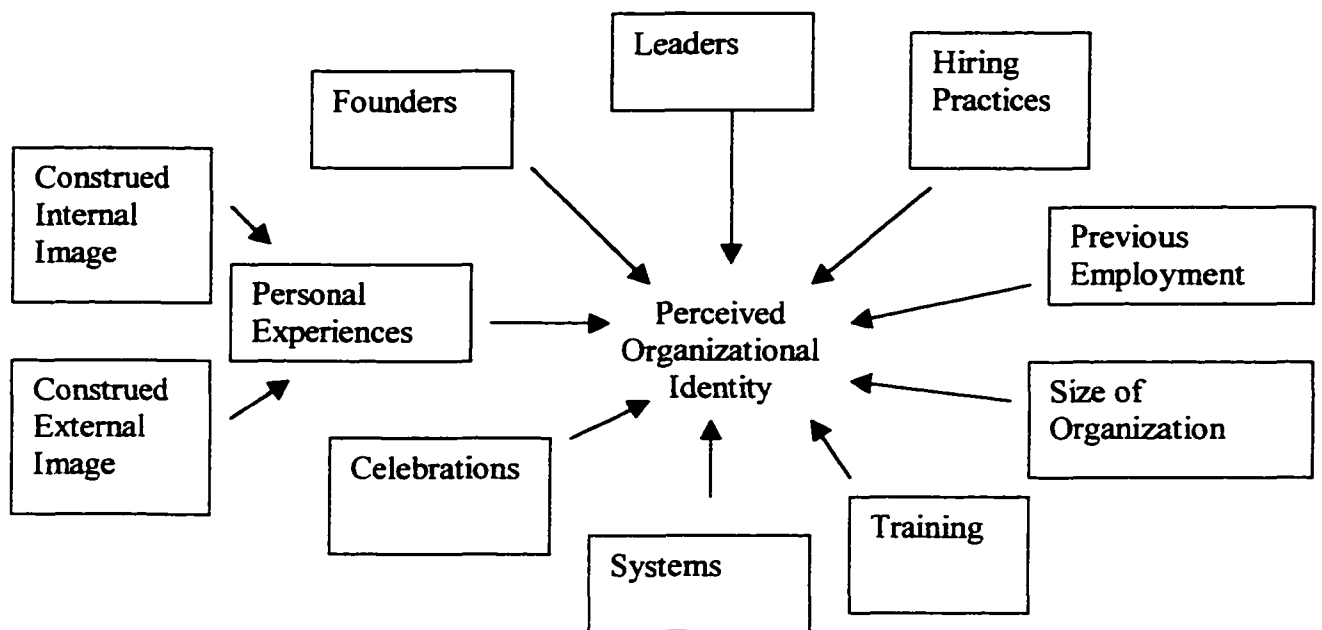
Figure 18: Construction of perceived organizational identity.

Proposition 7d: An organization's size can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7e: An organization's training can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7f: An organization's systems can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7g: Company celebrations can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7h: Members' personal experiences at work and with other employees can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7i: Members' perceptions of what others in the organization believe are core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed internal image) can contribute to the construction of organizational identity. Thus, construed internal images can influence perceived organizational identity (see Figure 18).

Proposition 7j: Members' perceptions of what others outside the organization believe are core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed external image) can contribute to the construction of organizational identity. Thus, construed external images can influence perceived organizational identity (see Figure 18).

Consistent with the research by Dutton and Dukerich (1991) and the explanations in Dutton et al. (1994) that construed external images can influence members' perceptions of organizational identity, these findings suggest a process for how that transformation takes place.

Proposition 8a: When there are inconsistencies between a member's construed external image of the organization and their own perceived organizational identity, the member, if identified with the organization, will typically discard the inconsistency.

Proposition 8b: If members cannot continue to discard an inconsistency between their construed external image of the organization and their perceived organizational identity, members will make efforts to change projections or practices

to reduce the magnitude of the discrepancy. If necessary, they will change priorities. Only as a last resort does an organization alter its organizational identity.

Future Organizational Images

Multiple Future Images

This research on Company A adds complexity to the meaning of future organizational images. Previous research has highlighted the perspective of the ideal (Gustafson, 1995; Reger, Gustafson et al., 1994) or desired future image (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). This research expands this perspective on future organizational images. These findings suggest the presence of multiple future images within an organization. These findings are consistent with research on the concept of multiple possible selves for the individual (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The variety of possible selves for individuals can be applied to members' perceptions of their organization. This research also extends the application of image theory (Mitchell et al., 1986). In image theory, the concepts of trajectory image and projected image are future organizational images used in organizational decision making. Therefore, based on previous research on organizational identity theory and on possible selves and image theory, the findings of this study of Company A add to and extend their application. Data suggest that members can possess multiple future images (see Figure 19) as expressed in the following propositions.

Proposition 9: A member of an organization can possess multiple future images of their organization.

Proposition 9a: A member of an organization can possess an expected future image of the organization (perceived expected future image).

Proposition 9b: A member of an organization can possess an ideal future image of the organization (perceived ideal future image).

Proposition 9c: A member of an organization can possess a feared future image of the organization (perceived feared future image).

Proposition 9d: A member of an organization can possess an image of what some others in the organization perceive as the future of the organization (construed internal future image).

Proposition 9e: A member of an organization can possess an image of what some others outside the organization perceive as the future of the organization (construed external future image).

Proposition 9f: A member of an organization can possess an image of what the company leader (a special insider) perceives as the future of the organization (company future image).

Members' perceptions of the future are not only complex but also fluid. The findings of this research suggest a relationship between one's perceived future images and the images held by others (see Figure 19). Thus, I would add the following propositions:

Proposition 10a: Construed internal future images can impact members' perceived future images.

Proposition 10b: Construed external future images can impact members' perceived future images.

Proposition 10c: The company future image as presented by the leader can

impact members' perceived future images.

```
┌──────────────────┐         ┌──────────────────┐         ┌──────────────────┐
│ Construed Internal│         │ Construed         │         │ Construed External│
│ Future Image      │ ───────▶│ Future Images     │◀─────── │ Future Image      │
│                   │         │                   │         │                   │
└──────────────────┘         └──────────────────┘         └──────────────────┘
        ▲                              │
        │                              │
┌──────────────────┐                   │
│ Company Future    │                   ▼
│ Image             │          ┌──────────────────┐
│                   │          │ Perceived         │
└──────────────────┘          │ Future Images     │
                              └──────────────────┘
                                      │
┌─────────────────────┬─────────────────────┬─────────────────────┐
│ Perceived Expected  │ Perceived Feared     │ Perceived Ideal     │
│ Future Image        │ Future Image         │ Future Image        │
│                     │                      │                     │
└─────────────────────┴─────────────────────┴─────────────────────┘
```
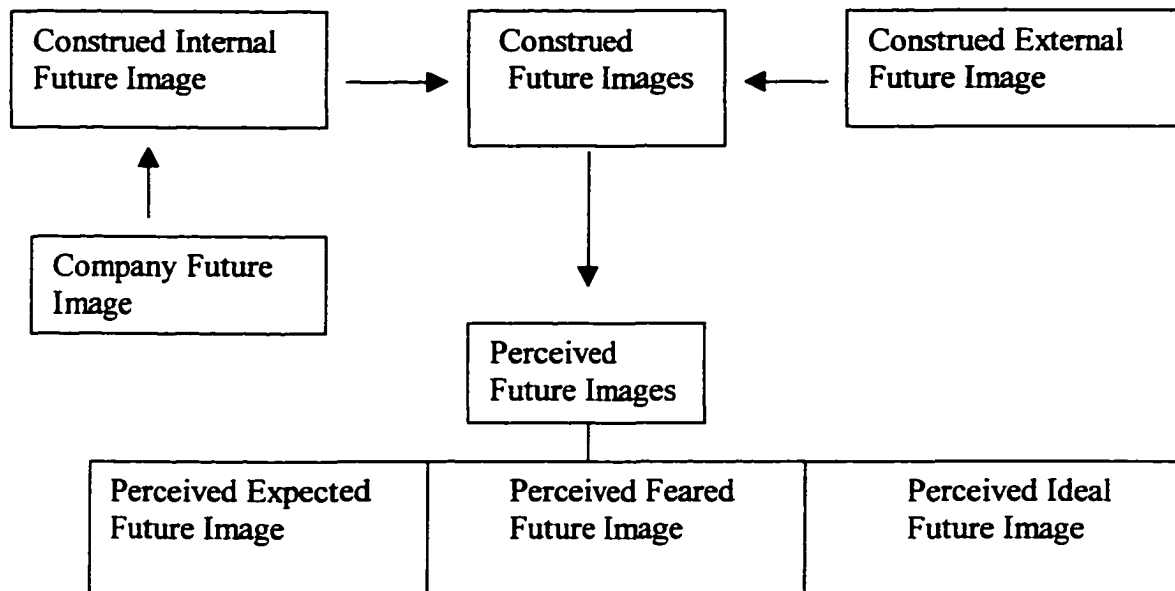
Figure 19: Multiple future images and influences on a member's perceived future

images.

Previous research has described the influence of the leader in managing future

organizational images and the content of the vision (Awamleh & Gardner, 1997;

Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This research confirms the significance of future

organizational images as being "key to the sensemaking process" (Gioia & Thomas,

1996, p. 370). Without a clear, shared picture of the future, members have

uncertainty that tentatively is replaced with their own expected, ideal, or feared future

images. But without confirmation by organizational leadership, over time, there can

be damage to the organization if no clear future image is presented by leadership.

Researchers have not investigated the complexities in how members adjust these future organizational images, especially in the absence of a clear future image by leadership. Many factors both inside and outside the organization can impact these perceptions in ways that are critical for the organization.

The experience of Company A suggests that the variability in future organizational images among its members and the lack of a shared vision within an organization, due to the absence of a leadership-initiated vision, can be dysfunctional for the organization. Members cannot achieve the vision of its leadership without knowing what that vision is. Therefore, I suggest the following propositions:

Proposition 11a: The greater the variability in future organizational images of members, the more difficult it will be to achieve a vision held by leadership.

Proposition 11b: Members can share similar visions for the future of their organization despite the lack of an established vision by leadership.

Proposition 11c: The identification, communication, and management of a vision by leadership can contribute to the organization's potential in achieving that vision.

The importance of a shared vision has been expressed in the merger literature (Isabella, 1993; Marks & Mirvis, 1997; McEntire & Bentley, 1996; Salk, 1995). The findings of this research suggest that the absence of such a vision in a time of organizational change can be debilitating if this absence persists over an extended period of time. Therefore, I suggest the following propositions:

Proposition 11d: During times of organizational change, both stability and uncertainty can be managed through the identification, communication, and management of a vision by leadership.

Proposition 11e: During times of organizational change, the lack of the identification, communication, and management of a vision by leadership can result in rumors and unmanaged future images. The absence of a clear direction can be damaging for the organization because this environment produces uncertainty.

This research also suggests that organizational vision can be a critical leverage point for change. Thus, I add the following propositions.

Proposition 11f: A clear and shared understanding of an organizational vision is critical for implementing change.

Proposition 11g: Management can use future organizational images as a leverage for achieving organizational change.

This research also sheds light on the content of future organizational images. There has been little research with this perspective (Larwood et al., 1995). Based on this research of Company A, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 12a: The content of a member's future images of an organization is based on images that the member can visualize and is typically an image that the member has experienced or observed others experience. These images are concrete and lack the abstract quality that may be defined by imagination.

Proposition 12b: The content of a member's future images of an organization is often based on members' perceptions of the competition and gauged against those

who set the standards in the industry. Thus, for many, future images are *benchmarked images* rather than totally abstract pictures.

Gap Between Current Organizational Attributes and Future Organizational Images

These findings suggest at least two avenues that can create gaps between current organizational attributes and future images of the organization (see Figures 20 and 21). The typical gap is between current application attributes and some different future application attributes, with organizational identity remaining constant (see Figure 20). When the future image does not significantly impact organizational identity, the inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and any future image would constitute an *application attributes gap*. This is the less severe gap that can more easily be managed because it does not impact organizational identity. Based on cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), cognitive consistency can be achieved by changing behavior related to priorities or practices or by altering projections.

Some organizations, particularly with a merger or acquisition, may see the need to create a future image that requires a significant alteration to organizational identity. When this happens, a clear change in either purpose or philosophy or both must be clearly communicated and actions must be put in place for constructing a new identity. This is an extensive process that impacts all facets of the organization because the previous identity was the essence of the organization and the foundation of not only the business but also how members did that business. In this situation, there will be a gap in organizational identity, an *organizational identity gap*, where

inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image require organizational identity to be altered significantly to achieve the future state. Thus, organizational identity and application attributes will change. This condition can produce more pronounced dissonance (Festinger, 1957) than with an application attributes gap.

This perspective differs from ones presented in previous research (Gustafson, 1995; Reger, Gustafson, et al., 1994) which have been called an "identity gap" (Reger, Gustafson, et al., 1994, p. 574). This label refers to the inconsistency between the current and ideal organizational identity; it uses a broader perspective on the term identity that is not consistent with the Albert and Whetten (1985) definition.

Thus, I would add the following propositions that provide enhanced clarity to this aspect of change, replacing the term identity gap.

Proposition 13a: An application attributes gap (see Figure 20) is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and future organizational image yet leaving organizational identity intact.

Proposition 13b: An organizational identity gap (see Figure 21) is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image when organizational attributes including organizational identity must be significantly altered to achieve that future state.
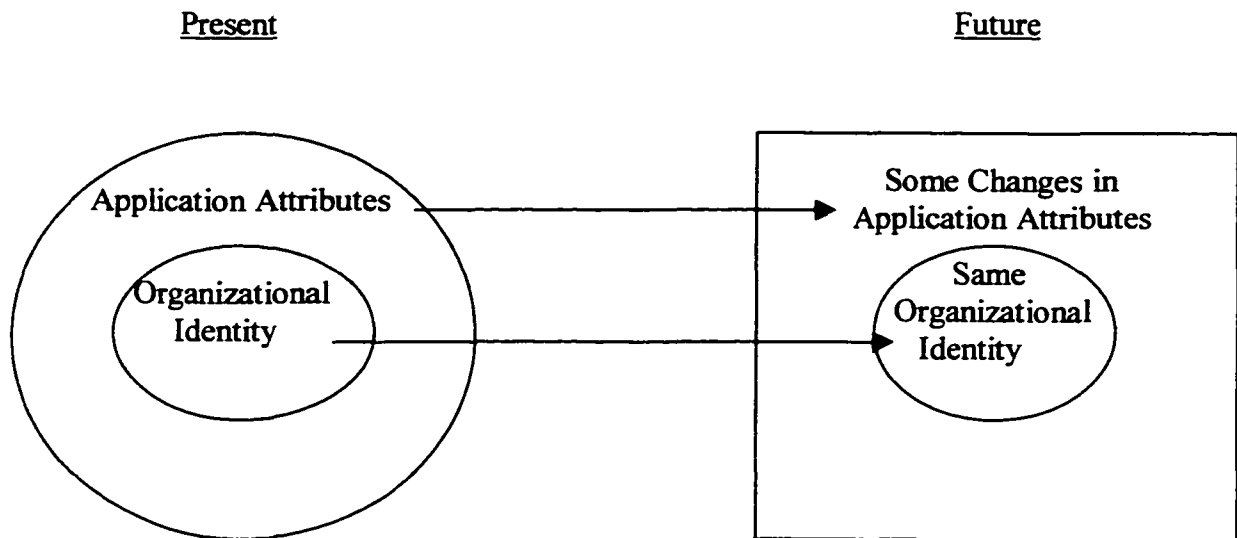
Figure 20: An application attributes gap involving changes in some application

attributes but not organizational identity.
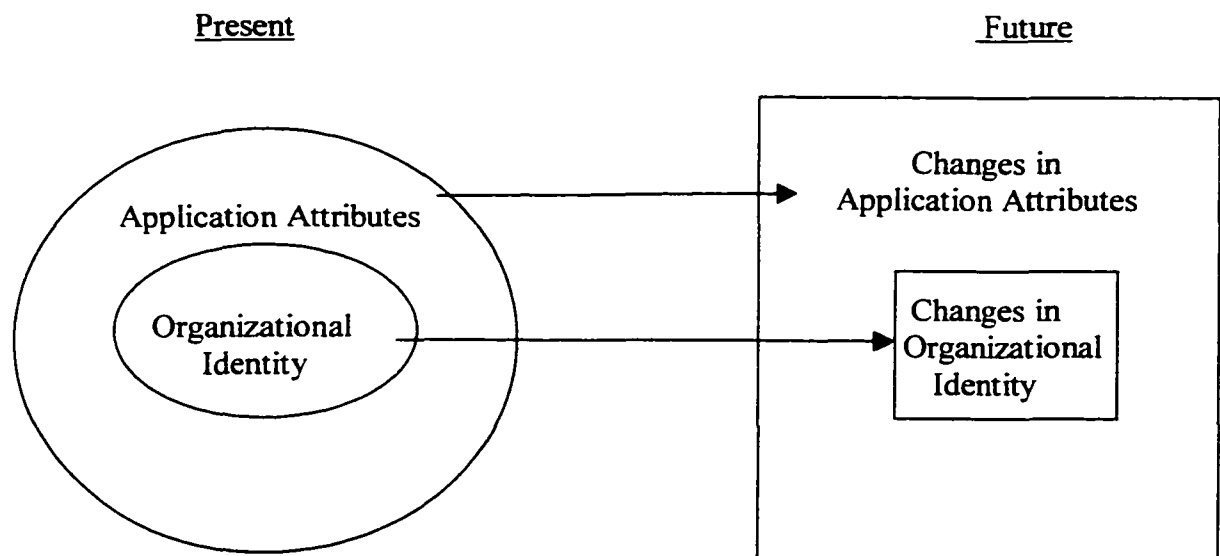
Figure 21: An organizational identity gap involving changes in both organizational

identity and application attributes.

According to this research, organizational identity should not typically be changed. If the organizational identity changes, then there are tremendous implications for both management and the membership because such a change would constitute a new identity. Rather, the findings of this research suggest that an organization can more readily alter the content of application attributes as long as they support organizational identity.

Language of Organizational Identity

In order to facilitate research on organizational identity, I suggest an extension of the labels and definitions begun by Dutton et al. (1994) that build on the definition of organizational identity by Albert and Whetten (1985). The article by Dutton et al. (1994), grounded in the earlier work by Dutton and Dukerich (1991), offered two terms to clarify the language of identity. It presented the concepts of perceived organizational identity to label that which a member believes is central, distinctive, and enduring about the organization and construed external image as what a member believes outsiders think about the organization. I suggest the following propositions to expand the language of organizational identity from the perspective of present images. Some of these propositions have been presented earlier in a different context.

Proposition 14a: Construed current organizational images are the images that members have of what others inside (construed internal image) and outside (construed external image) the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization. These images can impact perceived organizational identity.

Proposition 14b: Construed internal image is what a member believes others in the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization.

This research also suggests an expansion in the language of identity to include future organizational images. The present language refers to ideal or desired future images. Instead, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 15: Perceived future images are the multiple future images that a member has of the organization such as perceived expected future image, perceived ideal future image, and perceived feared future image.

Proposition 15a: A perceived expected future image is what a member believes will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 15b: A perceived ideal future image is what a member believes would be the ideal future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 15c: A perceived feared future image is what a member fears will be future attributes of the organization.

Members also have perceptions of what others think about the future of their organization. Thus, I suggest the following additions to the language of identity.

Proposition 16: Construed future images are the multiple future images that a member has of what others inside (construed internal future image) and outside (construed external future image) the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16a: A construed internal future image is what a member believes others in the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16b: A construed external future image is what a member believes others outside the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16c: Construed organizational images are images that a member has of what others inside and outside the organization see as core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed internal image and construed external image) and see as the future attributes of the organization (construed internal future image and construed external future image).

The gap between present and future organizational images can be expressed in several ways depending on the nature and magnitude of the changes needed to achieve that future image.

Proposition 17a: An application attributes gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and future organizational image where organizational identity is left intact.

Proposition 17b: An organizational identity gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image where application attributes and organizational identity must be significantly altered to achieve that future state.

All of these identity concepts are based on the definition of organizational identity presented by Albert and Whetten (1985) and the clarification of the identity components that are suggested by this research on Company A. Organizational identity is composed of the organization's purpose and philosophy. To define the components of organizational identity and application attributes, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 18: Organizational attributes are organizational identity and application attributes. The components of organizational attributes are purpose, philosophy, priorities, practices, and projections.

Proposition 18a: Organizational identity has two basic components: the organization's purpose and the organization's philosophy.

Proposition 18b: The purpose is the organization's reason for being in business (not to be defined as making money); it is the service that the organization is providing. Purpose is broad in scope and lasts over time.

Proposition 18c: The philosophy is the spirit of purpose and the framework for how members do business. It is the guiding spirit and organizing principle behind working practices in the organization. It is a feeling understood by members that serves as the source for the distinctive way members do business. It is understood best by insiders.

Those elements that do not constitute organizational identity but which do define the organization are defined in the next proposition.

Proposition 18d: Application attributes are priorities, practices, and projections that are applications or representations of organizational identity.

Proposition 18e: Priorities are application attributes. They are the key standards for action that support organizational identity. Priorities guide the path for applying purpose and philosophy to practice.

Proposition 18f: Practices are application attributes. They are the features or ways of doing business that put purpose, philosophy, and priorities into action.

Proposition 18g: Projections are application attributes. They are the images of the organization to the public.

Organizational Identification

Signs of Identification

Although this research was not initially designed to study organizational identification, members expressed comments that strongly supported many of the items included in the Mael (1988) instrument "Identification with Psychological Group Scale (IDPG)." Based on these signs that the members of this organization were strongly identified with Company A, I suggest that researchers consider an alteration in the item in the Shared Experiences factor of the IDPG scale indicating that an identified member would feel embarrassed by media criticism.

Proposition 19a: A person who identifies with an organization that experiences media criticism could feel a range of emotional responses not excluding anger.

Also, based on this research, I would have reservations about using the Shared Characteristics factor of the instrument. Members did not consistently respond to a clear understanding of what a typical employee was at their organization. Thus, I add the following proposition.

Proposition 19b: Members who are identified with an organization do not necessarily have a consistent definition of what a typical employee of that organization is.

One item taken from the instrument used by Dukerich and Golden (1997) did not receive consistent responses when used in this research with Company A. People who appeared identified based on other items did not consistently indicate an obligation to stay with Company A. Thus, I would suggest the following proposition.

Proposition 19c: Feeling an obligation to remain at a company may not be an indicator of strength of identification.

Three items taken from research by Dukerich and Golden (1997)—a sense of belonging, the company's problems, and having a career at the company—were used to measure identification. These items did receive consistent responses by those who were strongly identified with Company A.

Proposition 19d: Expressing a feeling of belonging with the organization could be a sign of identification.

Proposition 19e: Feeling as if the company's problems are one's own problems could be a sign of identification.

Proposition 19f: Wanting a career at the organization could be a sign of identification.

In addition, the findings from this research suggest that some consequences of identification can also be signs of organizational identification using the social identity theory perspective. Therefore, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 20: Consequences of identification can also be signs of identification.

Proposition 20a: Pride in the organization is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20b: Feelings of competitiveness against out-groups is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20c: Loyalty to the organization is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20d: Feeling supportive of the organization in response to threat is potentially a sign of identification.

Three additional signs of identification that constitute behaviors and thus are not consistent with the social identity theory perspective are as follows.

Proposition 20e: If the person chooses to wear company clothing outside of work, then this behavior is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20f: If a person is cooperative with other organization members, then this behavior is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20g: If a person socializes with employees after work, then this behavior is potentially a sign of identification.

Strength of Identification

Dutton et al. (1994) suggested that a person who strongly identifies with an organization will consider that identity more salient than others and that person's self concept will have many similar characteristics that the person believes describe the organization. In response to these two measures of strength of identification, I offer some reflection. When I asked members to rank their membership in Company A in its importance to other identities, they consistently ranked it high. Yet, when discussing this afterwards in the later interviews, I realized several things.

Proposition 21a: Measures of salience of identification may be accurate cross-sectionally but may not be stable longitudinally, especially in times of upheaval and change.

Proposition 21b: Organizational identification may require maintenance to preserve its strength.

The criteria that people use to measure salience may vary. Salience can be judged by amount of time one spends with the organization rather than how important it is in their definition of themselves. At a later point in the article, Dutton et al. (1994) do not use the criterion of salience (p. 239); instead, they use the criterion of whether the social identities "accurately describe them as individuals" (p. 258). I suggest the following proposition supporting the second approach.

Proposition 21c: When determining strength of identification, social identities should be ranked or rated by how accurately the organizations or groups describe oneself rather than ranking the identity that is most salient.

Another aspect that adds complexity is related to choice. Should there be a differentiation in viewing groups that one has a choice in membership (e.g., where one works) from those which one has little to no choice (e.g., gender, ethnicity, citizenship)? This added variable could be used in more accurately determining strength of organizational identification.

Also, from this research it appears that members often have a propensity to choosing work in a particular industry. Strength of identification can be influenced by how well one makes that person-industry-organization match. Thus, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 21d: Strength of identification can be influenced by previous experiences.

Proposition 21e: Strength of identification can be influenced by how well a member achieves a person-industry-organization match.

For the second technique for determining strength of identification—the overlap in characteristics that define oneself and the organization—responses varied depending on how interviewees interpreted the instructions. If the person is asked how much of an overlap there is in how one defines oneself and the organization, there is no clear understanding of the criteria that the person used in making that evaluation. Should one ask if the organizational identity attributes that define the organization also define oneself? Based on the limited components of organizational identity, is this sufficient for determining strength of identification? Should one focus not only on organizational identity but also application attributes and their consistency or inconsistency with one's own characteristics? Should one only look at the positive aspects of the organization and the self or should one also consider the overlap in what one considers to be negative attributes that do not necessarily constitute organizational identity? Based on this research, I suggest that the way the question is interpreted will influence the findings that one gets, and thus, answers to these questions should precede using such a measure.

The instrument by Mael (1988) that measures strength of organizational identification is another tool for this effort. I have already indicated an alteration in one of the items related to media criticism. The other items in the Shared Experiences factor of the instrument appear to be useful items to measure strength of

organizational identification although they do include affect. Based on this research of Company A, I do not think that affect should be excluded from the Ashforth and Mael (1989) definition of organizational identification because affect is a component of the Tajfel definition of social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1990).

Definition of Organizational Identification

Dutton et al. (1994) stated that some items in the Mael (1988) instrument measure how individuals feel about the organization. According to Dutton et al. (1994), "By involving more than the cognitive connection between a member and an organization, these scales tap into a broader concept of psychological attachment than what we intend by organization identification" (pp. 257-258).

Based on social identity theory, cognition of belonging can have both emotional and value significance attached to it (Abrams & Hogg, 1990); therefore, affect is included as an essential element in social identity. Thus, I believe that an alteration in how organizational identification is defined as expressed in Ashforth and Mael (1989) is warranted. Because this perspective on organizational identification is based on a social identity theory perspective, it would be appropriate to include emotion or affect. Based on this case study, I think that cognition independent of affect would be hard to separate because cognitions of belonging were significantly emotional. Therefore, I suggest the following proposition.

Proposition 22: Organizational identification based on a social identity theory perspective is defined as a form of social identification that is organization-specific,

distinct from commitment and internalization; a cognition or perception that can include some emotional and value significance but that does not include behaviors.

Construction of Identification

Previous research has identified the antecedents of identification to include the following: organizational prestige (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), organizational distinctiveness (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), tenure (Bhattacharya et al., 1995; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), satisfaction with organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), expectation confirmation (Bhattacharya et al., 1995), biodata (Mael & Ashforth, 1995), socialization (Ashforth & Saks, 1996), absence of intraorganizational competition and sentimentality (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), contact (Bhattacharya et al., 1995), and participation as a representative (Elsbach & Glynn, 1996). The construction of organizational identification is a complex phenomenon. This study of Company A supports some previous research as well as suggests additional influences on the construction of organizational identification (see Figure 22). The following propositions related to a positive sense of self support previous research:

Proposition 23: When organizational membership produces a positive sense of self, then it contributes to the construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 23a: Organizational success can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23b: Organizational distinctiveness can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23c: Job satisfaction can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

The following propositions related to a positive sense of self extend previous research.

Proposition 23d: Earning one's employment through a trial period can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23e: The capacity to achieve seniority quickly in relation to other organizations in a similar industry can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23f: Having opportunities for growth can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23g: Participation in a start-up can contribute to opportunities for growth and a positive sense of self, thus contributing to organizational identification.

Proposition 23h: Participation in a start-up can contribute to the capacity to achieve seniority and a positive sense of self, thus contributing to organizational identification.

The following propositions extend the literature in construction of identification.

Proposition 24: Having a sense of ownership can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 24a: Participation in a start-up can contribute to a sense of ownership and the construction of organizational identification.

Components of organizational identity can also contribute to organizational identification. For members of Company A, it appeared that the family philosophy had contributed to members' identification with the organization. Because this is one case study, it is not clear whether this particular philosophy is a match with most individuals or if it is unique to individuals at Company A. Research by Hochschild (1997) on workplace cultures suggested that communal ties at work offer the emotional magnets once provided by home. This leads to propositions related to the importance of a person-organization fit.

Proposition 25: Organizational identity attributes can contribute to the construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 25a: The organization's philosophy can contribute to organizational identification if there is a match between that philosophy and what is important to the members.

Proposition 25b: A family philosophy characterized as caring, friendly, small, close and open can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 25c: The organization's purpose can contribute to organizational identification if there is a match between the purpose and what is important to the members.

Although the leadership did not communicate a clear vision for its members, I propose that if such a vision existed, then this would be another potential factor in constructing organizational identification.
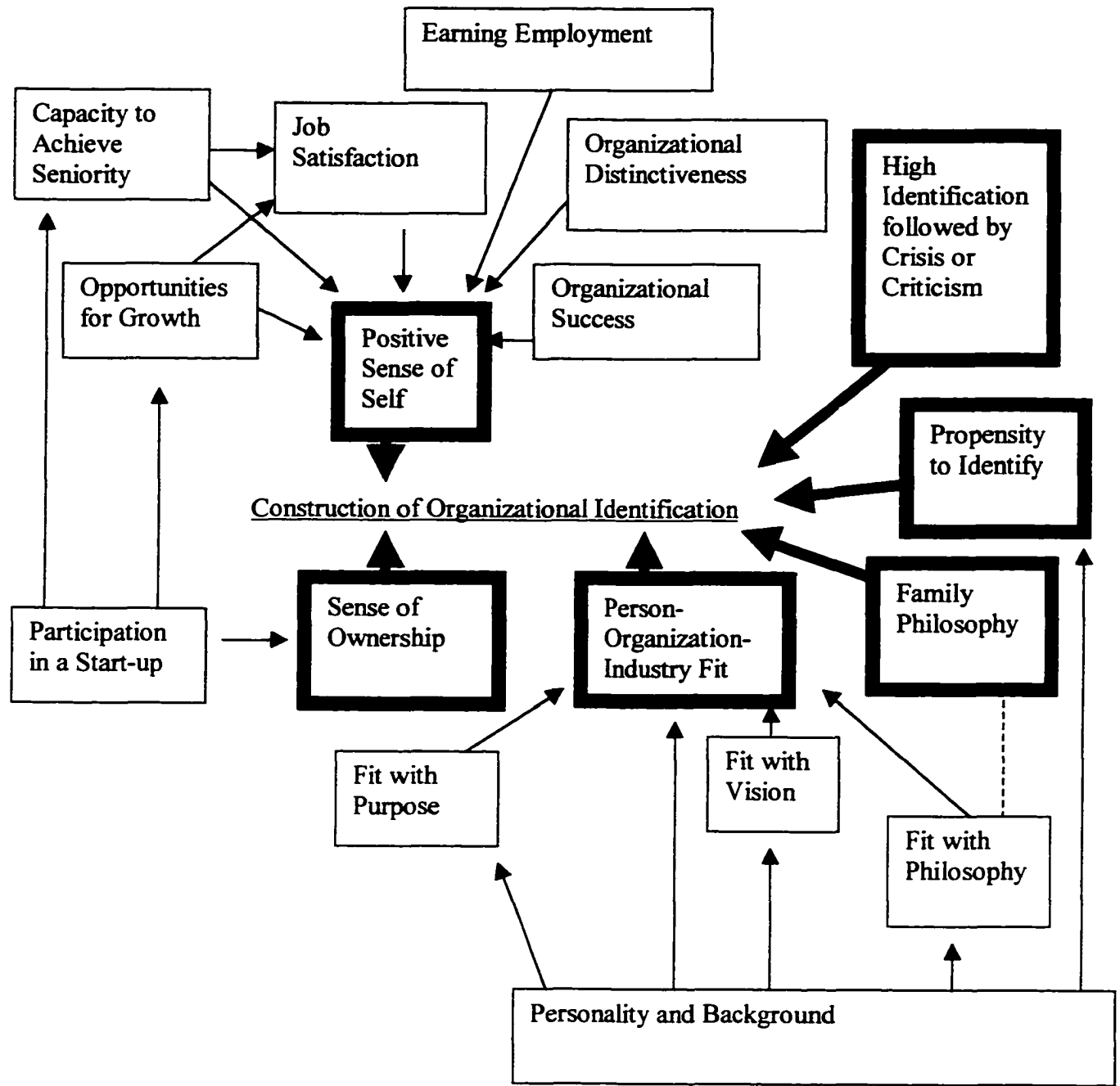
Figure 22: Construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 26: The organization's vision can contribute to organizational identification if there is a match between the vision and what is important to the members.

Research by Mael and Ashforth (1995) suggested a link between biodata and organizational identification where certain personal characteristics and life experiences predispose individuals to identity with a particular organization. Many members of Company A described a love for helping and serving people, which is an essential trait for someone in a service job. Most also expressed a desire for travel, flexibility, and a feeling that aviation was in their blood. Therefore, I suggest these propositions related to person-industry fit.

Proposition 27a: Certain personalities are conducive to working in a particular industry and can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 27b: Certain backgrounds are conducive to working in a particular industry and can contribute to organizational identification.

A large group of former Company E employees at Company A had stayed with Company E until it closed. These individuals may be a unique group because they might have a propensity to identify. Based on this possibility, I would add another proposition.

Proposition 28: An organization that consists of individuals who have a propensity to identify will contribute to the construction of organizational identification.

As suggested by Spears et al. (1997), high and low identifiers respond differently to a threat. Those who are high identifiers tend to show group solidarity

when their identity as group members is threatened. Also, those highly identified

tend to be more loyal (Adler & Adler, 1988) and more cooperative (Kramer, 1993).

Consistent with this research, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 29a: If strength of identification is high prior to a crisis, then

sharing a crisis can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 29b: If strength of identification is high, then media criticism can

contribute to organizational identification.

Spears et al. (1997) also suggested that those who are low identifiers tend to

set themselves apart from the rest of their group in response to a threat. This would

be consistent with the observation of a very identified workforce at Company A at the

time of the initial interviews. Also, interviewees stated that those not supporting the

organization (the low identifiers) had left after the accident and furlough. Thus, I also

suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 29c: If strength of identification is low prior to a crisis, then

sharing a crisis can further reduce organizational identification.

Proposition 29d: If strength of identification is low, then media criticism can

reduce organizational identification.

Human Aspects of Mergers

Based on this research, mergers have the potential to influence organizational

identity, application attributes, future organizational images, and organizational

identification. Although this has been suggested in the literature (Howard & Geist,

1995; McEntire & Bentley, 1996; Olie, 1994), it has never been studied through the lens of organizational identity theory.

The importance of communication throughout the merger process has been suggested in much research (Bastien, 1988; Howard & Geist, 1995; Isabella, 1993; Roach, 1988; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991; Wilkins, 1996). This research on Company A is consistent with the general conclusion that communication is critical to successfully managing change. The findings of this research agree with Bastien (1987) that there is an inverse relationship between both the amount of communication and the congruence of that communication with the level of personal uncertainty. The research on Company A also agrees with Schweiger and Denisi (1991) in that the symbolic value may even override the value of the content of the message. There is a real need, as indicated by Schweiger and Denisi as well as the research on Company A, for employees to feel that the organization cares about them. This symbolic role for communication is significant, especially during a time of change. This research supports Isabella's (1993) recommendation to provide information even if it is only boundaries of the puzzle, acknowledging what is not known. As the members urged in the research of Company A—just try to communicate more, even if the specifics cannot yet be stated. In other words, communicating anything is better than not communicating at all. As suggested by the threat-rigidity effect (Staw et al., 1981), communication tends to get reduced and power and influence become more centralized when organizations are faced with a crisis. Thus, I suggest the following propositions (see Figure 23).

Proposition 30a: Multiple methods for sharing official communications are critical in implementing a merger.

Proposition 30b: Official communications should be timely, regular, and congruent, even if no new information can be provided at the time of each delivery of information.

Proposition 30c: Official communications during a period of organizational change are critical for their symbolic value in demonstrating that the organization cares about its employees.

Proposition 30d: Official communications should include face-to-face meetings because the presence of leadership gives the opportunity to demonstrate that the leader cares about the employees enough to talk to them at these meetings.

```
    Timely        Regular        Congruent     Face-to-face
         \          \               |          /
          \          \              |         /
           →          ↘             ↓        ↙
                      Communications
                            |
                            ↓
                      Demonstrate

                  Caring by Leadership

                        Which
              /           |          \
             ↙            ↓           ↘
   Enhances Trust   Reduces Uncertainty   Reduces Stress
```

Figure 23: The importance of communication during a time of organizational change.

Proposition 30e: Not providing timely and regular communications that include face-to-face meetings can cause members to believe that the leadership does not care about or value them as people. This can make members feel as though they are not important in the eyes of the leadership and can enhance feelings of uncertainty and stress.

Proposition 30f: The frequency and quality of communications can impact the level of trust that members have in their leadership.

This research of Company A is consistent with the view of Marks and Mirvis (1997) that stress can be caused by fear of job loss. Marks and Mirvis explain that these fears can produce psychological and physiological problems. Communications that deal with the status of employment are critical for members (see Figure 24).

The research on Company A is consistent with the findings of McEntire and Bentley (1996) that mergers can cause ambiguity in identity if no clear statement on these issues is provided by the leadership. Thus, I add the following propositions.

Proposition 30g: The lack of information on how the merger will impact employment, organizational identity, and application attributes can cause uncertainty for members.

Conversely, communications that address employment, organizational identity, and application attributes can serve as levers for reducing uncertainty and stress (see Figure 24).

Proposition 30h: Official communications should state changes in organizational identity or application attributes or both, as soon as possible, including any replacements for those aspects of the organization changed.

Proposition 30i: The lack of information on how the merger will impact the future of the organization can cause uncertainty for members.

Proposition 30j: Official communications should describe the leadership's plans for the future of the organization, as soon as possible. These images do not demand detail as much as clarity in direction.

Content of Communications to Reduce Uncertainty and Stress

✓ Status of Employment

✓ Status of Organizational Identity

✓ Status of Application Attributes

✓ Future Vision of Leadership
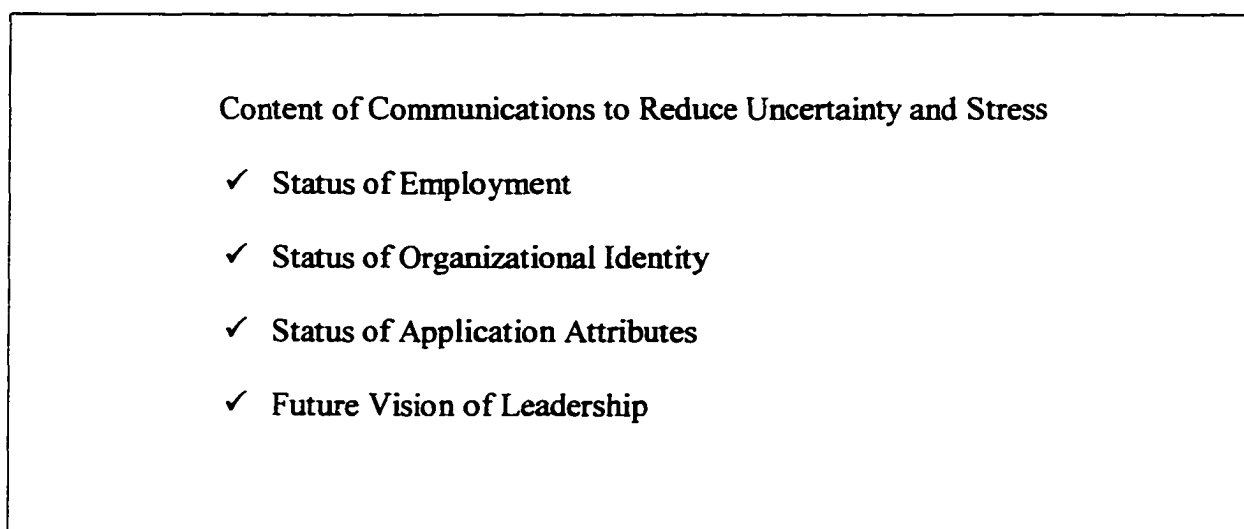
Figure 24: Content of communications that can serve as levers for reducing uncertainty and stress.

Members of Company A celebrated the farewell to their name and logo. This seemed to help members through this change. Such actions are examples of organizational rites as described by Trice and Beyer (1993).

Proposition 30k: To support the implementation of changes in organizational attributes, such changes could be preceded by actions that officially end the old attributes before adopting the new ones.

By replacing the company name and logo, the members were given new symbols to represent their organization. As suggested by Isabella (1993), these symbols should be properly managed so that any divergent perspectives can be brought into harmony. Gioia et al. (1994) stated that symbols have both expressive and instrumental roles, and their management is critical during a time of change (Gioia, 1986). In agreement with this, I suggest the following proposition.

Proposition 30l: Managers can use symbols not only as representations of the organization but also as instruments to promote change (see Figure 25).

If an organization anticipates future mergers or acquisitions that will result in changes to the company symbols, then management must evaluate how much emphasis to put on building loyalty to these symbols. Management at Company A was extremely effective in building loyalty to the name and logo of their company
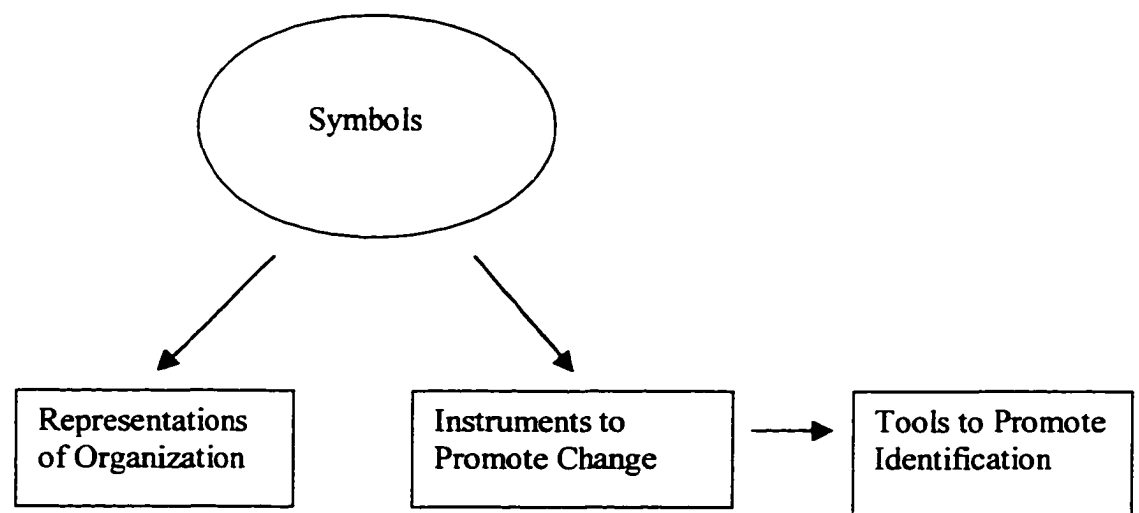
Figure 25: The role of symbols in managing organizational change.

prior to the merger. Members successfully made the transition to the new name and logo. Thus, based on this case, I suggest the following propositions.

Proposition 30m: Management can use organizational symbols as instruments for easing the loss of identity that often occurs with mergers and acquisitions.

Proposition 30n: Management can use organizational symbols as instruments for promoting organizational identification.

Implications for HRD Professionals

This research on the human aspects of mergers, organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification has several implications for HRD professionals.

First, HRD professionals should be integral participants in planning and implementing mergers and other organizational change events (see Figure 26). Because the primary focus of management is directed at financial and strategic decisions, those in key decision-making roles are sometimes insensitive to the impact of the change on the people in the organization. And this impact can produce delayed negative outcomes that can influence merger success. There must be someone in a leadership role who listens to and represents the voice of the employees. Too often, management does not realize that the workforce can make or break the organization. In addition, for humanitarian reasons, there needs to be an advocate for how this change will impact the people so that appropriate actions can be taken to make transitions and change more livable for the workforce. The HRD professional has the

obligation to serve in this role and, as a team member, participate in planning and

executing these activities.

During organizational changes, such as a merger, the HRD professional could

concentrate efforts on those levers that will contribute to satisfying human needs and

enhancing productivity. This effort involves targeting four distinct areas (see Figure

26).

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ Key Participant in Planning and      │
                    │ Implementing Organizational Change   │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘
                                      ▲
                                      │
                            ┌──────────────┐
                            │ HRD          │
                            │ Professional │
                            └──────────────┘
                   ╱             │        ╲           ╲
                  ▼              ▼         ▼            ▼
        ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌────────┐ ┌───────────┐
        │Communications│ │Organizational│ │Vision  │ │Alignment  │
        │              │ │Identity      │ │        │ │           │
        └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └────────┘ └───────────┘
```
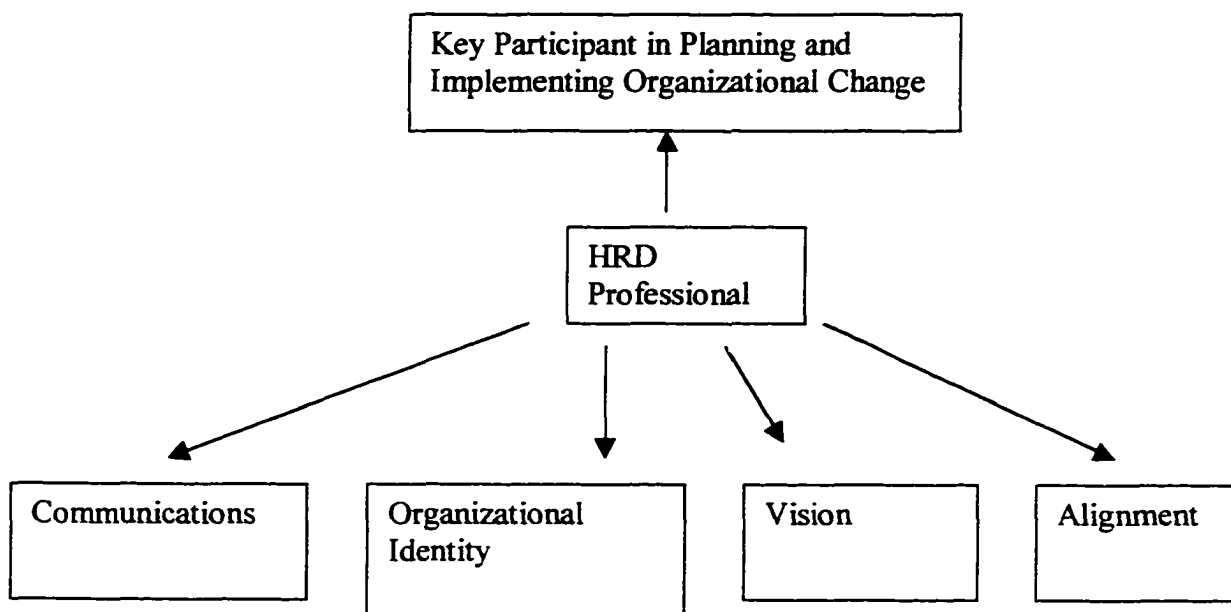
Figure 26: Roles of HRD professionals in facilitating organizational change.

First, the HRD professional can monitor and facilitate communications. This

role involves ensuring that timely and accurate communication systems are in place

throughout the change process. These communications are necessary during normal

times but are critical during times of uncertainty and transition. An array of

techniques can be used including face-to-face meetings with leadership, memos,

telephone hot lines, and newsletters. The HRD professional must be aware of how well these communications are serving their purpose and monitor information flow so that unnecessary uncertainty does not deter productivity.

Second, the HRD professional can help define and translate organizational identity. This involves ensuring that leadership is clear on the organizational identity attributes of the merged organization and then ensuring that members understand that identity and evaluate whether they fit with it. When organization members have clarity about the essence of the organization and if they feel comfortable with it, there is less uncertainty because they have an anchor of stability, even in an environment of change. The HRD professional could work with the leadership to clarify changes in application attributes and facilitate processes so that those changes can be smoothly adopted in the organization.

Third is the focus on vision. The HRD professional can work with the leadership in clarifying direction for the future of the organization and then clearly communicating that to employees in a way that sparks enthusiasm among members.

And, fourth is the role of supporting alignment. The HRD professional must work with others to be alert to misalignments, create new alignments, and strengthen current alignments within the organization so that attributes of the organization are congruent with the organizational identity and vision. The levers for constructing organizational identity illustrated in Figure 18 offer a focus for managing alignment. If those elements that construct identity do not consistently reinforce the organizational identity, then such misalignments must be corrected. These elements are also sources for creating new alignments and strengthening current alignments.

Also, these levers should be harmonious with the vision of the organization so that all actions are consistent not only with who they are as an organization but also where they are going.

The HRD professional could also work with members to determine if organizational attributes support organizational identity. Because there is a funnel effect for organizational attributes, the HRD professional could encourage others to be alert to any misalignments in those attributes.

In times of transition, members need the stability of knowing what is not changing, and they need the challenge of knowing where they are moving. With this basic information, members can better travel through transitions and maintain a sense of balance within the change. With the anchors of information, organizational identity, and vision, each member can contribute to organizational success by aligning their actions to what is important to the organization.

Thus, the HRD professional has a critical role to play in enhancing the capacity of an organization to not only survive change but also thrive on it. As a change agent, the HRD professional must monitor and promote communications, help define and translate organizational identity and vision, and support alignment. The HRD professional must take on these critical roles in supporting the organization and its members through change.

Contributions to Methodology

This research was an intensive application of qualitative case study methods for the purposes of understanding a significant change experience from the

perspective of the members going through the change. As I reflect on the use of this method, I would like to comment on a few observations.

First, I believe that rigorous qualitative research requires multiple interactions with organization members in order to understand their experience and to observe changes in perceptions over time. The follow-up interviews in this study were critical because they revealed altered perceptions by members. Without these multiple opportunities for gathering in-depth data, I would have seen a more stable condition and would not have understood the extent of the change that this organization was going through. What members perceived at the earlier stages of the research were different from perceptions months later.

From the standpoint of process, listening to the tapes after much coding and analysis provided a rich opportunity to understand the meaning behind the words. Reading transcriptions and coding them is part of the process. A critical capacity to understand gets lost as one moves away from the voice of the interviewee. By having the audiotapes and listening to them over and over again, I was able to get closer to the thoughts of the interviewees and hear again the emotion in their words. That emotion, the *tone of the talk*, was critical data that transcriptions exclude. I suggest that others involved in qualitative research stay close to the voices of their interviewees because aspects of that data are found only there and in one's memory.

I must also comment on the site for my case study. Company A was an ideal context for conducting research on the domains of this dissertation; in addition, members of the company were so open and willing to let me come in and talk and observe them. They opened up their organization to me and did not question my

work nor did they ask for much in return. Such a site is advantageous for conducting rigorous research.

The timing of coding qualitative data also merits a few comments. First, in the future, I suggest coding using qualitative software later in the process. I would code on the transcriptions first so that analysis and data gathering would be iterative, using the software in the later stages of data gathering. An alternative would be to use the software sooner; however, if I chose this process, I would not code families of data in order to save that analysis until a greater amount of the data were in. I do believe that the NUD*IST software helped me manage the data. I just caution researchers from making decisions too early on trees and families of nodes.

Limitations of This Research

Several limitations should be noted in relation to the execution and application of this research. First, data were gathered at several points spanning a six-month period. If additional time had permitted, it would have been helpful to see how issues of organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification would continue to unfold. Because clear statements about identity and future organizational images had not been announced by the leadership, it is unclear how perspectives on identity might continue to change. And if the philosophy or the purpose were altered, it would be interesting to see how this would influence the organization and its members.

Second, the blending of the two merged organizations had only begun when this research ended, and that blending was initially only apparent at corporate

headquarters. Only members of Company A were interviewed for this research. Attitudes of the merged organization will undoubtedly add complexity to the situation. How this factor further complicates issues related to organizational identity, future organizational images, and organizational identification is unknown to me at this time.

Third, only members at the major hub location and at City A were interviewed. It would have been interesting to interview others at the various airports outside of City A where this company had destinations. Also, only members of two shifts were interviewed. It would have been insightful to see if the third shift had different perspectives.

Fourth, subidentities within the organization could be another area of research. With larger numbers of interviewees from each functional group, the data might have revealed subidentity differences in perceptions. By expanding the interview process to even larger numbers, it might better expose variations within the organization.

Finally, this research is one in-depth case study. The application of the findings from this research is limited because understandings have been drawn from just this company's experience and my review of the literature. Not only is this one case but it is also a unique one with its own special history and people. Thus, it may have further limitations in relation to transferability. Yet, the propositions that emerged from the data offer rich opportunities for future research on many aspects of the domains of this research.

Directions for Future Research

This research offers many challenges for future research. Numerous propositions have been listed for all areas included in this study (see Appendix H).

In order to extend organizational identity theory, future research could continue to examine the content of organizational identity and the content and structure of organizational attributes. Is organizational identity the purpose and philosophy of the organization as this research has indicated? If either of those elements is significantly altered, how does it impact an organization? Further study of organizations undergoing change can shed light on this. Longitudinal research can best offer insights on these issues.

Additional research on the construction of organizational identity would also be useful. Because organizational identity is a construct that should be managed, it would be valuable to identify the best levers for promoting organizational identity, especially during times of transition and change. More extensive research on the construct of construed internal images is also needed.

The importance of future organizational images has been highlighted in this research. Additional research on the presence of multiple future images within an organization would be another fruitful area for research. A study of the various multiple future images presented in this research and relationships between shared future images and organizational success might be another area of focus. Also, a better understanding of the impact of others inside and outside the organization on members' perceptions of the future would offer interesting research opportunities. An analysis of the content of visions and how these images can best be expressed and

transferred to others in the organization would be useful for promoting a shared vision.

It is my hope that the extension of the language of organizational identity, which emerged from this research, can be used in communicating and researching these issues. Such a vocabulary can facilitate the development of organizational identity theory. Future research can build on and expand this language.

Concerning organizational identification, there are numerous areas ripe for further research. The scope used to define organizational identification based on social identity theory might be reconsidered to determine if the definition should be expanded to include affect. A modification of the Mael (1988) instrument to measure strength of organizational identification could be evaluated. Other recommended measures of strength of identification also need greater clarity in their definition and execution. Also, further research on the construction of organizational identification is needed to add new insights and examine propositions offered in this research. In addition, research on members' identification with the leader and how this impacts their organizational identification when that leader leaves can provide interesting insights because leadership change is common with mergers and acquisitions.

It is suggested that future research on the human aspects of mergers be framed within theory and research on organizational identity and organizational identification as presented in this research. Doing this will enable research to contribute to theory development and a better understanding of the processes that support such changes in an organization.

Another interesting area for future research is the symbolic value of communication in promoting trust and relieving uncertainty and stress. Also, future research could focus on the importance of clarity in organizational identity and vision during times of organizational change and the relationship between such clarity and uncertainty, stress, and organizational identification. The use of symbols as instruments to manage change is another interesting area of study.

Conclusion

This research covers many aspects of organizational identity and offers opportunities for revising and extending organizational identity theory. New theory has also been proposed with respect to future organizational images. And the extension of knowledge on the construction of organizational identification and measurement of the strength of identification provides interesting opportunities to extend research.

The role of HRD in meeting the challenges of conducting research on these domains as well as helping to implement successful change is an opportunity and a task that must not be neglected. Change events are becoming the norm and organizational members must have the support that they need to successfully operate in such an environment. With the guidance of the HRD practitioner, organizations must clarify their stability and nurture it so that its members have the capacity to successfully endure and endorse change. This is a critical role for the HRD professional that must be accepted and embraced if the profession, the organization, and the joy and fulfillment of work are to endure.

Appendix A

Memo of Agreement

To: Company A

From: Sheila L. Margolis

Date: September 9, 1997

Topic: Research for Doctoral Dissertation

This memo confirms that Sheila L. Margolis will be allowed to conduct research at this company for her doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this research is to develop a model for constructing organizational identity. She will be allowed to conduct interviews with 30 employees, representing the different functional groups in the organization. Interviewees will be informed that the researcher has not been hired by this organization to do this research and that this is an academic project. Neither the name of this organization nor any individual names of employees will be included in any published reports of this research. The organization will schedule these interviews. All expenses for the researcher's time and materials are the responsibility of the researcher. A review of documents and opportunities for observations will be needed for this research; these activities will only involve the time of the researcher. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher will provide the company an executive summary of the research results. Research can begin in September 1997 and must be concluded no later than February 1, 1998.

Signatures below indicate agreement with the research described above.

_____   _____

Signature of Company Representative   **Date**

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   **Date**

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Focus Questions

- How do members describe organizational identity? Do organization members share a collective organizational identity? If so, what aspects of organizational identity do they hold in common?

- How has the merger influenced organizational identity?

- What contributes to a member's perception of organizational identity?

- How can the organization support its members during this merger?

- How do members describe future organizational images?

- How can the organization cultivate member identification?

Products of Research

- Model for post-merger identity implementation—a model for constructing a cohesive corporate identity within the organization.

- Executive summary of the results of this research.

General Points to Cover Prior to Interview

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I understand that you are very busy, and I appreciate the opportunity to have you participate in this research. I shall keep this interview to a maximum of one hour.

- I am a doctoral student in Human Resource Development at Georgia State University. As my final requirement for receiving my Ph.D., I am responsible for completing a scholarly research study that will make a contribution to both theory and practice in the field of Human Resource Development. Your organization has agreed to allow me to conduct my research here. I have not been hired by this organization to do this research.

- The focus of my research is organizational identity in an organization that has experienced a merger. Specifically, I am looking at:

  - employees' perceptions of the organization

  - what has influenced how the employees see the organization

  - how the merger has influenced how one thinks about the organization

  - how employees see the future of this organization

- One way to gather this information is through interviews. I would like to tape-record our interview so that my data will be as accurate as possible. You may at any time ask me to turn the recorder off, and I shall do so. Also, you will have the opportunity to review my transcription of this interview to confirm that what I have is accurate and to discuss any additional information. Before we begin, I would like to reassure you that what is said in this interview will be held in the strictest confidence. You will remain anonymous in anything written or discussed about this research. I shall not make a reference to names in any way nor will data be presented in any way that could imply a reference to any individual.

- I have a consent form that is required by the University to be signed by participants when research involves talking to people. If you would review the form, ask me any questions, and sign it, then we'll begin the interview.

Additional Data Sources

- As additional sources of data, I must conduct observations and review documents.

- Are there any events, meetings, or places where I could observe activity related to the organization and its merger activities?

- What documents, records, communications, or objects should I see that would provide data related to issues of organizational identity, construction of identity, merger activities, and future images of the organization?

- Employee handbooks, orientation handbooks, recruitment pamphlets, training materials, print advertisements, statements about the company's philosophy and orientation procedures, newsletters, annual reports, slide/video presentations

Questions (revised Sept. 19, 1997)

1. Could you please describe what you do in this organization? (Employee; Job Function)

2. How long have you worked at this organization?

<u>Organizational Identity Attributes</u> (Describe what is core, distinctive, and enduring about this organization and ask how attractive is this to you personally.)

3. When you think of Company A, what adjectives/words would you use to describe this company? Give examples of the organization demonstrating these traits.

4. What does this organization stand for? Give me an example of this.

5. What values are important in this organization? Give me an example of this.

6. What do you feel as an employee is most important at this organization? Give me an example of this.

7. What is the thing most emphasized in this organization? Give me an example of this.

8. What do you feel makes Company A different/special/distinctive from other companies (in the airline industry)? Give me an example of this.

9. If I asked you these questions two years ago, would you be using the same adjectives or different ones to describe this organization?

10. What do you think will be changing?

<u>Construction of Identity (What has made you see the organization this way?)</u>

11. What has the *organization* (management) said or done to influence how you see the organization? Give examples.

12. How do others *in the organization* describe the organization? How does this make you feel? (inflight/pilots/gate/ramp/reservations/mechanics)

13. How do others *outside the organization* see the organization? How does this make you feel? (customers/suppliers/public/media)

(Alternate order with previous two questions.)

Merger

14. How has this merger affected your view of Company A?

15. How do you feel about the change of name, logo, etc.?

16. What has the organization done to support you during this change?

17. What could the organization do to support you during this change?

Future Images (What do you picture as the future for Company A two years from now?)

18. What do you picture as the future for Company A two years from now? What words will describe the organization?

19. Is this what you expect for Company A's future? If not, what words do you think you will use two years from now to describe how you expect to see this organization?

20. Is this the ideal future for Company A? If not, if you were describing the ideal organization, what would it look like in the future?

21. What has the organization presented as its anticipated future?

22. How important is it to know what the organization is planning for its future?

23. In what ways are your expected or ideal images for the organization consistent with the organization's expectations for the future of this organization?

24. In what ways do others inside the organization share your expected or ideal future image of this organization?

25. Has this affected how you view the future of this organization?

26. In what ways do <u>others outside</u> the organization share your expected or ideal future image of this organization?

27. Has this affected how you view the future of this organization?

<u>Signs of Identification (Give examples for each.)</u>

28. When someone criticizes Company A, how does it make you feel? Give example.

29. Are you interested in what others think about the organization?

30. When you talk about Company A, do you say "we" or "they"?

31. Do you consider Company A's success your success? OR Describe a success for this organization. How did it make you feel?

32. When someone praises Company A, does it feel like a personal compliment? OR When someone praises Company A, how does it feel?

33. Would you be happy to spend the rest of your career at Company A?

34. Do you consider the company's problems your own?

35. How strong is your sense of "belonging" to Company A?

36. If a story in the media criticizes Company A, how do you feel?

37. Do you feel like "part of the family" of Company A?

38. Do you consider yourself a typical Company A employee?

39. Does Company A give meaning to your life?

40. Are you emotionally connected to Company A?

41. Do you feel an obligation to remain at Company A?

Strength of Identification

42. When you think of who you are (self-concept) and the identity of Company A

(what it is), how much overlap is there (use circles)?

43. When you think of all the groups of which you are a member, where would you

rank Company A in its importance?

Construction of Identification

44. What made you feel so connected to Company A? OR What created that

closeness? OR What do you think has made you care so much?

Consequences of Identification (Give examples for each.)

45. Do you spend a lot of time here?

46. Is there a lot of cooperation here?

47. Is there a strong competitiveness against other airlines?

48. Do you do things for Company A that do not always benefit yourself?

49. Do you consider yourself dedicated, loyal?

Appendix C

Consent Form: Construction of Organizational Identity in a Merger Environment

I have been asked to participate in a study on the construction of organizational identity in the context of a merger. The purpose of this study is to investigate members' perceptions about their organization's identity and what has contributed to those perceptions. Any influences on organizational identity based on changes due to the merger experience will also be discussed.

This project is directed by Sheila L. Margolis, a Ph.D. student in Human Resource Development at Georgia State University. There is no other sponsorship or funding for this project.

If I choose to participate in this study, I understand that I shall be asked to participate in interviews that will last approximately one hour. As a participant, I shall be offered opportunities to review transcriptions of interviews and to attend follow-up interviews to clarify content.

I have been told that there are no known risks or discomfort to me from participation in this study, other than what is normally associated with an interview situation. Although there might not be any benefit to me personally for participating, knowledge gained from this study may contribute to a better understanding of the construction of organizational identity by members who have experienced a merger.

The data will be summarized and reported only in group form. I understand that information gathered from me will not be reported to anyone in any manner which personally identifies me.

The study investigator Sheila L. Margolis has offered to answer any questions that I have about my involvement in this project. The Georgia State University Research Office (room G-76 Alumni Hall) can provide me with general information about the rights of human subjects in research. I understand that I may end my participation at any time. If I refuse to participate or decide to stop, I shall not be penalized and shall not lose any benefits to which I am entitled.

I understand that a signed statement of informed consent is required by Georgia State University of all participants in research. My signature indicates that I understand the contents of this form and agree to be a participant in this study.

_____   _____   _____

Printed Name of Participant   Participant Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Printed Name of Researcher   Researcher Signature   Date

Appendix D

Address Form

Transcriptions

Please give your mailing address in order to receive a transcription of this interview

to check for accuracy of content.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Telephone:_(_____)_____

Appendix E

Mini-Tour Analysis Diagrams and Questions

Explain each analysis diagram and ask interviewees for feedback on accuracy

of analysis. Discuss any areas in question. Also, ask questions included with

diagrams.

Slide 1
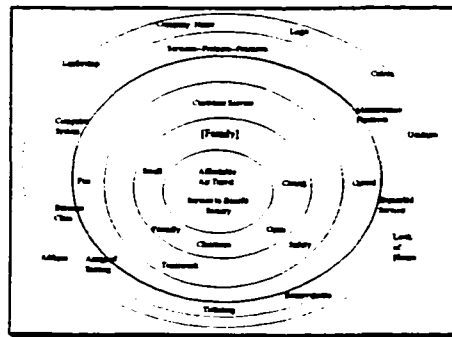
Slide 2

Organizational Identity Attributes
"core, distinctive, enduring"

- Safety—Has it always been a critical focus (more than other airlines)?
- Family—Is Company A more family like than other airlines? Is this a good description?
- Customer Service vs. Complaints
- Fun—Is there a reduction in fun?
- Casual—Has this changed?

Slide 3
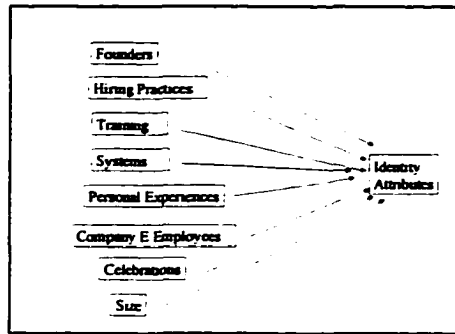
Slide 4

Construction of Identity
Attributes

- Company E—Did the Company E
  employees contribute to the construction of
  the family atmosphere?
- Training—What examples of training helped
  construct the identity?

Slide 5

> ## Merger Feelings
>
> - Positive and hopeful
> - Uncertainty
>   - Loss of job
>   - Lack of information
> - Opportunity
>   - Improved pay and benefits
> - Loss of identity

Slide 6

> ## Support
>
> - Provided by company—none
> - Needed from company—information
>   - "Just try to communicate more, even if you're not communicating anything If you communicate that you don't know anything, it's better than nothing at all."
>   - Meetings, town hall meetings and rallies, memos, President's Line

Slide 7

> ## Support
>
> - Has lack of information always been a problem with Company A or is this new?
> - Is the President's Line effective?

Slide 8

Language of Organizational Identity

Perceived Organizational Identity

Construed External Image

Reputation

Construed Internal Future Images

Construed Internal Image

Perceived Future Images

Desired or Ideal Future Image

Expected   Ideal
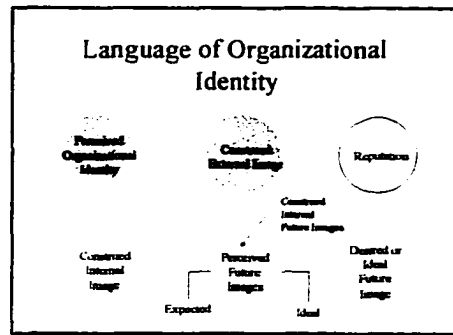
Slide 9

Language of Identity

- Does what others inside the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about this company affect what one thinks is core, distinctive, and enduring? Also, others outside?
- Do you ever talk with others about those aspects of the company?
- Have you ever had a fear about what the future might be?
- Do construed internal or external future images affect perceived future images?

Slide 10

Language of Identity

Perceived Organizational Identity

Construed External Image

Reputation

Construed Internal Future Image

Construed Internal Image

Perceived Future Images

Construed External Future Image

Expected   Feared   Ideal
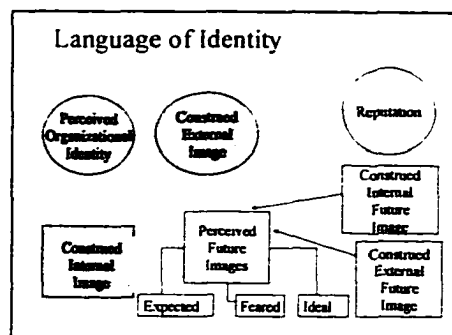
Slide 11

Signs of Identification

- Takes criticism personally
- Interested in what others think about organization
- Use "we" instead of "they"
- Organization's successes are my successes
- Praise feels like personal compliment
- Response to media criticism

Slide 12

Signs of Identification

- Wear company clothing
- Want career at company
- Company's problems—one's own problems
- Spends time with employees after work
- Feels like part of the Company A family

Slide 13

Signs of Identification

- Is your response to media criticism—embarrassed or angry or both?

Slide 14

Strength of Identification

When one's self-concept has many of the same attributes as one defines the organization.

Slide 15

Strength of Identification

• When you described a strong overlap in how you define yourself and the organization, were you referring to similar characteristics, the identity attributes, or something else?

Slide 16

Strength of Identification

Family

Company A

Other Groups

Salience of organizational identity

Slide 17

Consequences of Identification

- Loyalty
- Dedicated and hardworking
- Citizenship behaviors
- Cooperation
- Confidence in company
- Competitiveness outside of organization

Slide 18

Construction of Identification

- Family environment
  - Close, caring, friendly, open, small
- Positive sense of self
  - Company success and distinctiveness, job satisfaction, earned employment
- Start up/Ownership/Opportunities
- Biodata
  - Personality, love travel, flexibility, aviation in blood
- Crisis and media attack

Slide 19

Construction of Identification

- Role of symbols (logo) in constructing identification?
- Underdog—Does being the underdog support construction of identification? Has the company always been like the underdog?
- Order of significance

Appendix F

Cover Letter for Transcriptions

To:

From: Sheila Margolis

Date:

Subject: Sign-off on Interview Transcription for Doctoral Research

Thank you so much for participating in this research. Enclosed is the transcription of our interview. Please review the transcription and mark anything that you would like to change. (Do not be concerned with any spelling or grammatical errors.) Then, please complete the bottom of this page and return it with the transcription in the enclosed addressed and stamped envelope. I must receive your envelope before I can input your data, so please return it to me as quickly as possible, preferably no later than October 29, 1997.

I truly appreciate the time you have given me and the thoughtful comments that you have provided!

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

Please check one of the following:

_____1. I have not indicated any changes on this transcription.

_____2. I have marked changes on this transcription.

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Appendix G

Nodes

(1)	/Attributes
(1 1)	/Attributes/Family
(1 1 1)	/Attributes/Family/Reservations
(1 1 1 1)	/Attributes/Family/Reservations/Survived
(1 1 1 2)	/Attributes/Family/Reservations/Lost
(1 1 2)	/Attributes/Family/In-flight
(1 1 2 1)	/Attributes/Family/In-flight/Survived
(1 1 2 2)	/Attributes/Family/In-flight/Lost
(1 1 3)	/Attributes/Family/Pilots
(1 1 3 1)	/Attributes/Family/Pilots/Survived
(1 1 3 2)	/Attributes/Family/Pilots/Lost
(1 1 4)	/Attributes/Family/Customer Service
(1 1 4 1)	/Attributes/Family/Customer Service/Survived
(1 1 4 2)	/Attributes/Family/Customer Service/Lost
(1 1 5)	/Attributes/Family/Maintenance
(1 1 5 1)	/Attributes/Family/Maintenance/Survived
(1 1 5 2)	/Attributes/Family/Maintenance/Lost
(1 1 6)	/Attributes/Family/Corporate
(1 1 6 1)	/Attributes/Family/Corporate/Survived
(1 1 6 2)	/Attributes/Family/Corporate/Lost
(1 2)	/Attributes/Friendly
(1 2 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/Reservations
(1 2 1 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/Reservations/Survived
(1 2 1 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/Reservations/Lost
(1 2 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/In-flight
(1 2 2 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/In-flight/Survived
(1 2 2 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/In-flight/Lost
(1 2 3)	/Attributes/Friendly/Pilots
(1 2 3 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/Pilots/Survived
(1 2 3 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/Pilots/Lost
(1 2 4)	/Attributes/Friendly/Customer Service
(1 2 4 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/Customer Service/Survived
(1 2 4 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/Customer Service/Lost
(1 2 5)	/Attributes/Friendly/Maintenance
(1 2 5 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/Maintenance/Survived
(1 2 5 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/Maintenance/Lost
(1 2 6)	/Attributes/Friendly/Corporate
(1 2 6 1)	/Attributes/Friendly/Corporate/Survived
(1 2 6 2)	/Attributes/Friendly/Corporate/Lost
(1 3)	/Attributes/Caring

(1 3 1)	/Attributes/Caring/Reservations
(1 3 1 1)	/Attributes/Caring/Reservations/Survived
(1 3 1 2)	/Attributes/Caring/Reservations/Lost
(1 3 2)	/Attributes/Caring/In-flight
(1 3 2 1)	/Attributes/Caring/In-flight/Survived
(1 3 2 2)	/Attributes/Caring/In-flight/Lost
(1 3 3)	/Attributes/Caring/Pilots
(1 3 3 1)	/Attributes/Caring/Pilots/Survived
(1 3 3 2)	/Attributes/Caring/Pilots/Lost
(1 3 4)	/Attributes/Caring/Customer Service
(1 3 4 1)	/Attributes/Caring/Customer Service/Survived
(1 3 4 2)	/Attributes/Caring/Customer Service/Lost
(1 3 5)	/Attributes/Caring/Maintenance
(1 3 5 1)	/Attributes/Caring/Maintenance/Survived
(1 3 5 2)	/Attributes/Caring/Maintenance/Lost
(1 3 6)	/Attributes/Caring/Corporate
(1 3 6 1)	/Attributes/Caring/Corporate/Survived
(1 3 6 2)	/Attributes/Caring/Corporate/Lost
(1 4)	/Attributes/Open-door policy
(1 4 1)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/Reservations
(1 4 1 1)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/Reservations/Survived
(1 4 1 2)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/Reservations/Lost
(1 4 2)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/In-flight
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(1 4 2 2)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/In-flight/Lost
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(1 4 4 1)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/Customer Service/Survived
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(1 4 5 1)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/Maintenance/Survived
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(1 4 6 1)	/Attributes/Open-door policy/Corporate/Survived
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(1 5 2 1)	/Attributes/Casual/In-flight/Survived
(1 5 2 2)	/Attributes/Casual/In-flight/Lost
(1 5 3)	/Attributes/Casual/Pilots
(1 5 3 1)	/Attributes/Casual/Pilots/Survived

(1 5 3 2)	/Attributes/Casual/Pilots/Lost
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(1 5 4 1)	/Attributes/Casual/Customer Service/Survived
(1 5 4 2)	/Attributes/Casual/Customer Service/Lost
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(1 5 5 1)	/Attributes/Casual/Maintenance/Survived
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(1 6 2)	/Attributes/Low cost/In-flight
(1 6 2 1)	/Attributes/Low cost/In-flight/Survived
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(1 6 3)	/Attributes/Low cost/Pilots
(1 6 3 1)	/Attributes/Low cost/Pilots/Survived
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(1 6 3 3 1)	/Attributes/Low cost/Pilots/Focus on Cost over Product/Changed
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(1 6 4 1)	/Attributes/Low cost/Customer Service/Survived
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(1 6 5 1)	/Attributes/Low cost/Maintenance/Survived
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(1 8 1)	/Attributes/Fun/Reservations
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(1 9 2 1)	/Attributes/Customer service/In-flight/Survived
(1 9 2 2)	/Attributes/Customer service/In-flight/Lost
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(1 9 3 1)	/Attributes/Customer service/Pilots/Survived
(1 9 3 2)	/Attributes/Customer service/Pilots/Lost
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(1 9 4 1)	/Attributes/Customer service/Customer Service/Survived
(1 9 4 2)	/Attributes/Customer service/Customer Service/Lost
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(1 9 5 1)	/Attributes/Customer service/Maintenance/Survived
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(1 9 6 1)	/Attributes/Customer service/Corporate/Survived
(1 9 6 2)	/Attributes/Customer service/Corporate/Lost
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(1 10 1)	/Attributes/Team effort/Reservations
(1 10 1 1)	/Attributes/Team effort/Reservations/Survived
(1 10 1 2)	/Attributes/Team effort/Reservations/Lost

(1 10 2)	/Attributes/Team effort/In-flight
(1 10 2 1)	/Attributes/Team effort/In-flight/Survived
(1 10 2 2)	/Attributes/Team effort/In-flight/Lost
(1 10 3)	/Attributes/Team effort/Pilots
(1 10 3 1)	/Attributes/Team effort/Pilots/Survived
(1 10 3 2)	/Attributes/Team effort/Pilots/Lost
(1 10 4)	/Attributes/Team effort/Customer Service
(1 10 4 1)	/Attributes/Team effort/Customer Service/Survived
(1 10 4 2)	/Attributes/Team effort/Customer Service/Lost
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(1 10 5 1)	/Attributes/Team effort/Maintenance/Survived
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(1 10 6)	/Attributes/Team effort/Corporate
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(1 11 3 1)	/Attributes/Flexibility/Pilots/Survived
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(1 11 4 1)	/Attributes/Flexibility/Customer Service/Survived
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(1 11 6)	/Attributes/Flexibility/Corporate
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(1 12 1 2)	/Attributes/Safety/Reservations/Lost
(1 12 2)	/Attributes/Safety/In-flight
(1 12 2 1)	/Attributes/Safety/In-flight/Survived
(1 12 2 2)	/Attributes/Safety/In-flight/Lost
(1 12 3)	/Attributes/Safety/Pilots
(1 12 3 1)	/Attributes/Safety/Pilots/Survived
(1 12 3 2)	/Attributes/Safety/Pilots/Lost
(1 12 4)	/Attributes/Safety/Customer Service
(1 12 4 1)	/Attributes/Safety/Customer Service/Survived

(1 12 4 2)	/Attributes/Safety/Customer Service/Lost
(1 12 5)	/Attributes/Safety/Maintenance
(1 12 5 1)	/Attributes/Safety/Maintenance/Survived
(1 12 5 2)	/Attributes/Safety/Maintenance/Lost
(1 12 6)	/Attributes/Safety/Corporate
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(1 13)	/Attributes/Rapid growth
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(1 13 1 2)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Reservations/Lost
(1 13 2)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/In-flight
(1 13 2 1)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/In-flight/Survived
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(1 13 3)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Pilots
(1 13 3 1)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Pilots/Survived
(1 13 3 2)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Pilots/Lost
(1 13 4)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Customer Service
(1 13 4 1)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Customer Service/Survived
(1 13 4 2)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Customer Service/Lost
(1 13 5)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Maintenance
(1 13 5 1)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Maintenance/Survived
(1 13 5 2)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Maintenance/Lost
(1 13 6)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Corporate
(1 13 6 1)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Corporate/Survived
(1 13 6 2)	/Attributes/Rapid growth/Corporate/Lost
(1 14)	/Attributes/Dedicated Workforce
(1 14 3)	/Attributes/Dedicated Workforce/Pilots
(1 14 3 1)	/Attributes/Dedicated Workforce/Pilots/Survived
(1 15)	/Attributes/Innovative
(1 15 1)	/Attributes/Innovative/Reservations
(1 15 1 2)	/Attributes/Innovative/Reservations/Lost
(1 15 2)	/Attributes/Innovative/In-flight
(1 15 4)	/Attributes/Innovative/Customer Service
(1 15 4 2)	/Attributes/Innovative/Customer Service/Lost
(1 16)	/Attributes/Changing
(2)	/Identity Construction
(2 1)	/Identity Construction/Management
(2 1 1)	/Identity Construction/Management/Hiring
(2 1 2)	/Identity Construction/Management/Training
(2 1 3)	/Identity Construction/Management/Ceremonies
(2 1 4)	/Identity Construction/Management/Meetings
(2 1 4 1)	/Identity Construction/Management/Meetings /With Leadership
(2 1 4 2)	/Identity Construction/Management/Meetings /Other
(2 1 5)	/Identity Construction/Management/Founders
(2 1 6)	/Identity Construction/Management/Personal Experience

(2 1 7)	/Identity Construction/Management/Events
(2 1 7 1)	/Identity Construction/Management/Events/Whole Family Attends
(2 1 8)	/Identity Construction/Management/Can Voice Opinion
(2 1 9)	/Identity Construction/Management/Measurement
(2 2)	/Identity Construction/Others Inside
(2 3)	/Identity Construction/Others Outside
(2 4)	/Identity Construction/Start Up
(2 5)	/Identity Construction/Younger Crowd
(2 6)	/Identity Construction/Mobility Within
(2 7)	/Identity Construction/Size
(2 8)	/Identity Construction/Closeness through Crisis
(2 9)	/Identity Construction/Systems
(2 10)	/Identity Construction/Symbols
(3)	/Future Images
(3 1)	/Future Images/Expected
(3 2)	/Future Images/Ideal
(3 3)	/Future Images/Company
(3 4)	/Future Images/Others Inside
(3 5)	/Future Images/Others Outside
(4)	/Signs of Identification
(4 1)	/Signs of Identification/"We"
(4 2)	/Signs of Identification/Celebrations
(4 3)	/Signs of Identification/Pride in Company
(4 4)	/Signs of Identification/Socialize Outside of Work
(4 5)	/Signs of Identification/Takes What Happens at Company Personal
(4 7)	/Signs of Identification/Criticisms of Company
(4 8)	/Signs of Identification/Company's Problems Own Problems
(4 9)	/Signs of Identification/Interested in What Others Think
(4 10)	/Signs of Identification/Company's Success is One's Success
(4 11)	/Signs of Identification/Praise Feels Like Personal Complement
(4 12)	/Signs of Identification/Career
(4 13)	/Signs of Identification/Belonging
(4 14)	/Signs of Identification/Feels Like a Family
(4 15)	/Signs of Identification/Stay With Low Pay
(4 16)	/Signs of Identification/Wear A Clothes
(4 17)	/Signs of Identification/Typical A Employee
(4 18)	/Signs of Identification/Gives Life Meaning
(4 19)	/Signs of Identification/Hierarchy
(4 20)	/Signs of Identification/Circles Overlap
(4 21)	/Signs of Identification/Symbols
(5)	/Construction of Identification
(5 1)	/Construction of Identification/Attractive
(5 2)	/Construction of Identification/Distinctive
(5 3)	/Construction of Identification/Start Up
(5 4)	/Construction of Identification/Loyalty to Founders
(5 5)	/Construction of Identification/Attack by Media

(5 6)	/Construction of Identification/Feel Good About Self
(5 7)	/Construction of Identification/Spends Lots of Time
(5 8)	/Construction of Identification/Earned to be Team Member
(5 9)	/Construction of Identification/Celebrations
(5 10)	/Construction of Identification/Previous Employment
(5 11)	/Construction of Identification/Type of Employee
(5 12)	/Construction of Identification/Company Takes Care of Employees
(5 13)	/Construction of Identification/Company Success
(5 14)	/Construction of Identification/Ownership
(5 15)	/Construction of Identification/Open-Door Policy
(5 16)	/Construction of Identification/People Recognize Who You Are
(5 17)	/Construction of Identification/Individual Can Make A Difference
(5 18)	/Construction of Identification/Challenging
(5 19)	/Construction of Identification/Hard Work Put Into Job
(5 20)	/Construction of Identification/Airline Family
(5 21)	/Construction of Identification/Part of a Close-knit Group
(5 22)	/Construction of Identification/Feel All Equal
(5 23)	/Construction of Identification/Underdog
(5 24)	/Construction of Identification/Like Travel
(5 25)	/Construction of Identification/Satisfies Need to Help Others
(6)	/Crash
(7)	/Consequences of Identification
(7 1)	/Consequences of Identification/Cooperation
(7 2)	/Consequences of Identification/Competitive Against Others
(7 3)	/Consequences of Identification/Citizenship Behaviors
(7 4)	/Consequences of Identification/Dedicated
(7 5)	/Consequences of Identification/Loyal
(7 6)	/Consequences of Identification/A Lot of Time at Work
(7 7)	/Consequences of Identification/Intense
(7 8)	/Consequences of Identification/Hard Working
(7 9)	/Consequences of Identification/Confidence in Company
(8)	/Why Work Here
(9)	/Why Stay Here
(10)	/Merger Feelings
(10 1)	/Merger Feelings/Nervous
(10 2)	/Merger Feelings/Anxious
(10 3)	/Merger Feelings/Concern about Speed
(10 4)	/Merger Feelings/Uncertainty
(10 4 1)	/Merger Feelings/Uncertainty/Job
(10 4 2)	/Merger Feelings/Uncertainty/General
(10 5)	/Merger Feelings/Hopeful-Positive
(10 6)	/Merger Feelings/Excited
(10 7)	/Merger Feelings/Information
(10 7 1)	/Merger Feelings/Information/Not Enough
(10 7 2)	/Merger Feelings/Information/Adequate
(10 8)	/Merger Feelings/Rumors

(10 9)	/Merger Feelings/Chance to Get More Professional Look
(10 10)	/Merger Feelings/Money
(10 11)	/Merger Feelings/Concern About Changes
(10 12)	/Merger Feelings/Loss of Identity
(10 12 1)	/Merger Feelings/Loss of Identity/Good
(10 12 2)	/Merger Feelings/Loss of Identity/Bad
(10 13)	/Merger Feelings/Loss of Founders
(11)	/Support Provided During Merger
(12)	/Support Needed During Merger
(F)	//Free Nodes
(F 1)	//Free Nodes/In-fighting
(F 2)	//Free Nodes/Problems with Corporate/Info
(F 3)	//Free Nodes/Diversity
(F 4)	//Free Nodes/Trusting Personality
(F 5)	//Free Nodes/Importance of People
(F 6)	//Free Nodes/Outsourcing
(F 7)	//Free Nodes/Turnover
(F 8)	//Free Nodes/Integrity
(F 9)	//Free Nodes/Re-start Up
(F 10)	//Free Nodes/Company E family
(F 11)	//Free Nodes/Resilient
(F 12)	//Free Nodes/Younger employees
(F 13)	//Free Nodes/Changes in practices
(F 14)	//Free Nodes/Profit
(F 15)	//Free Nodes/Distinctive features
(F 16)	//Free Nodes/HRD Dept.
(F 17)	//Free Nodes/Understaffed
(F 18)	//Free Nodes/Communication (non-merger)
(F 19)	//Free Nodes/Problem Workers
(F 20)	//Free Nodes/On time
(F 21)	//Free Nodes/Poor Promotions
(F 22)	//Free Nodes/New Leadership Good
(F 23)	//Free Nodes/Systems Promoting Identity
(F 24)	//Free Nodes/Need More Training
(F 25)	//Free Nodes/Problem in Selecting Supervisors

Appendix H

Propositions

Proposition 1: Organizational identity consists of the organization's purpose (the reason for being in business) and the philosophy (the guiding spirit and organizing principle for how members do that business). They serve as the foundation and the framework for the organization.

Proposition 2: An organization has few organizational identity attributes.

Proposition 3: The long-term success of the organization can be negatively influenced if the components of organizational identity are not widely shared among the organization's members.

Proposition 4: If a significant component of organizational identity is altered, the organization will, by definition, have a new identity and be a new organization.

Proposition 4a: An organization that redefines itself with a new purpose that is significantly different from its previous reason for being in business constitutes an organizational identity change.

Proposition 4b: An organization that eliminates or significantly alters the framework for how members do that business, their philosophy, constitutes an organizational identity change.

Proposition 4c: Any modification that does not alter members' perceptions of their business (the purpose) and the philosophy (guiding spirit and organizing principle) that serves as the framework for their behavior does not constitute organizational identity change.

Proposition 5: Application attributes are priorities, practices, or projections that are applications or representations of organizational identity.

Proposition 5a: Application attributes may require modification and change to satisfy long-term competitiveness.

Proposition 5b: Any change in organizational identity will have a funnel effect and thus potentially impact application attributes.

Proposition 5c: Priorities, practices, and projections vary in their significance to the organizational identity core.

Proposition 6a: The structure of organizational identity consists of the purpose and philosophy of the organization that are understood by its members as their business and the framework for how they do business.

Proposition 6b: At the core of the structure of organizational attributes is organizational identity. In the structure of organizational attributes, those key standards that are most critical to organizational identity—the priorities—are located closer to the organizational identity core. Those attributes that are practices and features that support the purpose, philosophy, and priorities are located further from the core.

Proposition 6c: Those application attributes located closer to the organizational identity core are more enduring than those application attributes located further from the organizational identity core.

Proposition 6d: Those attributes that are the images of the organization such as company name, logo, and colors are application attributes that are most visible to outsiders

Proposition 6e: Those attributes that do not constitute organizational identity can be changed by the organization to be competitive yet still retain its identity.

Proposition 7a: An organization's founders and leaders can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7b: An organization's hiring practices can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7c: Previous employment of organizational members can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7d: An organization's size can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7e: An organization's training can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7f: An organization's systems can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7g: Company celebrations can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7h: Members' personal experiences at work and with other employees can contribute to the construction of organizational identity.

Proposition 7i: Members' perceptions of what others in the organization believe are core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed internal image) can contribute to the construction of organizational identity. Thus, construed internal images can influence perceived organizational identity.

Proposition 7j: Members' perceptions of what others outside the organization believe are core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed external image) can contribute to the construction of organizational identity. Thus, construed external images can influence perceived organizational identity.

Proposition 8a: When there are inconsistencies between a member's construed external image of the organization and their own perceived organizational identity, the member, if identified with the organization, will typically discard the inconsistency.

Proposition 8b: If members cannot continue to discard an inconsistency between their construed external image of the organization and their perceived organizational identity, members will make efforts to change projections or practices to reduce the magnitude of the discrepancy. If necessary, they will change priorities. Only as a last resort does an organization alter its organizational identity.

Proposition 9: A member of an organization can possess multiple future images of their organization.

Proposition 9a: A member of an organization can possess an expected future image of the organization (perceived expected future image).

Proposition 9b: A member of an organization can possess an ideal future image of the organization (perceived ideal future image).

Proposition 9c: A member of an organization can possess a feared future image of the organization (perceived feared future image).

Proposition 9d: A member of an organization can possess an image of what some others in the organization perceive as the future of the organization (construed internal future image).

Proposition 9e: A member of an organization can possess an image of what some others outside the organization perceive as the future of the organization (construed external future image).

Proposition 9f: A member of an organization can possess an image of what the company leader (a special insider) perceives as the future of the organization (company future image).

Proposition 10a: Construed internal future images can impact members' perceived future images.

Proposition 10b: Construed external future images can impact members' perceived future images.

Proposition 10c: The company future image as presented by the leader can impact members' perceived future images.

Proposition 11a: The greater the variability in future organizational images of members, the more difficult it will be to achieve a vision held by leadership.

Proposition 11b: Members can share similar visions for the future of their organization despite the lack of an established vision by leadership.

Proposition 11c: The identification, communication, and management of a vision by leadership can contribute to the organization's potential in achieving that vision.

Proposition 11d: During times of organizational change, both stability and uncertainty can be managed through the identification, communication, and management of a vision by leadership.

Proposition 11e: During times of organizational change, the lack of the identification, communication, and management of a vision by leadership can result in rumors and unmanaged future images. The absence of a clear direction can be damaging for the organization because this environment produces uncertainty.

Proposition 11f: A clear and shared understanding of an organizational vision is critical for implementing change.

Proposition 11g: Management can use future organizational images as a leverage for achieving organizational change.

Proposition 12a: The content of a member's future images of an organization is based on images that the member can visualize and is typically an image that the member has experienced or observed others experience. These images are concrete and lack the abstract quality that may be defined by imagination.

Proposition 12b: The content of a member's future images of an organization is often based on members' perceptions of the competition and gauged against those who set the standards in the industry. Thus, for many, future images are *benchmarked images* rather than totally abstract pictures.

Proposition 13a: An application attributes gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and future organizational image yet leaving organizational identity intact.

Proposition 13b: An organizational identity gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image when organizational attributes including organizational identity must be significantly altered to achieve that future state.

Proposition 14a: Construed current organizational images are the images that members have of what others inside (construed internal image) and outside (construed external image) the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization. These images can impact perceived organizational identity.

Proposition 14b: Construed internal image is what a member believes others in the organization think is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization.

Proposition 15: Perceived future images are the multiple future images that a member has of the organization such as perceived expected future image, perceived ideal future image, and perceived feared future image.

Proposition 15a: A perceived expected future image is what a member believes will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 15b: A perceived ideal future image is what a member believes would be the ideal future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 15c: A perceived feared future image is what a member fears will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16: Construed future images are the multiple future images that a member has of what others inside (construed internal future image) and outside (construed external future image) the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16a: A construed internal future image is what a member believes others in the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16b: A construed external future image is what a member believes others outside the organization think will be future attributes of the organization.

Proposition 16c: Construed organizational images are images that a member has of what others inside and outside the organization see as core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (construed internal image and construed external image) and see as the future attributes of the organization (construed internal future image and construed external future image).

Proposition 17a: An application attributes gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and future organizational image where organizational identity is left intact.

Proposition 17b: An organizational identity gap is the gap caused by inconsistencies between the current organizational attributes and the future organizational image where application attributes and organizational identity must be significantly altered to achieve that future state.

Proposition 18: Organizational attributes are organizational identity and application attributes. The components of organizational attributes are purpose, philosophy, priorities, practices, and projections.

Proposition 18a: Organizational identity has two basic components: the organization's purpose and the organization's philosophy.

Proposition 18b: The purpose is the organization's reason for being in business (not to be defined as making money); it is the service that the organization is providing. Purpose is broad in scope and lasts over time.

Proposition 18c: The philosophy is the spirit of purpose and the framework for how members do business. It is the guiding spirit and organizing principle behind working practices in the organization. It is a feeling understood by members that serves as the source for the distinctive way members do business. It is understood best by insiders.

Proposition 18d: Application attributes are priorities, practices, and projections that are applications or representations of organizational identity.

Proposition 18e: Priorities are application attributes. They are the key standards for action that support organizational identity. Priorities guide the path for applying purpose and philosophy to practice.

Proposition 18f: Practices are application attributes. They are the features or ways of doing business that put purpose, philosophy, and priorities into action.

Proposition 18g: Projections are application attributes. They are the images of the organization to the public.

Proposition 19a: A person who identifies with an organization that experiences media criticism could feel a range of emotional responses not excluding anger.

Proposition 19b: Members who are identified with an organization do not necessarily have a consistent definition of what a typical employee of that organization is.

Proposition 19c: Feeling an obligation to remain at a company may not be an indicator of strength of identification.

Proposition 19d: Expressing a feeling of belonging with the organization could be a sign of identification.

Proposition 19e: Feeling as if the company's problems are one's own problems could be a sign of identification.

Proposition 19f: Wanting a career at the organization could be a sign of identification.

Proposition 20: Consequences of identification can also be signs of identification.

Proposition 20a: Pride in the organization is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20b: Feelings of competitiveness against out-groups is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20c: Loyalty to the organization is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20d: Feeling supportive of the organization in response to threat is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20e: If the person chooses to wear company clothing outside of work, then this behavior is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20f: If a person is cooperative with other organization members, then this behavior is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 20g: If a person socializes with employees after work, then this behavior is potentially a sign of identification.

Proposition 21a: Measures of salience of identification may be accurate cross-sectionally but may not be stable longitudinally, especially in times of upheaval and change.

Proposition 21b: Organizational identification may require maintenance to preserve its strength.

Proposition 21c: When determining strength of identification, social identities should be ranked or rated by how accurately the organizations or groups describe oneself rather than ranking the identity that is most salient.

Proposition 21d: Strength of identification can be influenced by previous experiences.

Proposition 21e: Strength of identification can be influenced by how well a member achieves a person-industry-organization match.

Proposition 22: Organizational identification based on a social identity theory perspective is defined as a form of social identification that is organization-specific, distinct from commitment and internalization; a cognition or perception that can include some emotional and value significance but that does not include behaviors.

Proposition 23: When organizational membership produces a positive sense of self, then it contributes to the construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 23a: Organizational success can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23b: Organizational distinctiveness can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23c: Job satisfaction can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23d: Earning one's employment through a trial period can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23e: The capacity to achieve seniority quickly in relation to other organizations in a similar industry can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23f: Having opportunities for growth can contribute to organizational identification because it can produce a positive sense of self.

Proposition 23g: Participation in a start-up can contribute to opportunities for growth and a positive sense of self, thus contributing to organizational identification.

Proposition 23h: Participation in a start-up can contribute to the capacity to achieve seniority and a positive sense of self, thus contributing to organizational identification.

Proposition 24: Having a sense of ownership can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 24a: Participation in a start-up can contribute to a sense of ownership and the construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 25: Organizational identity attributes can contribute to the construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 25a: The organization's philosophy can contribute to organizational identification if there is a match between that philosophy and what is important to the members.

Proposition 25b: A family philosophy characterized as caring, friendly, small, close and open can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 25c: The organization's purpose can contribute to organizational identification if there is a match between the purpose and what is important to the members.

Proposition 26: The organization's vision can contribute to organizational identification if there is a match between the vision and what is important to the members.

Proposition 27a: Certain personalities are conducive to working in a particular industry and can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 27b: Certain backgrounds are conducive to working in a particular industry and can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 28: An organization that consists of individuals who have a propensity to identify will contribute to the construction of organizational identification.

Proposition 29a: If strength of identification is high prior to a crisis, then sharing a crisis can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 29b: If strength of identification is high, then media criticism can contribute to organizational identification.

Proposition 29c: If strength of identification is low prior to a crisis, then sharing a crisis can further reduce organizational identification.

Proposition 29d: If strength of identification is low, then media criticism can reduce organizational identification.

Proposition 30a: Multiple methods for sharing official communications are critical in implementing a merger.

Proposition 30b: Official communications should be timely, regular, and congruent, even if no new information can be provided at the time of each delivery of information.

Proposition 30c: Official communications during a period of organizational change are critical for their symbolic value in demonstrating that the organization cares about its employees.

Proposition 30d: Official communications should include face-to-face meetings because the presence of leadership gives the opportunity to demonstrate that the leader cares about the employees enough to talk to them at these meetings.

Proposition 30e: Not providing timely and regular communications that include face-to-face meetings can cause members to believe that the leadership does not care about or value them as people. This can make members feel as though they are not important in the eyes of the leadership and can enhance feelings of uncertainty and stress.

Proposition 30f: The frequency and quality of communications can impact the level of trust that members have in their leadership.

Proposition 30g: The lack of information on how the merger will impact employment, organizational identity, and application attributes can cause uncertainty for members.

Proposition 30h: Official communications should state changes in organizational identity or application attributes or both, as soon as possible, including any replacements for those aspects of the organization changed.

Proposition 30i: The lack of information on how the merger will impact the future of the organization can cause uncertainty for members.

Proposition 30j: Official communications should describe the leadership's plans for the future of the organization, as soon as possible. These images do not demand detail as much as clarity in direction.

Proposition 30k: To support the implementation of changes in organizational attributes, such changes could be preceded by actions that officially end the old attributes before adopting the new ones.

Proposition 30l: Managers can use symbols not only as representations of the organization but also as instruments to promote change.

Proposition 30m: Management can use organizational symbols as instruments for easing the loss of identity that often occurs with mergers and acquisitions.

Proposition 30n: Management can use organizational symbols as instruments for promoting organizational identification.

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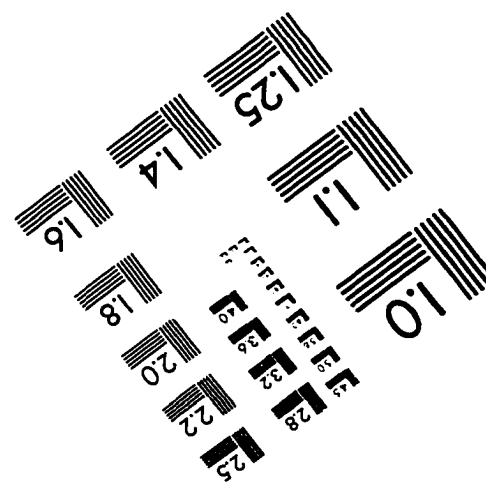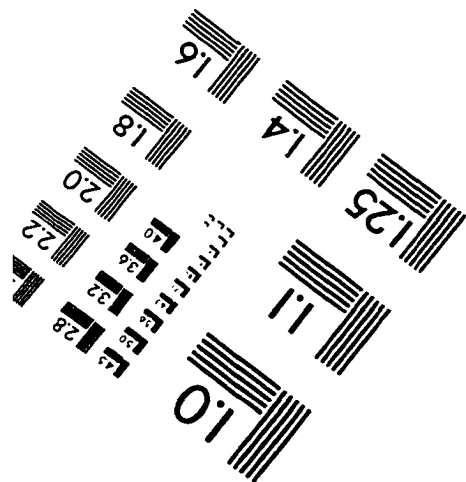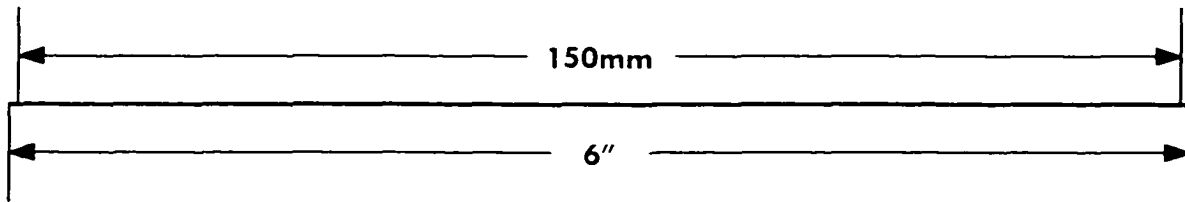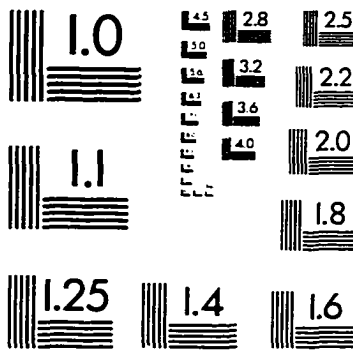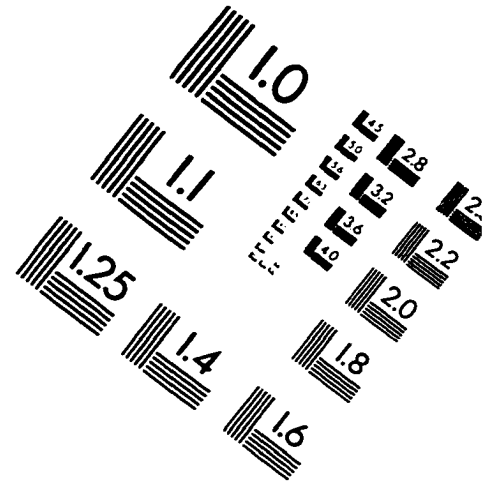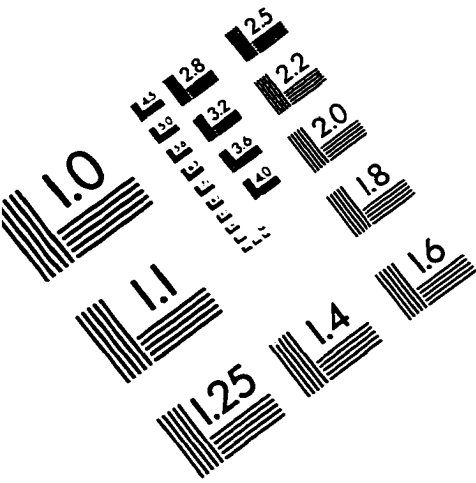
VITA

Sheila L. Margolis

Sheila L. Margolis was born in Atlanta, Georgia on November 19, 1950. She
attended the University of Florida from 1968-70 and received her AB degree in
Sociology from Georgia State University in 1971. Sheila earned a M.Ed. in
Secondary Education in 1975 and a Ph.D. in Human Resource Development from the
School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University in 1998.

Sheila's work experience has included 22 years in the fields of education,
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training and development. In education, Sheila has been a teacher, department
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related education. She has designed and delivered training for manufacturing and
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Sheila is a member of the Academy of Human Resource Development,
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IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

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