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**IMPACT OF AN ORGANIZATION IDENTITY INTERVENTION ON
EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT**

A Research Project

Presented to the Faculty of

The George L. Graziadio

School of Business and Management

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Organization Development

by

Tami Cole

March 2016

This research project, completed by

TAMI COLE

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: March 2016

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Abstract

This project examined the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' commitment during large-scale transformational change at a financial services company. A 21-member information technology team was recruited for the study. Commitment was measured using a quantitative instrument and the events and data collected during the identity intervention were described. Participants generally enjoyed the intervention, although team members grew increasingly negative over the course of the event due to past experiences with similar interventions. Commitment was consistent across both groups and remained unchanged across the study period. The study organization is advised to assure that its leaders support and are prepared to respond to the results of any interventions conducted and take measures to nurture participants' existing affective commitment. Continued research is needed to evaluate the impacts of the identity intervention on commitment. Such studies are advised to utilize a larger sample and to measure organizational commitment using mixed methods.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Organizations embark on large-scale transformational changes in response to environmental demands, competitive pressures, shareholder mandates, and business needs (Lau & Woodman, 1995). Some organizations are more ambitious in that they not only respond to the change but also use it as an opportunity to become nimble and as competitive as possible (Worley, Williams, & Lawler, 2014). Large-scale change efforts also can be used to help accentuate or redefine the organization's uniqueness in the marketplace (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000).

These changes, depending upon their scope, can send shockwaves throughout the organization and the workforce (K. Becker, 2010; Noer, 1993). Although smaller changes often can be easily assimilated, other changes can be distressing and even intolerable for employees. In response to substantial and distressing change, employees may seek other job opportunities, resulting in widespread attrition. This risk may be even greater among contingent employees who are, by definition, not permanent employees of the organization. Nevertheless, these workers often assume the same scope of responsibilities as permanent employees and also apply high-level knowledge and expertise just as a permanent employee would (Osnowitz, 2010).

Highly skilled, highly influential workers and managers also are likely to enact their freedom of choice during distressing organizational shifts, as these employees can more easily find other job opportunities—even in conditions of high general unemployment (Ahlrichs, 2000). Their departure—particularly the departure of higher-level skilled or broad scope of responsibility workers and managers—can force the organization to deal with issues of replacement, knowledge transfer, loss of knowledge

and experience, shifting team dynamics, onboarding, and other issues at a time when they often are fully extended dealing with the change (Moorman, 2001). Moreover, the departure of key employees may prompt more employees throughout the ranks and across the organization to exit, potentially leaving the organization in a vulnerable position.

Due to the risks of turnover during large-scale transformational change and the often substantial adverse impacts of such departures, organization leaders have sought to understand how workers' commitment and engagement to the organization may be enhanced and sustained through the duration of the changes (Wilson, 2010). Techniques for doing so include giving them responsibility, involving them in decisions, and engaging them at a strategic level (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Research indicates that these approaches have some beneficial effects for retention because it appeals to these workers' intrinsic motivators, such as desires for challenge, influence, and professional growth.

Haslam, Eggers, and Reynolds (2003) have offered one approach for enhancing organization members' commitment, which they call ASPIRe. The model engages participants in gaining consensus about and building a shared sense of the organization's identity. Peters, Haslam, Ryan, and Fonseca (2012) explained that use of the model builds organizational identification and support for the organization's strategic objectives. The ASPIRe model represents the core intervention in the present study.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' organizational commitment during large-scale transformational change within one financial services company. Pre and post commitment scores were compared using t-tests. The events and organically defined

identities also were reported. To provide further insights about the data, permanent employees' results were compared to the contingent employees' results.

Research Setting

The study was conducted with an information technology team within the U.S. headquarters of a financial services company, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of a large multinational organization. The team works on the Core Receivables Program, which is an enterprise technology program that is being implemented within the company to transform loan and lease processing

In addition to having a permanent staff, the organization employs a large number of contract and contingent workers. The total number of team members on this program is approximately 400. Of these, roughly 320 are contingents or vendors, many of whom are employed off-shore in India. The study subjects were a subset of the largest team on the program.

Additionally, at the time of the study, the headquarters organization being examined was in the midst of a multi-year, large-scale transformational change. Adding to the complexity of the program and shortly after the project began, it was announced that the national headquarters would be relocating to another state before the end of the project. Moving operations involved a great deal of technical transition and organizational integration.

In concert with the move, both contingent and permanent employees were anticipating the prospect of unemployment, although the specific number and identities of affected employees was unknown. Possible job loss only intensified the usual uncertainty, anxiety, job security fears, and other ambiguities that accompany organization change. As the organization relied on its employees to successfully execute

the change, employees' organizational commitment was critical throughout the process, even though some of the key employees would be laid off either before or upon completion of the project. These conditions underscored the importance of determining how employees' organizational commitment could be strengthened.

Study Significance

The present study provided insights about whether the ASPIRe intervention impacted workers' organizational commitment during a period of large-scale transformational change and how these impacts varied for contract and permanent employees. Insights about the ASPIRe model's applicability and utility during large-scale transformational change also were generated. These collected findings led to conclusions and recommendations about possible methods for fostering employee commitment during organizational change. This knowledge may be beneficial for the study organization and other similar organizations as they embark on or continue large-scale transformational change.

Organization of the Study

This chapter described the background, purpose, setting, and significance of the study. The next chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the present study, including a synthesis of research on large-scale transformational change, organizational commitment, and organization identity.

Chapter 3 describes the methods that were used in this project. The present study utilized an action research design to assess the impacts of the ASPIRe intervention on workers' organizational commitment. This chapter describes the research design and procedures related to participant recruitment, the ASPIRe organization identity intervention, data collection, and data analysis.

The results of the study are presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and recommendations emerging from this study, along with acknowledgement of its limitations and suggestions for continued research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' organizational commitment during large-scale transformational change within one financial services company. This chapter reviews theory and research related to the study purpose. The following sections provide a synthesis of existing literature on large-scale transformational change, organizational commitment, and organization identity.

Large-Scale Transformational Change

Although there is no widely accepted definition of large-scale change, Mohrman, Ledford, Mohrman, Lawler, and Cummings (1989) suggest that such efforts involve changes that affect the whole organization, often require several years to accomplish, and require substantial shifts in how the business is managed. Various specific interventions fit the definition of large-scale change, and many are multifaceted, in that they employ multiple techniques and tend to include both human process and techno-structural approaches (Friedlander & Brown, 1974). Multiple techniques often are needed during large-scale change to address the diverse types of challenges interfering with the accomplishment of organizational goals. Team building, strategic planning, skill building, survey feedback, and restructuring were the most common large-scale interventions used, based on Covin's (1992) review. Other commonly used large-scale interventions include job redesign and enrichment, quality circles, cultural awareness, change workshops, offsite problem solving sessions, process consultation, and culture workshops.

Need for change. A large-scale change event often is triggered by leaders' recognition that one or more primary components of the organization needs to shift to enhance the organization's alignment with its environment (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Such aims may concern organizational strategies, structures, technologies, information and decision-making systems, human resource systems, or business processes (Moorman, 2001). An increasing number of companies appear to recognize a need for large-scale organizational change, including those companies that once enjoyed market leadership and now find themselves engaged in fierce competition in an effort to reestablish their dominance or even to sustain their survival (Covin, 1992). Despite the need for change—even large-scale change—Mohrman et al. (1989) cautioned that organizational leaders should be aware of the limits of the organization and its members to withstand and benefit from change.

Nevertheless, as the pace of environmental change has accelerated (Baburoghu, 1988; D'Aveni, 1989, 1994), organizations have come to view the capacity to change rapidly in response to environmental conditions as a strategic capability that can provide a sustainable competitive advantage (K. Becker, 2010; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1994; Worley & Lawler, 2009). Technology, in particular, continues to be a driving force for organizational change. For example, a change in an enterprise information system impacts a wide range of practices and procedures and requires those within the organization to unlearn old attitudes, mental models, and behaviors and to acquire new ways of being if the changes are to be sustained (K. Becker, 2005, 2010).

Impacts. Change ignites an emotional process within employees; therefore, the impacts of change on employees cannot be viewed as entirely objective. Moreover, large-scale and complex changes are likely to affect employees and their work on multiple

levels, potentially leading to various sources of resistance (Friedlander & Brown, 1974). Research indicates that employees react both to organization level change events themselves (Ashford, 1988; Brockner, 1988) as well as to the processes by which these changes are implemented (Brockner & Weisenfeld, 1993; Herald, Moorman, & Parsons, 1996).

The general assumption is that employees respond negatively to change events (Heckscher, 1995; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989; Noer, 1993), and empirical results have tended to support this assumption (Moorman, 2001). This negative response is due to perceptions of increased threat and uncertainty. Employees' ability to predict whether they will achieve their goals is reduced (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), their established patterns of behavior become less effective (Gioia & Poole, 1984; Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1997), and they feel less confident in their ability to predict the outcomes of their actions (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Beehr & Bhagat, 1985; Ledford, Mohrman, & Lawler, 1989). Moreover, these perceptions of threat intensify as the size and complexity of the change increases (Brockner & Weisenfeld, 1993). Thus, large-scale transformational change may be associated with substantial negativity and sense of threat among employees.

Employees naturally feel concerned about changes to their business processes or technology. Such changes not only affect how they do their jobs, but they may also feel unproductive, inefficient, or ineffective in their jobs as a result of the changes. Change leaders and agents should anticipate these concerns and help employees feel at ease by setting positive but realistic expectations. Moreover, those who are most experienced in the previous system have the most to lose in the change and may be the most resistant to

unlearning, as their credibility is based upon their expertise in a now obsolete process or technology (K. Becker, 2010).

Employees also may exhibit resistance to change if past change efforts have been poorly handled (K. Becker, 2010). Past unpleasant experiences with change tend to produce negative emotions and expectations of failure within employees, which can prompt them to consciously and subconsciously oppose and obstruct the change effort. Moreover, an employee's connection and commitment to the organization may shift if the change modifies organizational attributes the employee considers important (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). In such cases, a disconnect between the individual's and organization's values could emerge (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Rousseau, 1998).

On the other hand, attributes important to the employee may actually be enhanced as a result of the change, affecting the employee's commitment in positive ways (Moorman, 2001). Brockner, Weisenfeld, Reed, Grover, and Martin (1993) concluded that how the individual interprets any given change attribute depends upon the individual's perception of (a) whether the change is a potential threat, (b) what the magnitude of the threat is, and (c) what the personal significance of the threat is.

Despite the concerns voiced in this section, it is important to acknowledge the numerous examples of situations in which individuals respond positively to large-scale change events. For example, following some changes, employees can become more committed to the organization and increase their level of effort to make the organization successful (e.g., Brockner et al., 1994; Heckscher, 1995; Kearns & Nadler, 1992; Tichy & Sherman, 1993).

Nevertheless, statistics continue to indicate that many, if not most, large-scale organizational change efforts fail to achieve their objectives (Bowman, Singh, Useem, &

Bhady, 1999; Cameron, 1998; DeMeuse, Vanderheiden, & Bergman, 1994; McKinley, Zhao, & Rust, 2000). Although most research on this issue has focused on macro-level explanations (e.g., Cameron, 1998; Cascio, 1993; Cascio, Young, & Morris, 1997; Freeman & Cameron, 1993), there is growing recognition that micro-level processes play a substantial role in the success or failure of organizational change efforts (e.g., Cameron, Whetten, & Kim, 1987; Huy, 1999; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999; Reilly, Brett, & Stroh, 1993; Roskies, Louis-Guerin, & Fournier, 1993; Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

An example of a supportive micro-level process is where an individual is committed to the organization's goals and objectives. Where this occurs, the individual is more likely to identify with and accept organizational change efforts (Lau & Woodman, 1995), initiate actions that support the change effort (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), exhibit creative responses to change (Amabile & Conti, 1999), and act in ways that improve the organization's flexibility to respond to environmental changes (Fisher & White, 2000). The next section examines approaches and interventions for promoting change success and employees' support for change.

Interventions to promote employee support for change. Given the risks of employee resistance to change, Van de Ven (1986) argues that change processes should begin with a focus on the human dimension. For example, detailed processes need to be designed to guide and support employees through the change (K. Becker, 2010). This change process should provide employees with reassurance and encourage a positive outlook among the employees regarding the change. Effective change management can reduce an individual's sense of threat and uncertainty (Herald & Moorman, 2000; Herald et al., 1996) by providing information that the individual can use to more accurately predict change outcomes and conclude that such outcomes will be positive. Huber (1996)

added that organizational change efforts that involve technical transitions should manage employees' unlearning and learning processes. Unfortunately, this level of attention to the human dimension of change all too often is lacking (Hammer & Champy, 1993).

These various ideas are reflected in Argyris' views concerning Model 2 approaches, meaning a worldview that can be characterized by a collaborative and minimally defensive stance toward the world (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985). Argyris argued that effective interventions are those that embrace a Model 2 worldview. This is made possible through governing values including the communication of valid information, allowing change participants free and informed choice in the intervention, and cultivating participants' internal commitment.

The principle of valid information is upheld when change leaders design situations or environments where change participants can be the source of information and can thus enjoy positive experiences such as psychological success and share and confirm information (Argyris et al., 1985). When these conditions are met, the change participants take roles as facilitators, collaborators, and choice creators and, in turn, are believed to become minimally defensive.

Free and informed choice is made possible when tasks are controlled jointly. This helps produce minimally defensive interpersonal relations and group dynamics, leading to double-loop learning, increased effectiveness of problem solving and decision making, and overall enhanced long-run effectiveness. Cultivating members' internal commitment to the change and constantly monitoring its implementation result in members protecting themselves and others through a joint enterprise that is oriented toward growth rather than defensiveness.

To further promote change success, leaders must effectively engage and motivate their audiences and seek to understand the cultural forces that come when behaviors and practices are deeply rooted. Practitioners and researchers at Harvard's Learning Innovations Laboratory urge leaders to attend to emotional, relational, and structural concerns to build social and behavioral bridges to promote employees' support for change. Of these, emotional barriers to change can be the most difficult to overcome (Wilson, 2010). It follows that "leaders must be skilled at creating specific kinds of emotional narratives that enable change" (p. 21). Leaders are encouraged to build emotional bridges by telling employees change stories that spark a sense of hope, purpose, urgency, efficacy, and solidarity. The aim of such stories are to *organize* versus mobilize employees. Wilson explained, "Mobilizing is the traditional marketing approach [of] influencing choices by pushing a message throughout the social system. In contrast, an organizing approach engages listeners in the narrative by finding ways to become part of the story through their own action" (p. 21).

The field of organization development provides a number of techniques and methods for implementing organizational change, many of which have become standard components of organizational plans for change, such as gathering and feeding back survey data or building teams (Covin, 1992). In reality, most large-scale change programs would not rely on a single organizational development technique, but rather would require a set of structured activities to move the organization toward its stated goals. A second consideration is the number of interventions utilized. The more variables that are altered, the more likely it is that new behavior patterns will emerge (Mohrman et al., 1989). A third consideration in a large-scale change intervention strategy is the timeframe for implementation of changes. A fourth major concern is determining the intervention-

strategy “fit” between intervention and program goals (Covin, 1992; Goodman & Dean, 1982).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to an individual’s attachment to their employing organization. Porter et al. (1974) defined organizational commitment as the strength of an organization member’s involvement and identification with a specific organization. These researchers conceptualized organizational commitment as a singular construct comprised of multiple employee attitudes, such as loyalty to the organization, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, congruence of the individual’s goals and values with those of the organization, and desire to maintain membership with the organization (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001). Under the right conditions, agreeing to work for an organization can result in an intention to continue employment, followed by the development of a positive attitude toward the organization that justifies the behavior (O’Reilly & Caldwell, 1981). Research on organizational commitment has focused on identifying the factors that influence the formation of organizational commitment in individuals and how commitment (once formed) influences organizational outcomes (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001).

Meyer and Allen (2001) subsequently posited that organizational commitment was comprised of an employee’s affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to the employee’s emotional attachment to the organization, which forms because the individual identifies with the goals of the organization and is willing to assist the organization in achieving these goals (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001). Mathieu and Zajac (1990) found that job involvement and job satisfaction were positively associated with affective commitment, ostensibly because

people who are satisfied with their jobs may develop emotional attachments to the organization.

Continuance commitment occurs when people wish to sustain employment with the organization because of the costs they associate with leaving it (Ketchand & Stawser, 2001; Meyer & Allen, 2001). H. S. Becker (1960) argued that continuance commitment is associated with longer tenure, because the longer an individual stays with an organization, the more benefits they accumulate, and the more difficult it becomes to leave the organization and its benefits behind.

Normative commitment is a high-sacrifice, low-alternative component of commitment that Wiener (1982) described as “the totality of internalized normative pressure to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interests” (p. 421). In this type of commitment, employees stay out of a felt sense of obligation, such as believing they need to see the project through to completion, not wanting to leave their team members in a difficult situation, or other rationales. Wiener argued that employees who stay due to normative commitment do so because they believe it is the right and moral thing to do.

Meyer and Allen (2001) concluded that each employee has a commitment profile that reflects his or her degree of emotional attachment, need, and obligation to stay with the organization. Importantly, the effects of each commitment component on work behaviors and performance varies, although increased strength of one or more components also tends to increase stay intentions.

Antecedents to organizational commitment. Theoretically, organizational commitment is hypothesized to result from personal and situational factors. *Personal factors* represent individuals’ characteristics and experiences before their entry into the

organization, such as age, gender, tenure, or education, among others. D'Amato and Herzfeldt (2008) examined differences in organizational commitment for Baby Boomers (individuals born between 1943-1969) and Generation Xers (individuals born between 1961-1981). The researchers hypothesized and subsequently found that older generations had significantly higher organizational commitment than younger generations. Davis, Pawlowski, and Houston (2006) found that although older generations were slightly more satisfied with their jobs than younger generations, Generation Xers exhibited higher levels of general commitment (defined as affective, continuance, and normative commitment combined). These contrasting results may be explained by Mottaz's (1988) research, which found that the effects of personal characteristics on commitment are indirect and disappear when work rewards and work values are controlled. Similarly, Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) meta-analysis concluded that although chronological age often positively correlates with organizational commitment, its most robust antecedents are individual differences (e.g., perceived personal competence), job characteristics (e.g., challenge and job scope), and leadership-related variables (e.g., leadership communication and participative leadership). Likewise, Meyer et al. (2002) found the strongest predictors of organizational commitment to be perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, role ambiguity, and organizational justice. This concept could be considered a restatement of Herzberg's (1964) two-factor theory that employees are influenced by (a) hygiene factors that undermine satisfaction if absent but whose presence do not affect motivation and (b) motivating factors that fuel motivation if present.

Situational (or organizational) factors originate within the organization and include elements of the work environment and the individuals' experiences as employees.

Mowday et al. (1982) classified these as structural characteristics, job-related characteristics, and work experiences. Organizational commitment seems to be particularly influenced by situational factors, such as leaders' behaviors, role ambiguity, role conflict, the degree of organizational centralization, and the extent of leader communications (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001). Scott, Farh, and Podsakoff (1988) stated that structural characteristics on commitment may not be direct, but instead are mediated by work experiences, such as employee-supervisor relations, role clarity, and the feelings of personal importance, associated with these structural characteristics. Other research found evidence that affective commitment is related to situational factors of decentralized decision-making and formalization of policy and procedures (Brooke, Russell, & Price, 1988).

A considerable amount of research has examined the links between work experience and affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2001), such as confirmation of pre-entry expectations (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988), equity in reward distribution (Rhodes & Steers, 1981), organizational dependability (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988), organizational support (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986), role clarity and freedom from conflict (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), and supervisor consideration (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987). Competence-related experiences that boost organizational commitment include accomplishment (Angle & Perry, 1983), autonomy (Colarelli, Dean, & Konstans, 1987; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987), fairness of performance-based rewards (Curry, Wakefield, Price, & Mueller, 1986), job challenge (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988), job scope (Pierce & Dunham, 1987), opportunity for advancement (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980), opportunity for self-expression (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988), participation in decision-making

(DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Rhodes & Steers, 1981), and personal importance to the organization (Steers, 1977).

Because continuance commitment reflects the recognition of costs associated with leaving the organization, anything that increases perceived costs can be considered an antecedent. The most frequently studied antecedents have been side bets or investments, as well as the availability of alternatives (Meyer & Allen, 2001). Meyer and Allen explained that as the amount of difficult to imitate and valued benefits accumulates with an employer, continuance commitment and the employee's likelihood of staying with firm increases.

The literature on the development of normative commitment is theoretical rather than empirical. Wiener (1982) suggested that the feeling of obligation to remain with an organization may result from the internalization of normative pressure exerted on an individual prior to entry into the organization (i.e., familial or cultural socialization) or following entry (i.e., organizational socialization). Normative commitment also may develop when an organization provides the employee with so-called rewards in advance (e.g., paying college tuition) or incurs significant costs associated in providing employment (e.g., costs associated with job training). Recognition of these investments on the part of the organization may create a perceived imbalance in the employee-organization relationship, causing employees to feel an obligation to reciprocate by committing themselves to the organization until the debt has been repaid (Scholl, 1981).

Outcomes of employees' organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has become an important construct in organizational research owing to its relationship with important work-related constructs such as absenteeism, job

involvement, and leadership-subordinate relations (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Michaels & Spector, 1982).

One substantial thread in research concerns the link between commitment and turnover intentions and behavior. This link is believed to exist because aspects of the work environment results in employees' affective responses to the organization that in turn feed organizational commitment and suppress turnover intentions, the search for employment alternatives, and actual turnover behaviors (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Notably, a statistically significant relationship was not found between organizational commitment and actual turnover, suggesting that other factors may be at play during the actual decision to resign. Additionally, Kalbers and Fogarty (1995) found that continuance commitment and affective commitment were differentially related to external turnover intentions.

Benefit of organizational commitment during large-scale transformation.

During times of large-scale organizational change, organizations rely upon its workforce to perform as effectively and efficiently as possible. Effective performance is undermined when employees leave the organization or when their commitment wanes and affects job performance. Commitment can become a concern during large-scale organizational change because the situational factors critical to commitment can shift and change, thus undermining employees' affective connection to, continuance costs, and normative sense of obligation to the organization (Meyer et al., 2002).

For example, employees may begin to feel overworked, undervalued, or expendable; they may experience changes in valued relationships with supervisors, or may see a diminishment of perceived benefits of staying. In the event of these and other conditions, employee commitment may suffer and turnover and other adverse impacts for

the change project and the organization may become real dangers (Mohrman et al., 1989). Failure to complete projects on time and within scope also comes with other consequences, which could include compromised reputation, reduced market advantage, and lowered morale throughout the organization. As a result, it is critical to understand how employees' organizational commitment may be sustained or even enhanced during times of large-scale transformational change (Meyer et al., 2002). The next section examines the role of organization identity, including its role in employees' organizational commitment, how it is affected by large-scale transformational change, and how interventions surrounding identity may help enhance commitment during these challenging times.

Organization Identity

The study of organization identity is rooted in social identity theory, which concerns questions of: Who am I? What do I do? Why do I do what I do? (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Much like individuals seeking answers to these questions to better understand who they are, understanding organization identity involves finding answers to similar questions, but with the focus of inquiry being the organization itself.

Albert and Whetten (1985) defined organization identity as that which is central, enduring, and distinctive about an organization's character. Since then, various definitions have emerged concerning the construct. Elsbach and Kramer (1996) asserted that an organization's identity reflects its central and distinguishing attributes (e.g., culture, modes of performance, products). Hatch and Schultz (1997) indicated that identity refers to a collective, commonly shared understanding of the organization's distinguishing values and characteristics. An adequate statement of organization identity meets the following criteria: it claims a central character, articulates the organization's

distinctiveness, and sustains its temporal continuity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2004). Ackerman (2000) argued that detecting an organization's identity requires an incisive type of insight into the organization that—despite the layers of products, services, cultural norms, and assumptions—is able to zero into

the heart, mind, and soul of the company as a self-directing entity in the purest sense. This is where identity lies, moving to its own rhythm, by all the layers that distract managers from what really “makes the company tick.” (p. 23)

Formation of identity. Various theories have been offered regarding how organization identity forms (Ashforth, 2007). Pratt and Kraatz (2009) argued that organizations, like individuals, attempt to express and validate their identities by interacting with their environment, comparing and contrasting, exchanging symbols, and incorporating distinctive qualities into their organizational fabric. Gioia (1998) elaborated that organizations both seek to look like other organizations (for the purpose of legitimacy) and, at the same time, seek to express their differences (for the purpose of competitive survival).

In this way, an organization's identity is formed through leaders' and employees' actions, through their experiences with the organization, and through the stories that are formulated about the organization (Czarniawska, 1997; Giddens, 1991; Weick, 1995). Such actions, experiences, and self-narratives include the language organization members use, the pictures they put forth about the organization, and the observable artifacts available about the organization (e.g., dress codes, normative behaviors, furniture, office layout, decor). Importantly, identity differs from culture in that identity is considered to be what is core, distinctive, and enduring about the organization (Weick, 1995), whereas culture reflects the shared patterns of thinking and behaving in the organization that is the result of long-term social learning (Schein, 2010).

Self-narratives as a means for forming identity refer to the dialogical process of visioning and bonding as members collectively imagine and re-imagine identity (Bakhtin, 1981). These activities, in turn, strongly affect members' future behavior. Bushe (2000) further argued that the social interaction involved in forming organizational self-narratives constitute the organization's "inner dialogue" (p. 104), and that these dialogues serve to interpret organizational events and determine what is "real" for the members.

Aust (2004) added that identity constitutes the members' deeply felt and organically developed sense of who the organization is. As a result, it is rarely susceptible to manipulation. Consequently, Aust argued that an organization's true identity could only be known by discovering members' genuine perceptions about who and what the organization is. Moreover, it is not uncommon for organizations to have multiple identities, such as identities for each subgroup as well as a macro, organization-wide identity. Ashforth and Mael (1989) advised that these multiple identities need to be integrated within a macro identity that aligns with the organization's goals and purposes.

Impact of identity. Having a clear identity offers an organization several benefits. Organization members and key stakeholders tend to express loyalty and support to companies that have distinct and positive identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This loyalty and support occurs because members absorb aspects of the identity into their own persona in a process called *identification* (Pratt, 1998). As a result, the organization's identity—in addition to indicating how the firm is both similar to and distinct from other organizations—affirms the uniqueness of all the human beings who are, have been, or will be the fabric of the organization (Ackerman, 2000).

Understanding who the organization is, what it does, and why it does what it does also helps organizations make strategic decisions, especially when these questions

become forward-looking and positioned as: Who do we want to be? What do we want to do? Why do we want to do that? Organization identity serves as a guidepost to strategy and has reciprocal influence on organizational culture, brand, image, and reputation (Lawler & Worley, 2006).

Identity during large-scale transformational change. During large-scale transformational change, internal and external stakeholders of the organization can experience uncertainty about the organization and whether it will continue to sustain the same identity (Corley & Gioia, 2004). This uncertainty is called *identity ambiguity*, wherein organization members lack clarity about who the organization is and what its future holds (Weick, 1995).

Ambiguity occurs under various conditions, such as when an organization loses the qualities that distinguish it from other companies (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Weick, 1995). Ambiguity also can occur if members lack a consistent understanding of the organization's identity and, consequently, have multiple interpretations of the organization's distinctive qualities (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Pratt, 2000; Thurlow & Mills, 2009; Watson, 2009; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Identity ambiguity can be a natural consequence of large-scale transformational change, as members experience uncertainty about the organization and its future and may interpret the change events differently. These differing interpretations can lead to increased variation in organization identity definitions (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

Identity ambiguity can have far-reaching effects for organizations and its members. Under conditions of ambiguity, organization members lack clarity about why the organization behaves as it does, leading to misguided employee actions (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton et al., 1994). For example, over 2008 and 2009, Pennsylvania

Governor Rendell imposed extensive budget cuts for its state-related universities, arguing that they were nonpublic universities because they “were not under the absolute control of the Commonwealth” (Rendell, 2009, p. 14). This sent university officials scrambling as their budgets and activities were based on their core trait of being public institutions (Ran & Golden, 2011).

Moreover, due to the relationship between organization identity and self-definition (through the mechanism of identification), identity ambiguity can undermine employee well-being, self-concept, engagement, and retention (Dutton et al., 1994). At an organization level, disparate and conflicting ideas about who the organization is can prompt internal subgroups to engage in unhealthy conflict and competition, creating factions and tension (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Relevant to the present study, identity ambiguity during times of substantial organizational change can undermine members’ organizational commitment as they entertain serious doubts and confusion about the organization’s future (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Members’ frequent doubts and confusion about why they are doing what they are doing and what value it has to the organization can dissolve members’ motivation to perform (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Identity interventions to strengthen organizational commitment. Several approaches have been offered as a means for strengthening organization identity and, in turn, employees’ commitment. Albert, Whetten, and their colleagues have described a method of extended metaphor analysis to discover organization identity wherein members examine their deep assumptions regarding the organization’s distinctive characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Similarly, Gioia (1998) described a process of identity discovery that involves review of

the non-changing symbols and narratives that reflect the organization's culture. Gioia explained that this process could help to reconstruct and revise the organization's formal identity claims.

Haslam et al. (2003) devised the ASPIRe model as an approach for articulating the organic subgroup and macro identities present within an organization, for the purpose of enhancing members' identification and commitment. The ASPIRe model consists of five phases:

1. **Ascertaining Identity Resources**, where the focus is on identifying the meaningfully distinct subgroups present in the organization.
2. **Sub-group Caucusing**, where members of the various subgroups of an organization discuss and debate their shared goals, facilitators, and obstacles relative to performing well in the organization.
3. **Superordinate Consensualizing**, where the system as a whole (or its representatives) discuss and debate their shared goals, facilitators, and obstacles relative to performing well in the organization.
4. **Organic Goal Setting**, where organizational leaders get involved to evaluate the results of previous stages and select and design effective solutions.
5. **Monitoring of Outcomes**, whereby leaders keep track of progress on member-identified goals, and managers provide support as needed.

It is important to note that although the authors connected the model to various supporting streams of literature and bodies of empirical data, the model in full does not appear to have been implemented.

Summary of the Literature

This chapter provided a review of literature related to the study. Large-scale transformational change involves modifications of fundamental aspects of the organization (Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2010). These shifts typically are associated with negative employee attitudes, lowered commitment, and increased turnover (Heckscher, 1995; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989; Moorman, 2001; Noer, 1993).

Therefore, it is essential for change agents and change leaders to attend to the human aspects of the change and support employees' emotional, relational, and structural transition to the new organizational form with sustained or even enhanced commitment (K. Becker, 2010; Covin, 1992; Herald & Moorman, 2000; Herald et al., 1996; Huber, 1996; Van de Ven, 1986; Wilson, 2010). Wide agreement is evident in theory and research that generating members' involvement and commitment to change efforts are critical for success.

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggested that attending to the organization's identity, in particular, may help employees' ambiguity and distress and in turn foster enhanced organizational commitment (Haslam et al., 2003). Examining the impacts of an organization identity intervention on employees' organizational commitment in the midst of a large-scale transformational change is the focus of the present study. However, no empirical data or cases were found of the model being applied in total. This study helps begin to fill that gap by providing a case utilizing the model to strengthen identity within the context of a large-scale change. The next chapter describes the methods used to conduct the intervention and to gather and analyze data.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' commitment during large-scale transformational change within one financial services company. This chapter describes the methods that were used in this project. The research design is described first, followed by descriptions of the participants. The identity intervention, an outline of the data collection process, and data analysis procedures are described.

Research Design

This study used an action research approach. Action research, simply stated, is learning by doing (Punch, 2005). It engages a group of people in identifying a problem, doing something about it (action), gathering and analyzing data to evaluate how successful their efforts were (research), and completing successive rounds of action and research. O'Brien (1998) explained that action research endeavors to pragmatically address people's concerns while advancing the goals of social science.

What differentiates action research from other forms of professional practice, such as consulting or daily problem-solving, is the emphasis on studying a problem systemically, basing actions on theory, and scientifically examining the results. Time is spent collecting, analyzing, and presenting data throughout the intervention, and the people involved are turned into researchers themselves. Action research is appropriate for use in the field, in real situations where circumstances require flexibility, speed, or a holistic approach and when people from the system need to be in the research. The present study consisted of a pre-survey, an organization identity intervention, and a post-survey.

Sampling

The study sample for the pre-survey was drawn by working with the client. Three criteria were used to guide selection:

1. The group had to have a relatively equal number of contingents and full-time employees.
2. The group size had to be manageable for data collection and analysis. A desired group size was set at 8-12 people.
3. The group had to be of interest to the company with regard to its commitment level.

The group selected through this process was the Business Systems Analyst group within the technology group. Table 1 describes the group's composition.

Table 1

Group Composition

Type	Total	Female	Male
Team members	11	9	2
Work onsite		6	2
Work remotely*		2	
Leave of absence*		1	
Business partners (all work onsite)	10	4	6
Total	21	13	9

*were not invited to participate

A study invitation was created and sent to contingents and team members in the group separately (see Appendix A). The invitation introduced the researcher and the study, included the consent form (see Appendix B), and contained a link to the survey. Participants also were invited to take part in workshop following the survey.

Organization Identity Intervention

A one-day organization identity intervention based on the ASPIRe model (Haslam et al., 2003) was used in this study. The ASPIRe model consists of five phases: Ascertaining Identity Resources, Sub-group Caucusing, Superordinate Consensualizing,

Organic Goal Setting, and Monitoring of Outcomes (see Appendix C). The first three phases fall within the scope of the present study and are described in detail below.

Organic Goal Setting and Monitoring of Outcomes falls outside the scope of the present study and are described briefly.

Ascertaining identity resources. In Phase 1, referred to as AIRing, all group members participated within the context of the general organization identity (e.g., a company-wide survey). The purpose was to identify employees' self-categorizations most pertinent to their ability to do their work. The formation of subgroups is based on employees' self-defined relationships rather than on demographic characteristics (e.g., position, gender, minority status) because shared social identity rests in a sense of "we-ness" that is self-defined (Haslam et al., 2003). At the same time, these subgroups were formed with the organization's broad agenda in mind.

The AIRing phase of the study was accomplished through a set of questions on the pretest whereby employees identified their stakeholder networks and those individuals with whom they best collaborate. Based on this information, the researcher divided the participants into "meaningfully distinct subcategories so as both (a) to maximize the perceived differences between the groupings and (b) to minimize the differences within them" (Haslam et al., 2003, p. 38). In the present study, two groups were defined: (a) team members and their stakeholders and (b) contingents and their stakeholders. Thus, two interventions were conducted: (a) a Team Member Intervention, in which seven team members and one stakeholder participated and (b) a Contingent Intervention, in which five contingents and two stakeholders participated.

Sub-group caucusing. In Phase 2, referred to as Sub-Casing, individuals convene in their subgroups. Within their subgroups, group members reflect on and discuss their

own identities in an effort to articulate and debate the subgroup identity. Haslam et al. (2003) stressed that convening the subgroups is important for providing an environment where subgroup members can develop trust and solidarity as they voice their values, needs, and concerns without fear of intimidation or personal reprisals from management. Through this activity, subgroup members identify and agree upon shared goals that will enable them to perform their work better, as well as identify those factors that obstruct goal achievement. Haslam et al. further asserted that these activities should give rise to a shared subgroup identity that emphasizes their we-ness, distinguishes them from other subgroups, is relevant to their goals, and which members internalize and carry forward into the next phase.

The agenda for Sub-casing is presented in Appendix C. The act of discussing, debating, and identifying group goals, supports, and barriers occurred through a combination of one-on-one, small group, and large group discussions to best allow members to voice their own viewpoints as well as listen to and arrive at a consensus with other group members.

Superordinate consensualizing. In Phase 3, referred to as Super-Casing, the large group reconvenes as a whole or utilizes representatives of the subgroups. Participants in this phase examine and reflect on the various subgroup identities identified in the previous phase in the effort to articulate an overarching identity. The process in this phase is similar to the former phase: participants, grounded in their subgroup identities, (a) identify and agree upon overarching shared goals that will allow them to improve their work and (b) identify structural and other barriers that obstruct goal achievement. These discussions and agreements, in turn, give rise to a shared organization identity that is relevant to the shared goals and which participants internalize and carry with them

beyond the intervention. Importantly, the resulting understanding of identity is different than where participants started: whereas the initial understanding was based on undifferentiated membership in the organization, participants' sense of the organization identity at this stage in the process is organically derived, based on the results of Sub-Casing and Super-Casing (Haslam et al., 2003). Haslam et al. argued that this type of organic understanding of identity is associated with improved subgroup interaction, integrative problem-solving across subgroups, and superior organizational outcomes. Although Haslam et al. describe these activities as being oriented around identity, it is important to note that the conversations are really centered on shared goals and impediments to achieving those goals. There may be some question about whether and how these conversations, according to the authors' assertions, give rise to identity.

The agenda for the Super-Casing Intervention is presented in Appendix C. During larger interventions, representatives from each subgroup attend this portion of the event. Due to the small number of participants, this phase was conducted immediately upon completion of Sub-Casing and all participants took part. Activities included presenting and discussing the results (goals, supports, obstacles) that emerged from the Sub-Casing phase; identifying common goals, supports, and obstacles that transcend the subgroups (pair discussions, in the case of the present study); inviting each subgroup pair to privately reflect on and discuss the shared goals, supports, and obstacles just identified to confirm their views are represented; and inviting the large group to confirm the identified list. Finally, participants were thanked for their participation and reminded to complete the post-survey that would arrive 1 week after the event. The total intervention lasted 2 hours.

Organic goal setting. In Phase 4, referred to as ORGanizing, the organically derived organization identity (articulated through the previous phases) is relied upon as leaders engage in strategic planning. In this stage, leaders evaluate the appropriateness of the superordinate goals identified in the previous stage and devise and implement subsequent plans accordingly. As this phase of goal-setting is based on participants' organically derived identities, members are more likely to have a sense of ownership about, commitment to, and adherence to the organization's decisions, goals, and plans (Haslam et al., 2003). Members also are more likely to perceive them as being fair and appropriate. This phase falls outside the scope of the present study and was not included in the intervention.

Monitoring of outcomes. In this phase, the strategic plan and goals are implemented and goal achievement, employee satisfaction, and employee commitment are measured. This phase falls outside the scope of the present study.

Data Collection Procedures

A 28-item questionnaire (see Appendix D) was used to gather organizational commitment data and information about the subgroups present in the organization (in preparation for the intervention). The survey was deployed online via the Qualtrics platform.

Allen and Meyer's (1990) organizational commitment scale was used to measure respondents' organizational commitment. The 24-item scale assesses affective, continuance, and normative commitment using a five-point Likert rating scale. Allen and Meyer (1990) found that organizational commitment could be better assessed if all three types of commitment were evaluated at the same time.

Three questions were posed for the purposes of carrying out the first stage of the intervention (AIRing). Participants were asked to (a) name the colleagues with whom they work most collaboratively and cooperatively, (b) name the key stakeholders of their work, and (c) name the individuals for whom they are a stakeholder. These data provided insights about the subgroups present in the organization, which helped inform the intervention. A final question asked the respondent's employment status (i.e., permanent or contract) to allow for a comparison between these employees' commitment levels.

The instrument was open eight days before the intervention, giving participants 1 week to respond and the researcher 1 day to analyze and determine subgroups. The instrument was administered as a post-survey (without the final three items) 1 week after the intervention.

Data Analysis Procedures

The focus of the present study was to evaluate whether the identity intervention had an impact on workers' organizational commitment. Therefore, the data generated during the intervention was not analyzed; however, a description of the intervention was constructed along with a reporting of the data generated during the sub-casing and super-casing intervention.

Survey data were analyzed as follows:

1. Mean and standard deviation statistics were calculated for each commitment scale at each point in time (i.e., pre-test, post-test).
2. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the aggregate mean scores across the scales and points in time for each subgroup (team members and contingents) to detect any significant differences in the scores.
3. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the aggregate mean scores for team members compared to contingent employees.

Summary

This action research study was conducted within a 21-member information technology team within the U.S. headquarters of a financial services company. The specific unit consisted of 11 permanent employees and 10 contingent employees, 12 of which participated in the identity intervention and/or completed surveys about their organizational commitment. Data were gathered using a quantitative instrument and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The events and data collected during the identity intervention also were described. The next chapter reports the findings of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' commitment during large-scale transformational change within one financial services company. This chapter describes the results that were produced through this study. A report of the intervention findings are displayed first, followed by a report of the survey results.

Participants

Although half the recipients agreed to participate initially, a new program priority emerged and all participants withdrew. The researcher enlisted the help of senior executives to talk with the group's leaders to permit participation by the group members. The team member workshop was held October 29, 2015. The contingent workshop was held on November 3, 2015.

Nine team members completed the pre-survey, for an 82% response rate, and four completed the post-test, for a 36% response rate. Three contingents completed the pre-test and three completed the post-test, for a 30% response rate for each round. Seven team members and five contingents participated in the intervention.

Team Member Intervention and Survey Results

Team member intervention. Two male and four female team members, along with one stakeholder, participated in the intervention. Through their group discussions, participants identified seven goals, nine supports, and 13 obstacles (see Table 2). Goals centered on completing team deliverables. Goal supports included adequate training and knowledge as well as support and involvement from managers, experts, stakeholders, and

other resources. Obstacles included lack of effective tools, management, and change processes.

Table 2

Team Member Identified Goals, Supports, and Obstacles

Goals	Goal Supports	Goal Obstacles
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documents ready for Quality Assurance 2. Complete assigned process data load and reconciliations 3. Complete drafting and approval of data load and reconciliation and other team assignments 4. Documents deliverables from other systems aligned with my assigned processes 5. Data load and reconciliation review, Impacted Systems documents 6. Completing assigned tasks and deliverables 7. Align the data load and reconciliation reports with business & technical documents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of software tools and applications to be used, including needed training 2. Understanding of expectations of testing (e.g. what am I testing for? What defines success?) 3. Support and involvement of management 4. Clear directions from management (management's messages are not consistent, which drives confusion below) 5. Assistance from key stakeholders 6. Standardized issues management 7. Need to receive completed and finalized documents from the business 8. Access to subject matter expert signoff, agreement on data details 9. Time and availability of key core resources 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issues management and mitigation tool 2. Timely decision-making 3. Constant change in process source document/map 4. No standardized project management processes and guidelines 5. Uniformed process for change 6. Ad hoc assignments from leaders that pull them from planned work and result in delays 7. Clear direction, guidance, decisions needed from management 8. Ad hoc deliverables 9. Unplanned tasks which become high priority 10. Lack of training on proper use of tools and applications 11. Unclear direction 12. Constant change without clearly defined change management process 13. Not enough resources or time

Participants were asked to examine the answers presented in Table 2 and then share their observations. Participants noted that they had identified more barriers than goals or goals supports. They additionally noted that their barriers resulted from a lack of support from management, that they had no clear direction, and that they needed better direction. Members reported they needed product training, commenting that the current training is not done properly.

Next, participants were asked to identify any trends or commonalities in the data. They responded that the data was rather uniform in that there is a need for deliverables to stop changing, and that this indicates poor direction and decision-making, change management, and issues management, while there is simultaneously an overabundance of ad hoc requests.

When asked to identify their short-term common goals and objectives (targeted for October-December 2015), participant reiterated that these goals included the completion of assigned tasks and deliverables and to align the data load and reconciliation reports with business and technology documents. Short-term supports included clear direction from management, standardized issues management, knowledge of how software tools and apps should be used, support and involvement from management around decision-making, time and availability of key resources, and product training. Obstacles to achievement of these short-term goals include lacking clear direction, having unplanned tasks that become a priority, lacking resources and time, and facing constant change without clearly defined change management process (specific to this program). Participants were unable to identify long-term objectives, supports, or obstacles. Long-term was defined in this study as those targeted for December 2015-June 2016.

Although participants expressed excitement and commitment regarding wanting the project to succeed, they wanted core vendor companies to take equal partnership with them for the success of their core deliverables. Team members voiced concerns that time and project delays, finger pointing, and politics were undermining project success. They also expressed they were having challenges balancing quality and schedule concerns.

Furthermore, they believed that too many variables had been defined and too many exceptions were precluding project success.

Frustration among the team member participants appeared to grow over the course of the intervention. Moreover, one team member began to emerge as a covert influencer of others, and the remaining team members coalesced around her thinking. Team members voiced their frustration with the lack of change or even response to their multiple past complaints. Although planning had been underway and decisions had been made, nothing changed: Knowledge of tools is still lacking, issue management remains poor, and no or limited traction has been made with regard to the identified barriers. Additionally, it became evident that there was a lot of finger pointing between this group and another, with each group blaming the other for hold-ups, poor quality, and missed deadlines.

Another growing and repeated conclusion that emerged from this discussion was that management's decision on change management methods and pathways for goal achievement needed to be clarified and communicated. Participants advised that management should have an offsite communications meeting to align themselves. Finally, participants emphasized that they needed clear direction from management regarding priorities, definition of success, and process for reaching success.

Team member survey. Nine team members completed the survey and four team members completed the post survey. Mean and standard deviations were calculated for each item and scale and for the pre- and post-tests. Pre- and post-test scores were then compared using independent samples t-tests to determine whether team members' responses changed significantly over time.

Table 3 shows the results for affective commitment, which refers to their feeling of emotional attachment to the organization. These results indicate that team members were generally neutral on affective commitment, with mean scores ranging from 2.78 (SD = 1.20) for “I couldn't easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one” on the pre-test to 4.50 (SD = 0.58) for “I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it” on the post-test. Overall, the pre-test average was 3.45 (SD = .95). The post-test average was 3.50 (.97). The independent samples t-test reveals that the differences between the pre- and post-tests were not significant ($p > .05$).

Table 3

Team Members' Affective Commitment: Pre v. Post

Item	Pre-test N = 9		Post-test N = 4		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	3.78	0.97	3.75	0.50	.053	11	.959
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it.	4.11	0.78	4.50	0.58	-.884	11	.395
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	3.13*	1.13	3.00	1.41	.167	10	.870
4. I couldn't easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.	2.78	1.20	3.00	1.16	-.311	11	.762
5. I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.	3.33	1.12	3.25	1.50	.112	11	.913
6. I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.	3.56	1.01	3.75	2.06	-.234	11	.819
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	3.33	1.12	3.75	1.26	-.599	11	.561
8. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	3.44	1.24	3.00	1.16	.609	11	.555
Affective Commitment	3.45	0.95	3.50	0.97	-.090	11	.930

* n = 8; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment

Table 4 presents the results for team members' continuance commitment, which indicates whether the perceived costs of leaving the organization are producing organizational commitment. These results indicate that participants disagreed or were neutral about this aspect: pre-test mean was 2.87 (SD = 0.71) and post-test mean was 2.41

(SD = 0.84). Item scores ranged from 2.0 – 3.22. Independent samples t-test showed that scores showed no significant change from pre-test to post-test ($p > .05$).

Table 4

Team Members' Continuance Commitment: Pre v. Post

Item	Pre-test N = 9		Post-test N = 4		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
9. I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up.	3.22	1.09	2.50	0.58	1.227	11	.245
10. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.	3.22	1.30	2.25	0.96	1.329	11	.211
11. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.	3.00*	1.41	2.75	0.96	.315	10	.759
12. It would be too costly for me to leave my organization now.	3.00	0.87	3.00	1.16	.000	11	1.00
13. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	2.89	1.05	2.25	1.26	.955	11	.360
14. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.	2.22	0.67	2.00	1.16	.446	11	.664
15. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	2.44	1.13	2.00	1.16	.650	11	.529
16. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice—another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here.	3.00	1.12	2.50	1.73	.633	11	.540
Continuance Commitment	2.87	0.71	2.41	0.84	1.03	11	.324

* n = 8; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment

Table 5 presents the results for team members' normative commitment, which refers to their feeling of obligation to remain with the organization. These results indicate that participants disagreed or were neutral about this aspect: pre-test mean was 2.80 (SD = 0.69) and post-test mean was 2.91 (SD = 0.80). Item scores ranged from 2.22 – 3.75. Independent samples t-test showed that scores showed no significant change from pre-test to post-test ($p > .05$).

Table 5

Team Members' Normative Commitment: Pre v. Post

Item	Pre-test N = 9		Post-test N = 4		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
17. I think that people these days move from company to company too often.	2.63*	1.19	3.00	1.16	-.520	10	.614
18. I believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization.	3.00	1.32	3.25	0.96	-.337	11	.742
19. Jumping from organization to organization seems unethical to me.	2.56	0.73	2.50	0.58	.134	11	.896
20. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.	2.78	1.39	2.50	1.29	.338	11	.742
21. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization.	2.22	0.97	2.50	1.29	-.433	11	.674
22. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one's organization.	3.00	1.12	3.50	1.00	-.765	11	.460
23. Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their careers.	3.22	0.83	3.75	0.50	-1.160	11	.271
24. I think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is still sensible.	2.89	1.05	2.25	0.96	1.034	11	.324
Normative Commitment	2.80	0.69	2.91	0.80	-.241	11	.814

* n = 8; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment

Contingent Intervention and Survey Results

Contingent intervention. Two male and three female contingents, along with two stakeholders, participated in the intervention. Through their group discussions, participants identified 9 goals, 13 supports, and 11 obstacles (see Table 6). Goals centered on completing documentation, project tasks, and team deliverables. Goal supports included ample communication, strong relationships, and the availability of resources. Obstacles included lack of knowledge among stakeholders and poor management.

Table 6

Team Member Identified Goals, Supports, and Obstacles

Goals	Goal Supports	Goal Obstacles
1. Business requirement documents, system requirement document approvals 2. Complete data definition documents and detailed forms specifications 3. Mock data set-up (release 5 & 6) 4. Finalize requirements 5. Complete documentation 6. Validate test completion 7. Support development team 8. Have a clear understanding of requirements and documentation 9. Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure consistency of requirements	1. Feedback 2. Clear, firm, timely decisions 3. Personnel/resources 4. Communication 5. Relationships (peers/team members/stakeholders) 6. Stakeholder participation 7. Contacts 8. Timely input from all teams 9. Availability of right resources 10. Support from vendors (work with, not against), team and business 11. Availability of data 12. Project plan 13. Regular meetings with stakeholders	1. Stakeholders lack of deep understanding of business processes 2. Constantly shifting, changing, evolving, unclear requirements 3. Tightening deadlines 4. Delayed/lack of decisions 5. Too many meetings 6. Disconnect/gaps between teams (hand-offs) 7. Lack of knowledge/overview on complete system process (missing complete picture of the process – need context) 8. Lack of ownership over process 9. Lack of timeliness 10. Inconsistent feedback 11. Delays in approvals of business requirement documents

Participants were asked to examine the answers presented in Table 6 and then share their observations. Participants believed there were too many obstacles; emphasized the need to complete deliverables; stated that lack of knowledge, shifting requirements, and unrealistic deadlines were a challenge; and expressed that the company culture was particularly problematic.

When asked to identify their short-term common goals and objectives (targeted for October-December 2015), participants reiterated the objectives of finalizing requirements and completing and obtaining approvals for business requirement documents and system requirement documents. Short-term supports included stakeholder participation and creating strong, reliable relationships (especially among peers and team

members). Short-term obstacles were identified as delays in document approvals, increasingly tight deadlines, and stakeholders lacking deep understanding of the business process. Participants identified their long-term objectives as testing of Release 5 and 6 of the new software program, completing business requirement documents and system requirement documents, and finalizing requirements. The long-term goals were defined in this study as those targeted for December 2015-June 2016. Long-term supports for the objectives again were identified as stakeholder participation; having strong, reliable relationships (especially among peers and team members); making timely decisions; and receiving support for meetings. Barriers to these goals were identified as stakeholders lacking deep understanding of the business process, decision making, and ownership.

When asked to reflect on these findings, participants noted the real concerns that emerged for them around their deliverables, the shallowness of business process knowledge by business owners, and the separation that existed between the business and project team. Participants also noted that the supports and difficulties they had identified had a common source—people.

Participants expressed that they were inspired that they agreed on the deliverables and obstacles facing them. They also recognized they shared a common mission to deliver a successful product to the company. Participants noted that as a result of the intervention, they gained a better appreciation about how invested the project team was in the project. Another notable comment that surfaced from the discussion was that “I am realizing that the change that I am looking for will start with ME!!” The next section presents the survey data.

Contingent survey. Three contingent members completed the pre- and post-survey. Table 7 presents the results for contingents’ affective commitment. These results

indicate that participants were neutral or in agreement that they had emotional attachment: pre-test mean was 3.29 (SD = 0.69) and post-test mean was 3.75 (SD = 0.43). Item scores ranged from 2.33 – 4.33. Independent samples t-test showed that scores showed no significant change from pre-test to post-test ($p > .05$).

Table 7

Contingents' Affective Commitment: Pre v. Post

Item	Pre-test		Post-test		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	2.33	1.53	4.00	1.00	-1.58	4	.19
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it.	4.00	1.00	4.33	0.58	-.50	4	.64
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00			
4. I couldn't easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.	2.67	1.16	3.33	1.53	-.60	4	.58
5. I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.	3.00	1.00	4.33	0.58	-2.00	4	.13
6. I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.	3.33	1.16	3.67	1.53	-.30	4	.78
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	3.67	1.53	3.00	2.00	.46	4	.67
8. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	3.33	1.16	3.33	2.08	.00	4	1.00
Affective Commitment	3.29	0.69	3.75	0.43	-.98	4	.38

$N = 3$; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment

Table 8 presents the results for contingents' continuance commitment, these results indicate that participants disagreed that the perceived cost of leaving was keeping them with the organization. Pre-test mean was 2.25 (SD = 0.13) and post-test mean was 1.96 (SD = 0.44). Item scores ranged from 1.33 – 3.00. Independent samples t-test showed that scores showed no significant change from pre-test to post-test ($p > .05$).

Table 8

Contingents' Continuance Commitment: Pre v. Post

Item	Pre-test		Post-test		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
9. I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up.	3.00	2.00	1.67	0.58	1.11	4	.33
10. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.	2.00	0.00	2.33	1.53	-.38	2	.74
11. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.	2.67	1.16	2.00	0.00	1.0	2	.42
12. It would be too costly for me to leave my organization now.	2.00	0.00	3.00	1.00	-1.73	4	.16
13. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	2.67	1.16	1.33	0.58	1.79	4	.15
14. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.	1.67	0.58	1.67	0.58	.00	4	1.00
15. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	1.67	0.58	1.33	0.58	.71	4	.52
16. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice—another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here.	2.33	0.58	2.33	1.53	.00	4	1.00
Continuance Commitment	2.25	0.13	1.96	0.44	1.11	4	.33

$N = 3$; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment

Table 9 presents the results for contingents' normative commitment. These results indicate that, on average, participants were neutral about this aspect: pre-test mean was 2.92 (SD = 0.63) and post-test mean was 3.63 (SD = 0.43). Item scores showed wider variation, with scores ranging from 2.33 – 4.67. Independent samples t-test showed that one item score, for “If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization,” showed significant change from pre-test to post-test: $t(2) = -5.00, p = .038$.

Table 9

Contingents' Normative Commitment: Pre v. Post

Item	Pre-test		Post-test		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
17. I think that people these days move from company to company too often.	3.67	0.58	4.00	1.00	-.50	4	.64
18. I believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization.	3.00	1.00	3.67	1.53	-.63	4	.56
19. Jumping from organization to organization seems unethical to me.	2.67	1.16	2.00	1.00	.76	4	.49
20. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.	3.33	1.16	4.67	0.58	-1.79	4	.15
21. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization.	2.33	0.58	4.00	0.00	-5.00	2	.04*
22. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one's organization.	3.67	0.58	4.67	0.58	-2.12	4	.10
23. Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their careers.	2.33	1.53	2.67	0.58	-.35	4	.74
24. I think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is still sensible.	2.33	0.58	3.33	0.58	-2.12	4	.10
Normative Commitment	2.92	0.63	3.63	0.43	-1.61	4	.18

N = 3; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment;

*= significant at the .05 level

Comparison of Team Members and Contingents

Comparison of team members' and contingents' intervention. Intervention results for team members and contingents were compared to identify similarities and differences in the data. Regarding the workshop design, both groups readily participated and were familiar with the workshop format. Participants in both groups enjoyed working on the different tasks during the workshop. The pair interviewing phase was well received, particularly by the contingents, who had not experienced this workshop technique before. Participants freely shared their views and reported relief and satisfaction that others had the same needs as themselves.

Regarding goals, both groups were focused on delivering the documents needed to complete their assigned tasks (at least at a surface level). The brevity of their goal statements is reflective of the task-oriented environment in which they work. Contingents

articulated need for clarity and the need to collaborate with stakeholders. This revealed their insight that communication and partnership are tools needed to complete the tasks at hand. It was notable that team members reflected a tendency to look outside themselves for answers rather than actively seek answers on their own. This is characteristic of the company's culture and hierarchical structure.

Regarding goal supports, team members were unique in that they stressed the need for clear direction and more training to develop their knowledge of the business process and tools. Team members also were more likely than contingents to articulate their needs as a complaint. Both groups voiced the importance of stakeholder partnerships. Whereas team members focused on the importance of technical tools, contingents focused on the importance of process tools.

When discussing common obstacles, both groups identified a long list of challenges, and the tone in both groups began to grow negative and deficit-oriented. Whereas complaints from team members centered on lack of change, finger pointing, and poor direction from management, contingents began to complain that they were not being given what they needed to be successful. One long-time contingent wondered aloud whether the company culture included operating within silos and being dissatisfied. For both groups, frequent changes and lack of clarity from leaders were producing chaos, confusion, and frustration. More pointedly, participants across both groups described the project leadership behaviors as being weak and ineffective.

Regarding short-term common goals and objectives, both groups are under extreme time constraints and are very focused on completing their tasks. Both groups identified key supports as clear direction from management, tool and process training (for team members), and relationship building with stakeholders (for contingents). Notably,

by this point in the intervention, frustration had overtaken the team members, who were participating less and less. In contrast, contingents were much more conversational and exploratory at this point. They appeared to be having fun with the process.

Both groups had difficulty thinking long-term. As a result, much of their long-term goals and objectives are unknown to them (or they are selecting to not envision them) at this time, “I can’t even think about that now.” The expectation across both groups is that the goals and objectives will remain much the same. As a result, much of the findings for both groups from this point on in the intervention yielded repetitive answers.

By the end of the intervention, it was evident that team members were exhibiting a pessimistic attitude, expressing that nothing had happened in response to their earlier similar complaints, and that the intervention would turn out to be another waste of time if no action comes from it. Notably, this suggested that team members may be looking to management and others to resolve their issues and provide clear direction.

In contrast, the contingents appeared to be more optimistic and empowered. Their responses indicated signs of their accountability and empowerment to make small changes. Contingents expressed comfort in the fact that others were feeling the same pain as them. Moreover, the contingents showed an evolution in their thinking, perhaps in part because they were not really a part of the system and were entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are characterized as being action-oriented and exercising personal accountability for their career outcomes (Hendricks, 2014). Additionally, contingents expressed that the intervention was valuable in that the process deepened their understanding of and context for the issues.

Comparison of team members' and contingents' survey results. Table 10 presents the results of the comparison between affective commitment for team members and contingents. On average, participants in both groups were neutral in their emotional attachment: Team members' mean score was 3.46 (SD = 0.91) and contingents' mean score was 3.52 (SD = 0.57). Team members' item scores ranged from 3.08 – 4.23. Contingents' item scores ranged from 3.00 – 4.17. Independent samples t-test showed that scores for only one item (I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own) were significantly different: $t(11) = -2.727$, $p < .05$. This is consistent with the differences regarding accountability and empowerment in team members' and contingents' attitudes noted in the intervention dialogue.

Table 10

Affective Commitment: Team Members v. Contingents

Item	Team Members N = 13		Contingents N = 6		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	3.77	0.83	3.17	1.47	1.15	17	.27
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it.	4.23	0.73	4.17	0.75	.18	17	.86
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	3.08*	1.17	4.00	0.00	-2.73	11	.02*
4. I couldn't easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.	2.85	1.14	3.00	1.27	-.26	17	.80
5. I feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.	3.31	1.18	3.67	1.03	-.64	17	.53
6. I feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.	3.62	1.33	3.50	1.23	.18	17	.86
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	3.46	1.13	3.33	1.63	.20	17	.84
8. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	3.31	1.18	3.33	1.51	-.04	17	.97
Affective Commitment	3.46	0.91	3.52	0.57	-.14	17	.89

*N = 12; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment;

*= significant at the .05 level

Table 11 presents the results of the comparison of continuance commitment for team members and contingents. On average, participants in both groups rated this form of commitment at a low level. Team members' mean score was 2.73 (SD = 0.75) and

contingents' mean score was 2.10 (SD = 0.33). Team members' item scores ranged from 2.15 – 3.00. Contingents' item scores ranged from 1.50 – 2.50. Independent samples t-test showed that none of these scores were significantly different: $p > .05$.

Table 11

Continuance Commitment: Team Members v. Contingents

Item	Team Members N = 13		Contingents N = 6		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
9. I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up.	3.00	1.00	2.33	1.51	1.15	17	.27
10. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.	2.92	1.26	2.17	0.98	1.30	17	.21
11. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.	2.92*	1.24	2.33	0.82	1.04	16	.32
12. It would be too costly for me to leave my organization now.	3.00	0.91	2.50	0.84	1.14	17	.27
13. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.	2.69	1.11	2.00	1.10	1.27	17	.22
14. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.	2.15	0.80	1.67	0.52	1.36	17	.19
15. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.	2.31	1.11	1.50	0.55	1.67	17	.11
16. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice—another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here.	2.85	1.28	2.33	1.03	.86	17	.40
Continuance Commitment	2.73	0.75	2.10	0.33	1.93	17	.07

*N = 12; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment

Table 12 presents the results of the comparison between the normative commitment for team members and that of contingents. On average, participants in both groups were generally neutral in their sense of obligation to stay with the company. Team members' overall mean score was 2.83 (SD = 0.69) and contingents' mean score was 3.27 (SD = 0.62). Team members' item scores ranged from 2.31 – 3.38. Contingents' item scores ranged from 2.33 – 4.17. Independent samples t-tests showed that scores for one item (One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I

believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain) were significantly different: $t(17) = -2.111$, $p = .05$.

Table 12

Normative Commitment: Team Members v. Contingents

Item	Team Members N = 13		Contingents N = 6		t	df	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
17. I think that people these days move from company to company too often.	2.75*	1.14	3.83	0.75	-2.10	16	.05*
18. I believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization.	3.08	1.19	3.33	1.21	-.44	17	.67
19. Jumping from organization to organization seems unethical to me.	2.54	0.66	2.33	1.03	.53	17	.61
20. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.	2.69	1.32	4.00	1.10	-2.11	17	.05
21. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization.	2.31	1.03	3.17	0.98	-1.71	17	.11
22. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one's organization.	3.15	1.07	4.17	0.75	-2.08	17	.05
23. Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their careers.	3.38	0.77	2.50	1.05	2.08	17	.05
24. I think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is still sensible.	2.69	1.03	2.83	0.75	-.30	17	.77
Normative Commitment	2.83	0.69	3.27	0.62	-1.32	17	.21

*N = 12; Scale: 1 = strongly disagree/low commitment, 3 = neutral, 5 = strongly agree/high commitment;

*= significant at the .05 level

Summary

Two male and four female team members, along with one stakeholder, participated in the team member intervention. Their identified goals centered on completing team deliverables. Goal supports included adequate training and knowledge and support and involvement from managers, experts, stakeholders, and other resources. Obstacles included lack of effective tools, management, and change processes. Frustration among the team member participants appeared to grow over the course of the intervention. They voiced their frustration with the lack of change or even response to their multiple past complaints. One team member also began to emerge as a covert influencer of others, and the remaining team members coalesced around her complaints.

Affective commitment for team members was generally neutral and remained unchanged from pre- to post-test. Continuance commitment and normative commitment were low or neutral and remained unchanged from pre-test to post-test.

Two male and three female contingents, along with two stakeholders, participated in the contingent intervention. Contingent goals centered on completing documentation, project tasks, and team deliverables. Goal supports included ample communication, strong relationships, and the availability of resources. Obstacles included lack of knowledge among stakeholders and poor management. Participants noted that as a result of the intervention, they gained a better appreciation about how invested the project team is in the project. Contingents' affective commitment was neutral and remained unchanged from pre- to post-test. Continuance commitment was low and remained unchanged from pre- to post-test. Normative commitment was neutral and relatively unchanged, although one item measuring this construct did significantly increase.

When comparing team members to contingents, the researcher noted that team members appeared to have a more negative and stronger extrinsic locus of control, whereas the contingents appeared to be more optimistic and empowered. Few differences were evident when comparing commitment scores for the groups. Contingents rated two items significantly higher than did team members: "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" (affective commitment) and "One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain" (normative commitment). The next chapter provides a discussion of these results.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' commitment during large-scale transformational change within one financial services company. This chapter presents a discussion of the study results. Conclusions are presented first, followed by recommendations for the study organization, limitations, and suggestions for continued research.

Conclusions

Effects of intervention on team members. Six team members and a stakeholder participated in the team member intervention. They willingly participated in the event and enjoyed certain elements of it. However, the participants' frustration appeared to grow over the course of the intervention due to the lack of change or response to prior complaints. They mentioned being in the same place they were 18 months to 2 years ago and that this further turned the tide of attitude and energy. One participant mentioned, "We do these sessions, we give our opinion, and then nothing ever happens." The participants added that several attempts like this intervention had been attempted as a means to solve the issues they had raised. However, according to the participants, leadership has opted to not enact the solutions defined as a result of the interventions. For the participants, the identity intervention facilitated for the present study was a bit like reopening an old wound. As a result, participants grew increasingly negative and deficit thinking set in toward end of the intervention.

Based on the survey results of nine team members, affective commitment for team members was generally neutral and remained unchanged from pre- to post-test.

Continuance commitment and normative commitment were low or neutral and remained unchanged from pre-test to post-test. Given the nature of the intervention and its effects on participants, these results are not surprising. Although no past empirical research was found documenting the effects of Haslam et al.'s (2003) ASPIRe model, it was anticipated that clarifying organization identity would have a positive effect on organization members. That was not the case in this research. The process of describing and discussing goals, supports, and constraints was insufficient as an intervention to produce increased commitment.

Despite the lack of change in organizational commitment, certain conclusions and implications are evident based on the data. First, based on participants' early enthusiasm about the workshop approach, it appears there is intrinsic value in high-touch dialogue sessions like the ASPIRe model. Specifically, certain design elements, such as pair interviews, analyzing and reporting findings, and voting on items raised, helps participants feel like peers and partners versus pairs-of-hands with regard to organizational issues. At the same time, these types of interventions need to be used with caution. If nothing will be done regarding the outcomes of the intervention (as participants have already experienced in the past), the effect will be diminished morale, increased negativity, and feeling that the effort was a waste of time. In other words, asking for organization members' opinions and then ignoring the response is worse than not asking at all.

There are a variety of alternative explanations for these results. First, an informal leader in the group was quiet but influential. Early and often during the group discussion, she underscored her complaints (e.g., "there's no process, no thinking in place regarding how this project is being run"). She gained traction with other participants regarding a

few of these, which appeared to correspond with the growing negativity evident in the group. The influence of this informal leader may have biased the entire group's perspective and attitude regarding the intervention, possibly resulting in additional negative effects on their post-tests.

Second, compared to survey results from outside the present project, team members reported having a sense of hopelessness regarding the project leadership. Many individuals asked to be reassigned to different projects due to the challenges in the team. The underlying hopelessness team members are experiencing might have influenced their energy, level of participation, and attitudes regarding the intervention as well as their commitment to the organization. The idea that employees' learned helplessness and sense of having little organizational impact may undermine their commitment squares with research suggesting that commitment is related to perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1990, 1986; Meyer et al., 2002) and dependability (Meyer & Allen, 1987, 1988; Steers 1977), past work experiences (Mowday et al., 1982), leaders' behaviors (Ketchand & Strawser, 2001), and employees' feelings of personal importance (Scott et al., 1988).

A third possible explanation is that strong emotional connection is endemic to the company culture, which has been repeatedly described by employees as being "family like." It follows that many employees have strong emotional bonds to the company and each other that may help sustain them through difficult periods, such as the transition project being examined in the present research. These strong bonds may have resulted in inflation of participants' commitment scores on both the pre-test and post-test. The next section discusses the results regarding the effects of intervention on contingents.

Effects of intervention on contingents. The contingent participants noted that as a result of the intervention, they gained a better appreciation about how invested the project team is in the project. Although contingents voiced concerns, they were conversational and exploratory throughout the intervention and appeared to be having fun with the process.

Based on pre- and post-surveys of three contingents each, contingents' affective and normative commitment were neutral and generally remained unchanged from pre- to post-test. Continuance commitment was low and remained unchanged from pre- to post-test. Contingents also rated two items significantly higher than did team members: "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" (affective commitment) and "One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain" (normative commitment).

The study results for the contingents indicate that this group may be more likely to proactively explore the issue, analyze it, and propose solutions. It is likely because these individuals had not had repeated prior experiences of sharing their opinions, proposing solutions, and being ignored. This underscores the suggestion of leading identity interventions like the one facilitated in the present study only when it occurs in a safe space and when the proposals emerging from the intervention will be received and, ideally, implemented.

The contingents' experience with the identity intervention may largely be explained by their employment contracts. Specifically, as independent contractors who have opted to be self-employed rather than permanent employees, they may be used to taking charge rather than waiting for leaders to solve their issues. They also may be less

jaded, as they had not had the experience of participating in interventions such as these only to have nothing change in the aftermath. The finding that contingents' experiences of the intervention may be related to their status as entrepreneurs is related to past research, which associated commitment and other worker attitudes to their sense of personal mastery (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), opportunity for self-expression (Meyer & Allen 1987, 1988), and participation in decision-making (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Rhodes & Steers, 1981).

Recommendations

A key recommendation emerging from this study is that interventions should be chosen and designed with care to assure that they are not repetitive with past interventions and that they do not trigger old, unresolved wounds caused by past organizational experiences. Action research processes generally begin with a diagnostic phase. The importance of this process is underscored in this research. A broader, deeper, and more rigorous diagnosis may have identified several of the alternative explanations that could have prevented the intervention from succeeding.

For an intervention like ASPIRe to be implemented effectively and for beneficial impacts to result for organizational commitment, it is critical for leadership to create the space for this to happen. Interventions create expectations of change in participants and should not be embarked on lightly. This means that if the intervention is going to be facilitated, leaders should be prepared to seriously consider and potentially implement the suggestions that emerge from the intervention. This would involve forming a true partnership with leadership that empowers participants, grants them a sense of control and personal accountability over their own destiny, and demonstrates to them that they

can make a difference in their workplaces. If these conditions are not met, the intervention is likely to be deleterious, as shown in the present study.

Additionally, before adapting any intervention, it should be evaluated whether the intervention can be effectively designed within compressed time frames and in radically smaller group sizes. Therefore, it is advisable that both groups be reconvened to allow for the full process to be completed.

A final recommendation is that the study findings indicated that a solid foundation of affective commitment is present in the company for both groups. It is important to continue to nurture that, especially given that participants are facing difficulties with the project and are having serious doubts about its leadership. Ways to nurture affective commitment include identifying and leveraging group strengths, continuing to assess commitment formally and informally, engaging in dialogue, and partnering with them to identify and resolve their issues. Team building and offsite events, social hours, and icebreakers also may sustain and continue to build affective commitment.

Limitations

A primary limitation affecting this study was its use of a small sample. For team members, 55% (5 of 11) participated in the intervention, 82% (9 of 11) completed the pre-survey, and only 36% (4 of 11) completed the post-survey. For contingents, 50% (5 of 10) participated in the intervention and 30% each completed the pre- and post-surveys. As a result, the study findings cannot be considered representative of all team members and contingents in the company or the professional workforce in similar companies.

A second limitation is that the study relied on self-reported data. Based on surveys completed within the company but outside the scope of the present study, this team is

known to score themselves very high. Therefore, the commitment scores indicated in the present survey results may be inflated.

A third limitation is that the participants were facing extreme time pressures and workloads at the time of the study. The stress associated with these might have served to increase their negativity regarding the intervention and research project and may explain the low survey response rates.

A fourth limitation is that the ASPIRe identity intervention was designed to take place over a longer timeframe and with a much larger group. The intervention facilitated in the present study was conducted over 90 minutes rather than days (as designed by the original authors) and, due to the small group sizes, the intervention steps and associated data generated were repetitive. This may have fed team members' negative attitudes about the intervention.

Suggestions for Research

One suggestion for research is to repeat the present study, with the condition that the intervention is conducted with a large group and over a longer time period, as it was designed. Additionally, commitment scores should be measured as a delayed post-test to allow for the effects of the intervention to take hold. Furthermore, it would be necessary in this type of study to measure commitment using mixed methods to gain deeper insights about the effect of the intervention on commitment and to eliminate other influences on commitment. Moreover, sensitivity should be taken to assure that the study intervention does not uncover old wounds of similar past interventions that left the participants feeling ignored. These past experiences likely had a carryover effect that biased participants' impressions and experiences with the present study intervention.

A second suggestion for research is to repeat the study using a different intervention and examine the effects on workers' commitment. It is important to note that the intervention may not have been powerful enough in terms of promised changes, increased ownership of results, or other aspects to influence commitment, even if it were done to a larger group over a longer period of time. Such interventions could include activities that more directly affect the worker attitudes that past research has shown to be associated with commitment, such as perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, role ambiguity, and organizational justice (Meyer et al., 2002) as well as other structural characteristics, job-related characteristics, and work experiences (Mowday et al., 1982). For example, patterns of organizational and employee-supervisor communication could be adjusted and the effects on worker commitment could be measured over time.

Summary

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the impacts of an organization identity intervention on workers' commitment during large-scale transformational change within one financial services company. The research was conducted within a 21-member information technology team within the U.S. headquarters of a financial services company. The specific unit consisted of 11 permanent employees and 10 contingent employees, 12 of which participated in the identity intervention and/or completed surveys about their organizational commitment. Data were gathered using a quantitative instrument and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The events and data collected during the identity intervention also were described.

Findings indicated that the participants generally enjoyed the intervention, although team members grew increasingly negative over the course of the event due to

past experiences with similar interventions which yielded no improvements. Commitment generally remained unchanged across the study period for both groups and team members' and contingents' commitment levels were generally similar.

Recommendations emerging from the present study including selecting and designing interventions with care so that they are not repetitive and do not trigger old, unresolved wounds; assuring that leadership supports and is prepared to respond to the results of any interventions; and continuing to nurture participants' affective commitment. Research suggestions are to continue evaluating the impacts of the identity intervention facilitated in this study and utilizing mixed methods to measure organizational commitment.

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Appendix A: Study Invitations

Post Workshop Survey

Many of you know me from my work through the Business Readiness workstream on the Core Receivables Program. What you may not know is that I am also a Master of Science (MS), Organizational Development (OD) candidate at Pepperdine University. I am writing to you today to request your participation in a study I am conducting that could aid in the long-term benefit for the Core Receivables Program.

This brief study is in alignment with Program workforce efforts currently underway, especially in the areas of engagement, communications and collaboration. As such, [the company] and the Core Receivables Program have granted me permission to conduct a short-term research project with you in support of my Master's thesis work. It is not uncommon for graduate students to conduct studies within organizations. In fact, [the company] regularly supports candidates during such projects because of the benefit that is realized with the business and within the field of study.

Attached is a letter that explains the study in greater detail to help you become familiar with the nature of my work and motivation to study topics that lead to opportunity creation in organizations. Also attached is a brief questionnaire ([link to pre-survey]) that I ask you to complete and submit by 12 noon PST, Tuesday, November 3, 2015.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at: [email address]

Sincerely,
Tami Cole

Post Workshop Survey

Thank you again for participating in last week's BR workshop. I appreciate your participation in this process and your continued effort to aid in the overall effectiveness of the Core Receivables Program.

As I mentioned, there is one final, important step to completing this phase of the process. Please take a few minutes to complete the post-workshop survey ([link]) by EOD, Thursday, November 5. This survey is shorter than the last, and should take you no longer than 10 minutes.

Sincerely,
Tami Cole

Appendix B: Consent Form

I greatly appreciate your time and willingness to contribute your valuable viewpoint to my thesis research project, which is currently titled - *The Impact of a Personal Identity Intervention on Organizational Commitment during Large-Scale Transformation*.

This letter is designed to inform you of the specifics of the study, and serve as a release of the information from the survey results and the impact intervention described below.

Overview

The process that I will walk with you through in the coming days is designed to test the viability of an espoused method for increasing commitment during large-scale change.

The Identity Intervention (i.e. workshop) mentioned in the thesis title, will be bookended by a pre and post workshop questionnaire to measure the impact, if any, of such an activity on organizational commitment. If proven viable, this process could be used more broadly by the Program to understand the values and needs of its Program team. By providing individuals an opportunity to identify, align around and generate action plans, this process could be used in future workforce efforts. Your participation will help shape the future of the Core Receivables Program.

Logistics:

The OCQ (Organizational Commitment Questionnaire) will be issued from my private survey account to protect the identity of participants and integrity of the data. Once received, your responses will be coded so as to further protect your identity. The workshop will be limited only to invited participants like you. To provide you with a safe place to share your opinions and discuss topics, no management will be in attendance at the workshop. Once the research is completed, only general themes and ideas will be shared with the Core Receivables Program leadership team for its use in improving Program execution. Specific comments will not be attributed to individuals.

Timing:

For the purposes of planning, the questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. The workshop should take no more than 2 hours to complete. If however, the group would like to provide additional feedback beyond the designated two-hours, I would like to request permission from you to extend our time together by 30 minutes.

My Role:

I will occupy a position of trust and confidence with you in this research and will never divulge your individual identity in connection with your comments, either in writing or verbally. Instead, all names and other information agreed to will remain anonymous and coded for my understanding and further analysis. I have retained a research assistant for help with the significant undertaking of transcribing and analyzing survey results and related data. My research assistant is bound by the same requirements stated in this letter. Even so, my research assistant will only have access to the code assigned to your name – not your name itself.

Additionally, I will not include in my research any content from you that results from verbal or written communications we may have outside of the interviews. Only content that arises specifically from the OCQ and workshop will be included in the study.

This study is a requirement for the Master of Science in Organization Development from The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management at Pepperdine University. The completed thesis will be published to a research library in November 2015.

Your Participation

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your participation. You also have the right to refuse to answer a particular question if you find it unacceptable. Upon request, you may obtain copies of your individual responses, and/or a copy of the completed study report when they become available.

Finally

My personal interest in the subject has naturally developed from my years spent committed to helping organizations create opportunities for success through people. Commitment continues to be an area I care very much about and want to include in my practice, along with other activities that help people and organizations accelerate positive results.

I encourage you to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. Otherwise, if this meets with your approval, please return this letter with your signature to me by EOD Wednesday, October 21 and retain a copy for your records. I look forward to working with you in the coming weeks.

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Tami Cole
MSOD Candidate, Pepperdine University
[email address]

X _____
(Participant signature)

X _____
(Date)

X _____
(Participant name – printed or typed)

Appendix C: Intervention

Sub-Casing Intervention

Introduction: Thank you for your participation today! Our focus here is to discuss, in pairs and small groups, the values, needs, and concerns you share as you go about your work. You will also discuss and identify the shared goals that will help you to perform your work better and what obstacles you face in achieving those goals. To allow us to be as productive as possible here, I appreciate your putting away your computers and cell phones for the duration of this event.

First, I would like you to pair up with another person at your table. Please interview each other using the questions I have displayed and record your answers.

[Break into pairs (within each table only). Pairs will interview each other and take notes.]

****PAIR INTERVIEWS****

Immediate goals

When you think about your day-to-day work, what goals and objectives are you working toward?

What things support you in meeting those?

What things make it difficult to achieve your goals and objectives?

Mid-term goals

Now extending the time horizon, when you think about achieving the next milestone, what goals and objectives are you working toward?

What things support you in meeting those?

What things make it difficult to achieve your goals and objectives?

****RECONVENE TABLES****

Instruction: Now, I would like you to reconvene your table. Please take turns, with each pair sharing its findings.

[The pairs each share their findings.]

Instruction: Now, as a table, I would like you to record the common goals and objectives, goal supports, and goal obstacles that emerged. Please record:

- Your common goals on the Blue sticky notes, one per note.
- Your common goal supports on the Green sticky notes, one per note
- Your common goal obstacles on the Yellow sticky notes, one per note

When you are finished recording these, please post them on the wall

[Have designated areas on the wall for Goals, Supports, and Obstacles]

BREAK

Instruction: We will now take a 15-minute break. In addition to getting refreshments, please take a moment to review the results of this morning and what each of the groups came up with.

RECONVENE LARGE GROUP

Instruction: Let's discuss what came up in your groups and what you saw when you reviewed this collection of sticky notes.

1. What struck you when you looked around?

2. Were there any surprises?

3. Did you notice any trends or commonalities?

FORMALIZE

4. What do you see as the common goals and objectives?

Used dot voting to get to 3-5 goals

Short-term (3-5)	Long-term (3-5)

5. What do you see as the critical supports?

Used dot voting to get to 3-5 supports

Short-term (3-5)	Long-term (3-5)

6. What do you see as the key barriers?

Used dot voting to get to 3-5 barriers if a longer list is emerging from the discussion]

Short-term (3-5)	Long-term (3-5)

Super-Casing Intervention

Reviewed short-term and long-term goals, supports, and barriers.

General Reactions

1. What strikes you when you consider these findings?
2. Are there any surprises—whether positive or negative?
3. What inspires or energizes you about what you see?
4. What concerns you?
5. Does this information or anything we've discussed change your perspective or outlook on anything? (probe about silos, etc.)

PAIR DISCUSSIONS OR INDIVIDUAL NOTE-TAKING

Instruction: Now, I would like you to pair up with the other representative from your subgroup and discuss the questions I have displayed. Please record your answers.

[Break into pairs (within subgroups). Pairs will interview each other and take notes.]

Representative Pair Discussion

6. In what ways are our goals, objectives, supports, and obstacles reflected in the common issues? (Which are reflected?)
7. In what ways are our goals, objectives, supports, and obstacles NOT reflected in the common issues? (Which are not?)
8. What action items do we need to carry out as a result?

Reconvene Large Group

Instruction: Please return to the group. Now, I would like each pair to share what you discussed.

9. Based on what we just discussed, do we need to revise our goals and objectives in any way?
10. Based on what we just discussed, do we need to revise our list of critical supports in any way?
11. Based on what we just discussed, do we need to revise our list of key barriers in any way?

Wrap up

Instruction: Thanks again for your participation in this event. The information and shared understanding we achieved here will be carried forward into discussions with leadership regarding their goal setting. Additional efforts may be initiated to address some of the more immediate concerns. We sincerely appreciate the insights you have shared and your great participation today. In 1 week's time, you will be receiving a post-survey from me, and I would sincerely appreciate your completing it. Thank you again for your help and input.

Appendix D: Organizational Commitment Survey

Instructions

Listed below is a series of statements that represent feelings that individuals might have about the company or organization for which they work. With respect to your own feelings about the particular organization for which you are now working, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting a number from 1 to 5 using the scale below.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = undecided
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

Affective Commitment Scale

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
4. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one. (Reverse scored)
5. I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization. (Reverse scored)
6. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization. (Reverse scored)
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
8. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. (Reverse scored)

Continuance Commitment Scale

9. I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up. (Reverse scored)
10. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to.
11. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.
12. It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organization now. (Reverse scored)
13. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.
14. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.
15. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives.
16. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice -another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here.

Normative Commitment Scale

17. I think that people these days move from company to company too often.
18. I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization. (Reverse scored)

19. Jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me.
(Reverse scored)
20. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain.
21. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization.
22. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one's organization.
23. Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their careers.
24. I do not think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore. (Reverse scored)

Identifying Subgroups Scale (Pre-test only)

25. Name the colleagues at with whom you work most collaboratively and cooperatively:

26. Name the key stakeholders of your work (within):

27. For whose work (within) are you a key stakeholder?

28. Please indicate your employment status:
 - Business partner
 - [Company name] team member