

THE EFFECTS OF 'NO-FAULT' TERMINATION ON EMPLOYEES OF
ORGANISATIONS WHERE 'LIVING THE BRAND' IS ADVOCATED
AS AN HR STRATEGY

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science, in the Graduate Programme in Organisational Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science (Organisational Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Abstract

Living the Brand has become a useful Human Resources strategy in post-Fordist organisations. This is due to globalized competition and decreased control structures leading to organisations needing to obtain ever higher levels of productivity and performance from highly skilled knowledge workers. Because of the nature of their work, knowledge workers are difficult to manage and control through traditional practices and are usually looking for more than just monetary remuneration. Living the Brand organisations provide a strong social identity, positive self-esteem and a sense of achievement to these employees. This small-scale qualitative study used inductive thematic analysis to investigate the after-effects of Living the Brand, using knowledge workers who had been retrenched from such organisations. The results show that the positive aspects of Living the Brand comes at the expense of the employees' social identity outside of the organisation. These include the identification with family, as well as their health and a sense of self beyond the organisation. As one can see in this study, this power imbalance, along with an increasingly unbalanced psychological contract, is a reality that was only truly realized by the employees after being retrenched from the organisation. Unfortunately Durban does not have a plethora of Living the Brand organisations, which in turn limits the available sample of research participants. This meant that the findings may not be applicable across cultures, and that the participants had all had several years to come to terms with their retrenchment. Further studies using a wider spectrum of participants are suggested, including those who have been more recently retrenched.

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1. Introduction

The workplace plays a highly significant role in individuals' lives, and work (or the lack thereof) is essential to understanding the individual's world. Individuals do not function in a vacuum, and workplace issues cannot be isolated from functioning outside of the workplace, and the impact this has on familial, social, psychological and biological aspects of an individual (Coles, 2003). From the organisation's perspective, the need for greater commitment from employees has increased dramatically over time as every advantage is searched for in a highly competitive global environment (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). This in turn can be argued to reflect a greater need for control of employees. Organisations have had to become increasingly organic and less hierarchical in this context, which has meant that employee participation (or empowerment) is more important than previously and that many of the institutionalised methods of self-perpetuation have been dismantled. This means that the identification, or emotional connection, of employees with the organisation is becoming more and more important. This internalised structure of the organisation's identity, where it is going and what it stands for, have become increasingly important for organisations and there is a great deal of emphasis placed on how to encourage these shifts (Albert, Ashforth and Dutton, 2000). Identification of employees with the organisation means a greater likelihood of far broader commitment to the organisation, and thus pressure to identify with the organisation is exerted on employees. This in turn leads to more subtle forms of domination than overt bureaucratic forms of control. This is referred to as 'Living the Brand'; an HR strategy, that can be stated or implicit, which takes an organisation's brand and puts in place processes to ensure that "employees live and breathe the ideology" (Ind, 2001: 61). From a psychological perspective, it seems inevitable that this identification and extremely high level of commitment would have a significant impact as employees have to discover other sources of (possible) personal identity if they lose their jobs, possibly needing to reconnect with family members and locate a social circle outside of their former workplace.

For this reason, this research project aims to examine the influence of Living the Brand on the employee's personal identity. It also considers the psychological and emotional impact that the loss of this social identity has on employees who have not chosen to leave the organisation. The literature review will therefore look at the concepts of identity, work, 'Living the Brand', and unemployment, as well as the relationships between them. The interviews and subsequent analysis attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How did ex-employees experience the organisation where Living the Brand is an accepted HR Strategy?
2. What are the psychological effects of retrenchment on employees of organisations where strong organisational identity is the norm?
3. How do retrenched employees perceive the organisation post-retrenchment?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Identity

The concept of identity plays an important part in understanding the process and effects of 'Living the Brand'. This is because identity is a complex concept which is vital to the very definition of an entity, whether an individual, a group or an organisation. Identity thus underlies many of the interventions, strategies and behaviours displayed by an entity. Identity is a psychological construct that is vital in demarcating oneself within and against one's environment (Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003). Thus, it provides a sense of being situated, of knowing who one is. It is necessary for others to recognise and (to some degree) understand who they are interacting with, and whether they wish to do so (Albert et al, 2000). Many different theories exist regarding exactly how identity is constructed and conceptualised, however it is widely recognised that identity is formulated over the life cycle (Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003). For the purposes of this research, Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been chosen as the most appropriate conceptualisation of identity, and as such will be discussed in detail here. However, it is necessary to have an understanding of identity in general as it is this concept and the meanings attached to it that underlie organisational identity (Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003).

The issue of identity has been widely explored, and there are a number of different theories that have been used to understand and explain identity and how identities are constructed. Identity can be broadly separated into social and individual identity, with every individual holding multiple identities. Simply put, identity refers to a person's sense of who they are, and the way that they define themselves in terms of what is important to them (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998). Berk (2000: 457) defines identity as "a well-organised conception of the self made up of values, beliefs, and goals to which the individual is solidly committed". An important part of this is that identity is derived from repeated interactions with others and is actively created and sustained in this manner (Giddens, 1991). Significantly, identity serves to emphasise the uniqueness of an entity over time and allows the entity to act in a consistent manner on the environment, which ensures the ability to adapt and thus survive (Van Tonder & Lessing,

2003). Thus, identity is considered a social construction that is open to change, making identity construction a process, which is both gradual and continuous (Berk, 2000; Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000).

2.1.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

SIT is a cognitive theory that distinguishes between personal identity and social identity; and was developed in 1979 by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in an attempt to understand and explain group membership (Hepburn, 2003). Personal identity refers to a person's own sense of who they are, whereby an individual defines herself or himself in terms of her/his unique personality and their personal attitudes, beliefs, values, goals, preferences and skills (Billington et al, 1998; Hepburn, 2003). Social identity refers to the way an individual defines herself or himself in terms of the social categories to which they belong, for example, being a woman, belonging to a certain organisation, and so on (Tekman & Hortaçsu, 2002). This then leads to self-labelling which can lead to stereotyping of the self and one's own behaviour (Hepburn, 2003). This is a fact that marketers and advertisers are acutely aware of and tend to use to their advantage in selling products and services. Tajfel (1981: 255) defines social identity as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his/her knowledge of his/her membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'. SIT argues that social identity is a significant part of personal identity and self-evaluation, and one's membership of social groups influences a person's image of him/herself (Tajfel, 1981; Tekman & Hortaçsu, 2002). This includes the perception that the fate of one's group is one's own fate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Social identity tends to become prominent in intergroup contexts (Tekman & Hortaçsu, 2002). In other words, when individuals are in group settings, they define themselves in terms of their social identity as opposed to their personal identity (Hepburn, 2003). This results in the individual's self-esteem becoming entangled with that of the group, and out-group members having a smaller influence on the individual than in-group members (Hepburn, 2003), a fact that is central to this study.

There are three central concepts involved in SIT, namely categorisation, identification and comparison (de le Ray, 1991). Categorisation can be argued to lie at the heart of social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004). The idea of social categorisation refers to the way that human beings categorise objects in order to understand them. Humans also tend to categorise people, including themselves, according to prototypical characteristics of members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This is done based on criteria that are relevant to the individual. People are placed into social categories, such as Black, White, South African, and so on, because assigning people to categories tells us things about them. Furthermore, by knowing what categories we belong to, we also learn things about ourselves (de le Ray, 1991). This in turn leads to accentuation, whereby the differences between and similarities within groups are exaggerated. Therefore, accentuation is the root of social stereotyping. With social groups, this has an evaluative and emotional component that results in more pronounced accentuation (de le Ray, 1991). Social categorisation is used to define an individual's position in society (Tajfel, 1981).

The notion of social identification refers to the way that people identify with the groups to which they feel they belong, and therefore group membership plays an important role in the way that we perceive ourselves, providing a sense of belonging (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Recognizing oneself (and one's identity) in a group context results in four consequences. Firstly, that the individual will remain part of a group and will become part of other groups if those groups can contribute to the positive facets of their social identity. These positive aspects are determined by the individual, what they place importance on, and what they gain satisfaction from. The second consequence follows, that the individual will leave a group if it fails to contribute to the positive facets of the individual, unless it is impossible or unless leaving conflicts with values which are part of the self-concept. If this is the case then the individual can change either their interpretation of the group or they can take action to change the situation. The final consequence of social identification is that the interpretation of attributes, social action and the positive facets of the social identity only has meaning if other groups exist as a comparison (Tajfel, 1981).

Social comparison refers to the way that people compare themselves to similar others in order to evaluate themselves, therefore people often compare themselves with others in their groups, and by doing this they gain self-esteem (McGarty, Haslam, Hutchinson & Turner, 1994). It is only through comparison that definitions of the self and others have meaning, for instance, 'unemployed' only has meaning in contrast to 'employed' (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Therefore, through categorisation, identification, and comparison, people develop a social identity, and this social identity forms an important part of one's individual identity. In *Living the Brand*, it is this social identity that becomes paramount, a point that will be addressed in detail later on. Social comparison is the link between social categorization and social identity (Tajfel, 1981). Social comparison also refers to comparisons of one's own group to other groups. This results in the group membership having meaning according to the differences perceived between groups and the value that is placed on these differences (Tajfel, 1981). Therefore, through categorisation, identification, and comparison, people develop a social identity, and this social identity forms an important part of one's individual identity.

More recently, there has been the extension of SIT into a form referred to as Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT). SCT was developed by Turner (1985) and expands the original idea of category-based differentiation between people to that of self categorisation (Abrams & Hogg, 2004). Self-categorisation refers to a cognitive awareness of one's group membership, without an evaluative component (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999). According to SCT, there are different levels of categorisation for individuals, namely the personal level (as a unique individual), group level (as members of a specific group, different from members of another group) or superordinate level (as a human being as opposed to other species). When applied specifically to identification with an organisation, an individual may, for example, identify with their own career, with their own team or department or with the organisation as a whole. These levels of self-categorisation become relevant according to changes in context, for example, according to whom the individual is comparing his/her self to (van Dick, Wagner, Stellmacher & Christ, 2004). Thus, when it is salient to categorise oneself as a group member then the individual will behave according to the

norms of the group, and share the interests and concerns of the group. In self-categorisation an individual accentuates his/her self-perceived similarity to the group prototype. This means that self-perception is also open to the processes of depersonalisation and stereotyping that others are subjected to in social categorisation. In other words, the individual starts to stereotype their own behaviour and view themselves as just a member of the group, as opposed to a multi-faceted individual. It is argued that this process of depersonalisation of the self underpins group phenomena (Hogg & Terry, 2000). SCT means that individuals may be attracted to a group and remain a member because of the prototypical characteristics of its members and not due to the personal qualities of each individual (Abrams & Hogg, 2004).

2.1.2 Organisation Identity

Like individuals, some organisations have an identity of their own, referred to as organisation identity. This identity has become increasingly important over time due to organisations having to become increasingly organic and less hierarchical due to the changing nature of work (Albert et al, 2000), which will be discussed later in this treatise. Thus the internalisation within employees of the structure of the organisation's identity, where it is going and what it stands for, has become more and more important for organisations (Albert et al, 2000). Organisation identity itself is 'a dynamic cognitive gestalt or integrative schema of the organisation's features which reflect its uniqueness or distinctive, central/core and enduring character' (Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003: 24). This identity serves the purpose of ensuring that the organisation in question is perceived as unique when compared to other similar organisations, and is achieved by distinguishing the organisation from its environment. This then helps the organisation to adapt more readily to changing circumstances. Another advantage is that brands that are more distinctive are also more likely to be remembered and thus more successful in selling their services or products (Klein, 2001; Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003). It also serves the purpose of making routine coordinated action possible as it allows for shared assumptions to be made and maintained about the organisation and the role each participant plays (Brown & Starkey, 2000). Through having a strong identity (or brand presence), an

organisation is more distinctive and possibly more attractive to (potential) employees, customers and shareholders (Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003).

Organisation identity, much like individual identity, is constructed through continuous formulation and preservation of the self through interactions with others, for instance, with customers, competitors and regulatory institutions. It is of particular importance when looking at organisation identity to note that identity is not considered static although it does maintain continuity (Albert et al, 2000). Here continuity refers to a core of stable beliefs and values that apply across time and context, but the identity shifts in the way it is interpreted and the meanings it carries. What is important to note is that identity is fluid and constantly being reinterpreted in order to avoid stagnating in a constantly changing environment (Gioia et al, 2000). Some of the characteristics that are thought to compose organisation identity include; the ideology, values and beliefs of the organisation, its strategy and structure, the organisational climate, organisational boundaries, its appearance and the leadership it is under (Van Tonder & Lessing, 2003). Although this is not to suggest that organisations only have a single identity, rather, like individuals, organisations have multiple identities, such as workgroups, external stakeholders, social groupings, all with different understandings and experiences of the organisation (Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

Organisational identity has been analysed from psychodynamic, communication, developmental and, most commonly, Social Identity theoretical perspectives. It plays an important role in that employees identify with the specific organisation, the values, beliefs and ideologies that distinguish that organisation from others; in other words the organisation's identity and more recently its brand (Hogg & Terry, 2000). From a SIT perspective, organisational identification is a specific form of social identification that is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organisation, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organisation(s) in which he or she is a member (Mael & Ashforth, 2001). In the case of Living the Brand, it is not just the organisation that the individual identifies with, but rather the brand that the organisation propagates. In this way the organisation itself can change to a degree without harming the identification,

for example new CEO's often bring changes, different colleagues who may be more or less pleasant to work with or difficult projects and processes.

Identification is used by employees to define themselves as members of social categories and ascribe characteristics that are typical of these categories to themselves. The more one identifies with a particular group, the more one's attitudes and behaviour are thought to be affected by that group membership (Lipponen, Helkama, Olkkonen & Juslin, 2005). Organisational identification forms one part of an individual's self-concept, as people identify with more than one social grouping at a time. However the stronger the identification with the organisation, the weaker the other identities in one's self-concept become, and the more influence the organisation is likely to have over the individual.

According to Ashforth & Mael (1989), there are four antecedents that are most likely to increase the likelihood of organisational identification. Firstly, there is the distinctiveness of the organisation and its values and practices. This provides a unique identity that can be negative or positive. A negative identity will affect the individual's identity negatively and this is then dealt with through reinterpreting the negative characteristic or distinction into a positive one, reinterpreting or simply changing the comparison out-group. However, generally the prestige of the organisation increases the likelihood of identification, which is the second antecedent. Individuals prefer to identify with organisations that are perceived as successful. The third antecedent is how important the out-group/s becomes. Competition increases identification as differences are emphasised and there is a greater awareness of out-groups and thus of the importance of the norms and values of the salient organisation. The final antecedent is that the factors that are usually associated with group formation may affect the extent to which individuals identify with a group, for instance, interpersonal interaction, proximity, shared goals and a common history (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

As a consequence of identification, individuals tend to choose activities that are congruent with specific aspects of their identities. The more individuals identify with an organisation, the more likely they are to take the organisation's perspective and to act in

its best interests, to be more committed and motivated, to perform better and show more behaviours that go beyond what is called for in their roles as employees (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Although organisational identification does result in commitment to an organisation, an individual can be committed to an organisation without identifying with it, which will be discussed later in this treatise. With this greater importance to the individual due to their identification, the organisation also gains more benefits than with employee commitment without identification (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Identification enhances the outcomes of group formation such as group cohesion, cooperation, and even altruism as well as increasing loyalty to and pride in the organisation. Organisation identification also reinforces its own antecedents, namely the distinctiveness of the organisation's norms and values, group prestige and competition with out-groups. All of which is good news for the organisation as employees work harder and are less likely to leave voluntarily (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001).

Less attention has been paid to why individuals would want to invest themselves in an organisation to this extent and sacrifice their self-interests for it (Mael & Ashforth, 2001). From an SIT perspective, identification with the organisation satisfies a range of needs for the individual, such as the need for affiliation as well as helping the individual find a sense of meaning in life, thus affecting the individual's cognitions, emotions and behaviours (van Dick et al, 2004). Identifying with an organisation may also provide a sense of vicarious success to employees through the success of the organisation, although the same does apply to failures of the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Through internalizing the group or organisational identity as a part of one's definition of self, the individual gains a sense of meaningfulness and connection (Albert et al, 2000).

Negatively, individuals may experience stress or even depression if they perceive the image of the organisation to become unfavourable. In turn, this could lead to negative consequences for the organisation, such as reduced effort. For the individual over-identification with an organisation can become destructive of individuality and personal values (Cheney, 1983). Thus, it can be seen that organisation identification holds many benefits for the organisation, but also many negatives for the employees. In this way the

organisations that were designed to serve the needs of people are instead manipulating people to serve them (du Gay, 2000, Klein, 2001).

2.1.3 Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is a psychological state that generally links an employee to an organisation for a relatively long-term period and impacts on decisions as to whether an individual should remain in a particular organisation (Arzu Wasti, 2003; Marchiori & Henkin, 2004). Organisational commitment has numerous benefits to an organisation; such as employees support organisational goals, require less supervision and are willing to put in extra effort without personal gain (Smith, 1999). Higher commitment levels have also been linked to lower absenteeism and turnover, pointing towards organisation commitment being highly beneficial to the organisation (Arzu Wasti, 2003). However organisations find it difficult to measure commitment, particularly in knowledge work due to its lack of concrete products, and thus often assume that long hours put in at the office are indicative of greater commitment, as opposed to alternative ways of working that may be more suited to the employee's needs as well as being more efficient (Lewis, 2003). Here knowledge work refers to any work that requires the use of the mind over that of one's physical abilities in order to produce, utilise or alter ideas, information or knowledge (Drucker, 1966).

Allen & Meyer (1990, as cited in Arzu Wasti, 2003) propose a model of organisational commitment composed of three aspects; affective, continuance and normative commitment. It is this model that is argued to be most extensively used by researchers and empirically tested (Marchiori & Henkin, 2004). Normative commitment refers to commitment based on feelings of obligation because of society's norms (Bosman, Buitendach & Laba, 2005). Continuance commitment refers to staying with an organisation because of perceived costs associated with leaving it. The most important aspect of commitment for this study is affective commitment, which refers to the employee's identification with, involvement in and emotional attachment to the organisation and is the most researched due to it being the most highly correlated with positive outcomes for the organisation (Arzu Wasti, 2003). Thus it is this aspect that is most pertinent to this study, especially as affective commitment is increased by the

organisation meeting the needs and expectations of the employee, a tactic used by Living the Brand organisations (Bosman et al, 2005).

Organisational commitment should not be confused with organisational identification, however, although these concepts do have similarities and overlaps. Differences can be seen in that organisational identification has a cognitive component and is part of one's self-definition in addition to the affective component that organisational commitment (and specifically affective commitment) has (van Knippenberg, 2000). If one takes the characteristics of commitment to be belief in the organisation's values and goals, the readiness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation and the desire to preserve membership of that organisation, then commitment does not include identification. In fact, an individual could reasonably change organisations, without sacrificing something of themselves, if another organisation displayed the same goals and values as those that the individual and current organisation believed in. In other words, the organisation itself is not necessarily of great importance in organisational commitment, but rather superordinate values and goals that can be met by another organisation if necessary or more convenient. With organisational identification however, this is not possible, as it is the organisation itself that is of value to the individual's identity, and thus not easily replaced (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

2.2 Work and the Changing Environment

As mentioned earlier, organisation identity and identification with organisations have become increasingly important over time due to changes in the global business environment and in the world of work. For the purposes of this research, 'work' will not include unpaid forms of work, such as housework and child-care due to the focus on organisations. This treatise now looks at these environmental factors more closely in order to understand this phenomenon better.

2.2.1 Changing Conceptions of Work

The meanings and significance attached to work have changed over time and context, although what is constant is that work of some form is necessary to sustain physical life.

Work has traditionally had a negative meaning, that of coerced labour, through physical threat or material necessity. This had implications for organisational structures and design, such as the formal processes of control and domination found in bureaucratic organisations. Labour was carefully monitored and controlled through checks and balances as people were being forced to work. The ancient Greeks regarded physical work as a distraction from purer pursuits, such as philosophy, and it was considered to be beneath a free man to work. Thus slave labour was used to avoid work (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). The Hebrews viewed work as a means of expiating sin. It is only in more recent times that work has taken on a more positive meaning through the Protestant work ethic. This was founded on the belief that hard work is indicative of spiritual salvation and a form of ascetism. Later this was extended to the capitalist ethic, whereby profit was seen as an end in itself, promoting and legitimising the accumulation of wealth through productive activity; i.e. work (Knights & Willmott, 1999).

The meaning of work has also changed in that it became more closely associated with an individual's mental powers as opposed to physical ability, and took on the characteristic of being intrinsically meaningful in itself and a means of mastering nature and oneself (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). Notions of 'the self-made man', that every individual could be wealthy and successful in life if they worked hard enough reinforced this. Thus those who were wealthy deserved to be, and those who suffered deserved their fate. This can be considered as a discourse in which individuals begin to discipline themselves into working. Foucault refers to this as a technology of the self, and is merely another form of subordination and domination in society. However, this changed with the industrial revolution and mass production, as tasks became fragmented and repetitive. Productivity has since become independent of all spiritual significance and instead the accumulation of wealth has become a motive in itself. This can be seen in the emphasis now placed on leisure and consumption in modern society (Knights & Willmott, 1999). The Living the Brand strategy exploits this trend by providing a sense of purpose, of belonging, and identity to individuals who seek greater meaning in their work.

The Protestant work ethic in particular is associated with capitalism, the pursuit of profits, self-reliance and thus individualism (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). However, this is not always considered to be positive. Marx in particular saw work in capitalist societies as exploitative. He regarded society as shaping and determining how individuals act, relate to each other, and perceive themselves and the world; and thus the Protestant work ethic was seen as a means of controlling the working class. However, he did believe that it is the production of goods and manipulation of the environment that made humankind distinct from animals. Thus in Marx's view economic relations and material relations underpin society, and therefore the legal, social and political aspects of society. Since society shapes the individual, economic relations are seen to underlie how individuals perceive and relate to themselves, others and the world, including their values, beliefs and morals (Hamber, Masilela & Terreblanche, 2001).

Marx viewed exploitation as resulting from one or more individuals benefiting at the expense of others and thus inherent in class relations and material production, as capitalist organisations are based on a motive of profit (Corra, 2005). The working class have to sell their labour (themselves) to the owners of the means of production (capitalists) in order to survive. By possessing greater resources, the capitalists are in a position to purchase this labour and make a profit from it by extracting surplus value from it (Morrison, 2006). Since the capitalist is making more money off the worker's labour than is paying for it, it follows that the worker is selling his/her labour for less than it is worth. Because of this profit, the capitalist gets richer and more powerful and the worker gets poorer and less powerful. This power differential becomes clearer as conflict arises as the capitalists wish to gain greater profit from the labour of the worker, as well as greater control of more aspects of society (laws, knowledge, institutions etc), and the workers wish to sell their labour for more remuneration (Hamber et al, 2001). This is important, as this exploitation is necessary in order for individual workers to be dominated and controlled by the organisations in which they work. This is regardless of whether this domination is explicit (as in Fordist organisations) or more subtle (as in Post-Fordism).

2.2.2 The Changing Nature of Work

When examining organisations, how work is structured and labour is organised, one needs to take the social, historical and economic context in which these organisations exist into consideration. Work has changed dramatically over time, particularly since the 1970s. This is due to a number of factors including technological innovations, globalisation, changes in government policies and changes in the organisation of work structures. This section therefore aims to briefly consider this context, from Fordism to post-Fordism, and how it has shaped organisations and work in today's society, to the point that identification by employees with an organisation and its brand has become so necessary.

2.2.2.1. Fordism

With Fordism, processes of control became institutionalised. It is this institutionalisation of control that has remained constant up to the present. This is regardless of changes in what the means or methods of control are (Deetz, 1998). Thus Living the Brand indirectly draws from these Fordist beginnings. According to Harvey (1989), the 'symbolic' date of the commencement of Fordism was in 1914 when Henry Ford developed the five dollar, eight-hour day for workers who worked on the assembly line. This era is associated with mass production, and a subsequent deskilling of workers, and a separation of the process of management, conception, control and execution of the product. These characteristics are based in Taylorism and scientific management, by which Ford was greatly influenced. It is important to note that Ford acknowledged that mass production would result in mass consumption, as well as new forms of labour control and reproduction of labour power, which would in turn pervade all aspects of social life (Harvey, 1989). This included the standard employment contract, which is the idea that working for an organisation meant full-time, secure, lifetime employment (Gottfried, 2000). It should be noted that Fordism was built on the aesthetic of modernism, which encompassed the ideas of efficiency and functionality, and post-war Fordism in particular was regarded as a way of life. This is because "mass production meant standardization of product as well as mass consumption; and that meant a whole new aesthetic and a commodification of culture..." (Harvey, 1989: 135).

Ford strongly believed that organisations could build society through providing workers with sufficient income. Workers would then be motivated to work better and have the resources available to purchase mass-produced products. This increase in productivity and demand would in turn increase profits and investment (Harvey, 1989). Thus, Fordism is argued to have been part of an accumulative regime built on cycles of economic growth in a comparatively stable, closed economy. In this way, Fordism also affected the social aspect of economic regulations. The wages that resulted from mass production industries were distributed amongst the employed who were taxed, which provided the resources available to support the unemployed through the welfare state (Jessop, 1994). Just as Fordism provided resources for the welfare state, the state provided the conditions for Fordism through guiding demand and consequently restraining the competitive markets, as well as guaranteeing stable economic growth; this was necessary because of the inflexible nature of Fordism. Because of the rise in wages and resulting productivity, demands, profits and investment the state became vital in combining the capital and consumer goods industries. Managing wage relations was another result of this that the state took a major part in, especially through organising trade unionism, collective bargaining as well as consolidating social partnerships (Jessop, 1994).

2.2.2.2. Post-Fordism

The decline of Fordism was in part due to the problems of hegemony and functionality. The rigidity of the labour force resulted in a great many workers being only able to perform one role. What was also problematic in the labour force was its composition, as the majority of individuals who made up the union were white males. For this reason, the unions were constantly under attack from minorities, women and underprivileged, who perceived the unions to be self-serving (Harvey, 1989). Consumers were becoming critical and dissatisfied with the blandness of mass production and began to question the quality of the mass produced products they were buying. This can be seen in parallel with the move away from the aesthetic of functionality and efficiency, to one that included an aesthetic based on uniqueness and continual change, reflective of a post-modern society.

All these problems combined to result in a move away from Fordism with the recession of the 1970s and towards the post-Fordist era (Harvey, 1989).

With the decline of Fordism in the 1970s, rapid change began to take place in the world of work. Post-Fordism is aimed at describing, “a new era of capitalist economic production in which flexibility and innovation are maximized in order to meet market demands for diverse, customized demands” (Giddens, 2001: 385). According to Harvey (1989), post-Fordism and flexible accumulation are in direct contrast with the rigidities that were characteristic of Fordism. Thus, flexibility is of particular importance in labour, products, markets, processes and patterns of consumption. The aim of this flexibility is to maintain competitiveness in comparison to other countries who are already implementing post-Fordist policies and to maximise profits (Jessop, 1994). Because of the great deal of unemployment, due to the recession of the 1970s, the way in which labour was structured changed, and this was taken advantage of by the employers at the time. What became evident was a movement away from full-time employment for the majority to rather this luxury only being afforded to the smallest percentage of workers. This form of work is still increasing today (Clark & Sacks, 2004).

An important aspect of post-Fordism is the move away from modernism and the associated emphasis on functionality and towards a post-modern emphasis of change and discontinuity. This is partly a result of the rapidly increasing pace of technological change and globalisation. Essentially globalisation refers to worldwide cooperation and competition. Countries have begun cooperating (to some extent) on a global scale, and due to the power of technology, trade can cross these borders on a previously unimaginable scale at a previously unimaginable pace (Isaacs, 1997). Organisations can now operate across countries and continents, basing one aspect of operations in one locale with different aspects in another, wherever cheapest or most convenient (McGrew, 1992). Many employees can now work from home or anywhere else due to the advances in telecommunications. Importantly, however, is the fact that as technology continues to change rapidly so do the tastes and demands of consumers. These tastes and demands are also being gratified by organisations from all over the world, as organisations can gain

access to consumers from around the world far more easily. Culture is also arguably globalized as Transnational Corporations (TNCs) become more powerful and more prevalent, disseminating Western goods and values all over the world (Isaacs, 1997).

Organisations now have to be vastly more efficient and competitive than ever before as competition comes from all over the world. Any business organisation's reason for existence is profitability, and thus new and innovative ways have to be found to cut costs in order to profit and thus survive (Klein, 2001). Human capital has been targeted as one way of cutting costs as the more productive an employee the greater the profit. One way of achieving this is through flexible labour. Flexible labour, or atypical employment practices, is a growing trend worldwide, and refers to types of work that are open to rapid change by the employer due to changing demands; such as part-time, temporary and self-employment (Felstead & Jewson, 1999). However, it is not limited to these concepts and various types of work often fall into this category and define it in subtly different ways. One such way is as periphery as opposed to core work. According to this model, the workforce is divided into core and periphery work groups. Periphery work is that which is considered not to be essential in an enterprise and as such are more likely to end in the near future, such jobs are often on fixed term contracts or outsourced. Core jobs, in contrast, are those that are essential to an organisation and thus tend to be considered more secure. (Felstead & Jewson, 1999)

For organisations, this allows for far greater flexibility in hiring and firing, remuneration, job specifications and hours worked. Flexible labour, and atypical employment practices, are integral to globalisation as links between developed and developing countries are used to mobilise cheap labour and stimulate growth, this is often done via sub-contracting chains that span the globe (Felstead & Jewson, 1999). It is in this era of insecurity and uncertainty that organisations have begun putting emphasis on identification with the organisation (van Tonder, 2004). In fact, it can be argued that it is because of this insecurity for both organisations and employees that this tactic has been employed. Organisations need employees to identify with the organisation because they can no longer offer long-term security and opportunities but still need the commitment of

employees in order to remain competitive (van Tonder, 2004). However, the question then becomes how does one ensure employees remain committed? This is where organisation identification and 'Living the Brand' come into play (Ind, 2001).

2.2.3 Foucault and Subordination

If one looks briefly at Foucault's perspective on the changing forms of work over time, it can be argued that work as a form of control went through a number of permutations, and subtle shifts over time (Townley, 1998). Fordist and bureaucratic forms of control were clear in nature, foremen watched workers, employees clocked in and out, and paperwork was done in triplicate. All of this acted as surveillance, employees were (and are as such organisations do still exist) watched and their performance appraised. For those organisations, this ideally led to employees surveying and disciplining themselves, even if they were not under direct managerial surveillance at the time. In modern organisations that live the brand this has moved to control and discipline through an emphasis on results as opposed to processes, and identity as opposed to work (Deetz, 1998). Brand 'champions' are cultivated in these organisations and if one is not part of the group, identifying with the brand and advocating it, then one is a brand 'saboteur'.

According to Foucault, individuals take on the responsibility of transforming themselves in order to achieve a 'happier' or 'better' state of being through technologies of the self (Deetz, 1998). It is exactly this that Living the Brand organisations utilises to control workers and thus increase competitiveness. It is worth noting that the Living the Brand strategy is usually aimed largely at knowledge-workers, where there is greater potential for conflict between employee and employer and less opportunity for direct control. This is due to the specialised nature of their work, employee expectations of autonomy, a lack of clear normative standards, the presence of professional codes, work activity outside of the employment site and employment prospects (Deetz, 1998). Thus a method of control that utilises technologies of the self, and technologies of power, is necessary, for example through group processes, culture and values, vision statements and socialisation programmes. This reduction of direct control provides employees with a sense of self-determination and of negotiating their own identity within the organisation; as well as the

need for self-control, self-discipline and self-surveillance. It also means that workers are less likely to rebel through unionisation and strikes as their decisions about their work are seen as choices (Deetz, 1998).

Employees at these organisations strategize their own subordination; they control their behaviour and feelings, and use self-surveillance to obtain ‘money, security, meaning or identity’ (Deetz, 1998, p164). All of which should come from work without self-subordination being necessary. From this perspective, the organisation is integrated into the self and life outside of work becomes a constraint on one’s ability to do more. Work stops being a means of supporting one’s life and social relations, rather one’s life and social relations are valued inasmuch as they support work. The employees do this far more effectively than management directly could. Because employees do this themselves, they generally remain happy in their working conditions despite being aware that they are making sacrifices. Deetz (1998: 169) raises the interesting question of ‘is this the best or worst workplace?’ Employees generally gain wealth, status, identity and satisfaction, but lose security, leisure time, social relations and identity outside of the workplace.

2.3 Branding and Living the Brand

Branding first became popular as an external marketing tool, however this concept has exploded and its pinnacle can arguably be found in Living the Brand (LtB) organisations. Branding was first conceptualised in the mid-1980s as a re-conceptualization of the function of organisations. Instead of producing goods organisations were seen as producing brands, this meant that in a highly saturated market that had a multitude of very similar goods, the organisations’ products could stand out as symbols of a brand. The product was no longer the item of value; instead, it was merely a representation of a better way of life, an attitude, a value, and most importantly, an identity (Klein, 2001). Owning, and more importantly, displaying a particular brand, means that the consumer becomes a member of that ‘club’, they have the values represented by the brand and become permeated with the imagery of the brand. This can then lead to the brand becoming internalised as part of the individual’s identity and thus having a deep emotional attachment; the brand and the person becomes entangled and as such, the brand

becomes an extension of the self. This can be seen in the profitability of brands such as Coke and McDonalds, and in the crime associated with certain brands. Klein (2001) refers to young people being murdered in poorer areas of America and only their Nikes being stolen. These people are not being killed for a pair of shoes, but a lifestyle, a symbol of success and wealth, an identity that is far removed from the reality of poverty and hopelessness.

This shift in perception was a shift in the way organisations did business, with many even outsourcing their production and manufacturing functions and instead focusing on marketing and branding in order to create the most powerful images to sell. It seems almost inevitable that organisations would recognise the power branding could have on their own members. This has led organisations to encourage members to ‘live the brand’, to invest themselves in the meaning of the brand being produced and thus enhance the profitability of the organisation. In other words, the individual employee begins to identify with the brand and thus find fulfilment in aligning her/himself with it. These employees are not passive recipients however, but rather they come to believe in the brand and what it stands for, and thus start to passionately advocate this. This then becomes a cyclical process as employees encourage each other to live the brand and revitalise it through finding new ways of doing so. A myriad of methods are utilised to make employees aware of their brand and to identify with it. These include; corporate logos, brand books, videos, workshops, brand launch events, brand rulebooks, branded advertising, uniforms, badges, mission statements and mandatory organisational event days, to name but a few (Ind, 2001; Klein, 2001).

Living the Brand organisations firstly select individuals whose values and beliefs are compatible or similar to the organisations. This relies on the values and beliefs of the organisation being made explicit and clear to all involved. Stories and myths (true or fictional) about the brand’s history and actions are used to promote employees to share a common view of the world, thus encouraging social categorisation and identification. These organisations then use Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs to encourage this identification and create ‘brand evangelists’ (Ind, 2001: 33). Self-actualisation is

encouraged through trusting employees and promoting freedom of expression. The social needs of the individual are met through extending the organisational relationship from purely work-based into complete social contracts instead of employees having alternative networks and interests. Many examples of this exist, with organisations providing on-site coffee shops, hair salons and laundromats for example. All of which means that employees seldom have to leave the organisation in order to accomplish the ordinary tasks of daily living. The need for esteem is met through fostering a perception of being important to and cherished by the organisation. Generally training, appraisals, rewards, recruitment and development are all structured to embed the values of the organisation and align employees with its principles.

For organisations in particular, distinctiveness increases the tendency of individuals to identify with the organisation. This refers to distinctiveness of the organisation's values and practices in relation to those of comparable organisations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This is vitally important to this study as this is exactly one of the tactics employed by organisations that advocate LtB (Ind, 2001). It is precisely this distinctiveness that is thought to explain the 'brand evangelist' behaviour, or missionary zeal that the members of these organisations often display. Identification is also enhanced by prestige, social identification affects self-esteem, and as such, people tend to cognitively identify with a winner (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This relates to the stories and myths that organisations use to promote themselves as highly distinctive and successful (Ind, 2001).

According to Ind (2001) the higher the level of identification, the greater the likelihood of commitment and thus the greater the pressure from the organisation to heighten identification. Related to this is that identification is made more likely by organisational images inside and outside the organisation. The brand permeates throughout the individual's life. Although the importance of a balanced view of work is recognised, it is considered unnecessary and potentially negative for the organisation from this standpoint (Ind, 2001). This means that although an individual will have multiple identities and identify with multiple groups, in a LtB organisation more focus will voluntarily be placed on the importance of work and far more time and self will be invested in the organisation,

leaving far less available for outside interests. For the individual then, finding a balance between home or social life and work becomes increasingly difficult. Organisations that strongly encourage identification address this through promoting committing to the organisation socially as well as through work (Ind, 2001). A sound strategy as this perceived interest in and concern for the employee and their work-life balance has been found to actually increase organisational commitment (Sturges & Guest, 2004).

According to Ind (2001), LtB means that employees are more satisfied and motivated, have higher self-esteem, find greater meaning in their work and are more self-actualised. This is a great draw card of such organisations since individuals, as employees, desperately want meaning in their lives and transcendence of purely self-motivated interests (Mael & Ashforth, 2001). However, apart from the increased difficulties in finding a balance between work and home life, branding can also have broader detrimental effects of invading public and personal space, and having a negative impact on youthful identities and the concept of nationality (Klein, 2001). Of particular interest to this study are the detrimental effects that the loss of this identity has to the individual when they are retrenched.

2.4 The Psychological Contract

Due to this study focussing specifically on employees who have been re-employed, the long-term effects of unemployment will not be considered here. The negative results of unemployment are varied and well researched, ranging from lower self-esteem and lower well-being to higher rates of child abuse and suicide (Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte & Feather, 2005). The positive effects of employment are recognized as tied to the meaning the person and society place on the job (Warr, 1987). Thus, it follows that the higher the level of identification with, and therefore importance placed upon membership of an organisation, the greater the negative impact of the loss of that membership. This can only be worsened if considered in conjunction with a perceived breach of the psychological contract.

The psychological contract refers to the individual's beliefs about the expectations of themselves and the organisation in return. It defines what the employee will provide the organisation with in terms of time and effort in return for acceptable working conditions, rewarding work, pay and benefits and future promotions or merely employment. It has no objective basis, but rather is perceptual in nature and refers to the recollection and interpretation of promises exchanged during the employment relationship. However, it functions as a contract in that serious repercussions can result if either side breaks it. This has become important in understanding the employment relationship in today's rapidly changing environment as the psychological contract plays a role in commitment to the organisation and can motivate employees to go beyond their formal job description. Conversely, perceived breach of the psychological contract can result in a sense of betrayal and decreased motivation and commitment (De Vos, Buyens & Schalk, 2005).

The psychological contract can be conceptualised as having six aspects each of which is a continuum. Where an individual lies on each of these continuums is dependent on their individual career experiences and demographic profile. The first characteristic or continuum is that the psychological contract is based on an exchange of benefits and rewards (Davidson, 2007). Both parties have to perceive that there are benefits to be gained or the psychological contract will not continue. Employees provide effort and cooperation while the organisation is expected to provide extrinsic rewards (such as remuneration) and intrinsic rewards (such as satisfaction and future opportunities). If such expectations are not met or one party feels they are giving more than they receive then imbalances arise and the relationship will decline. The second characteristic is that the psychological contract is entered into voluntarily by both parties, although the amount of freedom involved is relative to a number of factors, such as the economic climate and the number of job seekers with the requisite skills (Davidson, 2007).

All psychological contracts are implicit, at the very least in part. This is the third characteristic, and causes a lack of clarity for both parties. The details of any psychological contract can change unexpectedly at any time, which is the fourth characteristic. An employee may be asked to work longer hours than they expected, or

may receive an unexpected promotion, changing the expectations of one or both parties. The fifth feature is that the attitudes and trust levels of both parties will be affected by their previous experiences and any breaches of the psychological contract, whether this has happened in the current relationship or a previous one (Davidson, 2007). The sixth and final characteristic is that there are two dimensions to the psychological contract, group and individual. The individual dimension comprises of the contract as it stands between the organisation and individual. The group dimension refers to the normative contract, the interaction with a group or team within the organisation, and a social contract, the interaction with the individual and the world outside of the organisation (Davidson, 2007).

The psychological contract has changed over time with organisations offering far less in terms of stability. The ideas of the hierarchical organisational career, a career in a single organisation and a reliance on management of the career by the organisation are perceived as outdated by many (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Instead, it seems that employees should expect employability and development at best from the organisation in return for commitment (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). Employees now have to accept that they must be independent and even have multiple careers. In LtB organisations it is difficult to see this as a balanced situation as it is clear that employees are expected to give steadfast loyalty and commitment beyond those of an average organisation, yet the responsibilities of the organisation towards the employees seem to be no different, or even diminished when compared to twenty years ago. The organisation is not expected to provide life-long employment or any real security anymore for example. Yet employees are supposed to work longer hours and participate in extra-curricular work activities, such as sponsored runs and team-building exercises.

2.5 Retrenchment

Retrenchment almost inevitably breaks the psychological contract. For organisations, retrenchment should be a logical process, determined by the operational requirements of the organisation. In South Africa, section 189 of the Labour Relations Act (1995) governs retrenchment and states that this process must be follow certain procedures. These

procedures include consultation with the employees, or their representative union, as to what alternatives could resolve or mitigate the situation. This consultation is to take place as soon as retrenchment is contemplated, not after it is decided upon.

If the organisation decides that retrenchments will take place, it has to inform the employees of several issues:

- the reasons (e.g. economic, technical or structural) for the retrenchments,
- the alternatives considered and why those alternatives were rejected,
- the number of employees likely to be affected and their job categories,
- how the organisation proposes to select those to be retrenched,
- when the dismissals are likely to take effect,
- the severance pay proposed (a minimum of one week for every complete year of unbroken service),
- what assistance the employer will be offering;
- and what the possibilities are of future re-employment and/or any issues around re-employment (Labour Relations Act, 1995).

Because retrenchments can only be for operational requirement, the organisation benefits by being able to remain profitable or avoid bankruptcy, or to divest itself of employees whose jobs are no longer required or the content of which has changed to the point where the employees are unable to meet the required skill levels. Although employers to hold a responsibility to train their employees wherever possible to meet the new demands or new technologies. Side effects can be very detrimental to the retrenching organisation, as many studies have looked at how the employees who remain are negatively affected by the retrenchment of their colleagues. This in turn generally leads to decreased engagement with and commitment to the organisation by those who remain (Burke & Nelson, 1997; Parker, Chmiel, & Wall, 1997; Campbell, Worrall & Cooper, 2000).

For the individual the effects of retrenchment are both practical (loss of income, loss of stability and possible decrease in the standard of living), as well as psychological

(Weller, 2007; Gribble & Miller, 2009). The psychological effects include the stigma of having failed and no longer being a 'productive' member of society, loss of identity as an employed person, reduction in self-esteem, increased anxiety and anger (Gribble & Miller, 2009).

The stigma around retrenchment may be more accurately described as being about losing one's job. As previously discussed, the Protestant work ethic associates work with self-reliance and it is considered a sign of virtue (Schreuder & Theron, 2001). To be without work is then to be without virtue, and is further stigmatised by world views such as good employees are rewarded not dismissed, and that what goes around comes around.

Although this stigma is decreasing as retrenchments become more common, it does still exist and is closely related to one's identity. The stigma of being jobless is more severely felt and internalised if an individual has strongly identified themselves with either their work in general or their organisation in particular (Gribble & Miller, 2009). It is this loss of identification with the previous organisation that will be looked at in this study and has been previously explained in terms of Social Identity Theory. Accordingly, the loss of self-esteem is to be expected when one is effectively rejected by one's in-group. Self-esteem is also likely to be more affected in those people who believe that 'good' people are not retrenched than those who see retrenchment as no reflection of who they are as a person (Gribble & Miller, 2009). Understandably, the anger associated with retrenchment can then stem from feeling discarded by the organisation one has worked hard for. The effect of increased anxiety is generally as a result of feeling pressure to find a new job, and whether one will be able to do so. This is particularly the case for those whose self-esteem has been badly damaged by being retrenched (Gribble & Miller, 2009).

3. Rationale

The importance and meaning of work and the workplace has changed over time, from that of beneath free men, to a moral obligation, to a meaning in life. This discourse is now being used to control people through the investment of their identity in the organisation (or its brand). This has become an extremely useful tool as globalisation has

forced companies to look for every advantage in such a competitive environment. In a knowledge economy human resources are increasingly looked upon as the future of the organisation. Thus, a strategy, such as LtB, that increases identification with and thus commitment to the organisation is incredibly useful. This means that employees feel that they choose their disconnection from other social identities and isolation from friends, family and community. The impact of retrenchment and breaking of the psychological contract are profound in almost any situation; but the impact of having to re-identify with the outside world and separate from such an integral part of one's identity have not as yet been considered and are therefore the focus of this research.

Much research has been conducted on employment as well as organisational identity and LtB. However, very little has looked at the impact this identification and extremely high level of commitment has on employees who leave the organisation with little choice and through no fault of their own. From a psychological perspective, it seems inevitable that this would have a significant impact as employees have to discover other sources of possible identification; reconnect with family members and locate a social circle outside of their former workplace. Qualitative research in particular is of interest as this process would be complex and individual in nature due to the social context in which it would take place. An individual focus is taken here which requires interpretative qualitative analysis due to the multifaceted nature of identity.

4. Methodology:

This study is a small-scale qualitative study, as this enables the researcher to develop a dense and holistic description of the way that loss of employment from an organisation that encourages a high level of identification affects the psychological and emotional functioning of employees and their identity. This is also appropriate, as the population sampled is small, making a larger quantitative study much more difficult to complete. Another aspect is that the key to understanding the impact that leaving a living the brand organisation has on the employee, is in understanding the subjective and personal experiences and feelings of these people. These experiences and feelings need to be explored in great detail, and cannot be understood without talking at length with the

person. Interviews allow the researcher to get to know the participants and to understand what they think and feel (Terreblanche & Kelly, 2002). Semi-structured interviews in particular were used, as these place more emphasis on the interviewees' thoughts and feelings, and allow the interviewee to talk with little interruption from the interviewer, this allows for greater insight into the topic from the interviewee's point of view. Therefore, the use of interviews allows for the collection of detailed information about the experiences and feelings of a few ex-employees.

4.1 Sample

The population which was drawn from, was that of employees who belonged to organisations that advocated high levels of commitment to and identification with the organisation. The individuals were then terminated due to no fault of their own (retrenched) and have been subsequently re-employed. This was done in order to eliminate extraneous factors stemming from the effects of long-term unemployment impacting on the results. Therefore a non-probability sampling technique was used, specifically purposive sampling as specific characteristics were required. From this snowball sampling was employed in order to gather names of possible participants from those who had already agreed to be interviewed, although only knowledge workers were included as this is the group that the LtB strategy is generally aimed at. This was necessary, as the number of potential participants is quite small as the requirements are quite specific and not all organisations advocate LtB.

The organisations themselves were identified as LtB organisations through discussions with the HR Director of one of the companies, and the HR Manager of the other. Neither directly identified their organisations as LtB, but the characteristics of their organisations included the LtB characteristics, such as free lunches, on-site, gyms, beauty therapists, open-plan offices, regular team building functions, brand launch events etc. One of the organisation's employees even identify themselves with the name of the organisation, much like people identify themselves as South Africans, these are Company X-ans. The research participants were also given a description of the characteristics of a LtB organisation and all agreed that their previous organisation fit that description.

No particular age group or gender was focused on, as potential research participants are limited in number. In total, there were two female and four male participants in the study, who were drawn from two separate organisations. Of these participants only one was Asian, whilst the remainder were Caucasian. This may be a result of whom the participants knew and thus referred for the study. The absence of black participants is regrettable, but is likely to have been impacted on by the value placed on black employees, at the knowledge worker level, due to the affirmative action policies of most businesses. This meant that black participants were much more difficult to find as none of the participants could name any that had been retrenched. All of the participants had been employed at the organisation for more than five years prior to retrenchment, and had been retrenched in the last five years. The longest period of employment at a LtB organisation was 38 years. The organisations looked at fell in the retail and marketing field, and the IT industry. It is worth noting that many of the participants are now employed by new organisations under atypical employment contracts. In fact, of the six participants only three are working full-time as traditional employees, i.e. under permanent contract.

4.2 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix A) was developed based on the literature reviewed. The semi-structured format meant that interviews took between an hour and a half and three hours, depending on how much the participants wanted to talk about their experiences. The interviews were conducted in quiet areas, where there were few distractions and the interviewees felt comfortable. In most cases the participants asked to be interviewed at their new organisations where they booked board rooms. A digital audio recorder was used to record the interviews, and these were then transcribed verbatim. The transcribed interviews were coded according to the interviewee and page number quoted (e.g. B12). Anonymity was ensured by randomly assigning one of the first six letters of the alphabet to each of the participants. The names of the organisations involved (both current and previous employers) were also coded in order to further protect the participants. Each participant's organisation received a unique identifier,

regardless of whether the same organisation was mentioned by more than one participant or not.

Analysis was conducted using the thematic analysis technique, specifically inductive thematic analysis, as described by Hayes (2000). Themes refer to ‘recurrent ideas or topics which can be detected in the material which is being analysed, and which come up on more than one occasion in a particular set of data’ (Hayes, 2000: 173). Inductive thematic analysis refers to the researcher not establishing these themes beforehand, but rather as they come up in the collected data, as this allows for greater flexibility (Hayes, 2000). This process involved identifying items of interest in the transcriptions and sorting these into initial or proto-themes. The proto-themes were then broadly defined and the transcripts re-examined theme by theme for relevant material. Finally, the themes were given a final label and more clearly defined according to the information gathered from the transcripts. This resulted in the following themes, or findings presented below.

5. Presentation and Discussion of Key Findings

5.1 The Old Company

The participants remembered both negative and positive aspects about the LtB organisations that they previously worked for. However, their overall memories were positive (see 5.1.1), that of a company that valued its employees and provided excellent opportunities for growth. This positive environment provided by the organisation was then reciprocated with increased commitment from the participants (5.1.2), who allocated greater time and resources to it, placing the organisation above their own wellbeing (5.1.4) and above the needs of their families (5.1.5). This is indicative of their self-discipline/domination, as these sacrifices were not explicitly required or demanded by the organisations to which they belonged.

Beyond this, the participants also acknowledged identifying with their organisations to the point where, in the words of one participant, they were “cloned” (D6) (see 5.1.3), indicating the identification with the organisation that went further than just commitment. This (somewhat) positive version of the different organisations is in direct contrast to the

participants' current views of the same organisations, which will be discussed later. It seems clear that this indicates that loyalty still exists for that more ideal, earlier version of the organisation. It seems that this loyalty has not been reciprocated, whether because of changes in the organisation, from a more Fordist environment to a more post-Fordist one, or because the idealised company never truly existed, is perhaps unimportant for this study. What is important is that that change did occur and the people who had identified with and sacrificed for the organisation were expendable and this has affected them. It is clear that these post-Fordist, LtB organisations do not follow Maslow's Hierarchy of needs as simply as LtB claims to (Ind, 2001). Instead, the employees sacrificed the basic needs, such as health, security and family for self-esteem and, supposedly, self-actualisation.

5.1.1 The Good Old Days

All the participants remembered their previous organisations positively, although this is before the retrenchment period, and in direct contrast to their current views of their old organisations (see 5.3). This is an indication of the esteem the organisation was held in previously, which is expected when dealing with people who have identified with their organisation or any social grouping, and is thus an indication of the self-esteem and sense of belonging gained by being part of the organisation. As mentioned earlier, social identity derives from knowledge of membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Thus, it could be argued that the participants still identify with their previous organisations on some level, but only the organisation in the form that supposedly valued them – the pre-retrenchment organisation. Another aspect of this theme may be that by placing the organisation in a positive light it is perhaps also easier to explain why one sacrificed so much for it.

A4: "It was very good. A very progressive, dynamic environment... it was a good environment to work for."

B1: "It was a very exciting environment; it was never an environment you particularly wanted to leave..."

C8: “I had a good time because if you are prepared to expand your horizon, very few people are going to say no.”

D3: “...for me, Company A has created the space for so many firsts in my life, and I’m very honoured to be part of that and very privileged. Ja, so I’m serious when I say it was lovely...”

D4: “did I enjoy working there? I loved working there. And I was very fortunate...”

E9: “I felt ten foot high working there, I thought it was brilliant, I really did...”

When one looks at some of the characteristics of this idealised organisation, they are very much that of a more Fordist environment, where stability and benefits are emphasised. This changes to a more post-Fordist type of environment, as one can see in section 5.3.

A5: “...stability used to be a big thing... you get very, very fair company in terms of having set policies and practices and things. Pension fund is very well invested and looked after, medical aid is very good... very good systems and computers and state of the art stuff people work with, and they’re very lucky there... a very transparent system of managing people’s performance.”

D5: “Beyond good pay, knowing every month end your money is going to be there, knowing that they were taking care of the tax deductions, knowing that they were putting aside a pension for you, that they were contributing to great medical aids; children, helped with children’s education, housing loans...heaven, it was heaven.”

F4: “Organisation Z was a place where people cared for each other... it was an easygoing, affiliative organisation...”

5.1.2 Previous Commitment and Involvement

Almost all the participants reported that they had committed to their previous organisations through the time and effort spent at their job. The sacrifices made were regarded as greater than what would normally be required of employees in other organisations, but normal for any employee at their organisations. In other words, this was viewed as a group norm and is in keeping with a LtB approach where work-life balance is regarded as a negative for the organisation. This is because higher

identification and commitment means less hours spent outside of the organisation (Ind, 2001). This heightened level of involvement is an indication of the identification of the individual with the organisation as they placed the needs of the organisation above those of other groups to which they may have belonged, such as family, and the participants believing that they did this of their own accord. This can be seen through the increased hours spent there in particular.

A9: "...I would put in a lot of overtime. And it wasn't... paid overtime, you just did it as part of getting the work done and everyone kind of did it...it was almost kind of the norm..."

C8: "...you either left dead or you didn't (leave)"

C10: "...mega, mega, mega hours, not the 40 hours a week."

D17: "there were times that my neglect of my home duties, responsibilities, family stuff, actually got in the way."

F3: "It was weekend work; night work...eight hour day didn't work..."

From a Foucauldian perspective, this perception of greater commitment as a choice could be viewed as an example of how the employees strategised their own subordination in the interests of their group identity, and their membership to the organisation. In return, they felt a sense of involvement, as well as gaining self-esteem, wealth, and identity, but losing security, leisure time, social relations and identity outside of the workplace.

B1: "Absolute allegiance...So your whole life is now focused in that business strategy. Their whole concept of what they believe, you become part of that, because if you didn't you would never, you wouldn't stay there."

B2: "You will work around the clock and you wouldn't even think twice about it.

Time is nothing on your calendar, absolutely nothing, you don't have lunch times, you don't have breaks, you can, it's there but you don't..."

C18: "...it was self-motivated to get these things done."

D14: “I spent 60 hours a week there; I sacrificed a little bit of my family life, and my kids growing up life. I would also sing the company song, I was very proud to be able to relate the stories of Company A in new company...”

5.1.3 Cloning

Some of the participants were quite aware of how their individuality was impacted on by working in their organisation. This can be explained in terms of self-categorisation, whereby individuals accentuate their perceived similarity to the rest of the group, thus the participants placed themselves into the category of ‘Brand X’ people. In terms of SIT, this shows how the participants categorized themselves on a group level without evaluating this category as necessarily positive or negative (although this evaluation is discussed further on). It is this depersonalisation that helps to explain why these individuals were willing to sacrifice so much of their personal lives and individuality for the brand. These quotes also highlight how the individuals were more than just committed to their organisations, but had identified with them; in fact, these sacrifices are an indication of over-identification with the organisation (Cheney, 1983). It is worth noting that the individuals identify with the brand or with the organisation, not as part of a specific profession or department even, which shows just how strong the organisations identities were and how effective the LtB strategy was on these individuals.

C17: “I think my values and the business values were aligned for a large degree of the time.”

D6: “...they take your blood, they take your marrow, and then they take your soul.”

E6: “It was the feeling that Company C owned you...”

It seems that the prototypical characteristics of ‘Brand X’ people include having the same values as the brand, defending it from criticism and identifying with it. This identification meant that the participant’s work was no longer a means to support their lifestyles, but rather the ability to do more. The employees did this far more effectively than management directly could, and because of this, they generally remained happy in their working conditions despite being aware that they are making sacrifices. This is a prime

example of strategising one's own subordination. The participants both recognise the harmfulness of their situation, as they feel consumed by their organisations, and yet believe that this was their own choice. This seems to be because it was the organisations' expectations, culture and manipulation that were the motivating factors, as opposed to explicit rules or policies. Thus one could argue that the organisations looked at here were successful in conditioning employees to discipline themselves. The employees' awareness that they lose their identities is also striking, and yet it continued. This indicates just how unbalanced the psychological contract was, and is in such organisations.

B1: "...you become the brand. Absolute allegiance, in that if a person came in and tried to distract your attention from the Organisation X brand, you would defend it. So your whole life is now focused in that business strategy. Their whole concept of what they believe, you become part of that, because if you didn't you would never, you wouldn't stay there."

B1/2: "...it was never an environment you particularly wanted to leave... Ruthless in terms of absolute indoctrination in their brand, to compete viciously against another brand. Because something had to drive you as an individual to buy into and protect that brand... their expectations are so demanding that eventually you're almost like; you're no more who you were... you become manipulated ... They want to get you to a point where... you almost lose your identity."

D7: "Now Company A expects you to put job in the centre and everything revolves around that. What happens though is that becomes your identity. You say, 'I am the training manager of Company A; I'm the group training manager, that's who I am'. And then they say, but hang on, you don't have a job anymore – who am I, I'm nobody, I've got nothing."

The high expectations of the organisations as well as those of the individuals can be seen in the above quotes. It is by investing their identities (as is expected of them by their organisations); the individuals lose their identities, but gain intrinsic rewards such as self-esteem as the organisation they identify with and have invested in succeeds. Thus, the

more that is sacrificed for the organisation, the more imperative it is for the organisation to succeed, and the more is sacrificed for it. The connection to Foucault and post-Fordist means of control can be seen, in that the benefits obtained are not primarily extrinsic and neither is the motivation to be so disciplined.

Another aspect that can be seen in this theme is the self-labelling that is occurring, and that of how the individual and others in the organisation were stereotyped. This further encourages individuals to conform to the norms of the group, as employees not only survey themselves, but also each other.

A7: “You can almost tell an Organisation N person in a social circle.”

D6: “You were cloned, you sang the Company A song every morning, you raised the Company A flag.”

5.1.4 Health Problems

Half of the respondents reported that their health suffered as a result of stress while working at their previous organisations. It is noticeable that these issues were resolved after being retrenched and have not resurfaced at their new organisations. This possibly indicates the lower levels of commitment the participants are now willing to give to their current organisation, or possibly simply that their current organisations have fewer expectations or requirements from their employees. This is predicted by theories of the psychological contract, which indicate that breaking of the psychological contract impact on future psychological contracts with other organisations.

B23: “I felt stress; it’s definitely affected me physically, psychologically, definitely. I couldn’t handle”

D20: “from the point of view of health I was heading down the bucket. I smoked, I ate, didn’t drink much, I’ve never been a drinker ...but, I’ve lived a bad life from a health point of view, not enough exercise. And that heart attack, again, was a whole wake up call, I’m still unhealthy, but I don’t ail, I don’t ail at all.”

E7: “And my health started to suffer at Company C, and I developed this horrific cough, and I ended up having two sinus operations, which I think were a complete waste of time, that were to cure this horrendous cough, but the more I look back the more I think it was like a nervous reaction. And I would spend lots of nights sleeping on my own in the living room so I didn’t keep my wife awake because I’d wake up and I couldn’t stop coughing... I didn’t realise probably what the problem was. I just felt this pressure”

E12: “I probably became a bit cynical. Ja, ja, as I said it affected my health...”

The fact that the respondents were willing to sacrifice their own physical wellbeing in the interests of their previous organisation is also noteworthy. This is another example of how effectively employees monitor and control themselves in the interests of the organisation, and how they remain happy and committed, despite the negative consequences. Although these quotes raise the question of just how happy they were in a situation that made them physically ill. It is also an indication that LtB can be physically detrimental to the employees, which goes some way to answering Deetz’s question of ‘is this the best or worst workplace?’ (1998: 169). It seems that the imbalance of the psychological contract was so extreme that the participants’ health was considered expendable in these post-Fordist organisations. This is fairly ironic when one considers the greater health and safety regulations that are required by many countries in present day society, compared to the heyday of Fordism. This sacrifice of one’s health shows the domination that is taking place, as well as how LtB does not work on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as it is somewhat simplistically proposed to do, as the basic needs of these employees were not being met.

5.1.5 Impact on the Family

Although most of the respondents denied that working at their previous organisation had negatively impacted their family lives, they also made comments indicating that their family lives have improved since leaving those organisations. This is interesting as it may be indicative of an unwillingness to acknowledge the possibility that they sacrificed their families for an organisation that they felt betrayed them in the end. It is also an indication of how the individuals’ definitions of themselves have changed, moving from the

emphasis on the organisation and the meaning attached to that, and on to greater identification with their families. Of course this does not apply to all the participants, D in particular was quite aware of the sacrifices he had made for his previous organisation.

A20: “I think the kids have benefited a lot. You know, having mom pick them up from school everyday, whereas they’ve always been in aftercare a lot...they’ve thoroughly enjoyed the fact that I’m there to see them everyday and bring them home from school... they were longing for me to be retrenched.”

C20: “We’ve had our granddaughter stay with us a couple of times; we’ve been able to spend time with her... I think generally the relationship with my wife has improved...”

D14: “I sacrificed a little bit of my family life, and my kids growing up life.”

D19: “Fantastic. Two and a half years living cheek by jowl with your wife, doing everything together because there’s nothing else to do.”

E14: “I have a very understanding wife and no children, so that helped a lot, and she was very, very supportive. But ja, you tend to get so focused on your problems that it’s difficult to really take much interest in what’s going on outside, I think I definitely found that.”

5.1.6 Get the Rebels Out

Many of the interview subjects felt that conformity was a requirement at their previous organisation. Employees who did not conform and “live the brand” were either retrenched or left of their own accord as they found the work environment intolerable. Interestingly this even extended to those employees whose work performance was up to the organisation’s standards, but did not believe in the rhetoric of the organisation. These individuals were thus placed in an ‘out’-group, not really part of the organisation, despite being employees of it. This could be regarded as an indication of the value placed on the brand above all else, rebels were brand saboteurs who chose not to identify with the brand and promote it. Because this goes against the ethos of the organisation the loss of a productive worker was worthwhile in the interests of maintaining belief in the brand by the majority. This also served to avoid any sort of opposition to the Living the Brand

strategy, as it is advocacy of the brand by employees that encourages other employees to identify with it and live the brand.

Some of the interviewees saw themselves as part of this rebellious category, thereby understanding their retrenchment in terms of a new social grouping and potentially providing a new identity, the rebel. It should be noted that these same participants also made comments about how they identified with the organisation prior to the retrenchment (see theme 5.1.3 Cloning).

B1: “You’ve gotta think how they think, and if you don’t think (Organisation X), you would end up out of the business for sure.”

B7: “...I was a rebel, it got me into trouble”

B14: “I was sometimes pulled back into line, very quickly. They will not tolerate an individual to create a perception that contradicts anything that (Organisation X) believes in, in terms of their vision, their mission, their code.”

B16: “You can’t be a rebel, they’ll soon kick you straight out.”

C6: “I never kept quiet...I don’t know how many occasions I actually said in open forum that these things are wrong...”

C8/9: “If you were a maverick...it was not smiled upon too much”

D8: “I have seen guys come into the business; bright, bright fellows, who have been unable to accept that process, I call it the cloning process, and you’ve either left the business of your own accord or they’ve hoofed you out, saying “Hang on, you’re too much of a pain. I can’t manage you, out you go.”

E13: “To me its just gratuitous hogwash, but this was the big thing.”

5.2 What Just Happened Here: The Psychological Effects of Retrenchment from a Living the Brand Organisation

The participants all reported doing well post-retrenchment, although this may be a result of the study only looking at those who were re-employed elsewhere, thus enhancing the likelihood of having readjusted to the world without their former organisations.

Nonetheless, certain commonalities can be observed regarding the psychological effects

of being retrenched from a LtB organisation and having to readjust to their former social networks, or indeed discover new ones. One result is the surprise and sense of betrayal that was almost immediately felt by most of the interviewees. They could not believe that the organisation they had sacrificed so much for was discarding them. This was soon followed by anger towards the organisation and a perception of it as a negative environment. Another result is that their commitment to the current organisations that they work for has been affected. This could be regarded as a significant reaction, as it has implications for both LtB and non-LtB organisations when hiring new employees. It seems that the employees' psychological contracts have changed. These have become more balanced than previously as they expect less stability and loyalty from their current organisations, and accordingly give less commitment and emotional stability.

It should be noted that the psychological effects of retrenchment could be argued to encompass all that is being considered in this treatise (namely, the pre- and post-retrenchment perceptions of the organisation as well – 5.1 and 5.3). However, they have been separated in the interests of simplicity.

5.2.1 This Can't Happen to Me

Common across most of the interviewees was a feeling that they were safe in the organisation, even though they may have known retrenchments were happening. There appears to have been a perception that this would happen to other, less committed employees, not them (despite the comments by some of being rebels). This indicates the level of trust that existed prior to retrenchment, and led to a feeling of betrayal in many of the participants, as the psychological contract, with its implications of reciprocity, was broken.

A1: "I really didn't think that I actually would be that affected myself."

B11: "I don't think my relationship with Organisation X could ever, ever come back to the level it ever was, because the things that happened were unnecessary. It (the employment period) could have been extended through one quarter of one year, it

wouldn't have meant anything to them, they wouldn't have lost anything, they would have gained it all.”

B11: “I felt it was an unnecessary severement, that they could have extended me to at least the end of the first quarter of 2007, at least!”

C1: “...there was a meeting of the full company management...and um, they were talking about results and getting the company restructured. It's not the first time this has been done...but, um, I'm not a fearful person because I didn't think it really concerned me.”

F2: “It was a shock, an absolute shock, you feel numb, first numb and then cold.”

F2: “I felt highly let down”

5.2.2 Commitment Affected

The participants all indicated that their commitment had been affected once they were informed they were going to be retrenched. In some cases, this has extended to their current work situations where they still do not show the high levels of organisational commitment that they did previously. Thus, the retrenchment appears to have strongly impacted on not just their identification with their previous company, but also whether they identify with any other company in the future. This is not surprising when one considers that one of the features of psychological contracts is that attitudes and trust levels are affected by their previous experiences and any breaches of the psychological contract, whether this has happened in the current relationship or a previous one. Thus, the betrayal by one organisation can be expected to create distrust with future organisations.

A2: “And staying motivated was a bit hard.”

A17: “I don't think you should be working excessive overtime hours...”

B9: “...get out of there, as soon as possible... I didn't need that stress in my life.”

C2: “...the trust level between myself and the company was gone.”

C2: “...before I had even left Organisation Y I had my company set up and was ready to trade.”

E14: “I wasn’t the happiest person going there every day. Because it was just pressure, pressure, pressure every day.”

F3: “I’ll do what’s necessary to do good work, but I’m not going to let it affect my work-life balance.”

F3: “I’m not blindly loyal now.”

5.2.3 Life is Better Now

Almost all the participants feel their lives have improved since being retrenched, which may be indicative of the efficacy of their coping skills. By focussing on the negative aspects of the organisation (see 5.3.3), and reframing it as a new organisation that rejected them (see 5.3.2), the participants are able to consider themselves as having benefited from the retrenchment as their loyalties do not lie with the organisation any longer. An alternative view is that there have been real benefits received for not working at their old companies in terms of decreased stress due to not identifying with their current organisations to the same degree, and thus not working the same sort of hours. Interestingly, the only participant who did not express this is the most recently retrenched one, which may indicate that she has not yet dealt with the retrenchment as successfully, or simply that her life is more stressful prior to her retrenchment than it was before because of extraneous factors.

B16: “I feel free, I’m thankful that I passed through that road.”

B24: “I’m more relaxed, I don’t have stress, I can think easier, I can breathe easier.”

C20: “I’ve been able to do some of the things I always wanted to do... all round, great improvement.”

D18: “How’s it since I’ve been retrenched?... Just magic, absolute magic.”

E12: “So people hate to be retrenched, but I think at the end of the day it worked out really well for both sides of the parties. Although it didn’t seem like that at the time, but looking back I think it was very fortunate.”

E17: “I think I’m probably a nicer person. I got very grumpy when I was at Company C... I just got so focused internally about myself and my problems and how unhappy I was.”

F6: “I’m in a very good place at the moment actually, because I got retrenched, I got the package, and I’m working now... it’s doing well for me. While that short-term ego took a bit of a battering over a two-year period, when I look back my quality of life improved.”

5.2.4 Fear

Fear and self-doubt seemed to be an issue for many of the participants, which is commonly experienced by those who have been retrenched (Gribble & Miller, 2009). For some it was fear of the outside world and working in other out-group organisations, for others it was fear that existed in their previous companies; the fear of underperforming or failing, or the fear that their retrenchment meant that they were failures. The common thread is that these different fears ceased to exist post-retrenchment.

B29: “I don’t have those fears, I don’t have those; I can go to bed at any time, I know I don’t have to get up at 5 o’clock in the morning.”

E17: “If I’d gone from Company C into retirement I think there would have always been that baggage that would stay with me, but I think I’ve been able to get rid of it now.”

The fear of work outside the organisation is a form of out-grouping whereby the differences between groups are emphasised through the accentuation of the positive attributes of the in-group (the LtB organisation) and the negative attributions of the out-group (other organisations). Thus when the individuals were forced to leave their previous organisations they were also forced to confront these stereotypes, particularly as they are now part of these former out-groups. Thus, now the positive aspects of organisations other than their previous LtB organisations are being accentuated, whilst the negative aspects of their former organisations are also accentuated.

F6: “those things about fearing the outside, fearing the other side is now clearing. Ja, I don’t have that fear, that’s a big change, and I don’t think I take things for granted.”

D8: “And then you go out and you go, look at that little company over there! Look at all they’ve got, they’re actually much better than us at the following, and then you say hang on, I could actually work in that place...and so you need to keep touch with the outside world...”

B2: “... it’s almost like they con you into believing that this is the life, this is the career and you’re not going to find it anywhere else. This is the company you have to work for...”

5.3 Then and Now: Perceptions of the Organisation Post Retrenchment

In contrast to the previous views of their organisations, the participants describe the organisation as it is now in very negative terms. Two aspects of this can be seen, firstly the accentuation of the negative aspects of the organisation (5.3.5) as well as a belief that the organisation has changed into a more corporate, less people oriented environment (5.3.1 and 5.3.2). This is in contrast to the earlier views expressed in 5.1 and it culminates in the belief that they would not work in their previous organisations again, should the opportunity arise. This can be potentially damaging for the organisation, as knowledge workers are exactly the group that LtB attempts to retain, partly because of their comparative scarcity as a group.

It is possible that the organisations looked at have transitioned into more post-Fordist, insecure places. Another alternative however, is that because psychological contracts are unspoken, the organisations never considered themselves responsible to the employees to the extent the employees expected. This responsibility was possibly the case at the beginning of the employment relationship, as most of the participants had been employed for a long period of time. However, psychological contracts are not static, and thus it seems that as the expectations for the employees increased, the organisations’ reciprocal responsibilities seemed to decrease.

5.3.1 Dichotomy: Old vs. New

It appears that all the research participants have reassessed the organisation since their departure. The old organisation that seemingly deserved their loyalty no longer exists and

a new more self-interested version remains, and this is the 'other' organisation that broke the psychological contract. In terms of SIT, this could be regarded as a means of integrating the rejection of the organisation (in-group) in a way that lessens the impact of this on the individuals' self-esteem. In effect, turning the in-group into an out-group that one would not want to belong to in any case. SIT can also explain this change in perception through the linking of one's own fate to that of the organisation's. Thus, it is not just that the individual was rejected by the organisation they identified with, but that that organisation was also rejected as inefficient and thus transformed. However, it may also be quite an accurate perception, given that most of the participants had worked for their organisations for many years before they were retrenched and organisations have changed greatly with globalisation.

A18: "I think the company has changed a lot... I can't really say it's just my perception. It's changed a huge amount."

B19: "...its not the Organisation X I know, I don't like it."

B 24: "It's not the same company, I'm not impressed."

C13/14: "Like minded people, got on, did the job, set your objectives with your boss. The change came in when they introduced variable pay...now people are really focused on that at everybody's expense. Major change, major, major, major change."

D8/9: "...the old days at Company A handshakes were important, that sealed deals, not contracts and lawyers and all that sort of stuff, it was a mans word or a woman's word. So there was a whole different value system, and loyalty was part of that value system."

D14: "...but I think extrinsic motivation is now...show me the money and I'll show you my lack of loyalty."

D18: "...there's no heart here, I don't know the people, I don't think I could ever work there and I don't think I ever could again. Not in its current state..."

E2: "...the Company C of the 1970s was a far cry from the Company C of the 2000s... it was a friendly company and I think Company C people were well off and treated well"

F4: “Organisation Z was a place where people cared for each other. It had some good and bad things; it was an easygoing, affiliative organisation, the negative of that was it could have done better in terms of a performance culture. It’s switched now, now it’s highly performance culture.”

5.3.2 Just Another Corporate

Many of the participants regarded the organisation as specifically turning into a ‘corporate’, where people were no longer as important. This decreases this distinctiveness of the organisation, and it is distinctiveness that organisations use to encourage individuals to identify with them. By changing their perceptions of the organisation into that of just another corporate, the retrenchees are diminishing the uniqueness of the organisation and making it easier to disentangle one’s own identity from that of the group. Again, this may reflect an actual change in the organisation due to the effects of globalisation and a resulting change in business practices in order to increase competitiveness, in other words, the move to a post-Fordist mode of work with less stability and a more unbalanced psychological contract.

As mentioned earlier, SIT also argues that an individual will perceive the group’s fate that they identify with as their own fate. Thus, it could be argued that the disappearance of ‘their’ organisation has resulted in their own disappearance in the form of their retrenchment. From whatever perspective one looks at it, this also seems to be an attempt to make the individuals’ loss more acceptable and easier to bear.

A4: “The environment is very different. Its not as personable anymore I don’t think, I really think it feels like a global corporate now.”

A11: “At the end of the day it is a corporate and it’s looking at results and they’re cutting numbers and if you’re one of those to go then you’re just going to get cut.”

A23: “I don’t want to be in a big corporate that much anyway, it’s not so important to me, you know your career priorities change. So maybe for me it’s not all bad.”

B11: “you know they’re not doing anything any different than most corporates and most companies (whispered) they feed people shit, that’s what it is, they feed people shit.”

B12: “I think it’s a destructive path, they’re really self-centred, I don’t think that’s just Organisation X, I think it’s all corporates. They’re very self-centred; it’s all about money...”

F2: “Well for me I think that’s corporate life. Organisation Z also made it very, very clear that this is not a secure place anymore.”

5.3.3 Disillusionment

The participants expressed a great deal of disillusionment with their former organisations. The general sentiment seems to be that the organisation doesn’t care about its people. This is not surprising given the sense of betrayal that came with the organisation breaking the psychological contract, and is another indication of how the perception of the organisation changes radically and negatively post-retrenchment. Thus accentuating the negative characteristics of what is now an out-group. This disillusionment can also be seen as a result of the move to a post-Fordist ideology, where the general environment is one of “while you’re adding value we’ll employ you, when you don’t add value you’re out.” (C11).

A15: “I don’t think that they’d even once had a thought about me at all.”

B2: “...its quite a tragedy, you never have time to think about it... you were just called in, I had a month to make quite a few choices after 35 years.”

B7: “You know, everybody tries to con everybody in one way or the other.”

B11: “I felt it was an unnecessary severement, that they could have extended me to at least the end of the first quarter 2007, at LEAST. That changed, radically, my perception about Organisation X and the people who did it.”

D6: “...advantage for the shareholder, disadvantage for the human beings inside the business...”

D7: “Company A is watching this happen and they couldn’t give a damn...”

E3: “I look at it like a steamroller, you can stand up with your hand in front of it and it won’t even blink, it will squash you quite flat and they don’t care.”

E9: “If you don’t want to be the hamster then we’ll get someone else, no problem.”

F5: “...everybody is trying to show everybody how good they are. So I think there’s some bullshit that’s crept in in the business, and we see that...”

F8: “...I believe I have to perform to survive.”

5.3.4 Expectation of Commitment after the Retrenchment Announcement

The company seemed to maintain its expectation of commitment from the retrenched employees throughout the retrenchment period. This was problematic for the employees, as the psychological contract had become increasingly unbalanced in favour of the organisation. Thus from their perspective their previous commitment and the associated sacrifices were no longer warranted. It is this imbalance of the psychological contract that is shown here, indicating the unequal power relations involved in the work relationships, as well as how employees are dominated. This contradicts the previous views of commitment by choice.

The organisations’ expectation of commitment without reciprocal loyalty is not surprising in post-Fordist organisations where the emphasis is on flexibility and fluidity. It is rather the realisation by the employees that this inequity exists that is of interest, and is perhaps one of the first signs that the individuals’ identities were becoming disentangled from their organisations.

A2: “you’ll start getting involved in a new project or a new area, and you want to get your teeth stuck in, but you know you won’t be there to see the end...and I found that a bit difficult.”

B4: “I mean people were even like threatened, if you peep during this retrenchment period, if you should decide and you get another job and you left, you wouldn’t get your retrenchment... I don’t believe it was right.”

C4: “One of the people who was called in was told that the business was sure he would understand that it’s in their best interest to get rid of him.”

E14: “I wasn’t the happiest person going there every day. Because it was just pressure, pressure, pressure every day.”

F8: “The worst thing is it was announced to me in December and I had to stay here another three months, like a zombie.”

5.3.5 Arrogance of the Organisation

The ‘new’ organisation is viewed as arrogant, placing the employees’ needs as unimportant. This is in direct contrast to the giving, positive place that is described before the retrenchment period (see 5.1.1) and can be regarded as being one of the effects of the psychological contract being broken. The organisations can afford to be arrogant because they have far greater power in a post-Fordist environment. The psychological contract between employees and the organisation is always unspecified, thus this arrogance may even be considered as normal in such organisations, regardless of the views or beliefs of the employees. The positive aspects of the organisation’s identity are now being downplayed, and the negatives accentuated, as is the norm with out-groups. Thus just as the participants needed to view the organisation positively in the past in order to view themselves as employees positively, so the negative attributes are now highlighted in order to mitigate any sense of loss or actual loss of self-esteem that may arise out of being retrenched from the organisation.

A7: “...they’re very sure of themselves, they’re quite arrogant.”

B4: “people were even like threatened, if you peep during this retrenchment period, if you should decide and you get another job and you left, you wouldn’t get your retrenchment.”

C5: “...it’s arrogant”

D7: “Now Company A expects you to put job in the centre (of your life) and everything revolves around that.”

E4: “they expect you to be available 24 hours a day and more or less they own you, and I think that’s quite sad.”

5.3.6 *Never Again*

It is interesting to note that only one participant would be willing to be an employee of their old company again. Some of the participants showed an extreme distaste for their previous employers, which is not surprising given the betrayal they felt when retrenched, as well as the reported improvement in their lives post-retrenchment. This rejection of the organisations can also be explained in terms of the organisation having become the new out-group, with which they no longer identify, thus enabling the participants to see its faults far more clearly, and less of its strengths or positive aspects, which is in line with the social comparison aspect of SIT.

A19: “I’m glad I’m not part of that... I don’t have a strong urge to go back there.”

B11: “I will be honest; I will never go back to them! Never!”

C2: “Organisation Y asked me to stay on as a contractor to ...work for periods of three months at a time at their discretion...I wasn’t prepared to do that so I said to them if they needed anything it would be done at my consultancy rates and if they didn’t like that then well, tough.”

D18: “I came back in 2003 and I looked at this thing and I said, nice building, there’s no heart here, I don’t know the people, I don’t think I could ever work here and I don’t think I ever could again.”

E16: “I would rather eat bread and live in a tent than work at Company C again.”

6. Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of this study is the issue of recency. The sample chosen for this study were all individuals who had been re-employed, in order to avoid contaminating the data with extraneous factors resulting from long-term unemployment. However, this meant that the majority of the participants had had several years to come to terms with their retrenchment, which may have altered their perceptions and mitigated some of the negative effects of the retrenchment. This also makes it difficult to distinguish definitively whether their new views of their former organisations are a result of real post-Fordist changes in organisation or psychological coping strategies or both. Another limitation is that the population from which the sample was drawn is very small and

many people are unwilling to look back at an experience that caused them pain, thus shrinking the potential sample further. This meant that the sample size was small and no black Africans and only one Asian participant were part of the sample used, possibly skewing the results.

7. Implications for Future Research

This study purposefully avoided using individuals who had not yet been re-employed after their retrenchment in order to prevent contamination of the data with the psychological problems that commonly occur with unemployment. This meant that most of the individuals interviewed had been retrenched some years ago, and thus had plenty of time to readjust their social identities. A future study looking specifically at more recently retrenched individuals may be useful as it may be able to more effectively tap into the psychological effects of the retrenchment from a Living the Brand organisation. Of course, the researcher/s would have to be cognisant of the difficulties posed by the possibly more vulnerable state of the participants.

Another possibility would be to conduct a similar study using focus groups instead of individual interviews, as it is when individuals are in-group settings that they normally define themselves in terms of their social identity as opposed to their personal identity (Hepburn, 2003). Thus, it would be interesting to see whether the results obtained significantly differ from or correlate to those of the individual interviews.

Research that compares the psychological effects of retrenchment on individuals from non-LtB organisations with those from LtB organisations may be useful in order to gain greater insight into the immediate effects of retrenchment from such organisations.

8. Conclusion

As the workplace has become more fluid and all encompassing, so individual's family lives and work-life balance has become more and more affected. This is perhaps never more the case than with LtB organisations where the individual's very identity becomes enmeshed in the organisation, and the organisation then receives greater time and energy

than family, leisure and all other outside groups. Certainly the participants in this study had mostly positive memories of their previous organisations, where they felt valued. In turn they committed to and identified with the organisation to the point of losing their individual identities and voluntarily placing the organisation above their families and own well-being.

The effect of being retrenched from such an organisation leads to feelings of betrayal, anger towards the retrenching organisation and a re-evaluation of it as a negative environment. It is also worth noting that the retrenchment experience led to a re-evaluation of the psychological contract and decreased commitment to the future organisations that employed the retrenched.

Overall, the participants in this study seem to have succeeded in adjusting to life post-LtB and are happier with their family life in particular. Although it is tempting to conclude that LtB is thus a successful strategy with few long-term negative effects for those who are retrenched, this may be short sighted. Retrenchment from an LtB organisation also severely impacts the positive regard in which the organisation is held, which can also impact on the reputation of the organisation as an employer of knowledge workers, the very group which LtB attempts to recruit and retain.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

1. How long were you with ‘the organisation’?
2. When were you retrenched?
3. What made you decide to join that particular company?
4. What was the selection process like?
5. Can you tell me what it was like working for ‘the organisation’?
6. What were the advantages or perks of working for the organisation?
7. What were the negative aspects of the organisation?
8. Do you feel the organisation had a strong culture?
9. What was this and how was it conveyed?
10. Do you feel the organisation tried to pressurize you to form an emotional connection to the brand? If so, how?
11. What sort of hours did you put in at the organisation weekly?
12. Do you feel that working for the organisation meant a great deal as to how you saw yourself and how others saw you?
13. (Explain the characteristics of Living the Brand in brief) – Do you feel this describes the organisation you were working for?
14. Any other observations/differences/examples?
15. What were your perceptions of the organisation when working there?
16. What similarities, if any, can you identify that were a necessary part of working for the organisation?
17. Do you think the organisation looked for specific characteristics in people?
18. If so, what were these?
19. Do you think you changed as a result of working for the organisation?

20. What characteristics or values do you think the organisation presented itself as having?
21. Do you think it lived up to these values?
22. What do you feel the organisation expected from you as an employee?
23. Do you feel the organisation encouraged a high level of commitment from its employees?
24. How did you show your commitment to the organisation?
25. How did your relationships and life outside of the organisation change while you were a member?
26. Do you feel that your commitment to the organisation had an impact on these?
27. What were your expectations of the organisation?
28. Do you feel that the organisation lived up to these?
29. What are your perceptions of the organisation, having been retrenched?
30. Would you work for the organisation again?
31. How has your life changed since being retrenched from the organisation?
32. How have your relationships changed since being retrenched?
33. Do you think being retrenched from the organisation has changed the way you see yourself?
34. What aspects of your life are important to you now?
35. What do you do with your time since being retrenched?