The psychology of organisational group mergers: Towards organic pluralism

Siobhan Marina Hennessy-Davis

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DECLARATION

The research reported in this thesis is my own, except where indicated and has not been submitted for higher degree at any other institution

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Siobhan Marina Hennessy-Davis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines intergroup factors that may prevent a “successful” organisational merger. Towards this end, this thesis focuses on subgroup identities within an organisational merger, and the pursuit of a post-merger context where the existence of pre-merger subgroup identities are accepted and valued, and intergroup conflict is non-existent (i.e., a state of organic pluralism). Models associated with the management of pre- and post-merger identities argue for the benefits of both elimination and retention of pre-merger identities. However, this thesis suggests the answer to the issue of successfully managing subgroup identities within an organisational merger lies in process-based interventions.

This thesis contains two theoretical chapters which address: an overview of the organisational and social-psychological literature relevant to the processes of merging groups (Chapter Two), and an introduction to justice literature including methods of increasing perceptions of procedural fairness (Chapter Three). These chapters introduce the benefits of constructing an intervention process within an organisational merger that would alleviate ingroup bias, intergroup conflict and promote perceptions of inclusiveness. The theoretical assumptions of the thesis are then outlined (Chapter Four) and the purpose and original contribution of the thesis is established.

Five studies are reported in this thesis. Studies 1 and 2 (Chapter Five) report two field studies undertaken three months prior to a merger (Study 1) and twelve months after a merger had been completed (Study 2). The results from these studies suggest that, although pre-merger subgroups appear ready to move towards an organically pluralistic group, attitudes conducive to intergroup conflict remain present, particularly for low status subgroup members. In addition, the results indicate the subgroup’s social
identity may remain some time after the group itself was eradicated, and this may influence group members’ (particularly from the low status group) perceptions of intergroup conflict and attitudes that may hinder organic pluralism.

The results of the field studies are summarised (Chapter Six), and it is posited that subgroup members were facilitating a continuity of subgroup membership in the post-merger context through the strategy of ingroup projection, potentially increasing the likelihood of intergroup conflict. The next three studies of the empirical program of the thesis (Studies 3, 4 and 5) are designed to investigate the impact of voice and pre-merger subgroup status within a fictional organisational merger setting and to test the central hypotheses. Status is manipulated in Studies 3 (Chapter Seven), 4 (Chapter Eight) and 5 (Chapter Nine) and voice opportunity is manipulated in Studies 3 and 4. The impact of these variables on the measures of perceived fairness, pre-merger subgroup prototypicality and attitudes conducive to organic pluralism are examined. As a program of research, the methods are refined across the three studies leading to a comprehensive assessment of the factors.

Taken together, these studies find that, consistent with predictions, the provision of instrumental voice opportunity within an organisational merger can lead to increased perceptions of fairness and attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. In addition, within an organisational merger scenario, members from the high status subgroup, regardless of voice opportunity, tend to perceive their subgroup as more prototypical of the post-merger group. The implications of these findings and future directions for research are outlined in the final chapter (Chapter Ten).
CHAPTER ONE
Overview and Definition of the thesis

1.1 The issue examined in the thesis

There are a variety of reasons behind the decision to merge two or more organisational groups. The main impetus for why organisational mergers are deemed necessary may be to improve the performance of the organisations targeted as part of the merger, or to reduce duplication of effort across similar arenas. A merger provides business benefits in terms of integrating decision making, sharing resources, lowering costs, expanding market share and enhancing the competitive position of the merged organisation (Amiot, Terry & Callan, 2007; Amiot, Terry, Jimmieson & Callan, 2006; Bartels, Douwes, de Jong & Pruyn, 2006; Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006). However, behind the corporate motivations for organisational mergers and the designs of the new, improved post-merger superordinate group, are considerations for the effects of the process on employees. The employees of these organisations, as individuals, often have very limited involvement in the merger, and restricted opportunities to provide input into the decision to merge; yet it is mostly these individuals who are ultimately affected by the success, or failure, of an organisational merger.

The negative impacts of an organisational merger may reach beyond the auspices of a workplace, and may subsequently impact on employees’ social and psychological functioning (Fried, Tiegs, Naughton & Ashforth, 1996; Idel, Melamed, Merlob, Yahav, Hendel & Kaplan, 2003; Jetten, O’Brien & Trindall, 2002; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991; Väänänen, Ahola, Koskinen, Pahkin & Kouvonen, 2011). Therefore, the issue of examining ways to improve organisational mergers and to reduce the likelihood of these mergers impacting on employees in a negative way, is worthy of further
attention. As a result, this thesis aims to further the knowledge of the issues behind organisational mergers and, through this understanding, seek to add to the body of knowledge that explores the factors that contribute to, and can affect, the impact of organisational mergers.

### 1.2 The objective of the thesis

The general objective of this thesis is to advance the understanding of social psychological factors relating to organisational mergers, specifically in regards to assisting members of pre-merger subgroups to accept attitudes within the post-merger context that accept the inclusion and input of all pre-merger subgroups in the post-merger superordinate group. Specifically, the purpose and original contribution of the thesis is to answer the question: Is there a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of different status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group)?

Firstly, this thesis provides a review of the social-psychological literature regarding the intergroup context, management of social identities and procedural justice relevant to the study of organisational mergers. Within the body of the thesis, theoretical perspectives and their relevance are discussed in detail in relation to the broader goal of examining the impact of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on the creation of an accepting, positive post-merger context.

This thesis empirically investigates several psychological constructs shown to be key issues in assisting merger interventions to be successful. The first construct
investigated within this thesis is the impact of the status of the pre-merger subgroup with an organisational merger, and the way this status may impact on perceptions held by group members. The second relevant construct is the effects of giving, or denying, subgroup members opportunity to provide input into the organisational merger. This is referred to in this thesis as voice opportunity. The impact of these two constructs on the three relevant social psychological factors of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup prototypicality is investigated. Within this thesis, organic pluralism is defined as a post-merger context where the existence of all pre-merger subgroups within the post-merger superordinate body is accepted and valued, and intergroup conflict is non-existent. Perceived fairness, within this thesis, relates to the perception by individuals involved with a particular process, that the process is procedurally fair. And finally, subgroup prototypicality refers to the tendency of members within a pre-merger subgroup to “project” attributes prototypical of their subgroup ingroup onto the post-merger superordinate group.

1.3 The scope of the thesis

In line with the objectives outlined above, the scope of this thesis is restricted to an exploration of topics within psychology relevant to the discussion of organisational mergers. Social psychology, organisational psychology and the psychological study of justice will be examined in order to specifically address the research question underlying this thesis. Although within the thesis, psychological literature models and theories will be reviewed, the aim of this thesis is not to exhaustively review all historical literature. For example, although the social psychological theories of Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory are introduced in Chapter Two, the
historical basis of these theories is not discussed in detail. These theories have been comprehensively outlined in an extensive amount of research literature, and therefore, in this thesis, the nature of the theory, as opposed to the development of the theory, is discussed. Within this thesis, for example, it is recognised that the field studies of Muzafer Sherif and colleagues (Sherif, 1967; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1961) into intergroup conflict between boys at summer camp paved the way for subsequent research into intergroup discrimination identified in the minimal group studies of Tajfel and colleagues (see Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel, Billig, Bumdy & Flament, 1971; Turner, 1975; 1978). However, the research of Sherif is not detailed within the literature review chapters (Chapters Two and Three) of this thesis although relevant social-psychological theories are examined.

In addition, while mergers between subgroups of equal status do occur in the organisational realm, this thesis will focus on mergers between subgroups of differing status levels. This thesis will, therefore, explore the topics and literature deemed directly relevant to the identified research question.

1.4 The overview of the thesis

As stated above, this thesis argues there are a number of facets important in understanding the social-psychological processes behind subgroup reactions to an organisational merger. The thesis includes five empirical studies which were conducted to investigate the objective of the thesis as defined earlier in this chapter. The first two studies were conducted in the field (within an organisation three months prior to an organisational merger with two other groups; and within the post-merger superordinate organisation, twelve months after the completion of an organisational merger). The final
three studies of the thesis were experimental in nature, with the results of each study assisting in refining the methodological design of the next study.

Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant social and organisational-psychology literature relating to groups and group processes relevant to merger contexts. In addition, Chapter Two explores issues in the organisational merger literature and various theories discussing best practice for managing pre- and post-merger identities. In particular, this chapter reviews theories such as Social Identity Theory, Self-Categorisation Theory, and models such as the Ingroup Projection model, the Common Ingroup Identity Model, the Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model and the ASPIRe model. The importance of status within an intergroup context is introduced within Chapter Two, including the effect of this factor when an organisational merger is seeking to bring together pre-merger groups of differing statuses. Finally, this chapter highlights that the use of a process-based intervention within an organisational merger may assist in generating attitudes conducive to organic pluralism in members of subgroups facing, or undergoing, an organisational merger.

Chapter Three examines issues of procedural justice and perceptions of fairness within organisational mergers and intergroup contexts. Chapter Three also introduces models relevant to the behaviour of groups when they do, and do not, receive fair treatment, such as the Group Value Model and the Group Engagement Model. This chapter also discusses the benefits associated with the provision of voice opportunity within an organisational merger. In addition, Chapter Three discusses the changeable perceptions of fairness when intergroup context becomes salient.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical examinations of the thesis. This chapter outlines the various assumptions relevant to the generation of the thesis hypotheses. These assumptions relate to the effect of an
organisational merger and the pursuit of an organically pluralistic identity that have been drawn from the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. From these assumptions, three central hypotheses are developed. These hypotheses relate to the influence of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on organic pluralism, perceived fairness and perceived subgroup ingroup prototypicality. The empirical program of this thesis subsequently tests a number of sub-hypotheses relevant to the central hypotheses in order to answer the stated research question.

Chapter Five, the first empirical chapter, explores the issues of pre-merger subgroup status, perceived continuity of the pre-merger subgroup and expectations of conflict on organic pluralism (Studies 1 and 2). The findings of these two field studies provide evidence to suggest pre-merger subgroups may retain identification and belief in continuity of their subgroup. Further to this, the identification and perceptions of continuity may be present even after an organisational merger has occurred and the pre-merger social identity (i.e., their pre-merger subgroup) no longer exists in the post-merger context. These studies suggest pre-merger subgroup members, while reporting attitudes conducive to reaching an organically pluralistic state, still reported beliefs that may contribute to intergroup conflict.

Chapter Six provides a summary of the questions raised by the results of the two field studies and, drawing on literature from Chapters Two and Three, puts forward the argument for an experimental exploration of these factors. Chapter Six suggests a possible method to increase attitudes of organic pluralism, and also decrease perceptions of subgroup continuity through the provision of voice opportunity.

The desire to investigate the impact of pre-merger subgroup status more fully and to introduce the factor of voice opportunity, guided the design of the first experimental study of the thesis (Study 3), which is detailed in Chapter Seven. In this
study, pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity (that is, the opportunity to provide input into the organisational merger) was manipulated. Results found support for two sub-hypotheses and, although no differences in levels of organic pluralism between those in either voice condition were found, those members provided with instrumental voice reported higher levels of perceived fairness than those given non-instrumental voice. In addition, differences between the high and low status subgroups were found for reported levels of subgroup prototypicality. As some of the sub-hypotheses were not supported, the design of the study was enhanced to add conditions where a) subgroup members were denied voice and b) subgroup members were advised on which voice opportunity was provided to the ingroup and the outgroup.

Following on from the results of Study 3, Chapter Eight describes the fourth study of the thesis (Study 4). As noted, this study introduced a condition where the opportunity for voice in the organisational merger was denied. In addition, participants were advised on the voice opportunity provided to the ingroup, as well as the outgroup. Results from this study found support for only some of the predictions, and results suggested that instrumental voice opportunity could lead to increased perceptions of fairness and attitudes related to organic pluralism.

Chapter Nine continued the empirical program with the final study of the thesis (Study 5). Study 5 explored the manner in which members of pre-merger subgroups chose to distribute voice opportunity within an organisational merger context. The findings of this study suggested that, although members from all pre-merger subgroups agreed on the importance of input from members of both pre-merger subgroups, voice distribution appeared to favour members of the high status subgroup. Members of the high status subgroup tended to distribute voice opportunity in a manner that favoured the ingroup and members from the low status subgroup tended to distribute voice
opportunity in a manner that favoured the outgroup. These results provided insight into the findings of Studies 3 and 4 that were contradictory to predictions.

Chapter Ten provides a summary of the thesis and describes the contribution made in terms of both theoretical and practical implications. Within Chapter Ten, a limitation of the thesis is outlined as well as directions for future research in this field. As part of this section, specific factors important to future research are outlined. Finally, Chapter Ten provides a closing statement as to the importance of the focus of the thesis and summarises the practical application that could be gained from the added knowledge provided to the field of organisational psychology.
CHAPTER TWO

Social psychological processes underlying organisational mergers: The context

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research question, the theoretical approach and the empirical framework underpinning the thesis. The structure of the thesis was introduced within Chapter One, as well as a summary of the empirical research undertaken to explore the research question. Chapter Two provides an analysis of the relevant issues regarding previous research, and outlines where this research can be built on. This chapter also explores relevant psychological theories and examines the application of these theories to an organisational merger context.

Firstly, this chapter will draw out the psychological impact of organisational mergers and identify the risks to employees undergoing a merger involving their organisation. Following from this, the chapter will explore the importance of understanding how social psychological processes are affected by mergers. For example, Chapter Two will describe how organisational mergers may impact on levels of identification with pre- and post-merger groups. In order to more completely understand the group context during an organisational merger, the thesis outlines Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) (Turner, 1985; 1999). These theories are particularly relevant to the exploration of organisational mergers, as identity-based processes have been shown to have a meaningful influence on employee responses to merger situations (Haslam, 2001; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; van Dick, Ullrich & Tissington, 2006). Social psychological
theories have been shown to assist in identifying strategies that will facilitate and maintain effective identification with the post-merger superordinate identity.

Following from the overview of SIT and SCT, this chapter will also illustrate the relevance and complexity of merger literature. Focusing on organisational mergers, this literature review will examine the impact of mergers on employees, and the importance and benefits to an organisation of pursuing the goal of a “successful merger”. In addition, this chapter will explore relevant organisational literature to further define what constitutes a successful merger and explore strategies to pursue this goal. This review will explore the impact of the possible loss of the pre-merger subgroup identity on the merger outcome, as well as strategies that employees may use to maintain a positive social identity during an organisational merger. The Ingroup Projection model is introduced during this section as outlining a possible strategy used by group members to maintain pre-existing subgroup memberships within a merger. Finally, this section outlines how pre-merger subgroup status may impact on the self-enhancement strategy subgroup members may use during a merger, as well as what type of merger outcome they perceive will most benefit their group.

After outlining the impact of mergers and the relevance of various group processes, this chapter explores various models concerned with managing pre- and post-merger identities. Social psychological processes underlying both group and organisational mergers have been a focus of research over many years (see Haslam, 2001), and various theories have been posited to explain the reaction of employees to a merger. These theories have produced a variety of hypotheses of ways in which negative reactions to mergers can be minimised, while increasing positive or desirable outcomes (e.g., identification with the new organisation). This section of Chapter Two explores these theories and outlines where they converge, where they differ, and their real world
application. In order to be practically relevant, this thesis argues that an understanding of the processes that govern employee responses must also offer solutions and strategies.

Finally, the chapter explores common, superordinate identity models such as the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM) (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust, 1993), as well as relevant research supporting the creation of a superordinate identity with which all group members can identify. The chapter then explores subgroup continuity models such as the Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model (MIDM) (Hewstone & Brown, 1986), as well as relevant research into subgroup dominance. Finally, the chapter explores one process-based intervention, the ASPIRe model (Eggins, Reynolds & Haslam, 2003), and examines how techniques derived from this model may be applied in an organisational merger context.

2.2 The psychological impact of organisational mergers

The merger of two or more separate agencies or organisations to form one new entity is commonplace in government and private sector groups in order to consolidate resources, increase productivity and to initiate growth and diversity (Banal-Estañol & Seldeslachts, 2011; Stahl et al., 2013; Terry, 2001; Terry & Jimmieson, 1999; Terry & O’Brien, 2001). Notwithstanding the positive intentions of many mergers, the process of redefining previously separate entities into one can be a stressful and anxious process for the employees involved. Indeed, the organisations that are being ‘recategorised’ into the new superordinate group are often important social groups to the individuals employed in each agency (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Monden & de Lima, 2002). Although the literature exploring the merging of social groups extends beyond the scope of organisational psychology (see Gaertner, Bachman, Dovidio & Banker,
2001; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003), for the purposes of the current research, this thesis will confine discussion to mergers that are organisationally based.

Previous research has identified that mergers can have a negative effect on employees’ experience of work as well as their relationship with the organisation (Terry, Callan & Satori, 1996; Terry & Jimmieson, 1999). Mergers may result in emotional distress, a loss of status, identity and autonomy (Idel et al., 2003), feelings of helplessness stemming from a perceived lack of personal control over the organisational change (Fried et al., 1996), increases in global stress, perceived uncertainty and absenteeism (Schweiger & Denisi, 1991) and a decrease in organisational identification and job satisfaction (Jetten et al., 2002). All of the above represent risk factors for development of psychological disorders in affected employees (Väänänen et al., 2011). These effects are not only negative for employees, but they may result in productivity losses and employee attrition, which have real fiscal consequences for employers.

Given the potential problems posed by mergers, this thesis argues that those in control of organisational mergers should seek strategies to pre-empt or reduce the negative impact of the merger on staff. Continued resistance by employees to the merger, and the lack of motivation to identify with the post-merger superordinate identity has been shown to affect the success of the merger (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Therefore, any negative reaction from employees prior to, or during a merger, may possibly be seen as a warning indicator to managers that the merger strategy being adopted lacks efficacy. Given the large amount of capital invested in mergers, the motivation to coordinate a successful merger that leads to the development of a fully functioning single organisation should be high. Executive staff and managers will continue to seek practical interventions in order to reduce the impact of mergers on staff
and increase the likelihood of a successful merger outcome. This thesis aligns with arguments outlined in previous literature, in that an understanding of the psychological and social processes behind acceptance of, and resistance to, mergers is essential in the development of more successful mergers (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Terry & O’Brien, 2001).

2.3 The importance of group context when examining organisational group mergers

When individuals identify with an organisational group, a beneficial outcome may be an increase in positive behaviours and attitudes exhibited by the group members. Employee identification with an organisation engenders “good worker” behaviour, with group members espousing values and conduct in line with organisational values (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). In addition, research has shown that there is a positive relationship between identification with a post-merger organisation and employee’s attitudes, behaviours and performance (van Dick et al., 2006). Further, van Dick et al. (2006) demonstrated that employees who identified with the post-merger superordinate group were most likely to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours which, in turn, created a more positive working environment. Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs) are behaviours that, while not explicitly demanded by the group or task, are altruistic and cooperative behaviours that enhance the organisational culture (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Haslam, 2001). These behaviours may include cooperation with colleagues, helping colleagues and volunteering to perform extra tasks (Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005). In addition, if an individual identifies with a subgroup that has committed to a merger, he or she is more likely to maintain commitment to the process during difficult periods (Haslam, Ryan, Postmes, Spears, Jetten & Webley, 2006). Therefore, if identification with the post-merger superordinate
identity has benefits to both staff and to the organisation, developing a merger that increases organisational identification within employees becomes a desirable goal for those administrating mergers. That is, mergers are more likely to be deemed successful when employees identify with the post-merger organisation.

During an organisational merger, individuals are often presented with a situation in which it is likely they will lose access to a social group with which they identify. Research has demonstrated that the maintenance of an existing and valued group identity is often of great importance to employees in a merger context, particularly in the initial period following a merger (Terry, 2001). Many employees identify strongly with their pre-merger organisation and can maintain this identification during and after a merger (van Dick, Wagner & Lemmer, 2004; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). This can happen as employees facing the prospect of a merger are more inclined to focus on the identity they are soon to lose, rather than the one they are about to gain (Terry, Carey & Callan, 2001; Terry & O’Brien, 2001). This pre-existing identity is often difficult for employees to discard, even when the entity no longer exists in the new organisational context (Jetten et al., 2002).

Within social psychology there are theories that can assist in improving our understanding of the impact of psychological stressors that may arise from the loss of a valued social identity (e.g., such as a pre-merger subgroup). Social groups, working groups within organisations, and groups created as a result of mergers all provide a basis for the development of social identities (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Pratt & Foreman, 2000; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Moreover, identification with a post-merger superordinate group brings with it the desired normative behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that are relevant to that organisation (see Sherif, 1936; Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner, 1999). In addition, identification with the organisation communicates to individuals
something about themselves (self-definition) and provides affirmation of worth and/or positive distinction. As such, identification with an organisational group can be perceived as having a self-referential utility (van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Therefore, social psychological theories that provide an understanding of how individuals identify with groups, and the difficulties arising from threatening the identity associated with these groups will assist in pursuing the most effective strategy to merge organisational groups.

The context surrounding organisational mergers, which includes the loss of one social identity and the introduction of another, makes the intergroup context salient. Therefore, the relevance of identity-based processes is highlighted, and the application of theories such as SIT and SCT becomes apparent. Both SIT and SCT are comprehensively outlined in other research literature (see Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel, 1974, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, 1985, 1999; Turner & Haslam, 2001; Turner & Oakes, 1989) and, as such, only a brief overview of the theories relevant to this research is presented below.

2.3.1 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

SIT is a general theory that encompasses some of the processes that underpin intergroup relations, but particularly intergroup conflict. SIT posits that social behaviour can be conceived as varying along a continuum from interpersonal to intergroup relations (Tajfel, 1978). That is, people can shift their self-perception from an “I” to a “We” depending upon their subjective appraisal of the context surrounding them (Turner & Reynolds, 2001; p. 137). As an individual moves from a personal level of self-abstraction towards group-based self-perception (and corresponding intergroup
behaviour), perceptions of the outgroup by ingroup members become more
homogeneous, with both ingroup and outgroup members perceived less as individuals
and more as undifferentiated members of their respective categories (Haslam, 2001;
Turner, 1985).

SIT argues that, in some situations, people evaluate themselves in terms of group
contexts and seek to achieve positive self-evaluation from that in order to maintain a
positive and distinct social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1999). That is, when
the group identity is salient, group members are motivated to compare their own group
favourably with outgroups (Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994). Moreover, in
situations where individuals do not have access to a positive and distinct social identity
they will take steps to acquire one (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT outlines three distinct
methods by which members can facilitate this: social mobility (likely when identity
with the ingroup is low, and group boundaries are permeable so members can move into
a higher-status group), social change (likely when identity with the ingroup is high and
group boundaries are impermeable, preventing intergroup movement), or social
creativity (likely when ingroup identity is high but social change is not seen as possible)
(Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social creativity is a cognitive process whereby ingroup
members change the criteria for comparisons (among other things) to favour the ingroup
over the outgroup, and is used to maintain a positive and distinct social identity (Tajfel
& Turner, 1979).

2.3.2 Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT)

SCT provides further insight into the categorisation process underlying the function
and role of identities (Turner 1985, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell,
1987). Turner (1985) describes three levels of abstraction at which identities may be
defined: superordinate (e.g., membership of the human race), social (ingroups and
outgroups) and personal (individual). Generally, only one self-category is salient at any one time (Turner & Oakes, 1986). Two socio-cognitive processes (categorisation and self-enhancement) account for the social identity process. The self-categorisation process is context-determined and the salience of a relevant category at any moment is based on relative similarities and differences perceived against a social and cognitive background that provides this context (Turner & Onorato, 1999). Self-categorisation is the mechanism that operates when relevant subjectively-meaningful stimuli become salient in different contexts, and is the cognitive grouping of self that accentuates intergroup similarities and intergroup differences on relative correlated dimensions (Turner, 1998; Turner & Onorato, 1999). Self-enhancement refers to the tendency for individuals to see themselves in a positive light. When an intergroup context is relevant, group members will seek to make comparisons that favour their ingroup relative to a relevant outgroup (Turner, 1985).

The generation of the process by which categories become salient is outlined in the principles of comparative and normative fit (Oakes, Turner & Haslam, 1991; Turner et al., 1994; Turner, 1999). Comparative fit is defined by the principle of meta-contrast (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1993). That is, the differences between members of the ingroup is smaller than the differences between members of the outgroup and the ingroup in a comparative context (Oakes, et al., 1993; Turner, et al., 1994). Normative fit refers to the content match of these differences (e.g., whether the ingroup members are similar to each other and different to members of the outgroup in the direction or dimension that is expected in that context) (Turner et al., 1994).

Category salience accentuates perceived similarities and differences on group relevant dimensions (Turner, 1999). When individuals self-categorise in terms of a social identity, they perceive themselves as categorically similar to other members of
their group (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). This is known in social-psychological literature as the psychological process of *depersonalisation* (Turner & Onorato, 1999). When *depersonalisation* occurs, the perception of homogeneity within the ingroup and the outgroup, as well as the perception of difference between the ingroup and the outgroup, are all accentuated. Put simply, group members emphasise similarity to others perceived as the same and distinctiveness between those perceived as different. Each social self-category also brings with it a different group membership which defines relevant beliefs, norms and values which shape attitudes and behaviour (Turner, 1999).

If employees involved in a merger perceive their current pre-merger subgroup as a valid and relevant social identity, then the above theoretical arguments have obvious relevance within the context of a merger between two organisational groups. In an attempt to preserve the positive affirmation of self associated with their pre-merger subgroup, employees may seek to differentiate their ingroup from the outgroup along relevant dimensions. This would be particularly relevant in the case where a new, unified superordinate category is defined and subgroup distinctions are highlighted. In fact, the complex nature of this predicament is borne out in the extensive merger literature researching these very issues.

2.4 An overview of organisational merger literature: The impact of an organisational merger on members of subgroups

2.4.1 Introduction

The group and individual-based strategies outlined in SIT that people use to achieve and maintain a positive social identity can potentially become active when organisational mergers occur (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). A central part of an individual’s self-definition may be the original, pre-merger organisational identity, and
SIT suggests that organisational members will seek to maintain this identity as a positive one (Turner, 1985). For example, if group boundaries are permeable, members of low status sub-groups may abandon their pre-merger groups and seek to re-categorise themselves within the superordinate identity when it affords higher status (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a). However, this strategy may mean these members may also lose subgroup distinctiveness. Alternatively, where group boundaries are perceived as impermeable, group members may use strategies such as social creativity in order to preserve the identity and status of their pre-merger subgroups (Terry et al., 2001). Therefore, an organisational merger presents a situation where pre-merger subgroup identities are made salient, and subsequent treatment of these potentially valued groups may reduce or enhance the success of an organisational merger.

2.4.2 The relevance of pre-merger subgroup identities

As mentioned above, an organisational merger usually involves the introduction of a new, post-merger organisational identity, and the elimination of pre-merger subgroup identities. Both of these processes may have different impacts on individuals undergoing an organisational merger. As such, each of these issues must be explored in order to understand and predict their influence on the merger, and maximise the potential for a successful merger outcome.

Introducing a new, superordinate identity to individuals can have negative consequences for the merger if this identity is rejected. Often in the situation of an organisational merger, the process involves development of a new superordinate identity that is forced on the members of pre-merger subgroups (Terry, 2001). The presentation of this new identity often incurs resistance from employees (for example, an “us” or “them” reaction), thus reducing the likelihood that employees will transfer identification
from their pre-merger subgroup to the post-merger superordinate group (Terry, 2001). The imposition of a superordinate identity can engender conflict between groups as they endeavour to maintain and/or promote their pre-merger subgroup as dominant within the new superordinate identity (Terry & O’Brien, 2001). Superordinate identities that are perceived as negative may also be rejected by people as they seek to maintain membership of pre-merger subgroups, facilitating intergroup conflict and impeding the success of the merger (Terry et al., 2001). Therefore, the introduction of a superordinate identity may increase the salience of pre-merger subgroups, potentially strengthening the level of identification group members have with these groups.

The potential loss of a group or social identity can be a stressful situation for individuals facing an organisational merger. During the merger, group members are usually forced (as organisational mergers are rarely voluntary processes for employees) to change or forsake their valued subgroup identity (van Leeuwen et al., 2003). Naturally, this is potentially the most threatening to those subgroup members who identify strongly with their pre-merger subgroups (van Leeuwen et al., 2003). For example, a longitudinal study by Jetten et al. (2002) found that, in a work team facing a restructure, the more participants identified with their subgroup (that was going to be eliminated), the more negative they felt about the restructure. During the process of an organisational merger, members may perceive a threat to their pre-merger subgroup identity if that group, and with it the basis for their organisational identification, is going to be formally eliminated (van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003). Therefore, mergers can be described as posing a distinctiveness threat. That is, subgroup members may feel that the identity of their group (in this case the pre-merger subgroup) is denied or suppressed as a result of the impending merger (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b; Jetten et al., 2002; van Dick et al., 2006; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). In this
way, pre-merger subgroup identities, if valued, may become a source of focus (i.e., made salient) for group members facing an organisational merger.

The context of an organisational merger may make subgroup identities salient. As mentioned, employees facing the prospect of a merger may be more inclined to focus on the identity they are soon to lose (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001) and this identity is often difficult for employees to discard, even when it is clear that the subgroup is no longer going to exist in the new, post-merger context (Jetten et al., 2002). This tendency was observed by Jetten and Hutchison (2011) in the merger of a number of Scottish army regiments. Group members with high levels of continuity of subgroup traditions and history were more likely to be resistant to the merger, even after controlling for the impact of pre-merger identification (Jetten & Hutchison, 2011). However, this resistance abated in the conditions where group members were reassured that subgroup continuity would be retained in the post-merger context (Jetten & Hutchinson, 2011). Data gathered from three separate field studies by Ellemers (2003) provided support for the proposition that members who identify strongly with their organisational culture are more likely to feel threatened by change to this identity and, thus, resist the change. If employees hold on to pre-existing subgroup memberships, norms and values, and do not identify with the new superordinate group, this may have a negative impact on whether they feel motivated to strive in their role for the new agency.

Individuals who seek to retain subgroup identities during an organisational merger may use cognitive strategies to maintain their subgroup membership in the post-merger context. This process of holding on to pre-existing group memberships may lead to the phenomenon of Ingroup Projection. Ingroup Projection can occur when ingroup members refer to a salient superordinate category (including both their ingroup and an
outgroup) in order to evaluate their subgroup standing (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Ingroup Projection is a method of sub-ingroup enhancement and is likely when ingroup identity is high and a merger with another group has occurred (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Ingroup Projection is a cognitive process whereby ingroup members’ perceptions of a higher-order superordinate group emphasise subgroup ingroup attributes and downplay subgroup outgroup attributes (Waldzus & Mummendey, 2004; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel & Boettcher, 2004; Waldzus, Mummendey, Weber & Waldzus, 2003; Wenzel, Mummendey & Waldzus, 2008). When Ingroup Projection occurs, group members tend to represent the superordinate category in a way that makes their own subgroup appear to be relatively more prototypical, and thus positively distinct compared to other subgroups supposedly encompassed by the superordinate category (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Ingroup Projection operates at intergroup level and for Ingroup Projection to occur, the intergroup context must be relevant and the inclusive category must be positively evaluated by group members (Bianchi, Machunsky, Steffens, & Mummendey, 2009; Mummendey, Klink & Brown, 2001; Waldzus, Mummendey & Wenzel, 2005; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel & Weber, 2003; Weber, Mummendey & Waldzus, 2002). For example, for Ingroup Projection to occur in a large group of teachers, there must be a relevant intergroup context (e.g., the merger of the Chemistry and Sociology teachers into a new teaching faculty “Science teacher”) and they must rate the inclusive category in a positive manner (e.g., they all value the inclusive category of “Science teacher”).

The retention of subgroup identities post-merger may create an intergroup context with the potential for conflict between groups. In the Ingroup Projection model, intergroup conflict occurs when different subgroups disagree about their relative prototypicality within the context of the superordinate category, as well as the resulting
difference in deserved allocations (Wenzel et al., 2008). If we return to the teacher example, we would see this if the Chemistry teachers and Sociology teachers both disagree on how prototypical their respective subgroup is in relation to the inclusive group “Science teachers”. That is, if each group saw the inclusive group “Science teachers” as being made up of attributes more prototypical to their subgroup (e.g. “orderly” or “empathic”), then both groups could be said to be engaging in ingroup projection. However, if both groups agree on the relative prototypicality of each group, there may be no cause for intergroup conflict and any decisions made on resource distribution as a result of the relative prototypicality of one group are likely to be perceived as legitimate (Wenzel et al., 2008). Returning to the teacher example, if Sociology teachers agreed with Chemistry teachers that Chemistry teachers are much more prototypical of “Science teachers” than Sociology teachers, then there is no conflict between the subgroups over the meaning of the superordinate group. In summary, it is desirable to avoid a situation where subgroups disagree on their relative prototypicality in relation to a superordinate category.

2.4.3 The impact of pre-merger subgroup status on self-enhancement strategies and representations of subgroups in the post-merger context

In order to design a merger intervention that will assist in helping pre-merger subgroup members to accept the superordinate identity, it is important to identify what factors will determine whether or not employees will have a negative reaction to the prospect of a merger. SIT and SCT suggest that the status of a pre-merger subgroup may be an important factor in predicting the reaction of group members to a merger (see Ellemers, van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1990). Status is particularly relevant when examining the factors behind organisational mergers, as often one merging organisation
is likely to have higher status (e.g., productivity, size, reputation, resources) than the
other (Amiot et al., 2007). Moreover, members of high status subgroups are likely to
react differently to an organisational merger than are members of low status subgroups
(Giessner, Tendayi, Otten, Terry & Täuber, 2006; Gleibs, Noack & Mummendey, 2010).

The status of a pre-merger group can be derived from a variety of characteristics
and may be an important factor to consider when examining how subgroup members are
likely to approach an organisational merger. Status Characteristics Theory is a theory of
social inequalities that seeks to explain how different status distinctions can produce
behavioural inequalities (Berger, Cohen & Zelditch, 1966; Berger & Fisek, 1974;
Humphreys & Berger, 1981). Within this theory, a status characteristic is defined as a
characteristic that has two or more states that are evaluated differently in terms of
esteem or desirability (Humphreys & Berger, 1981). A characteristic can either be
specific (i.e., associated with a distinct expectation state) or diffuse (i.e., associated with
a distinct expectation state) (Humphreys & Berger, 1981). Status characteristics theory
applies in contexts where people are task oriented and consider it necessary to take
contributions of those undertaking the task into consideration during evaluation
(Kalkhoff, Friedkin, & Johnsen, 2010).

According to the status characteristics theory, status can be inferred from
characteristics of an individual (Berger, Cohen & Zelditch, 1972; van Djik & van
Engen, 2013). Indeed, status can stem from individual characteristics or abilities (Piazza
& Castellucci, 2013). For example, within their experimental design, Täuber and van
Leeuwen (2012) differentiated between high and low status groups through each
individual’s performance on a knowledge quiz. Within this study, high scores were
linked to the high status condition, and the lower scores were linked to the low status
condition. Within an organisation, generally, status is linked to judgements of expertise
and competence (van Dijk & van Engen, 2013). For example, in the merger of two academic institutions examined by van Vuuren, Beelen and de Jong (2010), the better funded university was seen as superior in both academic and research terms, which was equated to high status. However, staff from the lower status university reported that they believed their teaching ability was superior in comparison to the higher status university. Thus, the staff from the lower status university were using social creativity to retain positive distinctiveness during the merger by emphasising their superiority over the other university in status irrelevant areas (in this case, teaching ability) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Status differences between groups can be perceived as legitimate or illegitimate by group members. Members from low status groups (Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993) and high status groups (Tajfel, 1978; Turner 1999) can perceive their status level as illegitimate, and this can lead to intergroup conflict. Members from a low status group who perceive the status level of their group as illegitimate are more likely to report increased identification with their ingroup as well as increased competitive behaviour with other groups (Ellemers et al., 1993). Conversely, members of high status groups who perceive their status as illegitimate are more likely to experience guilt (Maes & Schmitt, 1999) and less likely to show ingroup bias (Turner & Brown, 1978).

The status of a subgroup has been shown to affect the type of self-enhancement strategy that group members pursue. For example, the use of social creativity strategies can be seen in the behaviour of subgroup members such as rating the outgroup favourably only on status irrelevant dimensions (Terry & O’Brien, 2001). Ingroup members of high status groups, for example, may rate members from low status outgroups higher than themselves on status irrelevant dimensions (Terry, 2001),
demonstrating a willingness to acknowledge that the outgroup is better or positive only on dimensions that have less significance. This generosity can be afforded when it will provide no threat to the status or social position of the ingroup; at the same time, outgroup workers are rated poorly on status relevant dimensions (Terry, 2001).

In some situations, the context surrounding the type of status assigned to a group may also impact on how group members may respond to a threat to their group’s positive distinctiveness. Low status group members who see their status as illegitimate are likely to respond in the same way as high status group members when faced with a merger (Ellemers, Wilke & van Knippenberg, 1993). However, other studies suggest that low status group members who see their status as illegitimate, when faced with a merger, are likely to demonstrate increased ingroup identification and use positive identity protection strategies such as social creativity (Terry et al., 2001). In an organisational merger situation, members of high status groups are likely to seek to maintain the existing ingroup, thus retaining a positive social identity through identity protection processes (Terry et al., 2001; Terry & O’Brien, 2001). However, if the boundaries between subgroups in the post-merger context are perceived as permeable, then acceptance of the superordinate identity (i.e., new post-merger organisation) may assist subgroup members from low status pre-merger groups to develop a more positive social identity (see Hornsey & Hogg, 2002). Therefore, the status of pre-merger subgroups may provide psychologists with information about how group members may react to a merger situation.

The importance of status in regards to group mergers has been observed in field studies. For example, a longitudinal study of a hospital merger showed that the reactions of low status group members aligned with the predictions of SIT (Terry, 2003). That is, for low status pre-merger groups, the merger heightened intergroup comparisons on
status relevant dimensions. Therefore, low status group members were more negative towards the merger than high status members. Members of the low status group were also more likely to identify more strongly with their pre-merger group, and less strongly with the post-merger group but were correspondingly less likely to perceive a common ingroup identity than were high status group members. Interestingly, identification of low status members with the superordinate identity worsened over time. That is, for low status group members, as time went on, identification with their pre-merger subgroup increased even further and identification with their post-merger superordinate group decreased. This reaction was believed to be a result of the low status members perceiving that in the post-merger context, the boundaries between the high and low status subgroups remained impermeable and the low status members had to seek another method of self-enhancement (Terry, 2003).

The perceived permeability of group boundaries also affects the type of strategy that members of groups of different status will choose in order to improve their social identity. As noted previously, the permeability of group boundaries influences commitment to the group (Ellemers et al., 1993). Those in low status groups, where boundaries between that group and the higher status group are permeable, are likely to use individual mobility strategies to change membership to the higher status group if the status differences are seen as legitimate (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, when group boundaries are impermeable and identification with the group is high, members of low status subgroups may use collective strategies to improve the social identity of the group (Turner, 1999). Group members can be pragmatic and, given the situation they find themselves in, will choose the social identity/status enhancing strategy most feasible to them at that time (Ellemers et al., 1993; Ellemers, Haslam, Platow & van Knippenberg, 2003). Indeed, Jetten et al. (2002) showed that a high level of
identification with the superordinate identity may assist employees in letting go of previous, valued subgroup identities (i.e., an individual mobility strategy). Similarly, data collected from three field studies by Ellemers (2003) indicated that feelings of threat and resistance to change to an existing valued group were reduced in members who were ‘helped’ to adopt the new identity. This, as discussed, can be viewed as the primary goal of an organisational merger: employees “letting go” of previous pre-merger group memberships and embracing the new group. However, the simplicity of this goal belies the complexity of the social-psychological processes behind it.

Another longitudinal study on the assimilative merger of two airline companies has also provided an indication of the reactions that low status pre-merger subgroup members may have towards mergers (Amiot et al., 2007). Whereas high status subgroup members showed an increase in their adjustment to the merger over time, low status subgroup members showed the opposite. Amiot et al. (2007) hypothesised this related to the opportunities presented to each group for status enhancing (or retention) strategies. After the completion of the merger, high status subgroup members become more aware of their strength in the new organisation (i.e., organisational dominance) and subsequently any threat to their group status/distinctiveness lessened. For members of the low status subgroup, the dominance of the high status subgroup in the post-merger context was felt as a threat to distinctiveness in the context where there are no perceived options for social mobility. According to SIT, under these circumstances an attempt at social change may be likely (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, in this situation, since so much time had passed, the links to the pre-merger subgroup were lessened to the extent that collective action was no longer perceived to be an option for members wishing to increase the status of their group (Amiot et al., 2007).
When high status subgroups expect dominance in the post-merger context, this may be linked to a transfer of identification from their subgroup to the superordinate group. The influence of status along these lines was explored by Boen, Vanbeselaere, Brebels, Huybens and Millet (2007). Boen et al. (2007) posited a causal link between pre-merger representation and pre-merger identification in the prediction of post-merger identification. In addition, the researchers hypothesised that status also played an important role in the prediction of identification with a post-merger group. Specifically, Boen et al. (2007) argued that members from the high status pre-merger subgroup were more likely to report higher levels of identification with the post-merger group, due to expectations of organisational dominance. That is, the impact of pre-merger subgroup status on post-merger identification would only emerge when relative representation of the subgroup was high. Within the experimental design, Boen et al. (2007) manipulated pre-merger identification, pre-merger subgroup status and relative representation of the subgroup. Results from this study partially supported the hypotheses put forward by Boen et al. (2007). That is, results supported the assertion that members of pre-merger subgroups with high levels of subgroup identification identified more strongly with the post-merger group when they perceived that their pre-merger subgroup had high representation in the post-merger group. Results from this study suggested that if members from both high and low status subgroups perceived their subgroup was appropriately represented in the post-merger context, they would accept the new group. However, as noted by van Vuuren et al. (2010), although status differences and power differences may align with each other (i.e., the high status group is often the dominant group), this is not always the case. Status often stems from comparisons that existed between subgroups before an organisational merger; however, dominance exists when there are power differences within a merged organisation (van Vuuren et al., 2010).
2.4.4 The impact of pre-merger subgroup status on perceptions of an organisational merger

In the preceding section this thesis discussed the impact that pre-merger subgroup status may have on the type of self-enhancement strategy chosen by individuals facing an organisational merger. Further, the pre-merger subgroup appears to be an important factor when predicting expectations of dominance, with research suggesting that members from high status subgroups are more likely to be dominant in a post-merger context. In line with these arguments, members from pre-merger subgroups of differing status tend to prefer different outcomes of an organisational merger, and indeed, different ways of implementing a merger.

Often, the preferred merger pattern of one group is at odds with the preference of the other (Giessner et al., 2006; Terry et al., 1996). For example, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup are more likely to favour a process that would lead to their dominance in the post-merger context over the pre-merger low status subgroup (Amiot et al., 2007; Dovodio, et al., 2007; Giessner et al., 2006; Täuber & van Leeuwen, 2012), whereas low status members are more likely to support a merger that either diminishes status differences (Giessner et al., 2006) or offers a chance for status enhancement (Terry et al., 1996).

2.4.5 Summary

Given the added complexity when trying to merge subgroups of different status, it is important to identify which kind of interventions will be effective in reducing negative reactions so that mergers can occur smoothly, and with a reduced cost to the
organisations and individuals involved. The investment placed in the requirement for organisational mergers to be successful is significant, however, so are the difficulties in creating a successful organisational merger when dealing with subgroups of different status. To effectively merge organisational subgroups of different status, the process itself must also be accepted by members of all pre-merger subgroups. These real-world restrictions heighten the difficulty of designing interventions that can be applied in organisational merger situations. Therefore, the best strategy to employ in a situation where one or more organisational groups of different status are merging is not immediately apparent.

As highlighted in the section above, pre-merger subgroup identities may continue to hold value to members during an organisational merger and, in turn, may affect whether group members accept the post-merger superordinate identity. In addition, the status of these subgroups may also impact on the type of self-enhancement strategy used by subgroup members to retain positive distinctiveness. Therefore, the nature of the treatment of subgroups within an organisational merger appears to be an important factor to consider when planning a successful organisational merger. As a result, it is important to understand whether an organisational merger should motivate employees to quickly discard old groups and embrace the new, or whether the pre-merger subgroup identities should be retained in the post-merger context. This chapter will explore various models that deal with the management of pre- and post-merger identities.
2.5 Managing pre- and post-merger identities – Identity Based models for interventions

2.5.1 Introduction

One of the primary issues that emerges during an organisational merger is the establishment of the new merged organisation, and the management (or elimination) of pre-merger identities. It is often not clear what the new group will look like and whether it contains parts and symbols of the pre-merger subgroups, or whether it will be a new group entirely disconnected from pre-merger identities. Given this uncertainty, it is also often not clear how employees can be expected to fully embrace the post-merger identity and identify themselves as members of this new group. Much of the social-psychological literature on mergers and interventions in mergers focuses on the final structure of the post-merger superordinate group and the impact of this on employee relations. Some models suggest that the focus should be on creating a common superordinate identity (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust 1993), others on the preservation of pre-merger subgroups (Hewstone, 1996; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; van Dick et al., 2006; van Knippenberg et al., 2002) and still others emphasise the importance of process-based interventions (Eggins et al., 2003; Haslam, Eggins & Reynolds, 2002). These different, identity based models for intervention are discussed below.

2.5.2 Common, Superordinate Identity Models

Some models recommend the creation of a common, superordinate identity and the elimination of pre-merger subgroup identities in the post-merger context, in order to reduce intergroup conflict. For example, the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM)
(Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner et al., 1993) recommends a focus on the post-merger superordinate group. Gaertner et al. (1993) posited that, through positive intergroup relations, such as cooperation, it would be possible to change the cognitive representation of a newly merged organisation from an agency comprising of two separate subgroups, into an inclusive, common superordinate identity. The CIIM is based on the idea that reclassification of two subgroups into one will reduce ingroup bias (as people become members of the same group) and, thus, increase positive acceptance of previous outgroup members (Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, 2007; McGarty, 2006). This model provides an option for the creation of this ‘common ingroup’ even when circumstances prevent elimination of the pre-merger group identities (van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003). However, in a field study of a newly-merged scientific organisation, Terry and O’Brien (2001) found that, although the pre-merger high status subgroup was more likely to perceive there was a common ingroup identity in comparison to the pre-merger lower status subgroup, the pre-merger high status subgroup was also more likely to show ingroup bias on status relevant dimensions. Results from this study suggested that the measure of merger threat was related to ingroup bias, with ingroup bias seeming to increase when the level of threat from the merger was perceived to be greater (Terry & O’Brien, 2001). The results of this study suggest that, when designing an organisational merger with a common ingroup superordinate identity in mind, ingroup bias may need to be addressed, particularly when the merged subgroups are of different status.

The new superordinate identity as outlined by the CIIM should be a common ingroup identity for all members, promoting a situation where “us”, as superior to “them”, refers to “us” as all employees of that agency and “them” refers to those residing outside the organisation (Terry & O’Brien, 2001). This may be facilitated
through the increased salience of a category of “them”, possibly a competitor or comparable outgroup organisation, thereby introducing a new level of social categorisation and comparison (Terry et al., 2001). Using management techniques to increase salience of the superordinate identity (for example through reward structures) is also a way that organisations can seek to reduce subgroup categorisation (Homan, Hollenbeck, Humphrey, van Knippenberg, Ilgen & van Kleef, 2008).

Increasing the salience of the post-merger superordinate identity may also lead to problems with members of subgroups who still hold strong attachments to their pre-merger subgroup. In a merger situation this may occur when the executive members of an organisation highlight the similarities within the new shared post-merger group, and discount any differences (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b). Thus, members of management, while seeking to promote the new organisation, may instead be triggering employees to strengthen attachment to pre-merger groups. In two experiments conducted by Hornsey and Hogg (2002), status was manipulated and participants were asked to perform a task in which they were either assigned to a condition where they were categorised exclusively as a university student (superordinate identity) or as a university student and maths-science student simultaneously (subgroup identity). Results of these studies suggested that high-status subgroup members were more likely to be protective of the distinctiveness of their subgroup identity, as highlighting the superordinate identity appeared to have the effect of removing the boundaries between the subgroups, thus increasing threat to subgroup distinctiveness. (Hornsey & Hogg, 2002). As these members still obtained positive self-image from the subgroup identity, they were more likely to be motivated to protect this identity. Therefore, the members of the superordinate group still perceived a threat to the distinctiveness of their subgroup, as these groups were no longer being acknowledged.
One of the challenges of using models focused on the post-merger superordinate identity, is managing pre-merger subgroup identities and whether these should be retained or eliminated. During the process of an organisational merger, an opportunity for a new superordinate identity is created; however it still incorporates the members of the subgroups that existed before the merger. If individuals perceive the new superordinate identity as a continuation of their previous group (i.e., their current group with a new name and new members, but still retaining existing norms, attitudes and beliefs), the higher the chance that identification may remain unchanged by the merger (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). Continuity of group membership does not necessarily equate to an easy transfer of identification from pre-merger groups to the new superordinate identity (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Knippenberg et al., 2002). Also, a sense of continuity may be challenged during the merger of the groups if one group (as is often the case) dominates the process and exerts a greater influence on the definition of the superordinate identity (i.e., organisational dominance) (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). Further, expectations of continuity may change throughout the life of a merger, for example, if one subgroup perceives that it does not exert the level of dominance on the new superordinate group that subgroup members predicted it would (Gleibs, Mummendey & Noack, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to explore strategies that specifically focus on the management of pre-merger subgroup identities.

2.5.3 Subgroup Continuity Models

Some identity management models espouse the benefits of attempting to retain pre-merger subgroup identities during an organisational merger. Providing members of pre-merger subgroups with continuity of group membership in the post-merger context
has been shown to have numerous benefits including low levels of negative emotions, high positive job satisfaction levels (van Dick et al., 2004) and promotion of subgroup members’ identification with the superordinate identity (van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003). For example, in a study of the organisational merger of two hospitals, van Dick et al. (2006) found support for the hypothesis that maintaining subgroup continuity for employees would be positively linked to feelings of job security. Similarly, in a study on a merger of two academic institutions, Boen, Vanbeselaere, Hollants and Feys (2005) found that pre-merger subgroup continuity was positively linked to post-merger identification in pupils who reported average to strong identification with their pre-merger subgroup.

Trying to retain all pre-merger subgroup identities in a post-merger context may be difficult, especially when some subgroups, such as those with higher status, may dominate that post-merger culture. Groups that perceive they have organisational dominance (see van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001) are likely to feel a sense of continuity during the merger. This continuity may be reinforced by the fact that the post-merger organisation in reality may closely resemble their own pre-merger group, thus facilitating a transfer of identification and group membership. The dominated group, on the other hand, will tend to have experienced the merger in a very different way and are likely to perceive a categorical change in group membership rather than continuity (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). Research by van Knippenberg et al. (2002) has supported this proposition with findings that suggested a dominant position in a merger facilitates a sense of continuity of group membership, and a less dominant position is associated with a discontinuity between pre- and post-merger identification. Accordingly, van Knippenberg et al. (2002) further suggested that allowing all pre-merger subgroups to retain a sense of distinctiveness in the post-merger
group ensures continuity for both dominant and dominated subgroups and promotes identification with the new organisation. However, subgroups that find themselves dominated in the post-merger context may be less likely to accept the superordinate group, as shown in qualitative research undertaken by van Vuuren et al. (2010) on a merger between two South African universities. This study found the factor of dominance was important in preventing employees from each pre-merger university accepting the post-merger superordinate group. In this research, both pre-merger subgroups perceived their subgroup as the dominated element in the organisational merger and in the post-merger context. Subsequently, as a dominated subgroup in the superordinate organisation, each subgroup perceived themselves as outgroup members and reported decreased levels of identification with the superordinate organisation (van Vuuren et al., 2010).

As organisational merger models seek to retain pre-merger subgroup identities in the post-merger context, this may make an intergroup context salient, possibly increasing the potential for subgroup members to exhibit ingroup bias. Research into the role of dominance, representation and ingroup bias by van Leeuwen et al. (2003) supported the findings of van Knippenberg et al. (2002) that perceived continuation of a pre-merger subgroup in the post-merger superordinate group facilitated continued identification with the new superordinate group, but also affected ingroup bias. Those groups that perceived their own subgroup (and inherent beliefs and values) were under-represented in the post-merger superordinate group showed low ingroup bias, but the groups with high representation showed high ingroup bias (van Leeuwen et al., 2003). This was supported in further empirical research by van Leeuwen and van Knippenberg (2003) who showed that for members of pre-merger subgroups that experienced low levels of representation in the post-merger group, post-merger subgroup identification
was enhanced. The opposite was found when pre-merger subgroups experienced high levels of representation, and subsequent perceptions of continuity of group, thus facilitating intergroup conflict.

Although results have highlighted some of the problems that may arise from the preservation of pre-merger subgroup identities, there is research providing support for the benefits of retention of the pre-merger subgroup boundaries. For example, the importance of preserving pre-merger subgroups has also been highlighted in the MIDM (Hewstone, 1996; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Research undertaken by Hewstone and Brown (1986; also see Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002) in support of the MIDM demonstrated that, when subgroup boundaries were preserved within the superordinate identity, the threat to subgroup distinctiveness diminished, facilitating identification with, and acceptance of, the superordinate identity. Thus, an acknowledgement of group differences was associated with a greater acceptance of intergroup commonalities. Hornsey and Hogg (2000a) found that when the distinctiveness of pre-merger subgroups within the superordinate identity was threatened, group members strove to maintain the boundaries between the groups. However, similar to Hewstone and Brown (1986), when the boundaries were acknowledged, Hornsey and Hogg (2000a) observed status effects within this study. Members from the high status subgroup were less motivated than members from the low status subgroup to maintain group boundaries through identification and intergroup bias. Also, members from the low status subgroup were more willing than members from the high status subgroup to be categorised exclusively at the superordinate level.

Research indicates that in some cases, preservation of subgroups may lead to situations where group members can maintain identification levels with both their pre-merger subgroup and the post-merger superordinate identity. Both the CIIM and the
MIDM present situations in which dual identification is a desired state (see Dovidio et al., 2007). As theories, however, they remain conceptually different, as the CIIM presents four different representations for subgroup and superordinate combinations (i.e., dual identity, different groups, one-group, separate individuals) (Dovidio et al., 2007; p. 306.) and the MIDM focuses more on the incorporation of both identities simultaneously. In support of dual identification, Hornsey and Hogg (2000a) suggest a model of dual identification, whereby two levels of group membership are maintained simultaneously, encouraging superordinate identification in low status subgroups and reducing the ingroup protection behaviour of high status subgroups. In their experimental studies, Hornsey and Hogg (2000b) found that when they activated both subgroup and superordinate identities simultaneously, ingroup bias was lower than when only one of these identities was salient. Data collected from interviews with African Americans, Latinos, and Whites about their cross-ethnic interactions with legal authorities, provided some evidence for the theory that increasing identification with the superordinate identity does not necessarily have to equate with decreasing identification with the subgroup identity (Huo, 2003). Results from these studies indicated that superordinate and subgroup identification were distinct constructs, and that ethnic identity and national identity was an example of a situation in which dual identities can coexist (see also Huo, Molina, Sawahata & Deang, 2005).

However, any model that emphasises the preservation of pre-merger subgroups will have to manage the varying desires and needs of each group, particularly regarding the status of each subgroup. For example, as discussed, subgroup members’ perception of how their subgroup is represented in the post-merger context is important. Members of one pre-merger subgroup will have a view about whether the post-merger superordinate group is seen as a valued identity, and members of other subgroups may
have compatible or incompatible perspectives on this (Dovidio et al., 2007). For example, a high status pre-merger subgroup member may perceive a one-group model as the preferred view (i.e., where their group is more likely to have organisational dominance in the superordinate group), whereas a low status subgroup member may prefer a dual identity representation (i.e., where they can retain identification with both their pre-merger subgroup and the superordinate group) (Dovidio et al., 2007).

Therefore, even across groups involved in the same merger, the preference to retain or discard pre-merger subgroups may differ. Thus, when the focus is on subgroups, status becomes relevant and, hence, a factor that must be taken into consideration during a merger.

Members of pre-merger subgroups of different status, as previously discussed, may desire different outcomes in the post-merger context. Field studies that examined the impact of group status within an organisational merger found members of the high status pre-merger subgroup reported higher identification with the new organisation and higher ingroup bias against the pre-merger outgroup on status relevant dimensions compared to members from the lower status groups (Terry & O’Brien, 2001).

In response to threats to group distinctiveness, studies have also shown that members with high levels of identification with their group emphasised their prototypicality as group members within the subgroup (Ellemers, 2002). Similarly, experiments by Hornsey and Hogg (2000b) showed that when manipulated to see themselves in a superordinate group containing a pre-merger low status subgroup, high status subgroups showed more ingroup bias and stronger subgroup identification. This situation is similar to that presented in the Ingroup Projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999), which, as previously noted in this chapter, suggests that the ingroup bias on the part of the high status group will be expressed in the belief that their group (and
attached beliefs and values) is more prototypical of the superordinate group than the other subgroup. Further to this, the perceived relative prototypicality of one group over another also provides that group with information about what they are entitled to (Wenzel et al., 2008). That is, the more prototypical one’s subgroup is perceived to be of the superordinate identity in comparison with the other subgroup, then the more one would perceive one’s group as being entitled to privileges or resources above those deserved by the other subgroup (Wenzel et al., 2008). Therefore, in a merger setting, pre-merger subgroups may each see themselves as more prototypical of the new post-merger organisation, leading to disagreement, intergroup conflict and ingroup bias. In summary, it does not seem to be the case that attempts to simply preserve subgroups throughout a merger will reliably lead to acceptance of the new organisation and a positive relationship between all parties.

Stipulation of how a new organisation should look in order to maintain identification levels and commitment from employees may, therefore, not be the most efficient or effective way to address and manage identity-based issues during a merger. As explored above, this thesis is based on the conjecture that a clear picture is lacking in relation to the best strategy in an organisation merger. It continues to be debated as to whether retaining or discarding pre-merger subgroup identities within organisational mergers is the best way to reach a state of organic pluralism.

Historically, organic pluralism has been used to describe societies that are characterised by flexibility, where variations within the society contribute towards the richness of the whole (Khubchani, 1988). Indeed, the integral relationship of an organically pluralistic society is where different communities within a society meld into an integrated whole, as opposed to remaining separate in terms of their various affiliations (Canagarajah & Liyanage, 2012). Within the organisational sphere, a state of
organic pluralism embraces group differences and incorporates these into a superordinate identity (see Haslam, 2001; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Therefore, within conflict management approaches, organic pluralism reflects a style of conflict management where both subgroup and superordinate group interests are highly valued (Haslam & Parkinson, 2005, p.550). This style is in opposition to “individualism” (the interests of the individual are paramount over both the subordinate and superordinate group), “assimilationalism” (the interests of the superordinate group trump those of the subordinate group) and “simple pluralism” (the interests of the subordinate group override those of the superordinate group) (Haslam & Parkinson, 2005, p.550). An organically pluralistic identity (i.e., the desired superordinate group) is defined by the existence of subgroup identities that are valued for their differences and their contribution to the superordinate group (for example, multiculturalism). Individual contributions by each group are equally valued and groups of different status are afforded voice in the merger and the formation of the new superordinate identity (Haslam, 2001). The benefits of pursuing an organic pluralistic organisation include enfranchising lower status subgroups, equalising out power imbalance between subgroups and leveraging diversity to produce a “harmonious, productive, create and stable” superordinate identity (Haslam & Parkinson, 2005, p.550).

In many situations, those in control of organisational mergers may not be able to retain elements of pre-merger subgroups. In those cases, strategies that rely on having control as to whether subgroup identities are retained or eliminated, may be limited in their application. Hence, models and theories that attempt to singularly focus on shifting to a new category structure may not be successful. Instead, a focus on process-based interventions may be more helpful in regards to assisting members of pre-merger subgroups to accept the post-merger superordinate identity.
2.5.4 Process-based Intervention

In order to create an intervention within an organisational merger that will assist the members of pre-merger subgroups to accept this identity, those directing the merger must understand how identities are created and made salient. The important focus of an organisational merger therefore becomes the production of the superordinate identity or category (McGarty, 1999). Following this logic, then, the merger could be used to create a new organisational group that pre-merger subgroup members will engage with, as well as accept the presence of previous outgroup members as fellow ingroup members. It is important to create a superordinate identity that will be positively valued by group members, and that is perceived as a “meaningful and homogeneous entity” (van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003, p. 210). In order to achieve this goal, one must clearly understand how categories are created, and what factors are important in making the new category salient for new group members.

Within an organisational merger, the psychological process of categorisation may be useful in defining a superordinate identity through cooperation and collaboration, thereby reducing intergroup hostility between merging groups (McGarty 1999; 2006). Therefore, the merger intervention becomes a process of designing an end category superordinate identity that is valued, and provides positive distinctiveness for members of pre-merger subgroups.

As categories are a social and psychological creation, they can also be manipulated in order to create a superordinate group that has meaning for members of all pre-merger subgroups. Towards this end, Eggins et al. (2003; Haslam et al., 2002) proposed using the Actualizing Social and Personal Identity Resources (ASPIRe)
If pre-merger subgroup members become involved in the process of creating the superordinate identity, this identity may assist in facilitating intergroup cooperation and reducing the propensity for conflict in the post-merger context. The ASPIRe model departs from traditional hierarchical approaches within organisations in which managers enforce change upon employees, and instead empowers employees to self-determine their organisational outcomes (Haslam et al., 2002). This is supported in some way by McGarty (1999) who sees that superordinate identification, or categorisation, should be formed by a completely new understanding of the relationships between the subgroups and their members, not by engaging their previous subgroup or superordinate membership. Within the model itself are stages to facilitate intergroup cooperation as opposed to conflict (Eggins et al., 2003). These stages include Ascertaining Identity Resources (AIRing), Subgroup Caucusing (Subcasing), Superordinate Consensualizing (Supercasing) and Organic Goal Setting (ORGanizing) (Eggins et al., 2003, p.251). The initial step to this process provides an understanding of exactly which subgroups exist in the workplace and how important and relevant these are to the individuals who work within the organisation.

The ASPIRe model, as discussed above, was developed in order to provide guidance to organisations to establish a meaningful superordinate identity while balancing the needs of subgroup interests (Eggins et al., 2003). The ASPIRe model can be applied in a variety of contexts where subgroup and superordinate group relations need to be managed (see Batalha & Reynolds, 2012) and thus could be applied in an organisational merger. As identified earlier in this chapter, one goal of an organisational merger could be the creation of an organically pluralistic superordinate identity. To
pursue an organically pluralistic superordinate identity, Cornelissen, Haslam and Balmer (2007) recommend recognising the existence of differences across subgroup identities, creating superordinate identities which encompass the diversity of the subgroup identity differences, and emphasising the holistic strength that comes from that diverse superordinate identity. Thus, the underlying key principles of the ASPIRe model may provide a strategy for members seeking to understand social identities and engage with them within an organisational merger (see Haslam, 2014).

Providing an opportunity for members of pre-merger subgroups to have input into the merger may lead to the formation of a relevant, meaningful superordinate group that is accepted by all members. With regard to these subgroups, Eggins, O’Brien, Reynolds, Haslam and Crocker (2008) argue that employees want their employer to recognise the self-categories that are important to them. In order to be successful when using group-based techniques in any type of organisational process, Eggins et al. (2008) noted that the management of the organisation in question has to ensure that the groups chosen for participation are relevant, meaningful and are a valued identity. These groups are then allowed formal representation in a decision making process. In a merger this may happen by providing a way in which pre-merger subgroups can provide input into the process. A process such as this, which facilitates input from employees, demonstrates commitment to procedural justice and implies to employees that their personal, social and organisational identities are relevant and valued (Haslam, Eggins & Reynolds, 2003). The involvement of subgroups in this way is designed to motivate these subgroups to develop a shared identity. This subgroup involvement runs through a planning and negotiation process in which each subgroup gets to state its case and all groups work together at finding common solutions. To be successful and accepted by
group members, Haslam et al. (2003) argue that new identities must emerge from group processes rather than being imposed on them.

Results from experimental studies have provided evidence to support the positive benefits of recognition of subgroups and their inclusion in designing inclusive superordinate groups. Models proposing the importance of valuing the input of subgroups in conflict resolution and negotiation have been supported by experimental research undertaken by Eggins, Haslam, and Reynolds (2002). Across two studies, the researchers created an experimental design to examine the impact over time of making a subgroup identity salient (via the process of negotiation) and the development of a shared, superordinate identity. Results from the first study showed that creating a context that increased subgroup ingroup identity salience did not produce negative intergroup relations or conflict (Eggins et al., 2002). Additionally, results from the second study indicated that positive perceptions of the negotiation process were mediated by development of identification with the superordinate group (Eggins et al., 2002). In these studies, inclusion and recognition of subgroups had a legitimising effect on negotiation that was then perceived as representative. It was hypothesised that inclusion of subgroup identities in a negotiation process may be more beneficial than a singular focus on the superordinate identity. As in any negotiation process, the active involvement of subgroups may assist in an organisational merger and may be associated with greater acceptance of an emerging superordinate group.

In the real world, often there are constraints on the construct of the post-merger superordinate identity. However, the process-based aspects of the ASPIRe model may provide a potential way forward. The ASPIRe model is not, however, specifically designed to be applied in an organisational merger context. It is designed to be used in an intergroup conflict context in which it is assumed that subgroups have continuity.
a merger, there may be no option to improve or change the post-merger superordinate group according to identity-based employee goals. Similarly, the options regarding the inclusion, exclusion or even retention of pre-merger subgroups may be limited, or at the very least, already proscribed. Therefore, any theory that suggests that groups have to remain after a merger can only take us so far. However, perhaps a process-based approach, and the concepts of voice and representation utilised as part of the ASPIRe model can be used to identify a successful organisational merger intervention. A considerable body of work has shown that allowing participants to have input or voice into a process increases feelings of satisfaction and perceptions that the process is fair (see Haslam et al., 2003; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Pease, Lind & Kanfer, 1988; Tyler, 1987). The allocation of input or voice opportunity to members of subgroups gives them an opportunity to advance the interests of their own group (Shapiro & Brett, 2005) and also provides information to them about the status of their group (that is, their group is a valued part of the process) (Lind & Tyler, 1988).

2.6 Conclusion

This thesis aims to further understand the process behind intergroup reactions to an organisational merger, and seeks to identify methods by which positive interventions can be made. Although psychological research into the intergroup processes of organisational mergers has begun to be addressed within this past decade and earlier, further research into dynamic organisational changes such as mergers is warranted (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005).

It is certain that organisational mergers will continue to occur within the government and private sectors, and as such, there is a continued drive to unpick the psychological processes underlying group mergers. There is a need to motivate
employees to see other groups as legitimate entities and to motivate them towards a state in which all group members form a unit that functions effectively (i.e., a state of organic pluralism).

This chapter has discussed various methods of improving the outcomes of an organisational merger. These have included the importance of creating a superordinate identity that provides an avenue of positive distinctiveness for employees and various models in favour of, or against, retaining pre-merger subgroups. What has become clear is that the group processes that underlie an organisational merger are key. As has been demonstrated from the research covered in this chapter, context is highly relevant when understanding when groups form, how they form and what this means in a merger situation.

Chapter Two has made a case for acknowledging the importance of the pre-merger subgroup within an organisational merger, and for recognising how membership in this group may affect the way an employee views the merger and the new organisational identity. However, what also has become apparent in both social-psychological and merger research is the importance of status. Thus, it still remains unclear what is the appropriate strategy to apply within an organisational merger in order to pursue a post-merger situation in which all employees are seen as equally valid participants in the new organisation (that is, an organically pluralistic state). The research discussed within this chapter suggests that this desire may be easier to foster in members of low status subgroups than in higher status subgroups. Due to their desire to maintain their status, and likely dominance, in the post-merger context, members of high status subgroups may be more difficult to convince that an organic pluralistic identity will benefit them (or at the very least, not disadvantage them). Findings from the studies explored in this chapter suggest that employee involvement in mergers may
also be important to ensure employees accept the post-merger organisation. Therefore, Chapter Three will explore further in detail the role that procedural justice and voice opportunities may have in a merger context. Finally, the relevant literature will be summarised, and Chapter Four will outline the core questions that remain, and the hypotheses that will be explored in the empirical chapters of this thesis.
CHAPTER THREE

An exploration of justice: the benefits of pursuing a procedurally fair organisational merger

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the relevance of social-psychological theories in understanding organisational group identities, and the reactions of group members to group membership and positive distinctiveness. Chapter Two also provided an overview of literature that focused on organisational mergers and their impact on subgroup members. This discussion revealed that the status of pre-merger subgroups has an impact on acceptance of the post-merger superordinate group identity, as well as on perceived representation of subgroups in the post-merger organisation. Further, theories and models that made recommendations about the most effective way to manage pre- and post-merger organisational identities were compared and contrasted. From this analysis, it was posited that process-based interventions may be useful in assisting members of pre-merger subgroups to engage with the organisational merger and accept the post-merger superordinate identity. Finally, the chapter concluded with the proposal that process-based interventions that provide subgroup members with the opportunity for voice could be the preferred intervention in terms of organisational mergers.

In order to analyse this proposition, this chapter will explore the role of voice, procedural justice and fairness in regards to group-based identification and intergroup behaviours. Firstly, justice and fairness processes specific to group settings will be examined, including an overview of the Group Value Model (Lind & Tyler, 1988) and the Group Engagement Model (Tyler & Blader, 2000). Within this discussion, results
from field studies will be drawn on to demonstrate how perceptions of fairness may impact on factors that have been identified as relevant to the success of an organisational merger. Within this thesis, the terms “fair” and “just” will be used interchangeably, except in the cases to reference is made to specific models or theories.

An important element of procedural justice, voice opportunity, will be introduced as part of the rationale of this thesis. Justice research has identified the benefits of providing voice to group members but also has recognised the complexity surrounding perceptions of fairness. The aim of this chapter is to gain a greater understanding of how voice could be relevant to an organisational merger and to subgroup members of varying status. The distinction between instrumental and non-instrumental voice will be outlined as well as the impact on perceptions of procedural justice when voice opportunity is manipulated. Finally, the thesis will explore the benefits of pursuing procedural justice within an organisational merger, specifically using voice opportunity to create a procedurally fair merger. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the research focus of the thesis.

3.2 Distributive and Procedural Justice

3.2.1 Introduction

How people are treated at work by authorities is likely to impact on the commitment of these individuals to the organisation, as well as to the type of behaviours that individuals exhibit at work (Smith, Tyler & Huo, 2003). Thus, authorities within a workplace can be described as having a stake in perceptions of fairness. In order to identify whether fair treatment can lead to beneficial outcomes in an organisational context, it is important to establish what makes a procedure seem fair compared to other
types of treatment. Given the potential importance of creating an organisational merger that is perceived as procedurally fair, an overview of the literature underpinning this area is essential in understanding how fairness is created, manipulated and maintained.

3.2.2 An introduction to Distributive and Procedural Justice

Up until the late 1970s, research into theories of justice focused almost exclusively on distributive justice. That is, organisational research focused on how resources in organisations were distributed, and how this distribution affected variables such as job satisfaction and employee morale; however, there was very limited literature focusing on the process of determining this distribution (Greenberg, 1987; Pease et al., 1988). For example, one of the theories prevalent during this early period of justice research was Equity Theory. Equity Theory (Adams, 1965; Walster, Berschied & Walster, 1973) posited that in evaluating benefits provided to them, individuals would also seek to compare what they received with what others received. This comparison is made under the principle of distributive justice, by which, the fairness of a distribution of a resource is linked to how even-handed the distribution of rewards is perceived to be (Homans, 1961). Within this theory, consideration of inputs (defined as something of value that the individual brings to the relationship), outcomes (defined as factors with value or use to the individual), and the nature of the social comparison process are important factors in the evaluation of a distributed reward (Adams, 1965; Morand & Merriman, 2012). These inputs and outcomes are evaluated relative to each other in a ratio, and Equity Theory posits that an individual will compare his or her outcome/input ratio to the outcome/input ratio of another person or group (Adams, 1965; Pritchard, 1969). As a result of this comparison, a fair distribution is perceived when the ratio of the individual’s outcome to input ratio is equal to the outcome/input ratio of the
comparison individual or group; and an unfair distribution occurs when it is perceived the ratio is not equal (Adams, 1965; Morand & Merriman, 2012). Equity Theory is similar to the social-psychological theory of Relative Deprivation (RD) (see Walker & Pettigrew, 1984 for an overview). RD theory states that individuals make comparisons between themselves and other categories (which may include groups, ideals, themselves in the past), with a result that these comparisons may create potentially key feelings of deprivation in terms of desirable states relative to this category (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984).

Equity Theory focused solely on the distributive element of justice, and paid no attention towards the procedures underlying the distribution of the reward. Leventhal (1980, p.28) described the theory as a “unidimensional rather than multidimensional conception of fairness”, and criticised the singular focus of this theory on the final distribution of reward as the sole basis for an individual’s judgement of fairness. In order to understand the concept of fairness in a more complex manner, perceived justice would need to be conceptualised more than in terms of an outcome principal.

Justice research changed focus to procedural justice when Thibaut and Walker (1975) examined the impact of procedures, as opposed to distributive outcomes, within a legal, dispute-resolution context. This research demonstrated that the way in which procedures are carried out is subjectively evaluated by individuals undergoing these procedures as to the perceived fairness of the procedures (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Research on perceived distributive justice is focused on the judgements on the fairness of the outcome. Research on perceived procedural justice, however, is focused on the perception that the process used to decide how the distribution is made is fair or not (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walker, Lind & Thibaut, 1979).
Thibaut and Walker (1978) went on to propose a general theory that outlined a framework to assist in developing procedures that are perceived by individuals and group members as procedurally fair. Within this theory, the distribution of “control” within a decision-making context was noted as one of the most significant factors for consideration when designing a procedural system (Thibaut & Walker, 1978). The factor of control was defined by two elements: control over the decision (i.e., how much control a participant has to determine the outcome of the procedure) and control over the process (i.e., control over access to the information used to determine the outcome of a procedure) (Thibaut & Walker, 1978).

The factor of process control was assumed by Thibaut and Walker (1975) to have great utility in increasing perceptions of fairness. The research undertaken by Thibaut and Walker (1975) demonstrated that giving people the opportunity to have their say in a procedure (e.g., presenting evidence in court to support their own case) led to an increased satisfaction with the verdict, even in cases where the verdict was not the outcome that was desired. That is, allowing people voice opportunity in a procedure is likely to increase the perceptions by those people that the manner in which the distribution of the outcome was decided was procedurally fair. This phenomenon, in which people who are given voice are more likely to perceive that process as fair, is described by Folger, Rosenfield, Grove and Corkran (1979) as the fair process effect. Folger (1987) saw advantage in gaining the benefits of the fair process effect in an organisational setting, arguing for the inclusion of voice input into workplace performance appraisals as a way of increasing the procedural justice of these processes. More recently, the fair process effect is more likely to be found in uncertain situations (see van Den Bos, 2013) potentially similar to the context of an organisational merger.
Although the initial research into procedural justice was focused on the context of legal disputes, subsequent research in this area demonstrated the applicability of the study of procedural fairness to the organisational realm. For example, a study of approximately 2,800 federal government employees that collected information on their perceptions of a major reform, found that, although both procedural and distributive justice were identified as having important effects on relevant organisational factors, procedural justice made significantly larger contributions to four of these (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987). These four organisational factors were: job satisfaction, evaluation of supervisor, conflict/harmony and trust in management (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987). The measure of conflict/harmony included statements such as: “There is a lot of conflict amongst people here”, “People will do things behind your back”, “Around here its important to protect yourself or you will be blamed for a problem”, “People are afraid to express their real view to top management” (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; p. 185). The researchers argued the results from this study suggested procedural justice had greater influence than distributive justice on attitudes and behaviours related to intergroup relations, and individual subjective perceptions (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987). These results suggest procedural fairness may have an effect on attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. In Chapter Two, organic pluralism was described as a state where subgroup members accepted members from other subgroups and where there was no intergroup conflict (Haslam, 2001). These types of attitudes are similar to those described by the harmony measures used by Alexander and Ruderman (1987), suggesting that procedural justice may significantly affect reported levels of organic pluralism.

When people experience fair treatment within a process, and potentially have the opportunity to influence the procedure their benefit, positive perceptions of this process
may be deemed to have a self-interest bias. Within justice research, areas of study may focus on first party involvement (i.e., being personally affected by a process) and/or on third party observers (i.e., observing a process). Research into third party observers of fair and unfair procedures indicate that people identify, and disapprove of, unjust procedures, even when they are not personally affected by them (Cugueró-Escofet, Fortin & Canela, 2014; Hegtvedt, Johnson, Ganem, Waldron, & Brody, 2009). Although research suggests people place more importance on their own experiences of justice (or injustice) than the experiences of others (Lind, Kray & Thompson, 1998; van Prooijen, Stähl, Eek, van Lange, 2012), fair treatment of self and others appears to be important to people.

Although the study of distributive and procedural justice can be observed as two distinct realms of research focus within justice literature, researchers have sought to explore how these different types of justice relate to each other. In an experimental study that manipulated procedures and distributions (outcomes), Greenberg (1987) posited that the manner in which procedures are undertaken may matter most to participants when they result in lower or negative outcomes. Greenberg (1987) found that his predictions that fair procedures would lead participants to perceive outcomes as relatively fairer were only supported when outcomes were low. That is, when participants were given medium to high rewards, these were reported as fair, regardless of the procedures used to distribute the rewards (Greenberg, 1987). This aligned with observations of Thibaut and Walker (1975), in that higher (or better) outcomes were perceived by recipients as fairer than lower outcomes. This may be relevant within an organisational merger context, where the outcome of an organisational merger may not be considered a high reward. In addition, as outlined in Chapter Two, in many organisational mergers, the distribution of power and/or organisational dominance
within the post-merger superordinate identity may favour one pre-merger subgroup over another. Thus, one subgroup may be more likely to receive a lower outcome than the other subgroup, potentially increasing the relevance of procedural justice to that subgroup.

3.2.3 Summary

Historically, justice research has largely focused on two separate but related aspects of fairness: distributive and procedural processes. Researchers interested in distributive justice focused on how individuals react to decisions on outcomes (e.g., whether the reward given is fair), and researchers who were interested in procedural justice focused on the manner in which decisions are made to distribute the outcome (e.g., the way reward distribution was decided) (see Greenberg & Tyler, 1987). Although research initially primarily focused on distributive justice, the importance of procedural justice to participants involved in a process emerged as an important research focus within justice research.

Chapter Two outlined that in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups of different status may desire different and conflicting outcomes of the merger procedure. This, in turn, may have a detrimental effect on perceived fairness by members of the subgroup denied their preferred outcome as part of the merger. However, within an organisational merger, it may be difficult to ensure that each pre-merger subgroup’s preferred outcome is obtained. As emphasised in Chapter Two, the outcome of an organisational merger may be pre-determined, with little chance available to alter it. As a result of these restrictions within an organisational merger context, focus on distributive justice may be of limited utility and attention could instead be placed upon strategies relating to enhancing procedural justice. In order to
understand the relevance of procedural justice to an organisational merger, this thesis must first clarify the benefits of procedural justice in an intergroup context.

3.3 The impact of procedural justice on groups

3.3.1 The Group Value Model (GVM) and Group Engagement Model (GEM)

Based on the principles of SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Lind and Tyler (1988) developed the GVM, which provided a different conception on the manner in which procedural justice was viewed. Unlike research focusing on factors affecting the perceived fairness of how distribution is decided (see Barrett-Howard & Tyler, 1986; Leventhal, 1976, 1980; Leventhal, Karuza & Fry, 1980), the GVM distinguished between motives related to instrumental concerns, with those related to concerns such as factors linked to the type of treatment received from authority figures (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The GVM was based on the assumption that being a member of a group is psychological rewarding and people value this membership and try to maintain their belonging (Lind & Tyler, 1988). According to the GVM, factors such as receiving outcomes perceived as being unfairly low from a procedure, or treated poorly by authority figures during a procedure, provides information to group members about their social standing (Tyler & Smith, 1988).

The GVM further outlined several processes assumed within the model to be relevant to people in regards to procedural justice. These processes include: the neutrality of the decision making procedure, trust in the authority controlling the procedure, and evidence about social standing of the ingroup (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The neutrality of the decision making procedure refers to the perspective that people will
observe whether an authority figure has created a neutral context in which their issue will be resolved (Tyler, 1989). Trust refers to the belief that the authority figure will act in a fair manner (Tyler, 1989). In addition, if people perceive that the authority figures are acting in a trustworthy manner, commitment to the group increases (Tyler, 1989). Finally, treatment by the authority figure provides information to a person about his or her standing in the group. For example, being treated respectfully by an authority figure informs a person that they are perceived to have high status within the group, whereas disrespectful treatment suggests the authority figure regards that person as being a low status member of the group (Tyler, 1989).

The GVM was tested via a field study on 176 organisational members undergoing a change process. Results confirmed the predictions of the GVM, that there was a relationship between relational judgements and pride in the group, as well as respect within the group (Sousa & Vala, 2002). Within this study, results provided evidence that one of the most relevant justice aspects for participants was procedural aspects of their relationship with organisational authorities, as opposed to distributive judgements (Sousa & Vala, 2002). Sousa and Vala (2002, p. 166) suggested the results of this study indicated that within an organisational conflict situation between employees and their supervisors, treatment perceived as positive by employees “contributes to positive behavioural orientations toward the organisation”. More recent research by Huo, Binning and Molina (2009) on public school students also suggested that the relationship between people and their relevant groups was important for both commitment to that group and psychological wellbeing. That Within an organisational merger context, these results suggest if members of pre-merger subgroups evaluate treatment by the authority figures as positive, and evaluate the decision-making procedures as just, this may lead to positive attitudes towards the post-merger
superordinate group and increase the likelihood of creating an organically pluralistic state.

Tyler and Blader (2000; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Blader & Tyler, 2009; 2013) extended the exploration of the influence of procedural justice on groups in the Group Engagement Model (GEM). The GEM suggests that the experience of procedural justice is an important factor in predicting whether group members will exhibit rule following and helping behaviour. Within the GEM, two important aspects of groups are contrasted: the identity implications for the group member and resources gained or lost as a result of the membership with that group (Tyler & Blader, 2003). The GEM asserts that one of the reasons people engage in groups is that information from groups is used by people to develop and maintain a favourable identity. This, in turn, is hypothesised to influence cooperation within a group. Within the model, three aspects of social identity are outlined: identification (people align their sense of self and self-worth with the judgements and status of their group), pride (people’s self-evaluation of the status of the group) and respect (people’s self-evaluation of their own status within the group) (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

Within the GEM, two core procedural elements are outlined as important to procedural justice: quality of decision making by authority figures in control of the process, and quality of treatment experienced. The model also introduced types of cooperative behaviour (including the function and form of the behaviour) and also potential motivators of group behaviour (Tyler & Blader, 2000; 2003). These behaviours are mandatory cooperative behaviour (i.e., behaviour stipulated by the group) and discretionary cooperative behaviour (i.e., behaviour that originates from the group member) (Tyler & Blader, 2003). These two types of cooperative behaviour are also distinguished by the motivational source of each type. As it is linked to behaviour
sanctioned by the group, mandatory cooperative behaviour is often dependent on
specific group-based incentives in order to encourage this type of behaviour (Tyler &
Blader, 2003). Conversely, discretionary cooperative behaviours are linked to
motivations of group members (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Within the GEM, discretionary
cooperative behaviour is emphasised as being particularly beneficial, as this type of
behaviour does not rely, like mandatory cooperative behaviour, on group-based
sanctions or incentives (Tyler & Blader, 2000; 2003). The GEM proposes a circular
relationship between procedural justice processes and group processes. That is, the
willingness of a group member to cooperate with his or her group (particularly
discretionary cooperative behaviour) is linked to identity information he or she receives
from the group. This identity information, as explained by the GEM, is generated from
“evaluations of procedural fairness experienced by the group” (Tyler & Blader, 2003; p.
353). Procedural justice, as outlined in the GEM, is perceived by people to be
particularly important as it provides very useful identity-related information about their
group (Tyler & Blader, 2003). In this way, fair treatment for group members can lead to
an increase in self-enhancement (Sousa & Vala, 2002; Tyler, Degoey & Smith, 1996).

Tyler and Blader (2000) found preliminary support for the model in the analysis of
survey data collected from 404 employees and from two field studies (Blader & Tyler,
2009).

Aligning with the principals of SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the GEM argues
that identification with a group will impact on the type of behaviours an individual will
engage in within a group, and that fairness (or not) of procedures provides useful
information to people about their group and themselves (Tyler & Blader, 2000; 2003).
Thus, the meaning of procedural justice to group members, the procedural justice they
experience, connections to the group as well as motivators for cooperation, all lead to
types of collaborative behaviour in group members (see Tyler & Blader, 2000; Blader & Tyler, 2013).

3.3.2 Summary

Research has confirmed that people care about procedural justice (see Folger, 1977; Thibaut & Walker, 1975) and that within procedural justice, there are various factors that influence whether a process is perceived as fair or not, and how members accordingly react to fair and unfair procedures (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2000). Chapter Two identified one goal of an organisational merger may be to create an organically pluralistic post-merger superordinate identity. Within Chapter Two, types of positive behaviours exhibited by employees within an organisation classified as Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs) were introduced. Further to this, within Chapter Two it was posited that the organisational context that promotes OCBs may also increase, in employees, attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. There is similarity between the type of behaviours that would be identified as supporting organically pluralism (i.e., working cooperatively in the superordinate group) with those outlined as enhancing cooperative behaviours in the GEM. This suggests that procedural fairness can play an important part in developing an organisational merger that generates attitudes supportive of an organically pluralistic post-merger identity. Furthermore, the GEM suggests a procedurally fair process could also lead to increased identification with the organisational group(s) involved in the merger.

Additionally, application of the GVM to an organisational merger context suggests if the merger is perceived as fair, subgroup members are likely to perceive they are valued by their group and by authority figures in control of the merger. This may, in turn, lead to positive behavioural outcomes that support, as noted above, organic
pluralism. Therefore, an overview of the GVM and GEM suggests that procedural justice could be an important factor in assisting members of subgroups facing an organisational merger to accept the introduction of the superordinate group identity, as well as the presence of subgroup identities within this group.

Chapter Two emphasised that the preferred intervention to effectively manage subgroup identities within an organisational merger is likely to be process-based. As noted earlier in this chapter, one factor shown to enhance perceptions of procedural justice was the element of voice opportunity. Providing participants with the ability to provide input into a procedure was shown to enhance perceptions of fairness (Folger, 1977; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Walker et al., 1979). Therefore, the impact of voice opportunity on procedural justice within an organisational setting will be explored, with particular attention to organisational merger contexts.

3.4 Process Control as Procedural Justice: Voice opportunity within an organisational merger

3.4.1 Introduction

As noted, perceptions of procedural (and even distributive) fairness can be increased by allowing group members to have input into a decision making context (Haslam et al., 2003; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 1987). Since the early work on procedural justice, the utility of voice opportunity in regards to increasing perceptions of fairness about organisational processes has steadily grown in interest to researchers (see Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006). Upon reviewing a decade of merger literature, Cartwright and Schoenberg (2006) concluded that allowing employees opportunity to voice their opinions within an organisational merger not only promotes the perception
that the process will be fair, but that the input from the group they belong to is seen by organisational authority members as valued. This perception of being valued by authority members subsequently reinforces a sense of belonging. Conversely, excluding employees from the organisational merger can lead to uncertainty in employees and increased negative feelings towards the process (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Jetten et al., 2002). Having the opportunity to provide input into a process is emphasised in justice research as an important factor affecting whether or not a process is perceived as fair (Fodchuk & Sherman, 2008; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). If denied voice opportunity, for example, employees facing a merger may perceive they have no opportunity to add to information being used as part of the merger, or of how the superordinate identity looks post-merger. Therefore, seeking input from group members in an organisational merger may lead to an increase in these feelings of control, a subsequent increase in perceptions of procedural fairness, as well as a possible increase in attitudes supportive of organic pluralism.

3.4.2 Voice opportunity: Benefits and potential problems

Providing group members with an opportunity to input into a decision-making process is linked to benefits that go beyond increasing perceptions of fairness. As noted earlier in this chapter, voice input can be instrumental or non-instrumental (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Originally, Thibaut and Walker (1975) discussed the manner in which disputants within a legal dispute, who are given an opportunity to put forward their case, can have an instrumental impact on the outcome of the dispute. Thus, instrumental voice opportunity occurs when participants in a process can provide input that may influence the outcome. Instrumental voice opportunity, as part of this influence, provides individuals with an opportunity to advance their own interests by attempting to
influence the outcome in their favour (Shapiro & Brett, 2005). Later research identified the non-instrumental opportunity afforded by voice (Tyler, 1987; Tyler & Lind, 1992). The non-instrumental benefit connected with voice is associated with the belief that allowing individuals or groups to have their say (even though it may not have an impact on the outcome) provides information about the standing of the individuals or groups who were given the voice opportunity (Lind & Tyler, 1988). That is, the individuals or groups are valued enough by the authority in control of the process to be given an opportunity to provide input into that process.

The provision of both instrumental and non-instrumental voice has been observed to increase perceptions of fairness (Pease et al., 1988; Tyler, 1987). Early research indicated providing a situation where one’s voice is heard (non-instrumental voice) and is taken into consideration (instrumental voice) by authorities, heightens feelings of satisfaction about the decision process (Shapiro, 1993; Tyler, 1987). In addition, research suggests that group members who are given a non-instrumental voice opportunity may lead them to be satisfied with an outcome, so long as they believed their feedback was at least considered by the authorities in control of the process (Avery & Quinones, 2002; Cawley, Keeping & Levy, 1998; Pease et al., 1988; Tyler, 1987).

In order to examine the instrumental effect of voice, Korsgaard and Roberson (1995) observed the impact of instrumental and non-instrumental voice in 168 management level employees and measured their attitudes towards performance appraisals. Results demonstrated both types of voice opportunity predicted satisfaction with the performance appraisal, but the variable of “trust for manager” was uniquely related to non-instrumental voice (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). Within the context of these results, Korsgaard and Roberson (1995) posited that instrumental voice was more important in regards to impacting attitudes on decisions of allocation whereas non-
instrumental voice was more important regarding attitudes towards management (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995).

The provision of voice opportunity to people leads to increased perceptions of fairness in comparison to conditions where voice opportunity is absent or denied (Folger, 1977; Konovsky, 2000). The influence of voice opportunity on perceptions of fairness may be impacted by the amount of control authority figures have over the outcome of a process. For example, van Prooijen, van Den Bos and Wilke (2007) conducted two experiments in which they manipulated outcome dependence and voice, and analysed the impact of these factors on perception of fairness and of the procedure. Within this study, outcome dependence was defined as how much participants believed their outcomes depended on the decisions of authorities, and voice opportunity was manipulated between voice and no voice conditions (Van Prooijen et al., 2007). Findings of this study suggested the positive effects of voice on perceptions of fairness were reduced when participants were exposed to conditions where the outcome was strongly dependent on authorities (Van Prooijen et al., 2007). This impact was not found in no-voice conditions. These findings suggest that in situations in which people perceive they are strongly outcome dependent on authorities, they may not entirely trust the voice opportunity provided by that authority (see Van Prooijen et al., 2007). These results are particularly relevant to an organisational merger, where, as discussed in Chapter Two, the authorities in control of the merger could be perceived as outgroup members, and where the outcome of the merger is likely perceived by subgroup members to be strongly in the hands of these authorities. Therefore, it is important to examine whether voice opportunity could impact on perceptions of fairness within such a context, as well as assist in promoting attitudes conducive to a shared, common post-merger identity.
3.4.3 Summary

Early research into voice found provision of voice opportunity led to higher perceptions of fairness than situations where no opportunity for voice was provided and there is general agreement in justice literature there are benefits to providing voice (Folger, 1977; Konovsky, 2000). People, across a variety of experiments, consistently care about how they are treated in procedures, and, therefore, voice opportunity presents itself as a useful strategy to consider when seeking to increase perceptions of fairness within an organisational merger.

3.5 Creating a procedurally just organisational merger

3.5.1 Introduction

This thesis has introduced theories of procedural and distributive justice and examined the impact of providing and not providing process control (voice) to individuals. This chapter has provided an overview of literature espousing the benefits of voice opportunity on procedural fairness, and has outlined some motivations for seeking to increase perceptions of fairness within an organisational merger. To whit, this thesis now aims to outline the benefits of increasing perceptions of fairness within an organisational merger, and subsequently provide evidence to support the application of voice opportunity within a merger.
3.5.2 The benefits of creating a merger that is perceived as fair

There is substantial research into the positive outcomes of fair procedures on groups (see Kim & Mauborgne, 1996; Lind, Kanfer & Earley, 1990; Vermunt, Knippenberg, Knippenberg, & Blauuw, 2001). For example, when group members (employees) perceive their treatment by an organisation has been fair, there is an increase in employee identification (Edwards & Peccei, 2010; Terry & Jimmieson, 2003) and in collaborative, extra-role behaviours (Kim & Mauborgne, 1996). The benefits of a procedurally fair organisational merger can also include increased identification with the post-merger superordinate identity. For example, Lipponen, Olkkonen and Moilanen (2004) found that, in a field study of a merger of two service organisations, perceptions of procedural justice was a strong predictor for post-merger organisational identification. Further, Lipponen et al. (2004) found employees who perceived the merger was fair reported an increase in their perception of a common ingroup (also see Gaertner et al., 1993). This aligns with research undertaken by Huo, Smith, Tyler and Lind (1996) into ethnically diverse groups of employees and their relationships with authorities. The research by Huo et al. (1996; p. 45) found that an experience of fair treatment allowed employees to “overlook minor inconveniences” and maintain their commitment to the organisational group.

A longitudinal study of a merger of educational organisations undertaken by Gleibs et al. (2008) showed that perceived fairness throughout a merger may lead to increased levels of post-merger identification, suggesting that the process of being fair may have affected how positively participants perceived the new organisation. This result aligned with a previous study into an airline merger undertaken by Terry et al. (1996), that found a link between a) perceptions that the merger was implemented in a fair manner and b) positive attitudes towards the merger itself. Therefore, creating a
merger that is perceived as being fair is likely to increase positive perceptions towards a merger, and may increase the likelihood employees identify with the post-merger superordinate identity.

The research by Lipponen et al. (2004) provided support for the prediction that perceiving a merger as fair is important to employees; however, the researchers only collected data on perceptions of fairness and were not able to report on what actually made the process seem fair. Collection of these data did occur during a study of a merger of two police organisations by Bartels et al. (2006). This study found those employees who felt they were involved in the decision making process of the merger reported higher levels of expectation they would identify with the new post-merger organisation (Bartels et al., 2006). The results of this study suggested employee involvement in an organisational merger, as posited in Chapter Two, could be an effective strategy in promoting attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. This involvement in the organisational merger could be facilitated through the provision of voice opportunity to members of pre-merger subgroups.

3.5.3 Creating a fair merger: The potential impact of pre-merger subgroup status

As outlined above, increasing perceptions of fairness about an organisational merger can have beneficial results, such as an increased likelihood that pre-merger subgroup members will identify with the post-merger superordinate identity. Research into procedural justice examined within this chapter has also indicated that voice opportunity can increase perceptions of fairness regarding a process, as well as the outcome of that process. However, within Chapter Two, the factor of pre-merger status was identified as important in understanding the self-enhancement strategy group members would choose within an organisational merger, and whether they would expect
continuity of their subgroup, or organisational dominance in the post-merger context. Further, the research summarised in Chapter Two suggested that in some cases, members of high status pre-merger subgroups may perceive their subgroup as more prototypical of the superordinate group than members of the low status pre-merger subgroup. In an organisational merger, this perception may impact on the utility of voice opportunity. For example, research by Kessler, Mummendey, Funke, Brown, Binder, Zagelka, Leyens, Demoulin and Maquil (2010) into perceptions of ingroup prototypicality and prejudice against immigrants in Germany found links between perceived prototypicality, and prejudicial and competitive tendencies expressed against the minority group. The less prototypical a subgroup was perceived to be, the less likely it was seen to have a legitimate right to a voice in regards to representing the superordinate group (i.e. Germans) (Kessler et al., 2010).

As noted in Chapter Two, the Ingroup Projection model predicts that members from a high status subgroup are more likely to perceive their subgroup attributes as more prototypical of the superordinate identity than members from the low status subgroup (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Therefore, the results of these different lines of research suggest that, within an organisational merger, members from the high status subgroup are more likely to perceive their subgroup as prototypical of the post-merger superordinate group, and hence, have more legitimate right to a voice within the merger. If supported by evidence, this notion suggests not only do members from the high status subgroup support interventions where they are dominant because it maintains their status (see Amiot et al., 2007; Dovodio et al., 2007; Giessner et al., 2006; Täuber & van Leeuwen, 2012), but that they also support these type of interventions because they reflect, in their eyes, the legitimate distribution of input within a merger situation. That is, as they are members of the subgroup more representative of the post-merger group,
they perceive this entitles them to a greater say in the development of the post-merger superordinate group identity.

Giving one subgroup a greater level of voice opportunity within an organisational merger may impact perceptions of influence on the outcome of the merger. Recent research undertaken into instrumental voice suggested that process control, while increasing perceptions of fairness, also increases the belief that the receiver will influence the outcome in his or her own favour (Hildreth, Moor & Blader, 2014). In a study of 129 undergraduate students, Hildreth et al. (2014) manipulated voice and outcome to observe whether voice opportunity created a shared circumstance effect. A shared circumstance effect was defined as the phenomenon where individuals neglect to consider the fact that a shared circumstance, such as favourable race conditions or difficulty of a quiz, would affect other people in that shared circumstance in a similar manner to themselves (Hildreth et al., 2014). For example, within a yacht race, a shared circumstance effect would describe the situation where a crew would believe a favourable wind would increase their chances of winning the race, without taking into consideration the fact that all other crews would benefit equally from the same wind. The study by Hildreth et al. (2014) was intended to identify whether the provision of voice to all participants would subsequently increase the belief in participants that they would win (i.e., shared circumstance effect). Results supported their hypothesis, and suggested that, when all members of a process in which limited resources are to be distributed receive voice, they all believe that their group will be favoured in the distribution of the rewards.

As previously noted, within an organisational merger it is likely that one pre-merger subgroup will have higher status than other pre-merger subgroups. Following the research described above, members of this pre-merger subgroup may perceive their
subgroup as more deserving of voice opportunity within the organisational merger. If they are subsequently provided greater access to voice opportunity than another subgroup, they are then more likely to expect that the outcome of the organisational merger will align with any requests they have raised as part of their voice opportunity. If the outcome of the merger does not align with their input, members provided with greater voice opportunity within a process are more likely to express disappointment with the outcome they are provided with, than members who have less voice opportunity (see Folger, 1977). Therefore, in an organisational merger, members of the high status pre-merger subgroup may perceive their subgroup as more prototypical of the superordinate group, more deserving of voice opportunity in the merger and more likely to receive the merger outcome they request. As a result, the impact of pre-merger status is deemed, within the thesis, to be an important factor to consider when implementing voice opportunity within an organisational merger.

3.6 Conclusion

A number of important points emerge from Chapters Two and Three which are central to the research question of this thesis. Firstly, organisational mergers often have a negative impact on employees; therefore, organisations should seek out those strategies which will reduce this negativity and foster identification in the post-merger organisation. Giving people input into a organisational merger can help groups and their members experience procedural justice, which increases perceptions of fairness which, in turn, can lead to positive feelings about the post-merger superordinate identity. However, group processes (as outlined in SIT and SCT) may lead to a situation in which each group seeks the process or outcome that benefits their group the most. Thus, there is potential disagreement between groups about what constitutes a fair or just process.
This suggests that it may be difficult to design an intervention into a merger that all pre-merger subgroup members accept and that leads to a fully functioning post-merger organisation.

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate whether there is a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of difference status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group). As noted in Chapter Two, such are the complexities surrounding the issues of distribution of rewards and resources in an intergroup context (especially where status is involved) that it is difficult to imagine a “one fits all” model that can assist an organisation that is in the process of deciding how to construct a fair merger. Consideration of fair process may be tempered by factors such as pre-merger subgroup status and the voice opportunities available to the merger personnel.

At the conclusion of the literature review chapters, a number of outstanding issues remain to be examined in order to answer the research question of this thesis. Chapter Four will draw out the assumptions of this thesis based on the previous research discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Further to these assumptions, Chapter Four will outline the central hypotheses tested as part of this thesis and provide a brief outline of the empirical program of the thesis. The proceeding chapters will present studies undertaken to test sub-hypotheses relevant to the central hypotheses which will then be summarised in the final discussion chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical and Empirical examinations of the Thesis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters of this thesis focused on a discussion of the relevant research literature. This chapter summarises the findings of the literature review and draws out the main assumptions of this thesis. These assumptions will be held to be “true” within this thesis and will not be directly tested. That is, they have been tested and explored by a variety of researchers and have held up against research scrutiny. In addition, this chapter will outline the central hypotheses developed from the assumptions that will be tested as part of the empirical program.

4.2 Assumptions

As covered in Chapter Two, organisational mergers occur for a variety of reasons, and may have a negative psychological impact on affected employees, as well as threatening valued subgroup identities (i.e., distinctiveness threat) (Banal-Estañol, 2011; Fried et al., 1996; Hauschild et al., 1994; Idel et al., 2003; Jetten et al., 2002; Terry et al., 1996). As a direct result of this, the primary motivation for strategically managing an organisational merger is to mitigate the potential for a negative impact on the affected employees and, thus, ensure a transition process that facilitates the effective functioning of the post-merger organisation. Therefore, the following assumption is made within this thesis:

Assumption 1: Organisational mergers can have a negative impact, including increasing distinctiveness threat, on employees.
As discussed in Chapter Two, the organisational literature has found evidence linking organisational identification with supposed good worker behaviours such as those covered within the classification of OCBs (e.g., Boroş, Curşeu, & Miclea, 2011; Haslam et al., 2006; van Dick et al., 2006; van Knippenberg, 2000; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). Given the negative impact mergers may have on employees, it is argued that, therefore, there is benefit for those in charge of organisational mergers to seek strategies to reduce the impact and to foster employee identification with the post-merger organisation. There are a variety of strategies available that focus on working with subgroups facing organisational mergers.

Chapter Two examined various models for the management of pre- and post-merger identities. These included identity-based models that focused on the post-merger superordinate identity, such as the CIIM (Gaertner et al., 1993) and subgroup continuity models that recommended the preservation of pre-merger subgroups (e.g., the MIDM; Hewstone, 1996; Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Finally, Chapter Two examined the effectiveness of one process-based intervention, specifically the ASPIRe model (Haslam et al., 2002). At the conclusion of these discussions, it was argued that, in order for an organisation to be fully functioning in the post-merger context, there needs to be cooperation, rather than conflict between subgroups, as well as the acceptance of the existence and role of each pre-merger subgroup. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the next assumption regarding the goal of an organisational merger is made:

**Assumption 2:** The goal of any organisational merger is to reach a state where all members, as part of the superordinate post-merger organisational group, agree to and accept the presence of each pre-merger subgroup.
As noted in Chapter Two, Haslam (2001) described this state as organic pluralism. In order to operate effectively within an organically pluralistic group, each pre-merger subgroup should be valued, accepted and incorporated into the superordinate identity and no intergroup conflict should be present (see Haslam, 2001; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). For the purposes of this thesis, the depiction of a preferred post-merger state will be based on the organic pluralism narrative.

Within Chapter Two it was argued that there is no clearly defined best practice process regarding an organisational merger. As was emphasised within that chapter, organisational mergers will continue to occur into the future. Therefore, it is beneficial to pursue effective strategies that assist in creating a post-merger context in which all employees identify with the post-merger agency and accept the presence of members from other pre-merger subgroups.

As indicated in Chapter Two, an organisational group has meaning to members (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Further, as posited by SIT, as an individual moves along the categorisation continuum towards self-perception as a group member, intra and intergroup behaviours become relevant (Turner & Reynolds, 2001). Therefore, in an organisational context, identification with an organisational group provides self-referential utility (Boroş et al., 2011; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). And, as emphasised in Chapter Two, an organisational merger context may make the pre-merger identity salient for members, possibly leading to increased identification with the pre-merger subgroup (Ellemers, 2003; Jetten et al., 2002; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001).

As assumed in this thesis (A2), the goal in a merger is to create a post-merger organisational group in which all group members feel their pre-merger subgroup is accepted and incorporated. Most importantly, the relationship between the groups
should be characterised by a lack of intergroup conflict. However, as outlined in Chapters Two and Three, within an organisational merger, intergroup context is often enhanced by the merger. Therefore, in line with the theories of SIT and SCT, it is likely that in an intergroup situation, group members will pursue group-based self-enhancement strategies (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1985, 1999). That is, they will make comparisons with the subgroup outgroup in a manner that favours their subgroup ingroup. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis the following assumption is made:

**Assumption 3: Group members will seek comparisons that favour their ingroup and choose strategies that provide them with a positive and distinct social identity.**

Chapters Two and Three explored a number of strategies that group members can use to maintain a positive social identity. These include social mobility, social change or social creativity strategies (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Of particular relevance to this thesis is another method of ingroup enhancement, ingroup projection, where group members tend to represent the superordinate category in a way that makes their subgroup ingroup appear to be relatively more prototypical than the outgroup (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). That is, they may infer high relative prototypicality of their subgroup in relation to the superordinate identity over the other subgroup, thus achieving positive distinctiveness. This strategy may be used in response to an intergroup context created by an organisational merger:

**Assumption 4: Group members may refer to a salient superordinate category in order to evaluate their group standing by psychologically representing their subgroup as more prototypical of the superordinate group than the outgroup.**
However, as outlined by Wenzel et al. (2008), disagreement may occur between groups on this relative prototypicality and any subsequent allocations of resources based on this prototypicality. In summary, the more prototypical of the superordinate group subgroup members perceive their subgroup to be, the more resources they perceive their subgroup is entitled to in relation to the other, less prototypical, subgroup. Therefore, it is argued that, in line with the stated goal of achieving an organically pluralistic post-merger organisation in the post-merger context, all pre-merger subgroup members must agree on the relative prototypicality of each subgroup in order for their relationship to be stable and positive. However, as discussed during Chapters Two and Three, there is no agreed best practice manner in which to achieve this state. It was not entirely clear from the literature examined during Chapters Two and Three what was the most appropriate strategy to use when developing an organisational merger.

In Chapter Two, various models suggesting the best methods to manage pre- and post-merger organisational identities to ensure a successful outcome were compared. It was argued models that relied on being able to control the appearance or make-up of the post-merger organisation may not be able to be applied realistically in many merger situations. Therefore, it was concluded it would be more helpful to focus on process-based interventions. Chapter Three drew upon the relevant justice literature in order to examine the factors that were important in administering a process all members perceived as fair.

Chapter Three provided a brief summary of the history of justice literature, including the importance of Thibaut and Walker’s (1975) seminal work on procedural justice. This chapter also covered models such as the GVM (Lind & Tyler, 1988) and the GEM (Tyler & Blader, 2000; 2003). In addition, this chapter reviewed publications researching the importance and effect of procedural justice in an intergroup context (see
Avery & Quiñones, 2002; Gleibs et al., 2008; Lipponen et al., 2004; Vermunt et al., 2001). In reviewing the justice literature, it was shown there was general agreement about the benefits of procedural (and distributive) fairness both in terms of affirming the importance or status of a group and having a positive impact on group behaviour for members who have experienced a fair process (see Boroş et al., 2011; Platow, Trosej, Grace & Ryan, 2006; van Knippenberg, 2000). Therefore, considering the focus of this thesis, in relation to fairness in an organisational merger context, the following additional assumption is also made:

**Assumption 5:** Fairness is an important factor within a decision making process, and a process that is seen as fair by group members will increase positive feelings towards, and identification with, the post-merger superordinate group.

Chapter Three emphasised relevant literature that demonstrated the importance of giving individuals the opportunity to participate in a process (e.g., through provision of voice). Research examined in this chapter suggested the provision of voice to group members can increase perceptions that a process is fair, even within an organisational merger (e.g., Amiot et al., 2006; Terry et al., 1996). While the provision of either instrumental and non-instrumental voice is likely to be perceived as more procedurally fair than denial of voice, instrumental voice is more normatively fair than non-instrumental voice (Pease et al., 1988; Tyler, 1987). Therefore, providing voice opportunities during an organisational merger for subgroup members may increase perceptions of fairness of and positive attitudes towards the merger.

**Assumption 6:** Providing an instrumental voice opportunity to people within a decision making process will be seen as procedurally fair.
As noted within Chapter Three, if members of groups experience procedural fairness this may lead to an increase in attitudes conducive to organic pluralism such as cooperative behaviours, as well as the belief in a common superordinate ingroup (see Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Lipponen et al., 2004). Therefore, in this way, within Chapter Three it was suggested that the provision of instrumental voice could increase perceptions of fairness as well as perceptions of organic pluralism. In addition, the provision of instrumental voice to people was perceived as having the additional benefit of reducing the tendency of members of subgroups to use the identity protection strategy of ingroup projection.

As the relevant social and organisational-psychological research were examined within Chapters Two and Three, the importance of group status became apparent. Further, as was highlighted from a number of studies, high and low status groups appeared to respond to organisational mergers in different ways (e.g., Giessner et al., 2006; Gleibs et al., 2010). Members from high status groups will tend to seek to maintain their existing subgroup ingroup (thus retaining a positive social identity), and members from low status groups will be motivated to enhance their social identity through the most available strategy (e.g., social creativity, social change) (Jetten et al., 2002; Terry et al., 2001). As noted from studies reviewed in Chapter Two (Amiot et al., 2007), in any organisational merger, it is likely that one pre-merger subgroup will have higher status than the other.

**Assumption 7: When examining best practice in regards to an organisational merger, the factor of pre-merger subgroup status must be assessed and taken into account.**

The organisational merger literature reviewed in Chapter Three suggested that members from high status subgroups facing an organisational merger were more likely
to expect dominance in the post-merger context (i.e., continuity of their subgroup). In addition, it is predicted that, as members from high status subgroups are likely to perceive the merger less negatively, they will report higher levels of perceived fairness and report higher levels of organic pluralism than members from the low status pre-merger subgroup, regardless of with what voice opportunity they are provided.

Therefore, along with consideration of assumptions A3, A4 and A7, the first central hypothesis for the thesis is:

**H1: In an organisational merger context, members from a high status pre-merger subgroup will be more likely to perceive continuity of their group (i.e., through higher perceptions of shared prototypicality with the superordinate group), report higher levels of perceived fairness and report higher levels of organic pluralism that members from a low status pre-merger subgroup.**

*Figure 4.1. Conceptual figure of central hypothesis 1.*
As outlined in Assumptions 5 and 6, procedural justice is expected to lead to increased perceived fairness and to attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. In addition, a procedurally fair process is expected to reduce the propensity of subgroup members to use the identity protection strategy of ingroup projection, thus leading to lower reported levels of perceived subgroup ingroup prototypicality. Therefore, it is predicted when provided with instrumental voice, subgroup members will report higher levels of organic pluralism and perceived fairness and lower levels of shared prototypicality than in conditions where they are not provided with instrumental voice. This prediction is the second central hypothesis for the thesis:

**H2:** When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of organic pluralism and higher perceptions of fairness of the merger and lower perceptions of shared prototypicality with the post-merger group (i.e., less ingroup projection) than under conditions where they are not given instrumental voice.
As stated previously, members from high and low status subgroups are likely to respond to an organisational merger in different ways. In addition, members from subgroups of different status are likely to have different expectations of the merger (e.g., members from the high status subgroup are likely to have higher expectations of continuity of subgroup). The variance in expectations from these subgroup members may also be present in perceptions of procedural justice. As suggested in Chapter Three, members from high status subgroups may perceive their subgroup as more prototypical of the post-merger superordinate group, and hence, see voice distribution that favours their group as a legitimate. Conversely, members from low status groups may perceive that voice opportunity should be equally distributed. As noted, members from subgroups of different status are also likely to pursue strategies within a merger that will lead to maintenance of a positive social identity. This pattern is expected to be reproduced when procedural justice is introduced into an organisational merger. It is predicted that members from subgroups of different status will respond differently to the
provision of voice opportunity within an organisational merger. As noted, the intergroup context of an organisational merger also brings with it the tendency of groups to choose strategies that enhance their own group (ingroup bias). This tendency to favour the ingroup also can affect perceptions of fairness (Platow, Wenzel & Nolan, 2003). That is, what is perceived as fair by one group may not be seen as fair by another (Platow et al., 2003). Consequently, in an organisational merger, what is perceived as fair by members of low status groups may not be seen as fair by members of high status groups.

Within procedural justice, Chapter Three highlighted the importance of distribution of control (i.e., process control and decision control) within a decision-making context (Thibaut & Walker, 1978). As noted by Platow and OBrien (2009) this distribution can align with distributive justice rules, however, perceptions of resource distribution may differ across context (Platow, Wenzel & Nolan, 2003). For example, in a study on the effect of a leader’s distributive and procedural fairness, Platow, Reid and Andrew (1998) manipulated the distribution of voice opportunity by an authority figure and found that perceptions of procedural and distributive fairness can vary across intra and intergroup contexts. The endorsement of a procedural fair authority figure over a procedurally unfair one weakened in an intergroup context where the unfair distribution of voice favoured the ingroup over the outgroup (Platow, Reid and Andrew, 1998).

Within an organisational merger, it is expected that each subgroup of differing status will apply different distributive justice principles to procedural justice. That is, within an organisational merger scenario it is expected that members of the high-status pre-merger group will perceive it more fair to distribute voice based on equity (see Adams, 1965; Homans, 1961; Walster et al., 1973). These members may perceive that their subgroup brings higher inputs and outcomes to the merger than the low status group, thus the distribution of voice to their subgroup is perceived as more fair.
Conversely, members of the low status group are expected to support an egalitarian approach to the distribution of resources, seeking to distribute voice equally across the subgroups. This prediction is the third central hypothesis for the thesis:

**H3: In an organisational merger context:**

- Members of a high status subgroup will perceive voice opportunities that maintain the status difference between their group and the low status group (e.g., high status receives instrumental voice, low status receives non-instrumental voice) as more fair than members from a low status group.

- Members of a low status subgroup will perceive voice opportunities that equal out status differences between the two subgroups (e.g., both subgroups are given non-instrumental voice) as more fair than members from a high status subgroup.

*Figure 4.3. Conceptual figure of central hypothesis 3.*
4.4 The thesis

As identified within the assumptions, in order to reach the stated goal of an organically pluralistic identity, all group members must agree on the relative prototypicality of their subgroups in relation to the post-merger superordinate group. Further to this, in order to increase positive attitudes towards the post-merger superordinate group and increase identification, the merger must be perceived by all group members as procedurally fair. This may be achieved through the provision of voice to group members as part of the organisational merger.

The purpose and original contribution of this thesis is to investigate whether there is a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of difference status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and to reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group).

On the basis of the Assumptions outlined in this chapter, sub-hypotheses relevant to the three central hypotheses outlined in section 4.3 will be tested as part of the empirical program of this thesis.

4.5 The empirical program

The empirical program of this thesis consists of five separate studies that tested sub-hypotheses relevant to the three central hypotheses. Two of these studies, Study 1 and Study 2, are field studies. The remainder of the studies in the program are experimental in design.

The two field studies were undertaken in order to explore the nature of an organisational merger. These studies were survey based, and were administered to
employees three months prior to an actual organisational merger with two other groups (Study 1) and twelve months after the merger had occurred (Study 2). These studies collected information on intergroup conflict and bias, perceived continuity of the pre-merger subgroup and the impact of status. These studies tested sub-hypotheses relevant to H1.

Study 3 was the first experimental study presented in this thesis and was designed to specifically test sub-hypotheses relevant to all central hypotheses of the thesis (H1, H2 and H3). This study manipulated the factors of status and voice, and tested the effect of instrumental and non-instrumental voice on attitudes relating to organic pluralism, perceptions of fairness and ingroup perceived prototypicality of the superordinate group.

Study 4 was designed to expand on the results of Study 3 with a more thorough exploration of the voice effect. That is, Study 4 included a “denial of voice” manipulation condition. Study 4 tested sub-hypotheses of the central hypotheses of H1, H2 and H3. This study sought to disentangle the differential effect of voice as a function of group status. That is, this study intended to answer the question of whether it matters to members of high status pre-merger subgroups what kind of voice the members of the low status pre-merger subgroup are given and vice versa.

Study 5 focused on the predicted different reactions of high and low status members to an organisational merger. Specifically, it sought to explore the relationship between ingroup favouring behaviour in an organisational merger to the attitudes relevant to organic pluralism. In this final study, data were collected to complete the investigation into whether the provision of a consistent process for providing input into an organisational merger would lead to more a positive intergroup perception.
4.6 Conclusion

This chapter, Chapter Four, summarised the relevant, specific psychological processes that may affect the ability of managers and general employees to reach a positive outcome from an organisational merger. More specifically, it was outlined that, in order to reach an organically pluralistic state, pre-merger subgroup members must accept and value the existence of each subgroup in the post-merger context. Further, it was noted that group members may respond to an organisational merger by referring to the post-merger superordinate group in order for them to evaluate their own pre-merger subgroup. This strategy for self-enhancement involves subgroup members inferring higher prototypicality of their subgroup with the post-merger superordinate group over the other subgroup. Thus, the subgroup members emphasise the prototypicality of their subgroup, over other subgroups, with the superordinate group. In addition, it was emphasised that by allowing subgroups to have input into the planning phase of a merger, it may increase perceptions of fairness and, subsequently, increase positive feelings towards the merger and the post-merger group. Finally, the complexity of the intergroup context was highlighted when status is taken into consideration. That is, members of high and low status groups can desire different outcomes from a merger, and may perceive different processes as being fair.

Within Chapter Four, the assumptions of the thesis and the central hypotheses for the thesis were stated and an outline of the empirical program of this thesis was provided. The first of the empirical chapters follows in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER FIVE

The impact of intergroup conflict, subgroup continuity and status on organic pluralism: Two field studies

5.1 Introduction

Chapters Two and Three outlined various reactions of subgroup members to an organisational merger that have been identified by previous research. Researchers in the field of organisational psychology have used the term organisational dominance to describe the situation where the norms, values and attitudes of one pre-merger subgroup are more influential in the post-merger context than the group values of any other subgroup (see van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Vuuren et al., 2010). Specifically, members of high status subgroups may be more likely to perceive they will have organisational dominance in the post-merger context (van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001); however, members from the low status subgroup may perceive themselves as being dominated in the post-merger context and, therefore, perceive the superordinate group as an “outgroup” (van Vuuren et al., 2010). Members from high status subgroups are, thus, more likely to expect continuity of their subgroup in the post-merger context than would members from the low status subgroup. Within this thesis, literature has been reviewed demonstrating that subgroup members will project prototypicality of their subgroup onto the post-merger subordinate group. Results from this literature suggest the tendency to expect continuity of one’s subgroup in a post-merger context increases the salience of the intergroup context, and also leads to decreased levels of attitudes conducive to organic pluralism.
Chapter Five begins the exploration of the relevant social-psychological processes, as outlined in Chapter Four, in the context of real world organisational mergers (i.e., outside the laboratory). The aim of the studies undertaken in Chapter Five was to gain further understanding of the identified relevant psychological concepts such as organic pluralism. To address these aims two small field studies (Studies 1 and 2) were conducted within three government organisations (Agency A, Agency B, Agency C) undergoing an organisational merger. In Chapter Four, three main hypotheses central to this thesis were stated (H1, H2 and H3). Studies 1 and 2 began by testing sub-hypotheses relevant to the first central hypothesis (H1):

**H1:** In an organisational merger context, members from a high status pre-merger subgroup will be more likely to perceive continuity of their group (i.e., through higher perceptions of shared prototypicality with the superordinate group), report higher levels of perceived fairness and report higher levels of organic pluralism than members from a low status pre-merger subgroup.

As the studies were not administered in an experimental context, status was not created or manipulated. The status of each pre-merger subgroup (Agency A, Agency B, Agency C) was determined by comparing aspects of each organisation such as size, resources and reputation. In previous research, similar aspects have been used to distinguish between groups of differing status (e.g., prestige and power, (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), performance (Ellemers et al., 1990; Fischer, Greitmeyer & Frey, 2007), recognition and prestige (Sani, Magrin & Scrignaro, 2010), salary (Caricati & Monacelli, 2010) and business savvy (Scheepers, Ellemers & Sassenberg, 2013)). Therefore, these were used to differentiate between the organisations examined in Studies 1 and 2.
5.2 Study 1

Study 1 was designed to test sub-hypotheses relative to the first central hypothesis (H1). However, while designing Study 1, the researcher was only able to gain access to members of a low status pre-merger subgroup (herein called Agency B). Therefore, the sub-hypotheses for Study 1 were re-conceptualised from comparing the difference between status groups on the dependent variables of interest, to hypotheses more suited for a correlation study in which the sample consisted only of members from a low status pre-merger subgroup. As noted earlier in the thesis, a state of organic pluralism is defined as being absent of intergroup conflict. That is, members of subgroups within the superordinate group accept and value the presence of each other. Therefore, as attitudes supportive of organic pluralism increase, it is expected that attitudes linked to intergroup conflict would decrease. The first sub-hypothesis (H1.1) predicts that, in the context of an organisational merger, members of the low status pre-merger subgroup foresee the loss of a valued identity (i.e., threat to distinctiveness) and the potential to be treated as outgroup members within the post-merger superordinate group:

**H1.1**: There will be a negative relationship between perceived intergroup conflict and organic pluralism. That is, as reported levels of perceived intergroup conflict by members of the low status pre-merger subgroup increase, then their reported levels of organic pluralism will decrease.

As discussed above, expected organisational dominance of their subgroup within an organisational merger process is proposed to lead to a perceived sense of continuity for members of high status subgroups. For members of low status subgroups, it is argued that this will not be the case and perceived continuity with the organisational merger by members of the low status subgroup is derived from increased identification
with their subgroup, largely driven by threat to distinctiveness. Taking this into consideration, the following prediction is made for Study 1:

**H1.2**: There will be a negative relationship between pre-merger subgroup continuity and organic pluralism. That is, as reported levels of perceived subgroup continuity by members of the low status pre-merger subgroup increase, then their reported levels of organic pluralism will decrease.

Three government agencies (Agency A, Agency B, Agency C) were required to undergo an organisational merger in order to form a new superordinate organisation (Agency D). Study 1 focused on the merger of these three government agencies (Agency A, Agency B and Agency C). Agency A was largest in terms of budget, staffing, activity and public profile (406 staff). As discussed, factors such as size, resource allocation and reputation have previously been used in research to distinguish between groups based on status; therefore, Agency A was identified as the high status subgroup. The medium sized agency (Agency B) (64 staff) had a much smaller staff population than Agency A, as well as a much smaller budget and activity, and virtually no public profile. Agency C was the smallest of the three agencies in terms of budget and staffing (8 staff), and was located pre-merger, within a larger government department. Agency C, similar to Agency B, had a very limited public profile. For the purposes of this research, Agencies B and C were identified as low status subgroups.

A survey was provided to members of one of the pre-merger agencies (Agency B) three months prior to commencement of the organisational merger. At that time, research access was only available to employees of Agency B. Prior to participating in Study 1, the employees had been notified of the upcoming merger with two other government agencies (Agencies A and C). At this stage, staff members of Agency B had been informed of various details of the post-merger superordinate group (Agency D).
These included the name, mission statement, corporate style, and the role that Agency D would take within the Australian Public Service.

5.2.1 Method

Participants

The survey was distributed to 64 employees of a medium sized, low status government agency (Agency B – returned survey sample size of 38 staff; 59 per cent response rate) from varying branches within the agency (e.g. human resources, administration, information technology).

Materials

Employees were given a survey that contained statements that sought to measure attitudes relevant to the hypotheses (i.e., perceived continuity of the pre-merger subgroup, expectations of intergroup conflict and organic pluralism). Employees were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements on a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = “Not at all” and 7 = “Very much”. No cases had missing data and SPSS statistical software was used for subsequent analysis of the data.

Measures

1. Perceived continuity of pre-merger subgroup

Two statements were provided to employees of Agency B that sought to measure how employees from this agency anticipated continuity of their pre-merger subgroup in the post-merger organisation (Agency D) (i.e., “Our [Agency B] group will continue to exist in [Agency D]”, “The beliefs and values of [Agency B] will still be represented within [Agency D]”). The two statements had a significant positive relationship $r = .56$, $p < .01$ and were combined, via mean reduction, to form a single measure.
2. *Expectations of intergroup conflict*

Four statements were provided to Agency B employees that sought to measure their perceptions of other pre-merger subgroups (i.e., “I think [Agency A] staff will discriminate against me in [Agency D]”, “I think [Agency C] staff will discriminate against me in [Agency D]”, “I believe [Agency A] staff will have a biased perspective compared to me”), “I believe [Agency C] staff will have a biased perspective compared to me”). The four statements had good internal reliability ($\alpha = .84$) and were combined, via mean reduction, to form a single measure.

3. *Organic Pluralism*

To the author’s knowledge, at the time of conducting Study 1 there was no published, standardised scale of organic pluralism. Therefore, statements were developed that were designed to measure attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. The attitudes that were measured focused on, included whether participants saw being a member of the superordinate group as providing positive distinction (i.e., “I am happy to be classed as an employee of [Agency D]”, “I worry about being associated with [Agency D]”), whether they perceived they (and by extension, their subgroup) was accepted within the superordinate group (i.e., “I am concerned that I am not accepted in [Agency D]”) and whether they perceived representation of all subgroups in the superordinate group as negative or positive (i.e., “Having the three groups represented in [Agency D] detracts from the organisation”). The negative statements were reverse coded and the four statements measuring perceptions of the presence of the three pre-merger subgroups in the post-merger group were then tested for internal reliability. The four statements had good internal reliability ($\alpha = .82$) and were combined, via mean reduction, to form a single measure.
Procedure

Permission was granted by the executive in charge of Agency B to conduct the study and ethics approval was gained from the university. Agency B employees were notified of the study by email, and their participation was invited. All employees were notified that the study was both voluntary and anonymous and that their details would not be linked to their responses. The questionnaire was provided electronically and a receptacle was set up in a neutral location where employees could anonymously leave their forms and where others could not retrieve them. Employees were notified of a three week period during which responses would be collected.

5.2.2 Results

Linear regression analysis was performed to test sub-hypotheses H1.1 and H1.2 regarding the prediction of organic pluralism. The full-factorial model included the centred variables of perceived continuity ($M = 4.08, SD = 1.29$) and expectations of intergroup conflict ($M = 3.22, SD = 1.49$), and the interaction.

The full-factorial model was significant ($F(3,37) = 6.069, p = .002$) and explained 35% of the variance in organic pluralism. There was only one significant main effect, and the two-way interaction was not significant. The main effect for expected intergroup conflict was significant, $t = -3.87, p < .001, \beta = -.53$. This result indicated a significant negative relationship between intergroup conflict and organic pluralism, and provided support for the sub-hypothesis relating to higher levels of perceived intergroup conflict yielding lower levels of organic pluralism (H1.1). However, there was no support for the sub-hypothesis that predicted perceived continuity of the subgroup would lead to lower levels of organic pluralism (H1.2).
Post-hoc analysis was performed to test the difference between expected intergroup conflict from the high status pre-merger subgroup (Agency A) and from the low status pre-merger subgroup (Agency D). It was expected that members from the low status group participating in Study 1 (Agency B) would report higher levels of expected intergroup conflict with the members from the high status group (Agency A) compared with members from the low status group (Agency C). A $t$-test was performed on the expected intergroup conflict expected from Agency A and Agency C, and a significant difference between the two means was identified, $t(37) = 4.16, p < .001$. As expected, members from the low status group expected more intergroup conflict with members from the high status group ($M = 3.72, SD = 1.81$) than members from the low status group ($M = 2.71, SD = 1.51$). What should be noted however, is that the means of these variables fell below the mid-point (4) on the seven-point scale. This indicates that, in general, the members from the low status group reported low levels of expected conflict with members from both pre-merger subgroups.

5.2.3 Discussion

Study 1 was a preliminary investigation into the attitudes within a lower status subgroup three months prior to an organisational merger. Results from this study provided some support for one sub-hypothesis. The significant main effect for the factor of expected intergroup conflict provided support for the prediction that, for members of the low status pre-merger subgroup, expectations of intergroup conflict were associated with lower reported levels of organic pluralism. Although the expectations of intergroup conflict appeared relatively low (less than the mid-point of the scale), these still played an important role in reported levels of organic pluralism from members of the low status group.
Staff from the low status group appeared more likely to expect intergroup conflict and bias from members of the high status group, than they were from members from a group of similar (low) status. This result is consistent with findings from previous organisational merger research which suggest that low status group members are more likely to feel threatened by high status group members in an organisational merger (Fischer et al., 2007; Terry et al., 2001; Terry & O’Brien, 2001).

In contrast, no relationship was identified between perceived continuity of the subgroup and organic pluralism. Those staff members with higher expectations that their pre-merger subgroup would exist in the post-merger context did not report lower levels of anticipated organic pluralism. This result may suggest that perceived continuity of the low status pre-merger subgroup by members is not driven by threat to distinctiveness, or even if it is, this does not have a negative relationship with attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. This result may also indicate that members from the low status group, as opposed to focusing on their pre-merger identity, perceived the organisational merger as providing an opportunity for individual mobility into a higher status group (Ellemers et al., 1990; Ellemers et al., 1993, Ellemers et al., 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, the continuity (or lack therefore) of a subgroup identity may have no impact on their acceptance of a common, accepting superordinate identity.

This study was limited to one pre-merger group only (Agency B) as access was not able to be arranged at the time with executive members of Agency A and Agency C. Nonetheless, this study has helped explore the reactions of a pre-merger group to the role that other pre-merger groups would play in the future merged organisation. Study 1 was administered three months before the organisational merger was to occur and data were collected from members of the low status pre-merger subgroup regarding expectations of subgroup continuity and intergroup conflict, and their impact on organic
pluralism. Following on from the results of Study 1, the aim of Study 2 was to
determine whether expectations of group continuity and intergroup conflict were borne
out after the merger had been completed. These aspects were taken into consideration
when preparing and administrating Study 2.

5.3 Study 2

One of the limitations identified within Study 1 was that research access was
only able to be secured for members from only one pre-merger subgroup. However, for
Study 2, research access was granted to include participants of all pre-merger subgroups
within the merged post-merger superordinate group. As with Study 1, data were
collected with regard to the key issues of perceived continuity of pre-merger subgroups
in the post-merger superordinate identity, intergroup conflict/bias and the pursuit of
organic pluralism in order to test one of the central hypotheses raised in Chapter 4 (H1)
and the sub-hypotheses outlined at the beginning of this chapter (H1.1, H1.2). The
experimental hypotheses of Study 1, while correlational in nature due to the sample
restrictions, provided information about organic pluralism. The results from this study
suggested that for members of the low status agency, expectations of conflict with the
other pre-merger subgroups was associated with lower levels of anticipated organic
pluralism.

Study 2 was designed so that the sample included members from both the low
and high status pre-merger subgroups. Therefore, sub-hypotheses directly relevant to the
first central hypothesis (H1) could be tested, as well as the two correlational sub-
hypotheses outlined for Study 1 (H1.1 and H1.2). The additional sub-hypotheses tested
for Study 2 are as follows:

H1.3: Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher
levels of organic pluralism than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.
**H1.4:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of perceived continuity than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H1.5:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report lower levels of perceived intergroup conflict than will members from the low status group.

### 5.3.1 Method

**Participants**

A survey was administered in the merged agency (Agency D), the result of the organisational merger introduced in Study 1, twelve months after the merger had occurred. Employees of the three pre-merger groups described in Study 1 (Agencies A, B and C) were invited to take part in the survey. The total number of employees in Agency D was 478; 406 staff were from Agency A, 64 staff were from Agency B, and 8 staff were from Agency C.

The sample was comprised of 54 employees of a merged government agency (Agency D) approximately twelve months after it was formed through the merger of three distinct agencies. This number consisted of 30 employees from Agency A (7 per cent response rate), 22 members from Agency B (34 per cent response rate) and 2 members from Agency C (25 per cent response rate). Due to the limited number of participants from Agency C, the responses from this group were discarded. Therefore, all hypotheses were analysed with only reference to Agency A and B (52 employees).
Materials

Similar to Study 1, employees were given a survey that contained statements that sought to measure attitudes relevant to the key areas of a) perceived continuity (or representation) of the pre-merger subgroup, b) perceptions of outgroup members and c) organic pluralism. Employees were requested to indicate their agreement with each statement on a seven-point Likert-type scale where 1 = “Not at all” and 7 = “Very much”.

Measures

The statements used in the survey administered as part of Study 2 were similar to those used in Study 1. The phrasing of the statements was altered from future to present tense. No cases had missing data and SPSS was used to analyse the data.

1. Perceived continuity of the pre-merger subgroup

Four statements were provided to employees from each agency that sought to measure perceptions from members of each pre-merger subgroup on continuity of their subgroup in the post-merger organisation (Agency D) (i.e., “[My pre-merger subgroup] continues to exist in [Agency D]”, “The beliefs and values of [my pre-merger subgroup] are represented within [Agency D]”, “The status of [Agency D] is jeopardised by the presence of staff from [my pre-merger subgroup], “I fear that involvement from [my pre-merger subgroup] reduces the status of the [post-merger group]”). The four statements had good internal reliability (α = .84) and were combined via mean reduction to form a single measure.

2. Expectations of intergroup conflict

Five statements were provided to employees sampled in Study 2 that sought to measure their perceptions of the other pre-merger subgroup members and expectations
of intergroup conflict (i.e., “I think [pre-merger subgroup] staff discriminate against me”, “I believe [pre-merger subgroup] staff have a biased perspective compared to me”). There were two statements specific to each outgroup and one statement specific to the post-merger agency (Agency D). For example, Agency A staff were presented with the following statements “I think Agency B staff discriminate against me”, “I think Agency C staff discriminate against me”, “I believe that Agency B staff have a biased perspective compared to me”, “I believe that Agency C staff have a biased perspective compared to me”, “I am concerned that I am not accepted in Agency D”. The statements had good internal reliability ($\alpha = .84$) and were combined via mean reduction to form a single measure.

3. Organic Pluralism

Four statements were provided to participants that were intended to measure their attitudes regarding the presence of all pre-merger subgroups within the post-merger group (Agency D) and their perceptions of the post-merger group (Agency D) (i.e., “I am happy to be classed as an employee of [Agency D]”, “I worry about being associated with [Agency D]”, “I am concerned that I am not accepted in [Agency D]”, “Having the three groups represented in [Agency D] detracts from the organisation”). The three negative statements were reverse coded. The four statements which measured perceptions of the presence of the three pre-merger subgroups in the post-merger group were tested for internal reliability. The statements had moderate internal reliability ($\alpha = .74$) and were combined via mean reduction to create a single measure.

4. Pre-merger subgroup membership/Status

Participants were asked to provide details of the agency that they were employees of before the organisational merger occurred. This provided information
regarding the status level of the pre-merger subgroup in which each participant previously was employed.

5. Identification with the pre-merger subgroup

Participants were presented with statements intended to collect information on their identification levels with their subgroup (i.e., “I identify with members of [my pre-merger subgroup”]. A single item measure of social identification has been shown to be reliable in collecting information about this factor (see Postmes, Haslam & Jans, 2012). This measure was taken to check identification levels participants may report for their pre-merger subgroups.

Procedure

The procedure for Study 2 was identical to that used in Study 1 in that permission was sought from the officer-in-charge of the agency to survey employees before the study commenced and ethics approval was gained from the university ethics board. Employees were notified of the study by email and their participation was invited. All employees were advised that the study was both voluntary and anonymous and that their details could not be linked to their responses. The provision and receipt of completed questionnaires were identical to the process used successfully in Study 1. Further options that were provided to geographically separated staff included a university fax where employees could fax completed sheets, and an email option. Employees were notified of a three week period during which responses would be collected.

In an attempt to improve response rate, three separate reminder emails were sent to staff members during the collection phase and reminders about the survey were provided at two staff association meetings. Although inducements were not offered to
employees to complete the survey, all staff members (regardless of participation) were
advised they could request copies of the collated, anonymised results at the conclusion
of the research.

5.3.2. Results

Identification with the pre-merger subgroup

An analysis of variance was performed to identify the levels of identification
members still held of their respective pre-merger subgroups. Results found no
significant difference between the reported levels of identification of members from the
high status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 4.80, SD = 1.83$) and the members from the low
status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 5.50, SD = 1.71$), $F(1,51) = 1.96, p = .167, \eta_{p}^2 = .038$.
However, these results indicate that levels of identification with pre-merger subgroups
were above the mid-point of the scale, indicating members of both pre-merger
subgroups reported moderate levels of identification with their pre-merger subgroup.

Hypothesis testing

An analysis of variance was performed to test for significant differences in
perceived levels of subgroup continuity between members of the high and low status
pre-merger subgroups (H1.4). Results found no significant difference between the
perceived levels of continuity between members of the high status pre-merger subgroup
($M = 3.69, SD = 1.25$) and members of the low status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 2.89,
SD = 1.67$), $F(1,51) = 3.95, p = .052, \eta_{p}^2 = .073$. However, the difference between
groups neared significance and was in the direction predicted.

An analysis of variance was performed to test the prediction that members from
the high status pre-merger subgroup would report lower levels of intergroup conflict
than members from the low status pre-merger subgroup (H1.5). There was no significant difference in reported levels of intergroup conflict between members from the high status group ($M = 1.85, SD = 1.29$) and members from low status group ($M = 2.51, SD = 1.28$), $F(1,51) = 3.36, p = .073, \eta^2_p = .063$. Similar to the results above, although the test was non-significant the difference between groups neared significance and was in the direction predicted.

Linear regression analysis was performed to test the sub-hypotheses H1.1, H1.2, H1.3 regarding the predictions on the measure of organic pluralism. The full-factorial model included the centred variables of perceived continuity ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.48$), expectations of intergroup conflict ($M = 2.13, SD = 1.31$), the categorical measure of pre-merger subgroup status and the interactions.

The full-factorial model was significant ($F(7,44) = 4.27, p < .001$) and explained 40% of the variance of organic pluralism. There was only one significant main effect, the measure of pre-merger subgroup status was a significant predictor of organic pluralism, ($t = -2.29, p = .027$). None of the two-way interaction terms were significant, however the three-way interaction term was significant (see Figure 5.1) $t = 2.21, p = .033$.

This interaction, illustrated in Figure 5.1, demonstrates that members from the low status group tended to report higher levels of organic pluralism than high status members except in the condition where they reported high levels of intergroup conflict and low levels of perceived subgroup continuity. Conversely, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup reported lower levels of organic pluralism in the condition where there was high intergroup conflict and lower levels of perceived continuity.
Slope difference tests showed a significant difference between slope (1) and (3), \( t = 2.14, p = .039 \) (see Figure 5.1). No other tests for differences between the slopes was significant.

![Figure 5.1. Three-way interaction between expected intergroup conflict, perceived pre-merger subgroup continuity and pre-merger subgroup status predicting organic pluralism.](image)

**Figure 5.1.** Three-way interaction between expected intergroup conflict, perceived pre-merger subgroup continuity and pre-merger subgroup status predicting organic pluralism.

This interaction, illustrated in Figure 5.1, demonstrates a significant positive relationship between pre-merger subgroup continuity and organic pluralism, but one that emerged for members of the low status group with relatively high levels of expected intergroup conflict. All the other slopes were negative. These results provided no support for the sub-hypotheses H1.1, H1.2, H1.3, H1.4, H1.5.
5.3.4 Discussion

The findings of Study 2 provided limited support for the sub-hypotheses presented at the beginning of this chapter. Participants from the low status group who perceived higher levels of intergroup conflict reported lower levels of organic pluralism only if they also believed their pre-merger subgroup was less represented in the post-merger context. This result differs from the findings of Study 1, where expectations of subgroup continuity had no relationship to reported levels of organic pluralism.

There was no difference in identification levels between participants from the low status or high status group. In fact, results suggested that all participants identified positively (i.e., above the scale mid-point) with their pre-merger subgroups. This result indicates that members from both pre-merger subgroups reported relatively high levels of identification with their pre-merger subgroup, even though Study 2 was administrated a year after the merger had completed. Therefore, this gives the impression that, for these subgroup members, although the sociological group may have diminished, the social identity remained. Previous research has outlined that the impact of perceived ingroup continuity can depend on the level of pre-merger identification (Boen et al., 2005). In this study, measurement of identification with pre-merger subgroups was collected twelve months after the merger had concluded, not prior to the merger. No significant difference was identified in participants between levels of identification with pre-merger subgroups in the post-merger context.

Results from Study 2 suggested that the continuity of the pre-merger subgroup identity affected reported levels of organic pluralism, particularly for the members of the low status group. For high status members, it appeared that higher perceptions of pre-merger subgroup continuity resulted in lower levels of organic pluralism. However, for low status members, when they reported lower perceptions of pre-merger subgroup
continuity in a context where intergroup conflict was perceived to be higher, they also reported lower levels of perceived organic pluralism. One possible explanation for this result is that while the pre-merger subgroup identities remain in the post-merger context, the members from the high status subgroup have possibly experienced organisational dominance, which in turn has facilitated a transfer of group identification (see van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). As noted in Chapter Two, a dominant position in an organisational merger facilitates a sense of continuity of subgroup membership and increases the chances that subgroup identification can be transferred to the superordinate identity (van Knippenberg et al., 2002). In addition, perceptions of subgroup continuity in a post-merger context has been shown to be linked to perceptions of the superordinate group. That is, subgroup members desire a common post-merger group, but also desire this group to reflect their old, pre-merger subgroup (Boen et al., 2005; Giessner et al., 2006).

The members from the low status subgroup in this study may have been similar to the members of the low status group in the airline merger examined by Amiot et al. (2007), by seeking equality within the post-merger context. Thus, when their belief of pre-merger subgroup continuity was low, perceptions of conflict may have increased salience of their pre-merger group, thus re-emphasising the status difference and affecting attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. In addition, members from the low status subgroup who perceived that the high status subgroup was dominating the post-merger context, would be more likely to report lower levels of subgroup continuity (see van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001; van Knippenberg et al., 2002). This would have prevented members from the low status subgroup accepting the post-merger superordinate group (see van Vuuren et al., 2010) and also lowered levels of organic pluralism. Although the results in Study 2 may be explained by potential differences in
perceived subgroup continuity, no significant difference in reported levels of subgroup continuity between the two pre-merger subgroups was found. Therefore, further exploration of the possibility of expectations of subgroup continuity in the post-merger context is required in an experimental context.

5.3.5 Conclusion

The results of Studies 1 and 2 have provided some insight into relevant social psychological phenomena that are present both pre- and post-organisational merger. Study 1 provided support for the prediction of a negative relationship between expected intergroup conflict as reported by members of the low status pre-merger subgroup and the measure of reported levels of organic pluralism. However, results from Study 1 did not support the hypothesis that there would be a negative relationship between perceived continuity of the low status pre-merger subgroup and organic pluralism. Results from Study 2 did not support the prediction that members from the high status pre-merger subgroup would report higher levels of perceived continuity and lower levels of perceived intergroup conflict than the levels of members from the low status pre-merger subgroup. Finally, results from Study 2 suggested that a positive relationship between perceived subgroup continuity and organic pluralism existed for members of the low status pre-merger subgroup in the condition where intergroup conflict was perceived as high. Results from these studies provided evidence to support the hypothesis of the tendency of members of pre-merger subgroups to hold onto subgroup identities and possibly intergroup bias. However, in order to clearly examine these findings, this thesis needs to test the central hypotheses (H1, H2, H3) within an experimental context.
CHAPTER SIX

Introducing voice: Interventions in an organisational merger process that may increase organic pluralism

Studies 1 and 2 examined an organisational merger at two periods of time. Firstly, Study 1 observed a low status pre-merger subgroup three months prior to a merger. Study 2 observed both a low and a high status pre-merger subgroup twelve months after the organisational merger, introduced in Study 1, had concluded. Although the sample sizes obtained in each study were relatively small, the real life aspect of these field studies provided an opportunity to collect data that represented the effect of an organisational merger on relevant subgroup processes and perceptions. Through these studies, research observations were made on how employees (i.e., pre-merger subgroup members) responded to an organisational merger with other organisational subgroups. In addition, in these studies it was able to be observed whether status, perceptions of pre-merger subgroup continuity, and expectations of intergroup conflict would affect attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. What was observed in these field studies was relevant to the thesis research question and provided further insight into the issue of subgroup member’s expectations of intergroup conflict following the completion of a merger.

Members’ perceptions of conflict were present pre-merger, at least for members of the low status subgroup. However, the expectation of intergroup conflict appeared more relevant when measured twelve months after the merger was completed. This was particularly relevant for low status members. Further, the results of these field studies suggest intergroup conflict (particularly from the low-status perspective) may have been
present during the merger. This is likely to have resulted, for members of the low status subgroup, in an increase in the salience of an intergroup context and subsequent comparison with the high status outgroup during the merger. However, results did not suggest that members from the high status subgroup perceived the same level of intergroup conflict. Increasing the salience of the intergroup context (as discussed previously) will likely increase the expectation and appearance of intergroup conflict and thus reduce the likelihood of members developing attitudes conducive to organic pluralism.

However, there were a number of constraints associated with the field studies that make it difficult to describe accurately what was producing these perceptions of intergroup conflict. One limitation of field studies is their weak internal validity, and subsequently their findings are often open to multiple interpretations (Haunschild et al., 1994). For example, within Studies 1 and 2 no information regarding the details of the merger, how this process was implemented, as well as how the process impacted on employees during the merger was able to be collected by the researcher. Although the above information was not available at the time of the research, there are some possible explanations for what was observed. For example, it is possible that elements of subgroup posturing for dominance during the merger process may have helped to preserve pre-merger subgroup salience (particularly for low status members), and thus maintain the relevance of an intergroup context, which subsequently increased expectations of intergroup conflict.

What is conclusive from the results of Study 2 is that once a merger is completed, pre-merger subgroup identification can remain high, even twelve months after a sociological subgroup ostensibly ceased. This result is consistent with the previous research outlined in Chapters Two and Three regarding the methods subgroup
members utilise to manage their identities during a merger. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that pre-merger subgroup members may have projected their pre-merger subgroup traits and attributes onto the post-merger group. This process of projecting relative prototypicality of a subgroup relative to a superordinate group has been observed in past research and has been shown to assist subgroup members in achieving positive distinctiveness (Giessner et al., 2006; Wenzel et al., 2003; Wenzel et al., 2008). Further to the above, the results of Study 2 suggest if the goal of an organisational merger is to increase attitudes consistent with the principles of organic pluralism in members of a pre-merger subgroup, then it may be more effective to try to develop methods that minimise the “representation” (psychological or otherwise) of the pre-merger group in the post-merger world. This goal may be achieved through reducing the tendency for members to perceive or expect continuity of their subgroup in the post-merger superordinate group. However, the research outlined in Chapter Two indicates developing effective merger strategies that promote identification with the post-merger superordinate group, while lessening attachment to the pre-merger group, has proven to be difficult.

To address this issue of increasing identification with the post-merger group, previous research suggests ensuring processes perceived by members to be procedurally fair helps produce the desired outcomes (i.e., members perceiving a common ingroup in the post-merger context). As discussed in Chapter Three and reiterated in Chapter Four, the level and nature of input that employees have in an organisational merger may have an impact on their identification with the superordinate group, and allow them to make inferences about the status of their subgroup (Bartels et al., 2006; Gleibs et al., 2008; Tyler, 1987). Providing opportunity for subgroup members to voice feedback within an organisational merger may assist in increasing feelings of justice and fairness in the
process and, in turn, increase reported identification with a post-merger superordinate group (Lipponen et al., 2004). Further to this, threat to the continuity of a pre-merger subgroup can make procedural justice salient to members of that subgroup (Edwards & Edwards, 2011). Thus, in a merger process where continuity of subgroup may be uncertain, subgroup members may be more sensitive to how fair the merger is perceived to be.

It follows, then, that pursuing a process that increases the reported levels of organic pluralism of members in pre-merger subgroups through managing identification processes, is likely to also decrease the likelihood that members will retain pre-merger identities post-merger. The research discussed in Chapter Three suggests strategies that present opportunities for voice in an organisation merger may assist in developing these desired outcomes.

Given the limitations associated with field studies, specifically regarding the ability to control the presentation of voice options at the commencement of the organisational merger, this thesis needs to shift from the field studies environment into the experimental realm. With the goal of increasing perceptions of organic pluralism, feelings of procedural fairness and reducing the tendency for members to perceive/expect continuity of subgroup identification, three further studies were designed that investigate whether a voice process can be identified that is accepted as fair by all members involved in a merger, regardless of status.

The first of these empirical studies (Study 3) was designed to test sub-hypotheses relevant to the central hypotheses of this thesis that were outlined in Chapter Four (H1, H2, H3). Study 3 is presented in Chapter Seven and was designed to observe an organisational merger scenario where input (voice), pre-merger subgroup status and perceived subgroup prototypicality could be manipulated or measured.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Organic pluralism as a function of pre-merger status and voice

7.1 Introduction

The results from the field studies suggested that, to achieve an increase in the levels of reported organic pluralism in members of pre-merger subgroups undergoing an organisational merger, several further avenues of investigation were still needed. It was argued that influencing members’ perceptions of procedural justice (fairness), through providing the opportunity for input into a merger (voice), may assist in decreasing the tendency of pre-merger subgroup members to perceive continuity of their pre-merger subgroups within a post-merger context.

Taking into consideration results from previous research and the results from Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 was designed to investigate perceptions of fairness by manipulation of both voice opportunity and pre-merger subgroup status. Study 3 utilised two voice conditions (instrumental and non-instrumental voice) to test the notion that members of high and low status subgroups will tend to report different levels of perceived fairness when given different voice opportunities during a merger process.

Consistent with the above, Study 3 was designed to collect information to identify whether members of pre-merger subgroups perceived that the post-merger superordinate group shared the attributes of their pre-merger subgroup. This measure was intended to collect information on pre-merger subgroup’s perceptions of the post-merger superordinate group in relation to attributes of their pre-merger subgroup. If members of pre-merger subgroups perceive the superordinate group as sharing a high number of attributes with their subgroup, this strategy may allow these members to
preserve identification with their pre-merger subgroup in the post-merger context.

When designing Study 3, inspection of the organic pluralism measure used in Studies 1 and 2 suggested that the operationalisation of the concept was incorrect. Unfortunately, at the time of designing Study 3, no established scale for organic pluralism was available. The author was able to obtain a measure of organic pluralism that had been developed by a post-graduate student. This measure, while unpublished, had been administered in social psychology research (also unpublished) and therefore was perceived as having some validity in the research sphere. This measure was identified as providing a reasonable basis to develop a methodology to test the hypotheses focused on the unique concept of organic pluralism.

As noted within Chapter Two, when presented with an organisational merger scenario, members from the low status pre-merger subgroup are more likely than members from the high status pre-merger subgroup to be more negative towards the merger process (see Amiot et al., 2007; Terry, 2003). This may be linked to expectations that the high status pre-merger subgroup will be dominant in the post-merger context. Continuing from the results of Study 2, and to test the central hypothesis H1, the following sub-hypotheses are to be tested in Study 3 regarding how the factor of pre-merger subgroup status will effect organic pluralism, perceived fairness and levels of subgroup ingroup perceived prototypicality:

**H1.3:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H1.6:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of perceived fairness of the organisational merger than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.
H1.7: Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of ingroup prototypicality than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

Within Chapter Three, research into organisational mergers suggested that if a merger was perceived as fair, this could lead to increased perception of a common ingroup (Lipponen et al., 2004) and also increase collaborative, extra-role behaviours (Kim & Mauborgne, 1996). It was argued within Chapter Three, if members of the pre-merger subgroups experience a just decision-making procedure, this may increase attitudes conducive to an organically pluralistic post-merger state (see Alexander & Ruderman, 1987; Sousa & Vala, 2002). In addition, it was suggested that experiencing a procedurally fair merger would decrease the distinctiveness threat for subgroup members, thus reducing the tendency for subgroup members to use the identity protection strategy of ingroup projection. Therefore, the following sub-hypotheses relevant to the second central hypothesis (H2) will be tested in Study 3:

H2.1: A main effect is predicted for voice for the dependent variable of organic pluralism. When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of organic pluralism than in conditions where they are not given instrumental voice.

H2.2: A main effect is predicted for voice for the dependent variable of perceptions of fairness. When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of perceived fairness than in conditions where they are given non-instrumental voice.

H2.3: A main effect is predicted for voice for the dependent variable of shared ingroup prototypicality with the post-merger group. When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger
subgroups will report lower levels of shared prototypicality (i.e., less ingroup projection) than conditions where they are given non-instrumental voice.

Finally, Study 3 will test sub-hypotheses relevant to the third central hypothesis concerning the factors of voice and pre-merger subgroup status and their impact on measures of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and ingroup subgroup prototypicality with the superordinate identity. It is predicted (H3.1) that the proposed differences in the expected reactions to the merger scenario of members from the low status pre-merger subgroup, compared to those from the high status pre-merger subgroup, will be replicated in reported levels of organic pluralism. Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism in the condition in which they receive instrumental voice, compared to the condition in which they receive non-instrumental voice. Members from the low status pre-merger group are expected to report higher levels of organic pluralism in the condition where influence from the members of the high status subgroup is likely to be diminished (non-instrumental voice condition) compared to where the opportunity to influence the outcome is higher (instrumental voice condition). Thus, the following sub-hypothesis will be tested:

**H3.1:** A significant interaction (two-way) between the factors of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity is predicted for the dependent variable of organic pluralism. Specifically, members from the high status group will report higher levels of organic pluralism in the condition in which they receive instrumental voice compared to the condition where they receive non-instrumental voice. Conversely, members from the low status subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism in the condition in which they receive non-instrumental voice compared to the condition where they receive instrumental voice.
Previous research has indicated that the development of a procedurally fair process through providing members with voice input opportunity can be complicated by the status of the subgroups involved. Research has demonstrated that members of high and low status groups tend to prefer a process that provides their group with the most beneficial outcome of the merger (Amiot et al., 2007; Giessner et al., 2006; Terry et al., 1996). In addition, status of a subgroup can affect subgroup members’ perceptions of fairness of an organisational merger (Van Prooijen, Van Den Bos & Wilke, 2002).

Members from high and low status subgroups are likely to perceive different procedures that incorporate the opportunity for voice as fair (e.g., members from high status pre-merger subgroups may perceive situations where their group receives instrumental voice and the low status pre-merger subgroup receives non-instrumental voice as fairer than members from the low status subgroup). Therefore, the final sub-hypothesis to be tested in Study 3 is as follows:

**H3.2:** A significant interaction (two-way) between the factors of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity is predicted for the dependent variable of perceived fairness. Specifically, members from the high status group will report higher levels of perceived fairness in the condition in which they receive instrumental voice compared to the condition where they receive non-instrumental voice. Conversely, members from the low status subgroup will report higher levels of perceived fairness in the condition in which they receive non-instrumental voice compared to the condition where they receive instrumental voice.

As noted in Chapter Six, it was posited that providing instrumental voice to pre-merger subgroup members would likely reduce the tendency of members from the high status pre-merger subgroup to project their subgroup attributes onto the post-merger superordinate identity when compared to the non-instrumental voice condition.
Conversely, it is predicted that provision of instrumental voice opportunity to members from the low status subgroup will increase their tendency to project their subgroup attributes onto the post-merger superordinate identity when compared with the non-instrumental voice condition. To summarise, it is predicted that provision of instrumental voice to subgroup members will reduce the tendency of members of high status subgroup members to project, and enhance the tendency of members of the low status subgroup members to project. Therefore, Study 3 will test the following sub-hypothesis:

**H3.3:** A significant interaction (two-way) between the factors of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity is predicted for the dependent variable of perceived ingroup prototypicality. Specifically, participants in the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels, than members of the low status subgroup, of shared traits between their pre-merger subgroup and the superordinate identity except when they receive instrumental voice. Participants in the low status group will report higher levels than members of the high status subgroup of shared traits between their pre-merger group and the superordinate identity when they receive instrumental voice.

### 7.2 Study 3

#### 7.2.1 Method

*Participants and design*

Participants comprised of 120 members of the public. Table 7.1 has participant numbers in each manipulation cell. Study 3 was a 2 (status of pre-merger subgroup: high status, low status) x 2 (voice opportunity: instrumental voice, non-instrumental voice) between subjects factorial design.
Table 7.1

*Number of participants and experimental manipulations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group membership</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Status(^a)</td>
<td>Instrumental Voice</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Instrumental Voice</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Status(^b)</td>
<td>Instrumental Voice</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Instrumental Voice</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Organisation Blue  
\(^b\) Organisation Red

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants were asked to complete a survey booklet. Each booklet contained a description of two groups. Participants were asked to report their levels of agreement with a number of statements. The booklet also listed a number of organisational attributes. Participants were requested to identify which attributes were representative of their pre-merger subgroups and the post-merger superordinate group.

Participants were alerted to the study by A3 signs which advertised the study ("Research Study - $5 for 20 minutes") in a public place in the Canberra central business district. Participants who approached the researchers\(^1\) for more information were provided with a handout containing more information about the study, details of ethics approval and a consent form to sign. Individuals who signed the consent form were provided with a questionnaire booklet.

Each booklet provided participants with an introductory paragraph about two fictional organisational groups: Organisation Blue and Organisation Red. In the field

\(^1\) For Study 3, a Research Assistant from the Australian National University assisted in the collection of data.
studies, the concept of status was multi-layered, with a number of aspects being used together to generate multi-layered concepts of “high” and “low” status. This approach to the concept of status was continued within the experimental setting, with the scenario presenting each organisational group differing from the other in terms of size, prestige, recognition and global reach. Organisational Blue was described in a manner to portray it as a high status group (e.g., larger, better known, and operating both domestically and internationally). Organisational Red was described in a manner to portray it as a low status group (e.g., smaller, less well known, and operating in one city with smaller levels of staffing) (see Figure 7.1).

Participants were asked to circle which group (Organisation Blue or Red) they believed was the high status group. This question was intended to measure whether the manipulation of pre-merger subgroup status was successful. Participants were also asked to report how much they identified with the group to which they were assigned (i.e., “I identify with other group members of [Organisation Red/Blue]”). This measure was taken to confirm that participants identified with the group to which they were assigned.

Figure 7.1. Experimental descriptions of high and low status organisational groups

There are two organisational groups, one is high status and one is low status.

Organisation Blue is the manufacturer of a highly recognisable sports brand which is the primary sponsor of several well known athletes. It provides funding for various sporting competitions. Blue estimates a profit of $30 million dollars a year and sells its product internationally. Blue has 500 staff members situated both in Australia and around the world.

Organisation Red also manufactures sporting apparel however on a smaller scale to Blue. Red only sells its products in Australia and estimates a profit of $300,000 annually. They are not well known and their clothes are primarily sold in lower level retail stores. Red has 150 staff members working at the organisational base in Canberra.
The participants were then introduced to a merger scenario; participants were told there would be a merger of the two organisations into one. Voice was manipulated in this step, with all participants being asked for their input into the upcoming merger. Each group, regardless of status, in each scenario received the same kind of voice. For example, in the instrumental voice manipulation, participants assigned to both Organisation Blue and Organisation Red groups received instrumental voice.

Participants in the instrumental voice condition were informed that their feedback would be used to design the structure of the new organisation and to decide on where the head office would be situated. Participants in the non-instrumental voice condition were told that their feedback would be collected, although the design and the structure of the new organisation were already decided and their feedback would not affect this. That is, participants in the non-instrumental voice condition were told that they would have no impact on the outcome. The text used in the survey instrument is replicated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2

*Experimental scenario of instrumental voice and non-instrumental voice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario instrumental voice</th>
<th>Scenario non-instrumental voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We would like to gather your thoughts on how the new agency should be structured. Please consider your responses as your feedback will be used to decide on the executive management of the new organisation and on where the head office should be situated.</td>
<td>We would like to gather your thoughts on how the new agency should be structured. Although your feedback will not have any effect on the design structure of the new organisation or where the head office is situated, your opinion is still valid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that contained items on attitudes toward the other group, as well as attitudes toward the merger and measures of ingroup prototypicality. Statements covering attitudes to groups were provided to participants, who indicated their agreement with each statement on a seven-point Likert-type scale where 1 = “Do not agree at all” and 7 = “Agree completely”. The statements are described below in more detail.

Two statements were provided to collect information on whether participants felt they experienced procedural fairness (i.e., “I think the merger of the two agencies is likely to be a fair process”, “I feel like I had a say in the merger process”) and one statement was provided to collect information on whether the manipulation of voice was successful (“I feel that I can influence the merger decision process”).

Participants were then asked to circle five words from a set list of fifteen attributes (based on Katz & Braly, 1933) to indicate which ones best reflected the prototypical traits of the pre-merger subgroups and the new organisation. A small study was undertaken prior to Study 3 to develop the list of attributes used in the list presented to participants as part of this study. Twenty attributes were chosen from the list of Katz and Braly (1933) and an additional list of twenty attributes were chosen from a variety of online and paper articles describing organisations. These forty attributes were presented to twenty individuals through convenience sampling, and each participant was asked to choose twenty of the attributes that he or she perceived could be used to describe an organisation. After the results were collected and collated, of the forty attributes that were originally presented, fifteen of the attributes were identified by participants as appropriate attributes to describe an organisation. This list was presented to subsequent participants in the main study as the set list from which they were asked to select their preferred attributes. The list of attributes can be found in Table 7.3.
This section of the questionnaire was intended to measure perception of inferred prototypicality. Participants were asked to select five words to describe their pre-merger ingroup and five words to describe the post-merger group. Participants were allowed to choose the same words for each group if they wanted. The higher the number of shared attributes between the pre-merger subgroup and post-merger superordinate group, the more it indicated that a group member was projecting subgroup prototypicality on the superordinate group.

After participants completed the questionnaire and returned it to the researchers they were provided with a debriefing sheet that provided information on the research with which they had been involved, as well as contact details of the research and the ethics board for the university.

*Creation of measures*

The two statements designed to collect information on perceived procedural fairness had a very strong positive relationship, \( r = .84, p < .01 \). A measure was created using mean reduction.

Nine statements to measure the level of organic pluralism were included in the survey (Bachman, 2005). A Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was performed on
the nine variables and an examination of the loadings of each variable identified eight statements that loaded on one component (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4

*Loading against first component from the Principal Components Analysis on the nine statements measuring organic pluralism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Within the new organisation there will be different groups but they will fit together well.</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Although there will be different sub-groups in the new organisation, it feels as if we will all work together well.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Although parts of the new organisation will have different roles to play, we will all have a common goal.</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Together we will achieve more than if we worked separately</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Each group of the new organisation has its own distinct contribution to make</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Some groups are particularly important for the new organisation.</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Some groups are not particularly important for the new organisation.</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  There is something about each group that is different from the other.</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  We couldn’t achieve our goals if we didn’t have the contribution of each group.</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eight statements (excluding “Some groups are not particularly important for the new organisation”) showed moderate internal reliability ($\alpha = .79$). A measure for organic pluralism was created via mean reduction from the eight statements.
7.2.2 Results

Manipulation Checks

Preliminary results demonstrated that all participants correctly identified the high status group in the scenario (that is, all participants circled “Organisation Blue” when asked to report which organisation they believed was high status).

An ANOVA was performed to test whether participants had identified with their experimental subgroups. Results indicated that members of the low status group (Organisation Red) reported higher levels of pre-merger subgroup identification ($M = 4.80, SD = 1.65$) than members from the high status subgroup (Organisational Blue) ($M = 4.02, SD = 1.72$), $F(1,118) = 6.44$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2_p = .05$. The results of a $t$-test showed that the subgroup identification level reported by participants assigned to the low status group was significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale (4.0), $t(28) = 2.61$, $p = .014$. However, the reported levels of identification from members of the high status group was around the mid-point on a seven point scale, indicating that participants from this group reported moderate levels of identification with their assigned pre-merger subgroup.

An ANOVA was performed to test the manipulation of voice opportunity within Study 3. Results indicated that participants who were given an instrumental voice opportunity were more likely to report that they felt they had a say in the merger ($M = 4.52, SD = 1.98$) than participants who were in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 3.28, SD = 1.86$), $F(1,118) = 12.37$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2_p = .095$. 
**Missing Data**

Missing data were identified within the sample. The proportion of missing data was very small (i.e., 4 missing survey items across three responses). Based on the small number of missing responses and the necessity to retain as many responses as possible, mean substitution was performed to replace the missing data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

**Analysis**

Three 2 x 2 ANOVAs were conducted to test the sub-hypotheses on the impact of pre-merger status and voice opportunity on reported levels of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup ingroup prototypicality (H1.3, H1.6, H1.7, H2.1, H2.2, H2.3, H3.4, H3.5, H3.6).

Results found support for one of the three sub-hypotheses related to central hypothesis H1. There was no significant main effect in reported levels of organic pluralism between members of the high (\(M = 5.34, SD = 0.74\)) and low status pre-merger subgroups (\(M = 5.20, SD = 0.92\)), \(F(1,116) = .35, p = .558, \eta^2_p = .003\) (H1.3). Similarly, there was no significant main effect in reported levels of perceived fairness between members of the high (\(M = 3.67, SD = 1.78\)) and members from the low status subgroup (\(M = 3.98, SD = 1.64\)), \(F(1,116) = .90, p = .345, \eta^2_p = .008\) (H1.6). However, as predicted (H1.7), there was a significant main effect in reported levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality. Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup reported higher levels of subgroup prototypicality (\(M = 3.34, SD = 1.35\)) than members from the low status pre-merger subgroup (\(M = 2.05, SD = 1.35\)), \(F(1,116) = 27.28, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .190\).
Results found support for one of the three sub-hypotheses related to central hypothesis H2. There was no significant main effect in reported levels of organic pluralism between participants in the instrumental voice condition ($M = 5.34, SD = 0.74$) and those in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 5.15, SD = 1.00$), $F(1,116) = 1.40, p = .540, \eta^2_p = .007$ (H2.1). Results indicated a significant difference in reported levels of perceived fairness between participants in the instrumental voice condition ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.62$) and participants in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 3.36, SD = 1.69$), $F(1,116) = 9.50, p = .003, \eta^2_p = .076$ (H2.2). There was no significant difference in reported levels of ingroup prototypicality in the instrumental voice condition ($M = 2.73, SD =1.53$) and the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 2.68, SD = 1.47$), $F(1,116) = .09, p=.765, \eta^2_p = .001$. (H2.3).

None of the sub-hypotheses related to central hypothesis H3 were supported by results of Study 3. Results did not support the predicted two-way interaction for status of pre-merger subgroup and voice condition on the measure of organic pluralism, $F(1,116) = .78, p = .38, \eta^2_p = .007$ (H3.4). Simple effects analysis using a t-test showed that members from the high status group did not report significantly higher levels of organic pluralism in the instrumental voice condition ($M = 5.46, SD = .80$) than members from the high status group in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 5.13, SD = .88$), $t(59) = 1.54, p = .128$. Additionally, results from a t-test showed members in the low status group did not report significantly higher levels of organic pluralism in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 5.23, SD = .67$) than in the instrumental voice condition ($M = 5.17, SD = 1.13$), $t(57) = .20, p = .842$. Results of Study 3 did not support the sub-hypothesis that predicted a significant two-way interaction between the factors of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on the measure of perceived fairness, $F(1,116) = .38, p = .538, \eta^2_p = .003$ (H3.5). Results from a t-test
showed that members from the low status subgroup did not report higher levels of perceived fairness in the condition in which they received non-instrumental voice ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.60$) compared to where they received instrumental voice ($M = 4.35, SD = 1.62$), $t(57) = 1.79, p = .961$.

Results of Study 3 did not support the sub-hypothesis relating to the effect of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on perceptions of subgroup prototypicality (H3.6). There was no significant two-way interaction for the factors of voice and status, $F(1,116) = .42, p = .516, \eta^2_p = .004$. Simple effects analysis using a $t$-test showed that participants from the high status subgroup did not report higher levels of shared traits between their subgroup ingroup and the superordinate identity in the instrumental voice condition ($M = 3.30, SD = 1.42$) compared with the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.31$), $t(59) = -.25, p = .804$. In addition, results from a $t$-test showed that participants from the low status subgroup did not report higher levels of shared traits between their subgroup ingroup and the superordinate identity in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 1.93, SD = 1.40$) compared with the instrumental voice condition ($M = 2.17, SD = 1.25$), $t(57) = .51, p = .506$.

### 7.2.3 Discussion

Results of Study 3 found support for only one of the three sub-hypotheses relating to the first central hypothesis (H1). Against predictions, there was no difference in reported levels of organic pluralism (H1.3) or perceived fairness (H1.6) from members of the high status pre-merger subgroup and the low status pre-merger subgroup. In support of H1.7, results showed that members of the high status group, irrespective of voice condition, reported higher levels of shared attributes between their subgroup and the post-merger superordinate group than members from the low status subgroup. This result aligns with findings of previous research by Mummendey and
Wenzel (1999), where members from the high status subgroup were more likely to report their subgroup shared more prototypical attributes with the post-merger superordinate group than did members from the low status group.

Also consistent with past research, and in support of H2.2, Study 3 results indicated that provision of instrumental voice did promote perceptions of procedural fairness. Members of the subgroups, regardless of status, who received the opportunity for instrumental voice, reported higher levels of perceived fairness than members in the non-instrumental voice condition (H2.2) (Tyler, 1987). Provision of instrumental voice is expected to produce higher reported levels of perceived fairness than the non-instrumental voice condition, which, as noted by Thibaut and Walker (1975) is not normatively fair. Within this experiment, participants clearly delineated between the two voice conditions as being more fair (instrumental voice) and less fair (non-instrumental voice).

Results from Study 3 did not support the prediction that participants in the instrumental voice condition would report higher levels of organic pluralism (H2.1) and ingroup prototypicality (H2.3) in conditions where they received instrumental voice in comparison to conditions where they received non-instrumental voice.

As noted in Chapter Three, both instrumental and non-instrumental voice processes have been found to promote feelings of procedural fairness (Cawley et al., 1998; Paese et al., 1988; Tyler, 1987). Research suggested that group members who are provided with non-instrumental voice opportunity can be satisfied with the outcome of that process (Avery & Quinones, 2002; Cawley et al., 1998; Pease et al., 1988; Tyler, 1987). Although there was a significant difference in perceived fairness between voice conditions, there were no significant differences for the variables of organic pluralism and perceived ingroup prototypicality. As noted in Chapter Three, there are potential
positive benefits of both instrumental and non-instrumental voice, and the design of Study 3 may not have presented voice opportunity in a manner that allowed differences between these voice opportunities to be appropriately examined for the measures of organic pluralism and ingroup prototypicality.

The results from Study 3 did not provide support for any of the sub-hypotheses related to the third central hypothesis of the thesis (H3.4, H3.5, H3.6). No significant two-way interactions were present in any of the analyses undertaken. In this study, provision of different types of voice did not lead members of each pre-merger subgroup to report, depending on the status of their group, significantly different levels of organic pluralism, perceived fairness or perceptions of subgroup ingroup prototypicality. Although it was expected that the members of the high and low status subgroups would respond differently to the voice conditions, this was not supported.

There are a number of methodological issues that may have contributed to the results of Study 3 not providing support for the sub-hypotheses related to the third central hypothesis (H3). Specifically, the provision of voice within the study did not expose participants to the possibility of other voice options within the organisational merger process (i.e., participants had no comparative context regarding voice options that were not available). Each participant was only aware of the scenario he or she was provided as part of the manipulation. Thus, participants in the non-instrumental voice condition were not able to recognise their condition offered less impact on the outcome than the other condition (instrumental voice). Therefore, within Study 3, participants were not aware there was any other possibility of a condition of voice other than the one presented to themselves.

Manipulations of voice opportunity where recipients are aware of how their voice opportunity compares to other available opportunities has been shown to polarise
perceptions of fairness when compared with conditions where participants are only aware of the voice opportunity they are provided. For example, in experiments designed by van den Bos (1999) and Avery and Quiñones (2002), participants in each condition were aware that their ingroup opportunity for voice had the possibility to differ from the outgroup opportunity for voice. Therefore, Study 4 was designed to present voice opportunities in a manner that ensured all participants were aware of the voice opportunity provided to the ingroup and the outgroup. The identified methodological limitations of Study 3 relating to distribution of voice opportunity to ingroup and outgroup subgroup members were addressed in the design of Study 4 by adding a voice denial condition and separating the conditions of ingroup voice and outgroup voice.
CHAPTER EIGHT
My say, your say, no say: The influence of ingroup voice, outgroup voice and pre-merger subgroup status on organic pluralism

8.1 Introduction

Following from the analysis in Chapter Seven, in Study 4 it is expected that members of a low status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism when they perceive the status differences between the two groups may diminish as part of the merger process. That is, members from a low status subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism in the conditions where both groups receive similar types of voice opportunity (e.g., ingroup non-instrumental voice opportunity, outgroup non-instrumental voice opportunity). Conversely, it is expected that members from a high status subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism in conditions where their pre-merger subgroup receives a voice opportunity that provides a perceived increase in control over the outcome of the merger process relative to members from the low status subgroup (e.g., ingroup instrumental voice opportunity, outgroup voice opportunity denied).

Some methodological changes were made from the design used in Study 3, including the introduction of a “voice denial” condition and the separation of voice opportunity into “ingroup voice opportunity” and “outgroup voice opportunity”. Within Study 4, the changes are expected to lead to empirical support for the three central hypotheses of this thesis H1, H2 and H3. Firstly, within Study 4, it is expected that participants assigned to the high status pre-merger subgroup will be more likely to perceive continuity of the subgroup, report higher levels of perceived fairness and report
higher levels of organic pluralism than participants assigned to the low status pre-merger subgroup (H1). Therefore, the following sub-hypotheses are made for Study 4, to support the central hypothesis H1:

**H1.3:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism than would members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H1.6:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of perceived fairness than would members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H1.7:** Members from this high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of ingroup prototypicality than would members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

Secondly, within Study 4, it is expected when provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of organic pluralism, higher perceptions of fairness, and lower perceptions of shared prototypicality with the post-merger superordinate group (i.e., less ingroup projection) than conditions where they are not given instrumental voice (H2). The following sub-hypothesis will be tested in Study 4 in support of the central hypothesis (H2):

**H2.1:** A main effect is predicted for ingroup voice for the dependent variable of organic pluralism. When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of organic pluralism than conditions where they are not given instrumental voice.

**H2.2:** A main effect is predicted for ingroup voice for the dependent variable of perceptions of fairness. When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in
an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of perceived fairness than in conditions where they are not given instrumental voice.

H2.3: A main effect is predicted for ingroup voice for the dependent variable of shared ingroup prototypicality with the post-merger group. When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report lower levels of shared prototypicality (i.e. less ingroup projection) than conditions where they are not given instrumental voice.

Finally, three sub-hypotheses will be tested to support the third central hypothesis of the thesis (H3):

H3.4: It is predicted that there will be a significant interaction (three-way) between the variables of pre-merger subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on the dependent variable of organic pluralism. That is, it is expected reported levels of organic pluralism will differ depending on the status of the subgroup, the ingroup voice opportunity and the outgroup voice opportunity provided to the ingroup and the outgroup. Specifically, it is expected that in conditions where the high status pre-merger subgroup receives either instrumental ingroup voice or non-instrumental ingroup voice and the low status pre-merger group is denied outgroup voice, the members of the high status pre-merger group will report higher levels of organic pluralism. Conversely, in conditions in which both members of the low status pre-merger subgroup and members of the high status pre-merger subgroup receive similar types of voice opportunity (ingroup voice and outgroup voice), members from the low status group will report higher levels of organic pluralism.

H3.5: It is predicted that there will be a significant interaction (three-way) between the variables of pre-merger subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on the dependent variable of perceived fairness. Members
from the high status subgroup are predicted to report higher levels of perceived fairness in the conditions where they are provided with instrumental or non-instrumental ingroup voice opportunity and members from the low status group are denied outgroup voice opportunity. Conversely, members from the low status subgroup are predicted to report higher levels of perceived fairness in conditions where both their group (ingroup voice opportunity), and the high status subgroup (outgroup voice opportunity) are provided with instrumental or non-instrumental voice opportunities.

H3.6: It is predicted that there will be a significant interaction (three-way) between the variables of pre-merger subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on the dependent variable of ingroup prototypicality. It is expected the type of voice opportunity given to the ingroup, the type of voice opportunity given to the outgroup, and the status of the pre-merger subgroup will affect reported levels of shared attributes between the ingroup and the post-merger superordinate group. Specifically, it is expected that members from the high status group will report higher levels of perceived ingroup prototypicality than members in the low status group in conditions where members from the high status group receive instrumental or non-instrumental voice and the low status group is provided with any voice opportunity. In addition, it is expected there will be no significant difference between the levels of perceived ingroup prototypicality in the conditions where members of the low status subgroup are provided with instrumental or non-instrumental voice opportunity and where members of the high status subgroup are denied voice.
8.2 Study 4

8.2.1 Method

Participants and design

Participants comprised of 268 members of the public. Demographic information was not collected from participants.

Study 4 was a 2 (pre-merger subgroup status: high status, low status) x 3 (ingroup voice: instrumental voice, non-instrumental voice, voice denial) x 3 (outgroup voice: instrumental voice, non-instrumental voice, voice denial) between-participants factorial design. Refer to Table 8.1 for participant numbers in each cell.

Table 8.1

Number of Participants by Experimental Manipulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High status pre-merger subgroup</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrumental voice</td>
<td>Non-Instrumental voice</td>
<td>Voice Denial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High status pre-merger subgroup</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low status pre-merger subgroup</td>
<td>Non-Instrumental voice</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low status pre-merger subgroup</td>
<td>Voice Denial</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Materials

Participants were asked to complete one survey booklet. The booklet presented a scenario involving two organisations of high and low status and assigned each
participant a role as an employee of one of these organisations. The booklet also contained a number of statements for which participants were asked to report their level of agreement, as well as a list of organisational attributes.

*Procedure*

Participants were alerted to the study in a similar manner outlined in Study 3 and participants were sampled in the same manner. Participants were provided with an information sheet that informed them that the aim of the experiment was to study organisational groups and outlined the details of the ethics approval for the study. This sheet also contained a sectioned where participants indicated their consent to undertake the study.

Participants were provided with introductory paragraphs on two fictional organisational groups: Organisation Blue and Organisation Red. The descriptions of these organisations were identical to the manner in which they were presented in Study 3; Organisation Blue was described in a manner to portray it as a high status group, and Organisation Red was described in a manner to portray it as a low status group.

Participants were asked to circle which group (Organisation Blue or Red) they believed was the high status group. This question was intended to measure whether the manipulation of pre-merger subgroup status was successful. Participants were also asked to report how much they identified with the group to which they were assigned (i.e., “I identify with other group members of [Organisation Red/Blue]”). This measure was taken to confirm whether participants identified with the group to which they were assigned.

The participants were told there would be a merger of the two organisations into one. Voice was manipulated in this step, with some participants being asked for advice
about the upcoming merger. Participants in the instrumental voice condition were informed that their feedback would be used to design the structure of the new organisation and location of the new head office. Participants in the non-instrumental voice condition were told that their feedback would be collected, but the design, structure and location of the new organisation were already decided, and that their feedback would not affect these decisions. Participants in the voice denial condition were told their feedback would not be requested. Further, each participant was informed whether or not members of the other organisational subgroup they were merging with were given a voice in the process (instrumental voice, non-instrumental voice or denial of voice).

For example, in the “ingroup instrumental voice/outgroup voice denial” condition the members assigned to the high status group (Organisation Blue) were asked to provide feedback on the design, structure and location of the new location and were told that their input would be taken into consideration when making decisions regarding the new organisation. They were also told that no feedback would be collected from members of the low status group (Organisation Red). Those participants were presented with the following text:

In the current business environment, the challenges an organisation faces are great – but so are the opportunities. More than ever, invention and inspiration are key advantages.

We are announcing that Organisation Blue and Organisation Red are merging to become one company. This merger will provide more innovation and expertise so the new agency can make the most of past, current and future investments.

The merger of Organisations Red and Blue will create an exciting new force in the manufacture of sporting apparel.

We expect to have regulatory approval to merge our two companies in the first half of next year. Between now and then, we are committed ensuring the merger has the best outcome for employees in both existing organisations.

We would like to gather your thoughts on how the new agency should be structured. Please consider your responses as your feedback will be used to decide on the executive management of the new organisation and on where
the head office should be situated. Employees from Organisation Red will not be consulted on the structure of the new organisation or where the head office is situated.

Similar to Study 3, participants were asked to complete a survey that contained items measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = “Do not agree at all” and 7 = “Agree completely”. Participants were asked to read the statements and select the number that corresponded to their agreement/disagreement with that statement.

Two statements were posed to measure whether participants believed the merger process was fair (i.e., “I feel like I can influence the merger decision process”, “I think the merger of the two agencies is likely to be a fair process”) and one statement was included to check the manipulation of voice opportunity (“I feel my views were taken into account”).

Nine statements were provided to participants to measure the level of organic pluralism (e.g., “Within the new organisation there will be different groups, but they will fit together well”, “We couldn’t achieve our goals if we didn’t have the contribution of each group”) (Bachman, 2006). These statements were identical to those provided in Study 3 to measure organic pluralism.

Finally, identical to the procedure of Study 3, participants were then asked to circle five words from a set list of fifteen attributes (based on Katz & Braly, 1933) that best reflected the traits of their pre-merger subgroup ingroup and the new organisation. Each participant was asked to choose five attributes that best described their pre-merger subgroup and the post-merger superordinate group. Similar to the procedure of Study 3, participants were allowed to choose the same attributes for each group if they wished. This section of the questionnaire was intended to measure perceived prototypicality. For example, the higher the number of shared attributes between the subgroup and the superordinate group, the more participants perceived their own ingroup subgroup to be
more prototypical of the superordinate group. After participants completed the survey and returned it to the researcher, they were provided with a debriefing sheet that provided information on the research with which they had been involved, as well as contact details of the research and the ethics board for the university.

Creation of measures

The statements designed to collect information on the experience of voice by participants (procedural fairness) had a very strong positive relationship, $r = .79, p < .01$. A single measure was created using mean reduction.

The nine statements used to measure organic pluralism were examined using a PCA. Examination of the loadings of each variable demonstrated that the eight statements used to create the measure in Study 3 still loaded on one component in Study 4 (Table 8.2).
Table 8.2

*Loading against first component from the Principal Components Analysis on the nine statements measuring organic pluralism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Within the new organisation there will be different groups but they will fit together well.</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Although there will be different sub-groups in the new organisation, it feels as if we will all work together well.</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Although parts of the new organisation will have different roles to play, we will all have a common goal.</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Together we will achieve more than if we worked separately</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong> Each group of the new organisation has its own distinct contribution to make</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong> Some groups are particularly important for the new organisation.</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong> Some groups are not particularly important for the new organisation.</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong> There is something about each group that is different from the other.</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong> We couldn’t achieve our goals if we didn’t have the contribution of each group.</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eight statements used to create the organic pluralism measure in Study 3 (excluding “Some groups are not particularly important for the new organisation”) showed moderate internal reliability ($\alpha = .79$). A measure for organic pluralism was created via mean reduction from the same eight statements as used in Study 3.
8.2.2 Results

Manipulation checks

Preliminary results showed that all participants correctly identified Organisation Blue as the high status group.

An ANOVA was performed to check the manipulation of voice opportunity and results revealed a significant main effect for ingroup voice opportunity, $F(1,265) = 28.14, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .175$. Fisher’s Least Significant Differences (LSD) post-hoc test was used to identify significant differences between the voice conditions. Results showed that participants in the condition where they received instrumental voice opportunity were significantly more likely to feel they had a say in the merger ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.87$) than participants given non-instrumental voice ($M = 3.42, SD = 2.10$) and participants who were denied voice ($M = 2.10, 3.25$), $p = .007$ and $p < .01$ respectively. Participants in the non-instrumental voice condition were more likely to feel they had a say in the merger than participants denied voice, $p < .01$.

Measures of identification with the pre-merger subgroup identity were taken before the manipulation of voice opportunity, therefore the variables of ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity were not required to be entered into the analysis when examining the levels of participant’s identification with their assigned experimental subgroup. An ANOVA was performed on the factor of pre-merger subgroup status on identification levels with each subgroup to confirm participants identified with their experimental group. Participants assigned to the low status pre-merger subgroup reported higher levels of identification ($M = 4.93, SD = 1.54$) than participants assigned to the high status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 4.50, SD = 1.77$), $F(1,265) = 4.40, p = .037, \eta_p^2 = .016$. Despite this significant difference, $t$-tests indicated that the identification level from participants assigned to the low status group
and those assigned to the high status group were significantly higher than the mid-point (4.0) of the scale \( t(134) = 6.94, p < .00 \), and \( t(134) = 3.28, p < .001 \). This result indicated reasonable levels of identification from participants assigned to both high and low status subgroups.

**Missing Data**

Missing data were identified within some responses. The proportion of missing data was very small and was distributed across several questions in several surveys (four responses over three questions). As in Study 3, mean substitution was performed to replace the missing data (refer Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

**Analysis**

ANOVAs were conducted to test the sub-hypotheses regarding the impact of the factors of pre-merger status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on reported levels of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup ingroup prototypicality (H1.3, H1.6, H1.7, H2.1, H2.2, H2.3).

Results found support for one of the three sub-hypotheses related to central hypothesis H1. As predicted (H1.7), there was a significant main effect for reported levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality between participants assigned to the high status pre-merger subgroup and participants assigned to the low status pre-merger subgroup. Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup reported higher levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality \( (M = 3.20, SD = 1.35) \) than members from the low status pre-merger subgroup \( (M = 2.21, SD = 1.40) \), \( F(1,266) = 34.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = . \). 12. Similar to the tendency observed in Study 3, members of the high status group
appeared more likely to perceive that their subgroup and the post-merger superordinate group shared more attributes than members from the low status subgroup.

There was no significant main effect for reported levels of organic pluralism between members of the high status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 5.03, SD = 1.25$) and the low status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.21$), $F(1,266) = 2.52, p = .114, \eta^2_p = .009$ (H1.3). There was no significant main effect for reported levels of perceived fairness between members of the high status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.91$) and the low status pre-merger subgroup ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.77$), $F(1,266) = .34 , p = .56, \eta^2_p = .001$ (H1.6).

Results from Study 4 found support for two of the three sub-hypotheses related to central hypothesis H2. Results indicated a significant main effect for the factor of ingroup voice on the measure of organic pluralism, $F(1,259) = 3.75, p = .025, \eta^2_p = .028$ (H2.1). Fisher’s Least Significant Differences (LSD) post-hoc test was used to identify significant differences between the voice conditions. Results suggested participants in the ingroup instrumental voice condition reported higher levels of organic pluralism ($M = 5.14, SD = 1.23$) than participants in the ingroup voice denial condition ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.19$), $p = .007$. There was no significant difference between the ingroup instrumental and non-instrumental condition ($M = 4.95, SD = 1.24$), $p = .310$ or between the ingroup non-instrumental and the voice denial condition, $p = .090$. Participants who were given instrumental voice in the organisational merger reported higher levels of organic pluralism than participants denied input into the organisational merger.

Similarly, results indicated support for sub-hypothesis H2.3 which predicted a main effect for voice on the dependent variable of perceptions of fairness. There was a significant main effect for the factor of ingroup voice, $F(1,259) = 10.33, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .074$. Fisher’s LSD post-hoc test was used to identify significant differences between
the voice conditions. Results suggested that participants in the ingroup instrumental voice condition reported higher levels of perceived fairness ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.70$) than participants in the ingroup voice denial condition ($M = 2.34, SD = 1.64$), $p < .001$. Similarly, participants in the non-instrumental voice condition ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.97$) reported higher levels of perceived fairness than participants in the ingroup voice denial condition, $p < .01$. There was no significant difference between the ingroup instrumental and non-instrumental voice conditions, $p = .319$. Participants who were given instrumental voice or non-instrumental voice in the organisational merger process reported higher levels of perceived fairness than participants denied input into the organisational merger process.

There was no significant main effect for reported levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality between participants assigned to different voice conditions. There was no significant difference in reported levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality between participants given instrumental voice ($M = 2.77, SD = 1.56$), or non-instrumental voice ($M = 2.86, SD = 1.34$) or denied voice ($M = 2.49, SD = 1.46$), $F(4,250) = 1.93, p = .148, \eta^2_p = .015$ (H2.3).

Three 2 x 3 x 3 ANOVAs were conducted to test the sub-hypotheses regarding the impact of the factors of pre-merger status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on reported levels of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup ingroup prototypicality (H3.1, H3.2, H3.3). None of the sub-hypotheses related to central hypothesis H3 was supported by results of Study 4. Results did not support the predicted three-way interaction for status of pre-merger subgroup, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on the dependent measure of organic pluralism (H3.1). The three-way interaction of status, ingroup voice and outgroup voice
was not found to be significant, $F(4, 250) = .67, p = .611, \eta^2_p = .011$. Refer table 8.3 and 8.4 for mean scores.

Table 8.3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Organic Pluralism for Members of High Status Premerger Subgroup by Ingroup Voice and Outgroup Voice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outgroup instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup non-instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup voice denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 5.21, SD = 1.03$</td>
<td>$M = 5.57, SD = .71$</td>
<td>$M = 5.14, SD = 1.36$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup non-instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 4.89, SD = .87$</td>
<td>$M = 5.14, SD = 1.26$</td>
<td>$M = 5.13, SD = .95$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup voice denial</td>
<td>$M = 5.07, SD = .88$</td>
<td>$M = 5.23, SD = .98$</td>
<td>$M = 4.78, SD = .90$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.4

*Means and Standard Deviations of Organic Pluralism for Members of Low Status Premerger Subgroup by Ingroup Voice and Outgroup Voice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outgroup instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup non-instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup voice denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 4.96, SD = .92$</td>
<td>$M = 5.17, SD = 1.25$</td>
<td>$M = 5.43, SD = .68$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup non-instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 5.19, SD = 1.18$</td>
<td>$M = 5.00, SD = 1.15$</td>
<td>$M = 5.04, SD = .81$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup voice denial</td>
<td>$M = 4.76, SD = 1.08$</td>
<td>$M = 4.35, SD = .91$</td>
<td>$M = 4.93, SD = .81$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results did not support the hypothesis predicting a significant three-way interaction of status, ingroup voice and outgroup voice on the variable of perceived fairness (H3.2). Results did not find support for this sub-hypothesis. The three-way interaction of status, ingroup voice and outgroup voice was not found to be significant, $F(4, 250) = 2.03, p = .091, \eta^2_p = 0.31$. Refer table 8.5 and 8.6 for mean scores.
### Table 8.5

*Means and Standard Deviations of Perceived Fairness for Members of High Status Pre-Merger Subgroup by Ingroup Voice and Outgroup Voice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outgroup instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup non-instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup voice denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup instrumental</td>
<td>M = 3.73, SD = 1.52</td>
<td>M = 4.40, SD = 1.66</td>
<td>M = 3.46, SD = 2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup non-instrumental</td>
<td>M = 3.36, SD = 1.66</td>
<td>M = 3.13, SD = 2.36</td>
<td>M = 1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup voice denial</td>
<td>M = 2.04, SD = 1.10</td>
<td>M = 3.31, SD = 2.06</td>
<td>M = 1.67, SD = .90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8.6

*Means and Standard Deviations of Perceived Fairness for Members of Low Status Pre-Merger Subgroup by Ingroup Voice and Outgroup Voice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outgroup instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup non-instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup voice denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup instrumental</td>
<td>M = 2.82, SD = 1.24</td>
<td>M = 3.84, SD = 1.33</td>
<td>M = 4.09, SD = 1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup non-instrumental</td>
<td>M = 3.87, SD = 1.98</td>
<td>M = 3.33, SD = 2.15</td>
<td>M = 2.56, SD = 1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup voice denial</td>
<td>M = 2.12, SD = 1.74</td>
<td>M = 1.84, SD = 1.05</td>
<td>M = 2.04, SD = 1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results did not support the sub-hypothesis predicting a significant three-way interaction of status, ingroup voice and outgroup voice on the variable of ingroup prototypicality (H3.3). The three-way interaction of status, ingroup voice and outgroup voice was not found to be significant, $F(4,250)=.12, p = .975, \eta^2_p = 002$. Refer table 8.7 and 8.8 for mean scores.
Table 8.7

Means and Standard Deviations of Ingroup Prototypicality for Members of High Status
Pre-Merger Subgroup by Ingroup Voice and Outgroup Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingroup Voice</th>
<th>Outgroup instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup non-instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup voice denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 3.60, SD = 1.35$</td>
<td>$M = 3.06, SD = 1.57$</td>
<td>$M = 3.23, SD = 1.78$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 3.67, SD = .90$</td>
<td>$M = 3.20, SD = 1.52$</td>
<td>$M = 3.07, SD = 1.22$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice denial</td>
<td>$M = 3.33, SD = .90$</td>
<td>$M = 2.80, SD = 1.47$</td>
<td>$M = 2.87, SD = 1.24$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.8

Means and Standard Deviations of Ingroup Prototypicality for Members of Low Status
Pre-Merger Subgroup by Ingroup Voice and Outgroup Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingroup Voice</th>
<th>Outgroup instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup non-instrumental</th>
<th>Outgroup voice denial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 1.94, SD = 1.18$</td>
<td>$M = 2.20, SD = 1.52$</td>
<td>$M = 2.67, SD = 1.50$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-instrumental</td>
<td>$M = 2.47, SD = 1.13$</td>
<td>$M = 2.40, SD = 1.35$</td>
<td>$M = 2.33, SD = 1.45$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice denial</td>
<td>$M = 1.69, SD = .95$</td>
<td>$M = 1.87, SD = 1.46$</td>
<td>$M = 2.27, SD = 1.91$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.3 Discussion

The central aim of the present study (Study 4) was to evaluate the impact of access to different types of voice opportunity by members of two pre-merger subgroups, of different status, facing an organisational merger. This aim was reflected in sub-hypotheses relevant to the central hypotheses of H1, H2, H3.

The three sub-hypotheses relevant to central hypothesis H3 predicted a three-way interaction between pre-merger subgroup status, the nature of voice opportunity given to ingroup members and the nature of voice given to outgroup members on reported levels of organic pluralism, perceived ingroup prototypicality and perceived fairness respectively (H3.1, H3.2, H3.3). None of the hypotheses was supported by
results from Study 4, in that no significant three-way interactions between pre-merger subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity were identified. Study 4 was designed with the intention of correcting the methodological issues suspected to be responsible for the lack of support for sub-hypotheses related to H3 in Study 3. Once more, the predicted pattern of results was not obtained by this study. The lack of the supportive results across Study 3 and Study 4 may indicate the hypotheses are incorrect, or that there is a psychological phenomenon that has occurred within the two studies, yet unknown, that can explain these results. There was some consistency across the studies that can be explored, and may assist in designing a study to identify the reason behind the non-significance of the data.

Within Study 4, results supported the prediction that participants exposed to the condition in which their ingroup was given instrumental voice would report higher levels of organic pluralism (H2.1). Conversely, the status of the pre-merger subgroup, and the nature of the voice opportunity given to the pre-merger outgroup, did not impact on reported levels of organic pluralism. These findings demonstrate that participants, regardless of status, are more likely to advocate attitudes conducive to organic pluralism if they are given the opportunity to provide input into a merger process when compared to a situation where they are denied voice. No significant main effect was found for voice opportunity on the measure of organic pluralism in Study 3, although this study did not include a condition where voice was denied. Therefore, the results of Study 3 are not inconsistent with those obtained in Study 4.

One possible explanation regarding the single main effect of ingroup voice on organic pluralism may be linked to the way in which the attitudes of organic pluralism were measured. The statements behind the measure for organic pluralism allude to collaborative and cooperative attitudes which align with the type of behaviours
associated with extra-role behaviours or OCBs. Historically, research into procedural fairness in an organisational setting has indicated that when presented with procedures perceived as fair, members of the organisation are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviours, such as spontaneous collaboration (Kim & Mauborgne, 1996). Further, within the study of over one hundred subsidiary managers, procedural justice was found to contribute uniquely to these types of behaviours, with no effect from factors such as distributive justice and outcome favourability (Kim & Mauborgne, 1996). These results were supported by research into the impact of fairness on extra-role behaviour undertaken by Platow et al. (2006) that demonstrated that provision of voice, even non-instrumental voice, increased extra-role behaviours above conditions where voice was denied. That is, the provision of instrumental or non-instrumental voice opportunity, as well as increasing perceptions of fairness, may have increased the propensity of the current participants to support the type of behaviours that may fall into both the extra-role behaviour spectrum as well as those attitudes conducive to an organically pluralistic state (e.g., courteousness, Organ, 1998; or cooperation, Tyler & Blader, 2000). However, what is unclear is why there was no impact from the outgroup voice opportunity on this voice. This result was counter to expectations, as was the non-support for the hypothesis regarding the impact of the three independent variables on the measure of perceived fairness.

As stated, the results did not provide support for the hypotheses predicting a three-way interaction between pre-merger subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on levels of perceived fairness. However, consistent with the results obtained in Study 3, and as predicted in H2.2, Study 4 found a main effect for the ingroup voice condition. In the discussion section of Study 3, the lack of support for the hypothesis predicting an interaction between pre-merger subgroup status
and voice opportunity was suggested to be linked to the methodological issues associated with the design of the study. However, the consistency of results between Study 3 and Study 4 suggest that, in line with previous research, and in support of the second central hypothesis (H2), presentation of instrumental and non-instrumental voice opportunity can increase perceptions of fairness of an organisational merger. This, in turn, aligns with previous reporting regarding the benefits of providing voice opportunity in order to increase perceptions of procedural fairness in group members. However, contrary to predictions, there was no significant interaction between the key variables as hypothesised. The results suggested that the provision of voice opportunity for the outgroup members did not significantly impact ingroup members’ perceptions of fairness. Again, this result was not expected and deserves further investigation into the factors that may have driven it.

There is consistency in the results between Study 3 and Study 4, which provides some insights into the stated aim of the thesis (i.e., to investigate whether there is a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of different status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group)). What is clear from the results of Studies 3 and 4 is that providing instrumental voice to participants leads to increased levels of organic pluralism and perceived fairness when compared to conditions where voice is denied. Therefore, all members of the sample, regardless of the status of their pre-merger subgroup, appeared to respond positively to the provision of ingroup instrumental voice. In addition, in both Study 3 and Study 4, members of the high status pre-merger subgroup reported higher levels of perceived subgroup prototypicality, irrespective of the ingroup and outgroup voice opportunity.
Overall, the results of Study 4 indicate, contrary to predictions, that voice opportunity (and the associated procedural fairness) does not impact on the behaviours that lead to subgroup members projecting their attributes onto the post-merger superordinate group. Therefore, it can be posited the tendency to overestimate the ingroup’s similarity to the post-merger superordinate group may not be, as previously argued, necessarily detrimental to organic pluralism. That is, it may be possible for members of a pre-merger subgroup to simultaneously project their attributes onto the post-merger superordinate group, and also endorse attitudes conducive to organic pluralism.

The results concerning the potential impact of expectations of subgroup continuity, obtained in Study 1 and 2, may indicate some potential problems. For example, it is possible that the perceived prototypicality, as discussed in previous chapters, provides members of a pre-merger subgroup with an expectation of continuity in a post-merger context. This continuity may increase the salience of the intergroup context, and subsequently also increase the potential for intergroup conflict. When members of the ingroup perceive themselves as more prototypical of the superordinate identity than members of the outgroup, and the superordinate identity includes both ingroup and outgroup members, there is likely to be a detrimental effect on evaluations of the outgroup (Waldzus & Mummendey, 2004). Therefore, the impact of this perceived prototypicality on the pursuit of an organically pluralistic state is still not clear.

At the end of Study 4, several gaps remain in the knowledge regarding the pursuit of a uniform process for facilitating voice opportunity in an organisational merger in a manner that is seen as procedurally fair by subgroup members, and that also promotes feelings of organic pluralism. Amongst the issues that remain unclear is why
there were no interactions between subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity on the measures of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and ingroup prototypicality. In order to attempt to understand the results from Studies 3 and 4, a final study was designed in a manner that would allow for exploration of these issues. Therefore, the design of the next study was intended to collect information from participants on how important they viewed the voice opportunity from the ingroup relative to the outgroup. This was intended to provide insight into whether the provision of voice to the outgroup was not viewed as important, thus providing some explanation as to the lack of interactions between outgroup voice opportunity and the other factors in Study 4.

Study 5 was designed to also collect information on the type of voice opportunity that participants thought would be most valued for members of the ingroup and the outgroup. This was intended to explore, again, why there was no interaction between pre-merger subgroup status, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity. That is, the study would indicate whether members from each pre-merger subgroup had different, or similar views on the manner in which voice opportunity was most appropriately distributed. Finally, Study 5 was intended to provide some insight into the relationship between the planned distribution of resources by subgroup members and ingroup prototypicality, and indicate whether, as predicted, there would be a negative relationship between them. In this way, the final study of this thesis sought to answer the central question of the thesis, as to whether a voice intervention within an organisational merger could be implemented in a manner that was accepted as fair by all members of the pre-merger subgroups, promote organic pluralism and, if necessary, diminish subgroup prototypicality of the superordinate identity.
CHAPTER NINE

Moving towards organic pluralism: Voice distribution as a function of pre-merger status

9.1 Introduction

Results from the previous studies have produced evidence to support the importance of providing voice opportunity to subgroup members undertaking an organisation merger, in terms of increasing attitudes conducive to organic pluralism and perceptions of fairness. The predicted interactions of pre-merger subgroup status and of voice opportunity on the measures of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup ingroup prototypicality were not found in Studies 3 or 4. What these studies do suggest, however, is that status of the pre-merger subgroup is an important factor in predicting the tendency of subgroup members to project their subgroup attributes onto the superordinate identity. As observed in both studies, members of the high status subgroup were significantly more likely to perceive their subgroup as more similar to the post-merger superordinate group than members from the low status group.

The original stated aim of this thesis was to investigate whether there is a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of different status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group). Results of the empirical program to this point suggest that providing instrumental voice to subgroup members will lead to increased perceptions of fairness and organic pluralism. However, there has been no success in decreasing the tendency of members of high-status pre-merger subgroups to
perceive the post-merger superordinate group as similar in attributes to their subgroup. Although there has been no success in this pursuit in Studies 3 and 4, the pattern of ingroup subgroup prototypicality held by members of both pre-merger subgroups did not match the pattern of reported levels of organic pluralism or perceptions of fairness. That is, although pre-merger subgroup status has consistently been a significant factor regarding subgroup prototypicality, this has not been the case for the other two measures of interest. What is not clear is whether differences in perceived subgroup prototypicality will increase the salience of the intergroup context, and possibly increase the potential for ingroup bias in relation to resource distribution in the post-merger context. If this occurs, it is possible this may impact negatively on attitudes supporting organic pluralism, and may subsequently negatively impact on the success of the organisational merger process.

Previous research into differences in reported subgroup ingroup prototypicality on the superordinate group has suggested that these variations may also be reflected in perceptions of distributive fairness (see Wenzel, 2004). That is, subgroup members who perceive their subgroup as relatively prototypical of the superordinate group, subsequently see their subgroup as more deserving of resources than other subgroups. If this process occurs in an organisational merger, then this may lead to intergroup conflict, as subgroup members may disagree on fair distribution of resources in the post-merger context. This, in turn, may potentially negatively impact on attitudes conducive to organic pluralism.

The final study of the empirical program of the thesis intends to identify whether the status of the pre-merger subgroup impacts on the distribution of a particular resource within an organisational merger. In an organisational merger context, resources available during the merger may include the opportunity to have impact on the outcome
of the merger, as well as the chance to obtain a dominant position in the post-merger superordinate group. Thus, Study 5 was designed to present an organisational merger scenario in which all participants were given the opportunity to affect the organisational merger (i.e., providing participants with instrumental voice). The outcome that each participant was allowed to influence was the chance to distribute further voice opportunity to the ingroup and outgroup. Therefore, as outlined in the discussion of Chapter Eight, Study 5 was designed to provide insight into how ingroup and outgroup voice opportunity is valued by members of each subgroup and the manner in which members of the pre-merger subgroups would distribute voice to ingroup and outgroup subgroup members if given the opportunity.

Similar to the predictions made in Studies 3 and 4, and in support of the first central hypothesis (H1), in Study 5 it is predicted that when presented with an organisational merger context, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will be more likely to perceive continuity of the subgroup, report higher levels of perceived fairness and report higher levels of organic pluralism than members from the low status pre-merger subgroup. Therefore, the following hypotheses will be tested in Study 5, to evaluate the central hypothesis (H1):

**H1.3:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of organic pluralism than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H1.6:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of perceived fairness than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H1.7:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will report higher levels of ingroup prototypicality than will members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.
Within Study 5, as stated previously, the scenario presents a voice opportunity for all participants, that, according to this scenario, would influence an outcome. The outcome that can be influenced is future distribution of voice opportunity to the ingroup pre-merger subgroup and outgroup pre-merger subgroup. As evidenced by previous procedural justice research, and supported by the results obtained in the results of Studies 3 and 4, instrumental voice increases perceptions of fairness of an organisational merger process (Halsam, et al., 2003; Tyler, 1987). Therefore, within this study, all participants are given an instrumental voice opportunity within the organisational merger scenario. As a result, the second central hypothesis of the thesis (H2) predicting the impact of instrumental voice will not be tested in Study 5.

Study 5 will explore the impact that differences in perceptions of subgroup prototypicality between members of high and low status pre-merger subgroups may have on the distribution of voice opportunity within the merger process. This research will build on the subgroup prototypicality results from previous studies (see Kessler et al., 2010), as well as provide insight into whether subgroup prototypicality may lead to behaviours that facilitate a context of intergroup conflict and ingroup bias. Within the previous studies, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup have consistently reported higher levels of subgroup prototypicality with the superordinate group. Therefore, it is expected that this pattern will also be replicated when members from each subgroup are presented with the opportunity to distribute resources. That is, members from each pre-merger subgroup will distribute resources based on the perceived relative prototypicality of their subgroup to the superordinate group. Therefore, Study 5 will test the following hypotheses relevant to H3:

**H3.7:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will perceive input from their subgroup as more important than input from the low status subgroup.
**H3.8:** Members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will provide their subgroup with greater access to future voice opportunity in the organisational merger scenario than members from the low status pre-merger subgroup.

**H3.9:** There will be a significant positive correlation between the measure of subgroup ingroup prototypicality and of voice opportunity valued for ingroup.

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**9.2 Study 5**

**9.2.1 Method**

*Participants and design*

Participants comprised 50 members of the public. In Study 5, status (pre-merger subgroup status: high, low) was manipulated. Participants were assigned to one of two groups of different status. Refer to Table 9.1 for participant numbers in each cell.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Status</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Status</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Materials and Procedure*

Participants were alerted to the study by an information leaflet posted on a variety of organisational bulletin boards. These notices invited interested individuals to
take part on an online survey focused on behavior within organisations. The information leaflet provided information about the study and ethical approvals as well as a hyperlink to the online survey. The hyperlink directed participants to an entry screen that provided them with more information about the study as well as a check box to indicate consent. Individuals who indicated they would consent to undertake the study were redirected to the survey.

Participants were provided with introductory paragraphs on the two fictional organisational groups: Organisation Blue and Organisation Red. The descriptions were identical to those used in preceding studies in which Organisation Blue was presented to participants as a high status group and Organisation Red was presented as a low status group. To check the manipulation of status at this point, participants were asked to identify which of the two fictional organisations was the high status group. Status of group membership was manipulated at this step, and each participant was randomly assigned to either Organisation Red or Blue. At this point, participants were asked to rate the level of identification he or she had with other members of the subgroup to which he or she had been assigned (i.e., “I identify with other members of [Organisation Red/Blue]”). This was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = “Do not agree at all” and 7 = “Agree completely”.

The survey then introduced participants to the merger scenario using the same phrasing as in Studies 3 and 4. Within this section, all participants were informed that their feedback would be used in the design of the upcoming organisational merger process. Participants were then asked to complete the rest of the questionnaire that measured attitudes towards the merger, perceptions of the amount of involvement each group should have in the merger process as well as pre-merger subgroup prototypicality.
Attitudes were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = “Do not agree at all” and 7 = “Agree completely”.

Participants were asked to report how important they thought feedback from each subgroup (i.e., Organisation Blue and Organisation Red) would be in assisting the merger to be successful (i.e., “How important will feedback from members of Organisation Red be in terms of assisting the merger to be successful?”, “How important will feedback from members of Organisation Blue be in terms of assisting the merger to be successful?”). These attitudes were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = “Not important at all” and 7 = “Very important”.

Participants were also asked what type of input would be most valued from members of their own subgroup and members of the other group (i.e., “When you think about elements of the new organisation - what type of input do you think would be most valued from members of Organisation Red?”). Participants were given three options to chose from: “No input” (denial of voice), “Asked to provide input - but not necessarily influence the final decision” (non-instrumental voice) and “Asked to provide input, and this input directly influences the final decision” (instrumental voice).

Two statements were posed to measure whether participants believed the merger process was fair (i.e., “I feel like I can influence the merger decision process”, “I think the merger of the two agencies is likely to be a fair process”) and one statement was included to check the provision of instrumental voice opportunity (“I feel my views were taken into account”).

As in Studies 3 and 4, nine statements were provided to measure the level of organic pluralism perceived by participants (e.g., “Within the new organisation there will be different groups, but they will fit together well”, “We couldn’t achieve our goals
if we didn’t have the contribution of each group”) (Bachman, 2006). These were identical to the statements used in Studies 3 and 4.

At the conclusion of the study, participants were asked to circle five words from a set list of 15 attributes (based on Katz & Braly, 1933), that was also used in Studies 3 and 4, that they felt best reflected the prototypical traits of the pre-merger subgroups and the new organisation (post-merger group). Identical to Studies 3 and 4, this section was intended to measure participants’ reported levels of shared prototypicality with the post-merger superordinate organisation of their pre-merger subgroup (ingroup). After participants completed the online study they were re-directed to a debriefing screen that provided information on the research with which they had been involved, as well as contact details of the research and the ethics board for the university.

**Creation of measures**

The statements designed to collect information on participants’ experience of procedural fairness had a very strong positive relationship, $r = .75$, $p < .01$. A single measure was created using mean reduction.

A PCA was performed on the nine statements used to measure organic pluralism and showed that seven of the statements loaded well against one component (Table 9.2). Although seven statements were shown to load well against the component, it was decided to use the same eight statements to create the organic pluralism measure that were used in Studies 3 and 4. These eight statements (excluding “Some groups are not particularly important for the new organisation”) showed moderate internal reliability ($\alpha = .76$). The eight statements were reduced to a single measure using mean reduction.
Table 9.2

*Loading against the first component from the Principal Components Analysis on the nine statements measuring organic pluralism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Within the new organisation there will be different groups but they will fit together well.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Although there will be different sub-groups in the new organisation, it feels as if we will all work together well.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Although parts of the new organisation will have different roles to play, we will all have a common goal.</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Together we will achieve more than if we worked separately</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Each group of the new organisation has its own distinct contribution to make</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Some groups are particularly important for the new organisation.</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Some groups are not particularly important for the new organisation.</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  There is something about each group that is different from the other.</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  We couldn’t achieve our goals if we didn’t have the contribution of each group.</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2.2 Results

*Manipulation checks*

All participants correctly identified Organisation Blue as the high status group. A one-way ANOVA was performed to test whether participants identified with the group to which they were assigned. There was no significant difference between levels of identification with their pre-merger subgroup from members in the high status group ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.27$) and the low status group ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 2.09$), $F(1,48) = 2.91$, $p = .095$, $\eta^2_p = .057$. Participants reported identification levels with their subgroup near to the mid-point of the scale (4.0). Results from a $t$-test showed that the reported level of
identification with the pre-merger group from members assigned to the high status group was significantly higher than the mid-point (4.0) of the scale, \( t(25) = 2.32, p = .029 \).

An ANOVA was performed to test whether there was a difference in perceptions of subgroup voice (i.e., checking perceptions of voice opportunity). Results found no significant difference in reported levels of perceptions of having a say in the merger between members from the high status pre-merger subgroup \( (M = 3.96, SD = 1.56) \) and the low status pre-merger subgroup \( (M = 3.50, SD = 1.79) \), \( F(1,48) = .95, p = .336, \eta^2_p = .019 \). This suggested that participants perceived similar levels of voice opportunity within the study.

**Missing Data**

No missing data were identified in the results.

**Analysis**

Three one-way ANOVAs were performed on the dependent variables of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup ingroup prototypicality, with the factor of pre-merger status to test the sub-hypotheses relevant to the first central hypothesis (H1). Results did not support the prediction that members from the high status subgroup \( (M = 4.91, SD = .85) \) would report higher levels of organic pluralism than members from the low status subgroup \( (M = 4.70, SD = .84) \), \( F(1,48) = .85, p = .631, \eta^2_p = .017 \) (H1.3).

Contrary to predictions (H1.6), there was no significant difference between the reported levels of perceived fairness reported by members in the high status subgroup \( (M = 3.68, SD = 1.38) \) and the low status subgroup \( (M = 3.14, SD = 1.61) \), \( F(1,48) = 1.64, p = .207, \)
η² = .033. The measures of perceived fairness of the organisational merger and organic pluralism were on a seven-point Likert type scale where the higher numbers indicated increased levels of perceived fairness or organic pluralism. Results from a $t$-test demonstrated that the reported levels of organic pluralism from members within both the high status and low status subgroups were significantly higher than the mid-point of the scale, $t(25) = 5.26, p < .001$ and $t(23) = 3.96, p < .001$. Means for perceived fairness of the merger were below the mid-point of the scale for Study 5, indicating moderate to low perceptions of fairness of the merger process. However, $t$-tests showed only the reported levels of perceived fairness from the low status pre-merger subgroup were significantly lower than the mid-point of the scale, $t(23) = -3.24, p = .004$.

Similar to previous studies in this thesis, results provided support for the hypothesis regarding subgroup perceived prototypicality in an organisational merger (H1.7). Members from the high status subgroup reported higher levels of shared ingroup prototypically with the superordinate group ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.20$) than did members from the low status subgroup ($M = 2.46, SD = 1.18$), $F(1,48) = 12.62, p < .001, η² = .208$. That is, high status members were more likely to report that the post-merger superordinate group shared more of their pre-merger subgroup attributes than did members from the low status subgroup.

In summary, in Study 5 the pattern of results suggest, similar to those found in Studies 3 and 4, a potential for intergroup conflict in regards to perceived ingroup prototypicality. Group members from the high status group perceived their own group as sharing significantly more prototypical attributes with the superordinate group than did members from the low status group.

One-way ANOVAs were performed on the statements designed to measure how important participants perceived feedback from their ingroup and the outgroup (the
other subgroup present in the organisational merger scenario) was in assisting the merger to be successful. The results of the analyses found no support for the prediction that members from the high status pre-merger subgroup would perceive input from their subgroup as more important than input from the low status subgroup (H3.7).

Members from both the high status subgroup ($M = 5.62, SD = 1.30$) and the low status subgroup ($M = 4.96, SD = 1.52$) rated no difference in importance between feedback from their ingroup in assisting the merger to be successful, $F(1,48) = 2.72, p = .106, \eta^2 = .054$. Similarly, there was no significant difference between members from the high status subgroup ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.67$) and the low status subgroup ($M = 5.29, SD = 1.67$) on the importance of feedback from members of the outgroup in assisting the merger to be successful, $F(1,48) = .049, p = .826, \eta^2 = .001$.

Paired sample $t$-tests were used to identify any within-group differences between the levels of importance of ingroup and outgroup voice opportunity and found no significant differences. The results from the $t$-test found no significant difference between how important members from the high status subgroup rated input from their own group ($M = 5.62, SD = 1.30$) and from the low status group ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.67$), $t(25) = 1.55, p = .133$. Similarly there was no significant difference between how important members from the low status subgroup rated input from their ingroup ($M = 4.95, SD = 1.52$) and from the high status group ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.49$), $t(24) = -1.25, p = .224$. Therefore, the results of Study 5 suggest that participants overall reported no difference in importance of input from members of both the ingroup and the outgroup in assisting the organisational merger to be successful.

In Study 5, participants were given three options as to the type of input they thought would be most valued from each group: instrumental voice, non-instrumental voice and no voice. Results show that no participant chose “voice denial” as an option.
for either high or low status group members. Therefore, the variables of ingroup voice type and outgroup voice type were recoded to categorical variables with two levels only (instrumental, non-instrumental).

A chi-square test was performed to identify whether there was any difference between the type of input that was chosen for the ingroup and outgroup as a function of subgroup status (H3.8). For the measure of ingroup voice, the result of this test was statistically significant, suggesting a relationship between subgroup status and ingroup voice, $\chi^2 (1, N = 50) = 11.77, p = .001$. The strength of this association was moderate, Cramer’s $V = .49$. Results supported the hypothesis (H3.8) that predicted members from the high status subgroup would be more inclined to report instrumental voice as a more valued type of voice opportunity for their ingroup than members from the low status group. Conversely, the results suggested that members from the low status subgroup were more likely to report non-instrumental voice as the more valued type of voice opportunity for their ingroup (see Figure 9.1).

![Figure 9.1. Graph showing type of voice valued for ingroup by subgroup status](image-url)
A binary logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effect of status on the distribution of voice opportunity to ingroup members. The analysis was significant $\chi^2(1) = 10.63, p < .005$. The variable of pre-merger group status explained 21.9 per cent (Cox & Snell) of the explanation for distribution of ingroup voice and correctly classified 74.0% of the cases. Being in the high status group increased the likelihood of giving greater voice opportunity to their ingroup by .112 times.

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between subgroup status level and type of voice opportunity valued for members of the outgroup. The relation between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 2.83, p = .093$. Therefore, there was no significant relationship between subgroup status and type of voice opportunity valued for members of the outgroup (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2. Graph showing type of voice valued for outgroup by subgroup status

Similarly to the procedure for distribution of ingroup voice opportunity, a binary logistic regression was performed to examine the effect of pre-merger subgroup status on the distribution of voice opportunity to outgroup members. The analysis was not
significant $\chi(1) = 2.77$, $p = .10$. Pre-merger group status only accounted for .05 per cent (Cox & Snell) of the explanation for distribution on outgroup voice however correctly classified 62% of cases. This suggests that the model is weak, and although it does improve predictability in the model, the contribution is very low.

In order to exhaustively explore the distribution of voice, the measure of ingroup and outgroup voice were recoded into a variable covering the following voice opportunity choices: instrumental voice valued for ingroup only, instrumental voice valued for outgroup only, instrumental voice valued for both groups, non-instrumental voice valued for both groups. A chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between subgroup status level and type of voice opportunity valued for members of the outgroup. The results showed the relationship as significant, $\chi^2 (3, N = 50) = 13.26$, $p = .004$. The strength of association between these variables was moderate, Cramer’s $V = .52$.

More members of the high status group chose the ingroup only as the valued recipient for instrumental voice (20.0%) than low status group members (4.0%) (refer Figure 9.3). Similarly, more low status group members chose the outgroup only as the valued recipient for instrumental voice (18.0%) than did high status group members (10%). This result supports the prediction regarding the proposed distribution of voice by high status members. Nevertheless, participants, regardless of status, were more likely to choose the high status group only as the most valued recipient of instrumental voice. Finally, more members of the high status group reported that both groups would be valued recipients of instrumental voice (16.0%) than did members from the low status group (8.0%).
Results from Study 5 suggest that members from both high and low status subgroups agreed that the high status group was, more than the low status group, a valued recipient of instrumental voice. In contrast, there was almost an equal split between high status group members who thought only the high status group should receive instrumental voice and those who indicated that both groups should receive instrumental voice. Within Study 5, although participants agreed overall that input from high and low status group members into the organisational merger was equally important, there were differences in the perceived type of voice most valued from each group.

Finally, results from a Pearson’s $r$ correlation analysis showed that there was a significantly moderate positive relationship between the measure of subgroup ingroup prototypicality and distribution of voice opportunity (H3.9), $r = .31, p = .028$. 

*Figure 9.3.* Graph showing the type of voice valued for ingroup and outgroup by subgroup status
9.2.3 Discussion

The aim of Study 5 was to present participants from pre-merger subgroups of different status, facing a scenario of an upcoming organisational merger, with an opportunity to recommend the type of input that their ingroup and members from the outgroup should have in the merger process. This study was designed to collect information regarding how important voice opportunity from the ingroup and outgroup was perceived to be by members of each pre-merger subgroup. As stated in the introduction of Chapter Nine, it was intended that the results from this study would provide some insight into the inconsistency of results of Studies 3 and 4 in comparison with the predictions of Studies 3 and 4. That is, the results from this study were intended to go some way to explaining why there was no interaction between pre-merger status and voice opportunity in either study. Moreover, this study intended to provide insight into whether the tendency to project subgroup prototypicality was detrimental to attitudes of organic pluralism (as previously predicted) and whether members of the pre-merger subgroups would show bias in resource distribution that aligned with their perceptions of subgroup prototypicality.

Participants overall, regardless of status, reported similar levels of perceived fairness of the merger and organic pluralism. Unlike Studies 3 and 4, all participants in Study 5 were provided with instrumental voice opportunity. As part of this opportunity, information was collected on their desires regarding distribution of further voice opportunity within the organisational merger for ingroup and outgroup members.

In order to build on the subgroup prototypicality results found in previous studies (see Kessler et al., 2010), status was manipulated to investigate whether this would affect distribution of voice. In addition, to further build on the findings from Studies 3 and 4, measures of subgroup ingroup prototypicality were collected. The
results of Study 5 aligned with those of Studies 3 and 4, as well as past research into subgroup prototypicality (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999), and provided support for one sub-hypothesis for this study (H1.7) of the first central hypothesis (H1). Members from the high status group reported higher levels of shared ingroup prototypicality with the post-merger superordinate group than did low status members.

In Study 5, the patterns of voice distribution appeared to align with perceived subgroup prototypicality. That is, the more prototypical members perceived their subgroup was of the superordinate group, the more that subgroup was perceived as a valued recipient of instrumental voice. In addition, within this study participants reported that the input of both subgroups (high status, low status) as equally important. And although members from both the high and low status group seemed to agree that instrumental voice was particularly valued from the high status group, no participants chose to deny a subgroup input into the merger process.

Within Study 5, members of the low status group were more likely to provide instrumental voice to the outgroup than the ingroup. That is, within this study, members from the low status group were exhibiting outgroup favoritism in regards to resource distribution. One possible explanation for this is that the experimental manipulation presented a legitimate status difference between the high and low status subgroups. Within SIT, in situations where members of the low status group acknowledge the status superiority of the high status group, these members are predicted to exhibit outgroup, rather than ingroup, favouritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This tendency has been replicated in experimental settings (see Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987; 1991) and reflected in real world surveys (Levin, Federico, Sidanius, & Rabinowitz, 2002). Research into outgroup favouritism has highlighted the importance of the legitimacy of these status differences (see Ellemers et al., 1993; Jost & Brugess,
In addition, the scenario in Study 5 made salient the status differences between subgroups, and then presented subgroup members with the opportunity to indicate their preference for the distribution of voice opportunity. This situation may have created a context where members of the high status group perceived their superiority, and conversely the inferiority of the low status group, had been established by those in authority and, hence, felt justified in their ingroup favouritism (see Reichl, 1997).

Therefore, the results of Study 5 suggest the perceived status differences between the subgroups in the scenarios presented across all the studies may have influenced perceptions of fairness. That is, in Study 4, members from both high and low status subgroups may have been prepared to accept scenarios that favoured the high status subgroup because it was perceived their superiority was established and legitimate. This indicates that, in organisational merger situations where the status difference between the subgroups is perceived as legitimate by all subgroup members, a merger that favours the high status subgroup may be perceived as fair and also may not negatively impact attitudes of organic pluralism.

Within Study 5, there was also a varied distribution of voice when the value of voice from each subgroup was examined across the two groups. The results suggest that some members of the high status group valued instrumental voice from both subgroups. In addition, some members of the low status group valued non-instrumental voice from both subgroups. For these members of the low status group, this may have been an attempt to affect the organisational merger process in a manner that would most likely diminish status differences between subgroups (see Giessner et al., 2006). That is, members from the low status subgroup may have been attempting to create a situation where members of both subgroups were allowed input into the merger process, without impacting on the final outcome.
The results from Study 5 indicated that participants overall reported similar levels of organic pluralism. That is, members of each subgroup perceived the post-merger superordinate organisation as a group that would value and respect the input and presence of both subgroups. This perception was also seen in the results of Study 4. Even when subgroups perceived that different types of input (instrumental versus non-instrumental) were more valued from each group, subgroup members from both groups reported similar levels of perceived fairness of the merger. This, in turn suggests that all participants, while potentially disagreeing with each other regarding the level of input each subgroup should have in the organisational merger, appeared to agree with attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. Thus, results of this study provide support for the hypotheses that high and low status groups can, in some situations, accept different types of voice opportunity as being fair, and possibly suggest agreement on perceived prototypicality and subsequent resource distribution does not necessarily prevent an organically pluralistic state.

Study 5 is the final empirical study undertaken for this thesis. The final chapter (Chapter Ten) will review the findings of the empirical program and connect the results observed in the studies to the central hypotheses outlined in Chapter Four. In addition, implications of this thesis will be discussed, as well as possible future directions of this research in the broader context of organisational and social psychology.
CHAPTER TEN

Summary, implications and future directions

10.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this thesis, the ongoing implementation of organisational mergers was discussed. Within this discussion, the thesis outlined that, as part of an organisational merger, employees were often faced with an uncertain scenario with a potential outcome of losing access to a valued identity (Jetten et al., 2002; Jetten & Hutchison, 2011; Terry, 2001; Terry et al., 2001; Terry & O’Brien, 2001; van Dick et al., 2004). In addition to the loss of this valued identity, the thesis discussed the introduction of the superordinate identity to employees undergoing an organisational merger, and the difficulties that are faced within the organisational merger as subgroup members subsequently vie for status and dominance within this context (Boen et al., 2007; Terry & O’Brien, 2001; van Leeuwen et al., 2003). With these complexities in mind, this thesis sought to investigate organisational mergers, and focus on whether interventions within these situations could alleviate intergroup conflict and increase the perception of a common post-merger superordinate identity within which all pre-merger subgroup identities are accepted. Within this thesis, this condition for an organisational merger was described as an organically pluralistic state (see Haslam, 2001).

In Chapters One and Two, relevant literature in organisational and social-psychology was explored, and various models and theories were reviewed to attempt to identify the most effective form of intervention. As well as an exploration of literature focusing on organisational mergers, the thesis drew upon relevant research from
procedural justice literature, particularly that focusing on voice (Chapter Three). From this review, it became apparent that managing merging and threatened subgroup identities within an organisational merger remained a topic of some contention. This thesis identified literature supporting the principles associated with a process-based intervention (see Haslam et al., 2003) that could possibly be replicated within an organisational merger through identifying appropriate voice opportunities.

Within this thesis, it was argued that the pursuit of an organically pluralistic state should be a goal for authority figures managing an organisational merger. That is, it was argued that it would benefit both employees and authorities in charge of organisational mergers to reach a state where all members of that post-merger superordinate group accepted the presence of each pre-merger subgroup as legitimate. However, this thesis noted that problems associated with ingroup bias and intergroup conflict over resources can negatively impact on the potential of organisational mergers to be successful. For example, members from high and low status subgroups may desire different outcomes from an organisational merger in the pursuit of outcomes most beneficial for their subgroup ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1999; Turner et al., 1994).

This thesis also drew out the complexities associated with perceptions of continuity within an organisational merger. Literature indicated that members of the high status group are more likely to anticipate being in a dominant position in the post-merger context and, moreover, more likely to experience continuity of their subgroup (Boen et al., 2007; van Knippenberg & van Leeuwen, 2001). This expectation of dominance may be borne out in distributive fairness processes, with members of the high status subgroup perceiving their subgroup as more deserving of resources in the post-merger context, given their relatively greater supposed similarity to the post-merger superordinate identity (Kessler et al., 2010; Wenzel et al., 2008).
Thus, the purpose of this thesis was to investigate whether there is a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of different status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group). The primary goal of this thesis was to identify a voice opportunity, that, while perceived as fair by members from both high and low status subgroups, would also increase attitudes conducive to organic pluralism and reduce the tendency of members from high status groups to project their ingroup attributes onto the post-merger superordinate group.

The empirical work of this thesis went some way to answering the research question posed at the beginning of this thesis. The results of this thesis suggested that voice opportunity that gives the possibility of impacting the outcome of a merger can lead to increased perceptions of fairness, and can increase attitudes conducive to organic pluralism. However, the results of the thesis also suggest that subgroup members may also support seemingly unfair distribution of voice opportunity.

This concluding chapter will outline the key findings that have arisen from the literature review as well as the empirical program of the thesis. A summary of the findings for each preceding empirical chapter of this thesis will be presented within this final chapter. Following from this, the theoretical, empirical and practical implications of this thesis will be discussed including the unique contributions of this thesis. Finally, future directions of the research will be suggested.
10.2 Recapitulation

Chapter Four presented the theoretical assumptions of the thesis and the purpose and original contribution of the thesis was established: viz., to investigate whether there is a way in which members from pre-merger subgroups of different status can all have a voice opportunity in an organisational merger that is perceived as fair, and reach an outcome where all pre-merger subgroups are seen as legitimate by members of the post-merger group (i.e., an organically pluralistic group). To this aim, and drawing on these assumptions, three central hypotheses were presented. An empirical program was designed to test sub-hypotheses relevant to the three central hypotheses. This program consisted of two field studies and three experimental studies.

In total, seven sub-hypotheses were tested as part of the empirical process of the thesis that were relevant to the first central hypothesis (H1): In an organisational merger context, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup will be more likely to perceive continuity of their group, report higher levels of perceived fairness and report higher levels of organic pluralism.

Results from the empirical program supported two of the sub-hypotheses (see Table 10.1). Within the field studies (Studies 1 and 2), results indicated a negative relationship between perceptions of intergroup conflict and organic pluralism. In addition, these studies suggested members of low status subgroups expected higher levels of intergroup conflict with members of high status subgroups. In a post-merger context, results suggested there was no difference between the reported levels of expected subgroup continuity of members from high and low status subgroups.
Table 10.1

*Results of testing the sub-hypotheses relevant to H1*

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<th>Study 2</th>
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The prediction that members from the high status subgroup would report higher levels of perceived continuity (operationalised in the experimental studies as subgroup ingroup prototypicality), perceived fairness and organic pluralism than members from the low status subgroup was tested as part of Studies 3, 4 and 5. Results from all three studies consistently supported the prediction that members from the high status subgroup were more likely to report higher levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality than members from the low status subgroup. However, no significant difference was found in reported levels for the other dependent variables of interest.

Within the empirical program of this thesis, three sub-hypotheses were tested that were relevant to the second central hypothesis (H2): When provided with the opportunity for instrumental voice in an organisational merger, members of pre-merger subgroups will report higher levels of organic pluralism and higher perceptions of fairness of the merger, and lower perceptions of shared prototypicality with the post-
merger superordinate group (i.e., less ingroup projection than conditions where they are not given instrumental voice).

These sub-hypotheses were tested within Studies 3 and 4 and partially supported the predictions made in the central hypothesis (H2) (see Table 10.2). The results consistently supported the prediction that in conditions where participants were provided with instrumental voice, they would report higher perceptions of perceived fairness when compared with conditions where they did not receive instrumental voice. In addition, the results of Study 4, which included improvements to the design of Study 3, supported the prediction that in conditions where participants received instrumental voice, they would report higher levels of organic pluralism than conditions where they were denied voice. However, there was no evidence found in either study to support the hypothesis on the impact of voice opportunity on perceptions on subgroup ingroup prototypicality.

Table 10.2

Results of testing the sub-hypotheses relevant to H2

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Nine sub-hypotheses were tested across Studies 3, 4 and 5 that were relevant to the third central hypothesis (H3) that predicted significant interactions for the factors of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on the measures of organic pluralism,
perceived fairness and perceived subgroup ingroup prototypicality. There was no support for the predictions of an interaction between pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity (see Table 10.3). Results across Studies 3 and 4 suggested that members of pre-merger subgroups, regardless of status, perceived instrumental voice as more procedurally fair than receiving non-instrumental voice or being denied voice. However, despite this, results from Study 5 suggested that members of the high status subgroup were more likely than members from the low status subgroup to report instrumental voice as the voice opportunity most valued from their subgroup ingroup. Members from the low status subgroup were more likely than members from the high status subgroup as reporting non-instrumental voice as the type of voice opportunity most valued for their ingroup. Finally, results from Study 5 supported the prediction that there was a positive correlation between reported levels of subgroup ingroup prototypicality and voice opportunity valued for ingroup.
Table 10.3

Results of testing the sub-hypotheses relevant to H3

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10.3 Implications of the thesis

The results from the empirical program of this thesis add to the body of work (overviewed in Chapters Two and Three) of social and organisational-psychology focusing on organisational mergers, and may assist in designing appropriate interventions for mergers. The evidence gathered from the results of the empirical program of this thesis suggests that the provision of instrumental voice within an organisation merger may lead to increased perceptions of fairness of the merger as well as increased levels of perceived organic pluralism in members. Therefore, this thesis suggests that allowing employees to have input into an organisational merger that may
impact on certain outcomes of the merger, may reap benefits for employee and employer alike.

One of the important initiatives of this thesis was in examining the impact of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on the measures of subgroup prototypicality and organic pluralism. Previous research into subgroup prototypicality has been undertaken on organisational group mergers via field studies (see Gleibs et al., 2008; Gleibs et al., 2010); however, this thesis presents a unique situation where subgroup prototypicality was measured in an experimental context, within an organisational merger scenario. In addition, although the tendency to project the attributes of a subgroup onto a superordinate category is well researched within the Ingroup Projection literature (see Bianchi et al., 2009; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Mummendey et al., 2001; Waldzus & Mummendey, 2004; Waldzus et al., 2005), this thesis provides new evidence that this phenomenon can be reproduced for participants within a near-minimal groups experimental design (see DiDonato, Ullrich & Krueger, 2011). This thesis is one of only two research studies, to the author’s knowledge, that has succeeded in reproducing the projection phenomenon within such a setting.

Therefore, the empirical program of this thesis indicates the potential to replicate the ingroup projection phenomenon in future experiments (as outlined later in this chapter), which subsequently extends the contexts within which this phenomenon can be studied. In a similar vein, the three empirical studies within this thesis are, to the knowledge of the author, unique in their manipulation of voice opportunity and pre-merger subgroup status within the experimental scenario of an organisational merger. Thus, the findings of this thesis adds to the body of knowledge researching the effect of instrumental voice, non-instrumental voice and denial of voice.
10.3.1 Central hypotheses

In regards to the original hypotheses, the empirical program of the thesis found partial support for the three central hypotheses (see Tables 10.1, 10.2, 10.3). Across all studies, results supported the prediction that, when faced with an organisational merger, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup were more likely to perceive continuity of their group. This thesis suggests these expectations of continuity may be linked to the phenomena of Ingroup Projection. As demonstrated within this thesis, when presented with a relatively undefined post-merger superordinate identity, members from the high status pre-merger subgroup were more likely to report this identity shared more attributes with their subgroup than members from the low status subgroup.

Pre-merger status was not shown to have any impact on perceptions of fairness or on organic pluralism. Although it was predicted to have a significant interaction with voice opportunity, this was not supported by any results across the empirical program of the thesis. In previous research into organisational mergers, the merger process was found to highlight intergroup comparisons (particularly in members of low status subgroups) and subsequently increased identification with the pre-merger subgroup (see Terry, 2003). As a result, members of the low status pre-merger subgroup were less likely to perceive a common ingroup identity than members from the high status pre-merger subgroup (Terry, 2003). However this pattern was not observed in the results of this thesis. One explanation could be there is a difference in the measurement of “common ingroup identity” and “organic pluralism”. The manner in which organic pluralism was discussed and measured in this thesis was related to attitudes conducive to a state of organic pluralism, as opposed to agreement on the existence of, and identification with, a common superordinate identity. That is, this thesis was focused on measuring attitudes in participants that demonstrated their willingness to accept
members from the other pre-merger subgroup in a post-merger context and to accept, holistically, that the presence of members from each pre-merger subgroup benefited the post-merger group. It is possible although members from each subgroup espoused these attitudes, they may not translate to acceptance of, and identification with, the new post-merger superordinate group.

Within Chapter Two, research was discussed that suggested making status salient to members of pre-merger subgroups also made these members more aware of the fairness (or unfairness) of procedures that would be affecting their group (Van Prooijen et al., 2002). In addition, it was explored in Chapter Two that studies into preferences of merger processes (see Amiot et al., 2007; Giessner et al., 2006; Terry et al., 1996) demonstrated that members are likely to prefer the type of intervention that benefits their subgroup in the post-merger context. This was extrapolated, within Chapter Four, to posit that members of pre-merger groups of different status would be more likely to perceive as fair, those processes that were likely to lead to an outcome that would most benefit their ingroup. That is, within the thesis it was expected that members from the high status group would report conditions as fairer where they received higher levels of voice opportunity than members from the low status group.

It was expected that members from the low status group would find conditions in which levels of voice opportunity were present but equal as being more fair than conditions where both subgroups received different types of voice opportunity. These hypotheses were not supported by the results of the empirical program of the thesis. However, the pattern of predicted main effects regarding the provision of voice opportunity and perceptions of fairness mirrored those perceptions identified in past research. That is, the provision of an instrumental voice opportunity is more likely to lead to increased perceptions of perceived fairness of a procedure than conditions where
an individual is given non-instrumental voice, or denied voice opportunity in the process in question (Folger, 1977; Konovsky, 2000; Pease et al., 1988; Tyler, 1987). However, results from this thesis suggest, in line with historical research, that preferences for a particular outcome, and perceptions of fairness of that outcome, may be distinct (see Lind et al., 1983; Thibaut & Walker, 1975, Tyler, Rasinski & Spodick, 1985). As is suggested by the empirical research in this thesis, members from pre-merger subgroups of differing status can agree a procedure is fair, yet ostensibly support the distribution of voice opportunity in a manner that appears to favour one subgroup over another.

The expectation that the status of the pre-merger subgroup would impact on perception of fairness (on the different ways in which voice opportunity was distributed) was not supported. The unexpected results focused mainly around the willingness of members from the low status pre-merger subgroup to distribute voice opportunity in a manner which was seemingly outgroup favouring in Study 5. This result, when taken in consideration with the other experiments in this thesis, may explain why the thesis found no support for the predicted interactions of voice opportunity and subgroup status in Studies 3 and 4.

The results of Study 5 suggested one possible explanation as to why the predicted significant interaction between the variables of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity was not found in the larger experimental design of Study 4 (described in Chapter Eight). This explanation, explored in the discussion of Chapter Nine, was that members from high and low status subgroups perceived the status difference between their subgroups as legitimate. That is, participants may have perceived as legitimate a fabricated designation of status between two fictional groups. As a result of this, in the conditions where voice opportunity was distributed in favour
of the high status subgroup, members from the low status subgroup may have accepted this outcome as legitimate, having agreed to the status differences previously established between the two groups (see Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1993). However, as the legitimacy of subgroup status was not measured in any of the studies within the empirical program of this thesis, the potential impact of legitimacy within the three experimental studies can be only be speculated.

The findings from the empirical work of this thesis allow some conclusions to be drawn regarding the behaviour of subgroups faced with an organisational merger, particularly regarding the management of subgroup identities in a post-merger context. As noted in past organisational research, the pre-merger subgroup identity is difficult for members to discard (Hornsey & Hogg, 2002; Jetten et al., 2002). For example, the results of this thesis suggest that members of pre-merger subgroups may maintain identification with their pre-merger subgroup, and belief in the associated prototypical attributes of this group through projection of these attributes onto a post-merger superordinate identity. The results also suggest that this tendency, while more prominent in members from high status pre-merger subgroups, is not necessarily linked to outgroup degradation and rejection of attitudes conducive to organic pluralism.

This result aligns with previous research undertaken by van Knippenberg and van Leeuwen (2001), and suggests that subgroup members using ingroup projection may be more inclined to perceive the superordinate identity as a continuation of their previous group. If so, there may be benefits to ingroup projection, as perceptions of pre-merger continuity, and moderate to high levels of identification with the pre-merger subgroup have shown to be linked to identification with the post-merger superordinate body (Boen et al., 2005). Although previous researchers have warned that subgroup continuity may be negatively influenced by the dominance of one pre-merger subgroup
over another (see Gleibs et al., 2008; van Knippenberg et al., 2001; 2002; van Vuuren et al., 2010), these researchers did not explore the impacts of legitimacy of status, or even dominance within this context. That is, these researchers did not explore a situation where organisational dominance of one subgroup over another was perceived by both subgroups as legitimate. This was also not studied within the context of this thesis, however, it may be a topic that could be explored in future research.

The results of this thesis can be extrapolated to posit that if members of both pre-merger subgroups agree on the relative prototypicality of their group within the post-merger context, they may also agree on the legitimacy of the relative dominance or sub-ordination of their subgroup within the post-merger context. And beyond this, members from both subgroups may hold relatively similar attitudes on organic pluralism. In other words, it may be possible for a situation to occur where members from different pre-merger subgroups agree that one group is legitimately dominant over another in the post-merger context, while still agreeing that involvement and acceptance of each subgroup in the post-merger context is important. However, in these cases, the agreed role of the each subgroup in the organically pluralistic group may be, in the eyes of others, unequal. Therefore, in some situations, a common ingroup identity may be defined with one subgroup identity dominant over another subgroup identity, but perceived as legitimate by members of that dominated subgroup. This identity may then reduce the potential for hostility between merging groups (see McGarty, 1999; 2006) and also be perceived as homogeneous as well as valued (see van Leeuwen & van Knippenberg, 2003).

In regards to the second central hypothesis, the results from the empirical program of this thesis found partial support for the predictions. Throughout this thesis, provision of voice opportunity was linked to higher levels of organic pluralism and
perceived fairness. However, the provision of voice opportunity (or denial of voice opportunity) did not impact on perceptions of shared prototypicality. It was expected that the provision of voice would affect the tendency of members from a subgroup to project their attributes onto the post-merger superordinate identity, as it was argued that this tendency would be reduced in an organically pluralistic state. However, the results from this thesis suggest that the phenomenon of ingroup projection, and the beliefs relating to organic pluralism, may be disconnected. That is, the tendency for members to believe their group is more prototypical of the post-merger superordinate organisation may not negatively impact on attitudes conducive to organic pluralism, but may be moderated by voice.

This tendency is possibly observed in the work of Waldzus et al. (2004) investigating Ingroup Projection within ingrained, social identities. For example, in their work in Germany, Waldzus et al. (2004) found that, after reunification, East Germans and West Germans both agreed that West Germans were more prototypical of the superordinate category of Germans. These perceptions of prototypicality were seen to mirror reality and that members of the pre-merger subgroups were accepting a prototypical distinction as legitimate. The superordinate identity of Germans was accepted by each group and, to some extent, was a valued common ingroup identity.

Further to this, Machunksy, Meiser and Mummendey (2009) note that ingroup projection is more prevalent in situations where the superordinate group is ill-defined. This may be relevant to the experimental design of Studies 3, 4 and 5 within this thesis. Although the two pre-merger subgroups were defined to participants at the beginning of each survey, the organisational merger scenario described in the survey instrument did not define the superordinate identity, possibly allowing members to define the organisation in their minds. The presentation of an ill-defined superordinate identity
may have increased the propensity of subgroup members to subsequently define the superordinate identity via the process of projecting their subgroup ingroup prototypical traits onto the superordinate identity. As a result, the representation of the superordinate group was perceived, by participants from both pre-merger subgroups, as organisationally dominated by the high status pre-merger subgroup. If this domination was also perceived as, similar to the German study, legitimate, it may explain why the different presentations of voice opportunity had no effect on the manner in which members of the pre-merger subgroups had envisioned the post-merger superordinate group.

These results suggest that within an organisational merger, the perceptions of the pre-merger subgroup members are particularly important. This has highlighted the importance of the subgroup identification stage that commences the ASPIRe model process, where perceptions of subgroup members can be articulated and categorised (Eggins et al., 2008; Haslam et al., 2002). The results from the empirical program of this thesis, however, emphasise the need to draw out further the influence of the subgroups. Within an organisational merger setting, identification of the subgroups may be the first step, and the research of this thesis has demonstrated the importance of understanding how each subgroup perceives the superordinate identity, as well as each other. That is, there is a need to explore differences in perceived prototypicality between pre-merger subgroups and the post-merger superordinate identity, which may link to perceptions of the role each subgroup is deemed eligible to play in a post-merger context.

If there are status differences between subgroups, results from this thesis suggests it is crucial to gain an understanding as to whether these status differences are perceived as legitimate or illegitimate. As suggested by, but not examined within the
results of this thesis, if perceived as legitimate, members from the low status subgroup may well accept some level of dominance of their subgroup by the high status subgroup. Further to this, members from the low status subgroup may even accept a situation in which members from their group are given less voice opportunity in the organisational merger than members from the high status pre-merger subgroup.

10.3.2 Practical implications of the thesis

The work of this thesis dovetails with broader change management literature. For example, research into change management strategies emphasised the importance of consultation during an organisational merger (Kavanagh & Ashkanasay, 2006). This thesis provides empirical credibility to this claim, and emphasises why it is an important part of an organisational merger. Further to this, this thesis may inform practitioners of change management strategies in regards to change-process steps of a) diagnosis of what needs to be changed, b) managing people issues (e.g. motivating people to change) and c) planning (e.g. shaping implementation strategies) (Hayes, 2014). Finally, this thesis may provide another perspective on the concept of changing an organisational culture (Brown & Harvey, 2011; Doppelt, 2009). This thesis focused on an SIT and SCT approach to an organisational merger, and a social psychological perspective allows the idea of “cultural change” to be conceptualised instead as “cultural nudge” or “culture integration”. Thus, the processes of seeking to change organisational culture may be a more nuanced process, focusing instead on motivating people within the merged organisation to re-categorise themselves.

In response to the results obtained during the empirical program of this thesis, some recommendations can be made to authorities controlling an organisational merger. Firstly, in order to move towards an effective merger outcome, the first step within the

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2 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for their suggestions.
The organisational merger process is to understand the pre-merger subgroups that are present in the process. This could be through a process similar to that outlined in the ASPIRe model, and using the Ascertaining Identity Resources (AIRing) step (see Eggins et al., 2003; Haslam et al., 2002). Within this step, this thesis suggests that the important factors to draw out of this process, specifically to assist an organisational merger, are subgroup identification, perceived prototypicality of the ingroup with the post-merger superordinate identity as well as perceptions of status (including legitimacy of the status). The results from this step can then be used to identify the most appropriate strategy for moving on with the organisational merger. Although input into the merger could be undertaken as part of the next step of the ASPIRe model (i.e., Subgroup Caucasing (Subcasing); Eggins et al., 2003) this input could mirror the instrumental voice manipulation introduced in the final study of this thesis. That is, members from the pre-merger subgroups can provide their advice (which, in itself, is voice opportunity) on how much influence their ingroup, and any outgroups, should have on the organisational merger.

Taken together, these steps will provide the authority invested in the success of the organisational merger with the information he or she requires in order to design and implement the most effective distribution of voice opportunity within the organisational merger. As suggested by the results of this thesis, if status differences between the pre-merger subgroups are perceived to be legitimate, then this may influence the type of voice opportunity that members of the pre-merger subgroups are prepared to accept. In situations where it is likely that one of the pre-merger subgroups may have organisational dominance over the other in the post-merger context, the results of this thesis suggest that, if this status difference and possibly any difference in perceived subgroup prototypicality is perceived as legitimate, then pre-merger subgroup members
from the dominated group may accept this situation with no additional impact on attitudes of organic pluralism.

**10.4 Limitations of the thesis**

Although this thesis provided an overview of the impact of the factors of pre-merger subgroup status and voice opportunity on the measures of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and subgroup prototypicality, there is at least one limitation regarding this thesis that needs to be outlined. In Chapter Two, the thesis introduced the principles of SIT and SCT, and reviewed the importance of identification within the sphere of social psychology. Without strong identification, the group behaviour explored in group based theories such as the GEM and the GVM may not emerge. In addition, where individuals do not identify with a group, the propensity to seek comparisons to perceive the group as positively distinct from other groups may not eventuate. Therefore, phenomena like ingroup projection are less likely to occur in situations where there is low level identification with the group.

Although identification measures were taken throughout this thesis to check on the success (or not) of the minimal groups experimental design, identification was not included in the hypotheses or tested as a moderator (or mediator) throughout the thesis. At the time the theoretical examinations of the thesis were being developed, the importance of status in the organisational context was identified as an important factor to consider when observing organisational mergers and designing interventions into the organisational merger process. However, upon examination of the results of this thesis, the role of identification with the pre-merger subgroup may be relevant to obtaining a clearer understanding of the factors that drive the response to voice opportunity and the impact on organic pluralism.
Post-hoc analysis of the data from the three experimental studies was undertaken, removing pre-merger subgroup status from the analysis, and substituting the measure of identification with the pre-merger subgroup. Results from Study 3 did not differ greatly from those obtained testing the original hypotheses. However, in Study 4, a significant three-way interaction was observed between identification with the pre-merger subgroup, ingroup voice opportunity and outgroup voice opportunity. This result suggested that, as identification with the pre-merger subgroup increased, participants who received instrumental voice were less likely to perceive it as fair when members of the outgroup received instrumental voice opportunity. This result was further explained by re-analysis of Study 5, which suggested the more participants identified with their pre-merger subgroup ingroup, the less they perceived feedback from the outgroup as important.

These results demonstrate that identification with the pre-merger subgroup, as noted as part of SIT, may increase bias favouring the ingroup. Further to this, these results suggest that understanding the level of identification with pre-merger subgroups that employees have, may be relevant to predicting ingroup bias and responses to distribution of resources or voice opportunity within an organisational merger.

One warning should be made regarding hypothesising any potential impact of identification within this thesis. Although the single item scale of identification has shown to be valid to use within similar studies, it is possible that within the empirical program, the identification measure did not appropriately collect information on participant identification with their assigned group. This is potentially demonstrated by the reasonably high levels of identification with the scenario based groups demonstrated in the final three studies.
One final limitation of this thesis that should be highlighted was specific to the empirical program.\textsuperscript{3} The empirical program of this thesis consisted of two field studies and three experimental studies. Although, as noted in Chapter Six, field studies may have issues surrounding internal validity, using real world samples provides an opportunity to collect data that draws on attitudes, beliefs and reactions of people to the situation they are presented with. Chapter Two outlined the uncertainty of organisational mergers, including the fear and anxiety that may be aroused in people who are potentially losing a significant piece of their social identity. Organisational mergers, for some people, may be a daunting process that may impact on them negatively both psychologically and even physically.

Studies 1 and 2 drew upon a sample of people who were a) either facing an organisational merger or b) working within a post-merger context. As a result, the data collected within these studies would have drawn on the range of emotions experienced by the people within the samples. However, Studies 1 and 2 were the only field studies undertaken as part of the empirical program. As noted in Chapter Six, it was posited that it was beneficial to move from the field study context into the experimental realm in order to focus on specific measures. The design of the three experimental studies (Studies 3, 4 and 5) were based around minimal group assignment. The merger scenario was presented to participants as part of a survey instrument.

As discussed within this chapter, a number of possibilities for the absence of results was posited, however one potential explanation for the lack of results may lie with the methodological design of studies 3, 4 and 5. Although the minimal groups assignment design has been an successful approach in researching a number of social psychological phenomena, it may not have been effective for the type of processes

\textsuperscript{3} Thanks are given to an anonymous reviewer for their suggestions regarding this important limitation.
driving reactions to organisational mergers. Thus, the lack of evidentiary support for the hypotheses of this thesis may have been the result of the empirical process. That is, the empirical design of each study did not effectively recreate the type of context necessary to induce the perceptions of threat that drive the post-merger attitudes and behaviour that the thesis sought to measure. Therefore, when the thesis moved from the field studies and collection of data within the real life environment, the experiments may have failed to produce the distressors necessary to effectively model an organisational merger.

To rectify this issue, there are a range of options that could have been undertaken in order to fix this potential methodological issue. For example, one alternative approach may have been to present the scenario within a simulation that would place participants within their group (using a minimal group approach) and building identity with that group through engagement before imposing the organisational merger on both groups. Another approach that may have been taken in Studies 3, 4 and 5 would have been to sample from the population of employed people and then to ask these participants to imagine their own organisation was undergoing a merger (with another organisation of higher or lower status) and to respond to the survey questions based on their feelings as real employees in that hypothetical scenario. Alternative approaches such as these are likely to engage participants and potentially elicit the attitudes and perceptions from participants that were the focus of this thesis.

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4 As suggested by an anonymous reviewer
10.5 Future directions

Within this thesis, the results of the final study suggest that legitimacy of status of pre-merger subgroups undergoing an organisational merger process may be of relevance when designing appropriate methods for interventions. Legitimacy of status, particularly in regards to members from low status subgroups, may impact how these group members respond to threats to their group distinctiveness as well to how accepting they are of particular types of interventions (Ellemers et al., 1993; Terry et al., 2001; Terry & O’Brien, 2001). Therefore, future research could attempt to replicate the results of Study 5, and identify whether participants assigned to the low status subgroup consistently demonstrate outgroup bias regarding the distribution of voice. This research could also examine the effect of manipulating the legitimacy of subgroup status and voice opportunity on the measures of organic pluralism, perceived fairness and ingroup prototypicality. Additionally, it would be useful to attempt to identify similar process in real world organisational mergers. To further extend this research, future studies could focus on identifying the affect of different merger pattern preferences on the concept of organic pluralism.

Within the thesis, status was operationalised and presented as a multi-layered concept. Within an organisation, for example, multiple hierarchies can exist due to differences in status ascribed to various characteristics (Piazza & Castellucci, 2013) and may be a variety of attributes that contribute to status. This thesis was not focused on identifying the most important status aspect, or on focusing on differentiating between attributes that can make up status. Rather, the empirical program of this thesis was interested in examining the broad, multi-faceted perception of status. Future research could seek to focus on the dynamic and subjective nature of status, and whether status
could be a moderator, mediator (or both) in regards to people’s reactions to
organisational mergers.

In some situations, organisational mergers may result in the dominance of the
high status subgroup in the post-merger context; and the results from Study 5 suggest
this dominance may be accepted as legitimate by the low status group. The results of
this thesis do not suggest that perceptions of organisational dominance impacts on
organic pluralism, indicating that, in some situations, organisational dominance of one
subgroup may be accepted as fair by the other subgroup. If these processes are found to
be consistent, then this result again demonstrates the importance of having a clear
understanding of subgroup categorisations and relationships before the beginning of an
organisational merger.

Further work could be undertaken around the potential for intergroup conflict in
a organisational merger context. The experiments conducted as part of this thesis made
no reference to the relationship, beyond outlining status differences, between the two
pre-merger subgroups. However, in an organisational merger, members of the pre-
merger subgroups would be likely to have an awareness of the role of each subgroup as
well as their status in relation to each other. For example, in the research of a merger of
two university groups undertaken by van Vuuren et al. (2010), there were high levels of
competition between the two pre-merger subgroups which affected identification with
the post-merger superordinate group. Therefore, it may be useful to conduct future
research in which the nature of the pre-merger intergroup relationship could be
manipulated (e.g., hostile, competitive or cooperative) in order to identify whether this
impacted on organic pluralism, perceived fairness or ingroup prototypicality.

One further area for future research may be to examine the impact of the way in
which members of pre-merger subgroups choose to distribute resources and rewards on
organic pluralism, perceived fairness and ingroup prototypicality. An organisational merger can often be a lengthy process over a number of stages (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991) during which time several social identity processes may operate (see Gleibs et al., 2008; Hogg & Terry, 2000), with the dominance of one subgroup possibly changing over time or the permeability of boundaries potentially changing (see Amiot et al., 2007). Therefore, a decision or recommendation accepted as fair by members of a pre-merger subgroup at one stage of the merger may seem unfair once implemented. Or, as noted above, if recommendations regarding distribution of resources such as voice opportunity are accepted due to the legitimacy of perceived status differences, this may change if the status differences are annulled or become illegitimate. Therefore, it may be worthwhile for future research to investigate how choices made by pre-merger subgroups, regarding their involvement in an organisational merger, would impact on their perceptions of fairness of a merger and desire for an organically pluralistic superordinate identity once these recommendations were implemented.

This thesis suggests that one possible strategy members of pre-merger subgroups use when faced with an organisational merger may be the tendency to project the prototypical attributes of their group onto the superordinate group. This tendency was queried as a result of the field studies undertaken in Chapter Five (Studies 1 and 2), and then tested experimentally in Studies 3 to 5. It would be interesting to gain more evidence of the tendency to project ingroup attributes onto the superordinate identity within a real organisational merger. Therefore, future research into field studies (or longitudinal studies) of organisational mergers could collect data on whether ingroup projection is observed in members of pre-merger subgroups. In addition, as discussed, the nebulous nature of the superordinate identity described in the experimental scenarios presented to participants as part of this thesis may have created a context where this
tendency to project prototypical attributes was enhanced. Therefore, in order to clearly understand the contexts where ingroup projection may be used in an organisational merger, it would beneficial to replicate the results of these studies and to manipulate the presentation of the superordinate group (e.g., given a name only and not defined, or given a name and limited definition, or given a name and extensive definition). This work may provide insight into the conditions where this type of behaviour is more prevalent and, as a result, provide advice to members designing an organisational merger as to the best manner in which to present the post-merger superordinate identity to members of the pre-merger subgroups.

Finally, as discussed in the implications of this thesis, the delimitation between acceptance of, and identification with, a superordinate body and the tendency to agree with attitudes conducive to organic pluralism was made. That is, reporting agreement with attitudes conducive to organic pluralism may not lead to increased identification with the superordinate identity. What was not tested as part of this thesis, was the link between these attitudes and intention to support an organically pluralistic post-merger state (i.e., identification with the post-merger superordinate body). Therefore, future work could identify whether the measure of organic pluralism is a significant predictor of identification with a post-merger superordinate group.

In addition to the above, future research could seek to identify any gap between reporting attitudes conducive towards organic pluralism and acceptance of a common ingroup superordinate identity. If the organic pluralism measure consistently shows itself to be a strong predictor of identification with the post-merger organisation, then this paves the way for research into the use of this measure in being able to identify the readiness of pre-merger subgroups to move towards the end point of a successful
merger (i.e., a superordinate group where all pre-merger subgroups are accepted and respected).

10.6 Final comments

There are estimates that people can spend up to 100,000 hours of their life at work (Handy, 1989). This represents approximately 43 per cent of the wake-time of an adult and, comparably, is a large amount of an individual's lifetime spent in various organisations where many of the decisions that directly affect him or her are made by people or departments beyond the individual’s sphere of influence. At times, as raised at the beginning of this thesis, the outcome of these decisions can impact negatively on people. These impacts are not restricted to working conditions, nor to within the context of the working environment, but can have real consequences on the physical and psychological health of employees. The motivation behind this thesis was to add to the body of knowledge of social psychology that seeks to improve the lives of employees. It has been argued in this thesis that the evidence gathered here can be used to increase the chance of success for organisational mergers. In this way, the findings from this thesis can assist in providing advice as to a particular approach which should decrease the negative impact of an organisational merger on employees and lead to the development of a post-merger organisational identity that is common to all members.

Throughout this thesis the goal of an organically pluralistic post-merger group has been emphasised. The results of this work suggest these attitudes are shared, and supported, by many members of pre-merger subgroups facing an organisational merger. In terms of movement towards these goals, this thesis has highlighted the importance of understanding pre-merger subgroup members’ perceptions of their subgroup status, as
well as the benefits of facilitating input into the merger. And, indeed, this thesis has demonstrated the best strategy for designing effective processes to allow input into the organisational merger first requires a clear understanding of the pre-merger subgroups, their status levels, as well as whether status differences between subgroups are perceived as legitimate or illegitimate.

Given the hierarchical nature of many organisations, and the myriad of expectations surrounding an organisational merger from relevant stakeholders, allowing time for subgroup identification and subgroup input into the process may seem somewhat indulgent by members of an organisational executive. In response to any potential feelings of reluctance, results from this thesis suggest that this effort and time will likely be repaid through increased perceptions of fairness, increased attitudes of organic pluralism and potentially a decrease in intergroup conflict in a post-merger environment. Therefore, the time spent on designing the input into these situations may be repaid through the achievement of a stable, accepted superordinate identity.
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