

**Understanding organisational identity as a factor  
influencing organisational design**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Organisations function in a rapidly changing operating environment and business leaders are in constant search of solutions that will increase both the organisation's effectiveness and performance. Organisational design is often utilised as one such solution to create alignment within the organisation. However, one of the many challenges of organisational design is to create and maintain this alignment between the design (what work is delivered?) and the identity (who are we?) of the organisation. Prior research says little on how the constructs of organisational design and organisational identity interact with each other as research tends to focus on these constructs separately. Therefore, purpose of this research is to determine if organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design to gain deeper insight as to how these complex constructs manifests itself within the organisational.

Based on the exploratory nature of the research, qualitative methods were used to investigate how organisational identity and organisational design interact using observations from participants who were either business leaders, HR practitioners or organisational design specialists within a variety of organisations across South Africa. Based on the rich data gathered from interviews with participants, thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The key findings of the research not only built on the existing literature, but new insights materialised. Firstly, the role of leaders' and individuals' identity influence on the organisational identity emerged as a consistent theme. Secondly, new insight regarding the nature of organisational identity and how it influences the organisational design process emerged. The findings, which are represented in the Organisational Identity Lenses model, suggest that organisational identity has four different lenses. These lenses are: 'who am I?' as an individual in the organisation, 'who are we?' as a collective, 'who are we becoming?' as a future-focused view of the organisation and finally 'who are we no longer?' as a reflection of the historical context of the organisation. These four lenses have a significant influence on the organisational design process and the implications of this research suggest that the organisational design process should be one that facilitates the process of articulating 'who are we becoming?' in a manner that encourages alignment within the organisation.

**KEYWORDS**

Organisational identity, organisational design, exploratory study

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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7 November 2018

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## **1. Chapter 1: Introduction to Research Problem**

### **1.1 Introduction and Description of Problem**

Alignment between an organisation's design and its identity is an essential enabler for superior performance (Gulati, Rivkin and Raffaelli, 2016). In today's fast paced and complex operating environment it is essential that business leaders understand what factors drive organisation effectiveness and performance to remain competitive. Although the alignment between organisational identity and organisational design may increase performance, maintaining this alignment is often challenging as leaders are frequently faced with a variety of competing demands and organisational influences when determining the optimal organisational structure that will result in superior performance.

Furthermore, organisations are often faced with a conundrum which jeopardises the fit between organisational design and organisational identity. Does the organisation either hold on to their current identity, culture and values and face potential inertia or expand into new markets and products or even merge with other organisations to gain competitive advantage? (Kreiner, Hollensbe, Smith, Sheep, & Kataria, 2015). These actions often threaten the identity of an organisation, change the organisational design and structure, as organisations are altered through "schism, divestitures, or partner splits" (Kreiner et al., 2015, p. 982) which result from changes in the organisation. These changes are the backdrop where organisational identity may be changed or renegotiated (Kreiner et al., 2015).

There are a multitude of studies (Oliver, Statler, Roos, & Roos, 2016; Carlsen, 2016; Cayla & Peñaloza, 2012; Sato, 2014 and Anteby & Molnár, 2012) that unpack the concept of organisational identity and highlight the valuable insight organisational identity provides management. However, van Tonder (2004) cautions that organisational identity is a concept that is difficult to define as there is inherently ambiguity in the concept.

In addition, there are many organisational design frameworks such as the Star Model™ (Galbraith, 1977) or People-Centred Organisation® (Overholt, Connally, Harrington, & Lopez, 2000). These frameworks provide a concrete theoretical and business management foundation to organisational design and provide guidance regarding how structures should be shaped. However, despite the amount of seminal research into organisational design, such as Fox (1971) and Galbraith (1977), research into

organisational design receded from the attention of organisational management scholars for a period of time (Gulati, Puranam & Tushman, 2012). This has resulted in many opportunities to explore organisational design concepts based on the modern business environment.

However, despite the amount of research in organisational design and organisational identity there has been little research on the influence that these two disciplines have on each other. Therefore, the aim of this research is to expand existing organisation theory by bringing together aspects of organisational identity and organisational design that have been tangentially acknowledged to the forefront and highlight key insights into the relationship between these two disciplines. The need for this research is echoed by Gulati et al. (2016) who encourage organisational design scholars to explore how organisational identity and organisational design shape each other. This is further supported by Gioia, Price, Hamilton and Thomas (2010) who suggest that the field of organisational identity is a flourishing domain amongst researchers.

Despite the positive outcomes of the alignment between organisational identity and organisational design very little research has been completed which focuses on how these two constructs interact (Gulati et al., 2016). Therefore, the overall purpose of this research is to understand if organisational identity is a factor that influences organisational design and to understand the implications of organisational identity's influence on the organisational design process.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Research**

In an age where change is constant, contemporary organisations are required to continually change and adapt to the environment to remain relevant. Therefore, the purpose of this research is threefold. Firstly, this research aims to provide business leaders insight into how the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design are understood in the modern business environment. Secondly, this research will obtain insight into how organisational identity and organisational design interact in practical ways using observations from participants to inform these insights.

Thirdly, this research will provide business leaders with insight into what overall influence organisational identity has on the design of structures and what impact this has on the organisational design process. This understanding has important business implications as these constructs could impact the alignment between who the organisation is and

what work the organisation executes to remain sustainable. This concept of alignment is fundamental to organisational design, as a business' performance will remain competitive when there is alignment between the organisation and its environment (Nissen, 2014). This study will therefore be of great importance to leaders when navigating the organisational design process.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The purpose of the research is to determine if organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design and to gain deeper insight as to how this influence manifests itself within the organisational environment. To crystallise the purpose of the research, the following research objectives have been formulated.

The objectives of this research are to:

- enrich the understanding of organisational identity and organisational design;
- establish if organisational identity is a factor influencing organisational design;
- assess the business leader's connection with the organisational identity and the influence it has on decisions around organisational design; and
- contribute to existing theory by recommending modifications to the traditional organisational design process that incorporate findings regarding the relationship between organisational identity and organisational design.

### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The scope of this research included insights from a wide variety of industries, ranging from healthcare to financial services, within South Africa. The research study focused on the opinions and observations of experienced and knowledgeable individuals who have had exposure to organisational identity and organisational design in a variety of organisations across South Africa. Business leaders such as Managing Directors, senior HR practitioners, such as Chief People Officers, and Organisational Design specialists provided the researcher with valuable observations, examples and insights regarding organisational identity and organisational design in line with the research questions and research objectives.

## **1.5 Conclusion and Overview of Research Report**

The seven chapters in this research report aim to explore the constructs of organisational identity and organisational design. Chapter 1 unpacks the rationale for the research, while Chapter 2 critically examines both the seminal and contemporary literature in the field of organisational identity and organisational design in line with the purpose of the research. In addition, the literature review focuses on important organisational elements that are relevant to the two constructs.

Chapter 3 contains the research questions which have been formulated based on the purpose of the research and examining literature in the relevant fields. Chapter 4 highlights what research methodology has been used in support of the research questions proposed in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 captures the results of the research, while Chapter 6 examines the implications of the research findings. Finally, Chapter 7 provides a summary of the research.

## **2. Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The theories and seminal research that underpin the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design have been explored in the literature review. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to amplify the understanding of the two key constructs and explore connections between organisational identity and organisational design by investigating the organisational components to which these constructs relate. The intellectual frame of this chapter cuts across the discipline of Industrial and Organisational Psychology to Management Science.

Organisations are made up of individuals, teams and leaders whose interactions shape the organisation as a whole. This sentiment is echoed in the words of renowned American economist Theodore Levitt, who is often quoted as stating “Organizations exist to enable ordinary people to do extraordinary things.” (Levitt & Levitt, 1998, p. 64). Therefore, it would be remiss to not explore the concepts of individual identity, occupational identity, culture and organisational brand when critically assessing organisational identity.

When critically reviewing seminal and modern literature, the definition and the positioning of these two concepts have evolved as the understanding of modern organisations has progressed. Therefore, the evolution of how these concepts are defined as well as the relationship these two variables have with important organisational components such as strategy, culture and structure have been explored in this chapter.

### **2.2 Defining Organisational Identity**

In their seminal work in 1985, Albert and Whetten found that organisational identity has three central themes. Organisational identity is the characteristics of the organisation that are viewed by members as (1) central to its nature or character; (2) distinct when compared to other organisations; and (3) enduring over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The three organisational identity criteria of Albert and Whetten (1985) have been expanded upon below.



### **2.2.1 Central to its Nature or Character**

The central character of an organisation refers to critical and fundamental characteristics that make an organisation different (Albert & Whetten, 1985). However, this doesn't mean that organisational identity is unchanging or fixed.

### **2.2.2 Distinctiveness**

This element focuses on how distinct an organisation is from other organisations. The distinctiveness of the organisation is reliant on how the organisational members classify the organisation based on various contexts. Furthermore, Albert and Whetten (1985) developed a hypothesis that suggests that organisations may have multiple identities based on various contexts.

### **2.2.3 Enduring Over Time**

This does not suggest that organisational identity doesn't change over time but rather that there is a degree of continuity of time. This element suggests that there are characteristics of the organisation's identity that are persistent despite change (Yamashiro, 2015).

Building on the foundation of the Albert and Whetten research, Ashforth and Mael (1996) expanded the definition of organisational identity by including the concept of the organisation's soul or essence. This concept is manifested through the unfolding narrative of stakeholders about meaning within the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

## **2.3 Evolution of the Definition of Organisational Identity**

Scott and Lane (2000) further expanded on the seminal research and view organisational identity from a stakeholder lens and propose that it emerges from interactions between organisational stakeholders such as employees, managers and numerous other stakeholders. Furthermore, they note that these interactions are complex, dynamic and reciprocal in nature and stem from how embedded organisational identity is within the different systems in the organisation (Scott & Lane, 2000). In addition, organisational identity is embedded into the organisation's formative events, rituals and activities (Brunninge, 2007). These elements provide members with meaning and provide a sense of purpose in the organisation (Gulati et al., 2016). Organisational identity is a concept

that is embedded in the organisation which captures 'who are we?' as an organisation and is shaped by stakeholders within the organisation. This is supported by Yeatman (2015) who emphasises that organisational identity deals with the core question of 'who are we?' and suggests that there is a point in the organisation's lifecycle where answering this question becomes pertinent to decision-making. Furthermore, belief that organisational identity poses the question of 'who are we as a collective?' which is an attempt at answering a question of social existence.

The concept of 'who are we?' in organisational identity literature remains a consistent theme. Anteby and Molnár (2012) build on this concept in their research, as they found that knowing 'who we are' as an organisation partially relies on organisation members understanding 'who we are not'. Furthermore, Evans (2015) states that organisational identity helps members make sense of the organisation.

More recent research challenges the traditional concept of organisational identity as 'state' and rather defines organisational identity as a 'process' which answers the question to 'How are we becoming?' (Schultz, Maguire, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012). Kreiner et al. (2015) supported this evolving view of organisational identity with their theory of organisational identity elasticity. This theory demonstrates how the boundaries of organisational identity can concurrently expand and contract. Organisational identity elasticity is therefore the process stakeholders in the organisation use to develop and share organisational identity. This contemporary perspective allows one to view organisational identity as central to the nature of the organisation, distinctive and enduring within the boundaries which may shift over time.

In addition, research conducted by Carlsen (2016) found that there are many tacit dimensions of organisational identity and started viewing organisational events through the lens of industrial, social, and cultural stories. An important implication of this research is that one must gain a better understanding of the tacit aspects of organisational identity as it has an influence on supporting or hindering organisational change. Therefore, understanding organisational identity provides significant insight into who the organisation is, how it operates and responds to change (Cayla & Peñaloza, 2012).

## 2.4 Individual Identity and Occupational Identity

Contemporary literature on organisational identity highlights how this concept is shaped and formed through the individual members of the organisation (Scott & Lane, 2000; Evans, 2015; Carlsen, 2016). Therefore, it's important to understand individual identity and an individual's identity within the occupation they hold which is commonly referred to as occupational identity.

When exploring individual identity, it is clear that nothing is more at the heart of humanity than answering questions such as 'Who am I?' or 'What is my place in the world?'. Many spend their lifetimes assessing and trying to understand who they are in relation to others and the world around them. Therefore, it can be positioned that identity is fundamental and central to the human experience (Caplan & Torpey, 2001). Understanding the concept of identity is rooted in the philosophy of ancient civilisations, with philosophers such as Socrates proposing the maxim of 'know thyself' and Descartes' dictum of 'I think, therefore I am'.

In more modern definitions of identity, it is seen as what is core to making a person a person. Therefore, identity constitutes what is core to one's being as well as what is consistently 'me' over time and what distinguishes me from other people (Caplan & Torpey, 2001). From this definition, it is clear that identity is a comparative concept. Social identity theory, when applied to the individual, provides insights as to how individuals construct themselves as having a set of idiosyncratic characteristics which they use to categorise themselves and others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). These categories are used to classify individuals in the social environment. Therefore, social identity encompasses how well an individual identifies with, or perceives that they belong to, a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Identity as a social and comparative construct is further reinforced by the seminal work of Mead (1934) who positions identity as a social experience or processes which contain two distinct phases: the 'I' and the 'me'. Expanding on this, Mead (1934) elaborates "The 'I' is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the 'me' is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized 'me', and then one reacts toward that as an 'I'." (p. 175). Building on this insight into individual identity, critically assessing the concept of individual identity within the context of the individual's occupation in the organisation may provide additional insights into organisational identity.

Occupational identity may be seen as “the overlap between ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do,’” (Nelson & Irwin, 2014, p. 892). Leavitt, Reynolds, Barnes, Schilpzand and Hannah (2012) argue that occupational identity is bound in the context of the organisation, in what they label as environmental cues. Accordingly, they define occupational identity as “a set of cognitive-affective structures related to identification with a career track involving extensive socialisation.” (Leavitt et al., 2012, p. 1317). This definition suggests that the individual identifies with the career track or the occupation itself thus embedding the individual’s identity in occupation identity. This conclusion further emphasises the interconnectedness of individual identity, occupational identity and organisational identity.

If individual identity challenges us to confront the question of ‘Who am I?’ then occupational identity could invite one to answer the same question in the context of the individual’s career, occupation and organisation. This understanding of occupational identity provides a base to understand the interaction between the individual’s identity and organisational identity. Ashforth and Mael (1996) state that organisational identity provides individuals with context that simultaneously enables and constrains them. Additionally, individuals can be enabled by organisational identity when they experience similarities between organisational identity and their own identity (Bartels, Douwes, de Jong & Pruyn, 2006). This provides some content to the relationship between individuals and organisational identity.

## **2.5 Organisational Identity and Leadership**

From the above discussion it is clear that individuals can have strong connections and affiliations with their careers and what work individuals perform may very well influence who they are and how they view themselves. An interesting dimension to understand is how the leaders’ identity and organisational identity interact. Scott and Lane (2000) propose an interesting perspective, where they suggest that leaders construct a desired organisational image to achieve a sense of self-esteem from their leadership role in the organisation. Enacting this, leaders construct certain images of the organisation in order to protect the view they have of their own identity, ‘I am this kind of person; therefore, I lead an organisation that has these kinds of attributes and because I lead this kind of organisation, I am this kind of person.’ (Scott & Lane, 2000, p. 48). This research positions the role of the leaders’ own identity as intertwined with the identity of the organisation.

Furthermore, Scott and Lane (2000) expand on this to position that leaders assume primary responsibility for managing organisational identity. In line with this theme, Karp and Helgø (2009) posit that leaders have a role in identity forming and that leaders lead organisations that are reflections of their own identities.

Building on the role of leaders in organisational identity, Van Knippenberg (2016) emphasises the significance of leadership in shaping the understanding of “what we do, why we do it and how we (should) do it.” (p. 338). This illustrates the leader’s role in shaping the understanding of the parameters of work within the organisation and this provides a sense of direction to answering the question of ‘who are we?’. However, Kenny, Whittle and Willmott (2016) caution that the leaders’ influence on organisational identity could be used as an insidious exercise of power and political positioning which can impact how the organisational identity is experienced in the organisation.

## **2.6 Organisational Components and Organisational Identity**

These evolving views and definitions of organisational identity are reconciled with the overarching view that organisational identity is undoubtedly a social construct and is deeply rooted in our individual identity and experience within the organisation. Understanding the implications of this social construct on the organisation is the underlying proposition of much organisational identity research. Implications that will be explored are culture, organisational brand, strategy and structure.

### **2.6.1 Organisational Identity and Culture**

Schein’s (1985) seminal work in organisational culture positions culture at three different levels: on the surface there are artefacts, underneath it there are values and lastly at the core there are basic assumptions. In this definition assumptions are the tacit and instinctual beliefs about reality and human nature, values are social principles or standards and artefacts are the visible, tangible and audible results of the values and assumptions (Schein, 1985).

Understanding how organisational identity and culture are connected can be, as Hatch and Schultz (2002) termed it, a conceptual minefield. According to Hatch and Schultz (2002), organisational identity and culture are concepts that are intimately linked, and they are oftentimes used to define one another. However, this overlap does not mean that these two concepts are identical or interchangeable. Hatch and Schultz (2002)

position that culture contextualises organisational identity in the sense that they mutually construct each other.

This is further reinforced by Deslandes (2011) who positions identity as an interpretation of the cultural values of the organisation. This understanding can be used to interpret the individual's cognitive process of identification towards the organisation, which has been found to develop in relation to how attractive the identity of the organisation appears to the individual (Deslandes, 2011).

Remarkably, Schultz, Hatch and Holten Larsen (2000) see the key differentiator of culture and organisational identity lying in the nature of the constructs, where they believe culture is relatively more tacit, emergent and contextual than organisational identity. However, this proposition is difficult to digest as when reviewing the number of articles on the subject of culture on the platform Google Scholar, there are well over 1000 papers on the subject of culture whereas when a similar search was conducted for organisational identity it only yielded around 200 papers. One could take the position that culture would not be so well researched and have such prominence in management if it were emergent or tacit. Therefore, one could conclude that it is organisational identity that is relevantly more emergent or tacit in comparison to culture. This view that organisational identity is more tacit is echoed by the work done by Carlsen (2016).

### **2.6.2 Organisational Identity and Organisational Brand**

Schultz et al. (2000) argue that to understand how the internal and external definition of the organisation's identity interact, identity and organisational image need to be closely examined. Through the lens of marketing, organisational identity can be seen as the "company logo, the design style, colour scheme, graphic design, the behaviour of employees, communication towards internal and external stakeholders." (Abimbola, 2009, p. 219). These aspects provide a far more tangible dimension of organisational identity.

Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) research found that how individuals, who are internal to the organisation, view the organisation's distinctive attributes and identity is influenced by how they think others, who are external to the organisation, perceive attributes as distinctive about the organisation. In other words, the opinions and reactions of others outside the organisation can mould or influence how the individuals internally see the identity of the organisation. Therefore, organisational image can be seen as the way

organisation members believe others view the organisation (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). This is consistent with the findings of Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) who posit “Image often acts as a destabilising force on identity, frequently requiring members to revisit and reconstruct their organisational sense of self.” (p. 67).

The relationship between organisational identity and brand is further reinforced by the findings of Tracey and Phillips (2016) who conducted research on organisational stigmatisation and identity. They found that when an organisation is stigmatised or its image is negatively portrayed in the external environment, for whatever reason, it will face an identity crisis. They observed an intriguing process following the event, some organisational members sympathise with those who were stigmatising the organisation and blamed leaders for the fallout.

The above literature highlights that organisational identity isn't a concept limited to the experiences of individuals internal to the organisation. The perceptions of stakeholders external to the organisation and how the organisation positions its image and brand have a profound impact on the organisation.

### **2.6.3 Organisational Identity and the Link to Strategy and Structure**

Cayla and Peñaloza (2012) noted that organisational identity plays a pivotal role in strategy development. This association, between organisational identity and strategy, is consistent with previous work. Organisational identity as been described as a beacon for strategy (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Furthermore, Ashforth and Mael (1996) propose that organisational identity is enacted and expressed via strategy as well as inferred from strategy.

However, the extent to which organisational identity aligns with strategy could be linked to the organisation's structure or hierarchy. Organisational structure can be seen as the creation of inner order and relations within the organisation's parts (Tran & Tian, 2013). Furthermore, Corley (2004) found that there are perceived differences in how stakeholders in different levels of the organisational hierarchy view organisational identity. This link between organisational identity and organisational hierarchy illustrates how senior leadership may experience the organisational identity differently to those lower down in the organisational hierarchy.

## 2.7 Organisational Design Definition

The definition and positioning of organisational design is as evolving as any component of business management. Seminal definitions of organisational design allude to the components of organisational design by defining it as “job definitions and specifications; the nature and degree of division of labour; the distribution of decision-making roles; the nature of the flow of communication and the methods of handling whatever stresses, strains or conflicts are perceived as existing within the organisation.” (Fox, 1971, p. 12).

Building on this Galbraith, who is considered to be a thought leader in the organisational design field, defines this concept as a “decision process to bring about a coherence between the goals or purposes for which the organization exists, the patterns of division of labour and inter unit coordination and the people who will do the work.” (Galbraith, 1977, p. 5).

From these early definitions one can see that organisational design was defined quite narrowly around work allocation, organisation structures and job descriptions. However, there is a consistent bridge between seminal and modern literature. Organisational design has always been positioned to create alignment or congruence between the purpose and strategy of the organisation with the work being executed (Galbraith, 1977; Daft & Lewin, 1993; Nikolenko & Kleiner, 1996). Building on seminal research, Stanford (2007) views organisational design as a process to create alignment between business strategy and objectives to the work executed within the organisation as a whole, business area or functional area.

Other researchers have adopted concepts from contingency theory to explain the phenomena of organisational design and structure. Hax and Majluf (1981) state that the structure of an organisation is not shaped by one single set of principles but rather each organisation designs its structure in tune with its internal characteristic and the business environment. This poses the challenge that organisational design does not provide a simple ‘how to’ recipe but rather it’s a process of incorporating significant organisational aspects, such as strategy purpose, value proposition, etc. into the design of the structure. Nikolenko and Kleiner (1996) echo this sentiment as they position organisational design as a mechanism to determine if the way the organisation is structured is adequate to meet the demands of the external environment.



More recent research categorises organisational design into restructuring and reconfiguration. Restructuring involves significantly changing the structural archetype for the entire business and aligning it to lines of business, geography, customer segments, etc. (Girod & Karim, 2017). In contrast, reconfiguration encompasses either adding, splitting, combining or transferring areas of the business without significantly changing the organisation's underlying structure (Girod & Karim, 2017). In summary, restructuring can be viewed as a fundamental change in the design of the organisation, where reconfiguration involves a realignment or slight adjustment to the structure without fundamentally changing the structure of the entire organisation.

Whether the intention of the organisational design is to restructure and reconfigure there needs to be mechanisms in place that guide the approach to the organisational design. After interviewing management consultants, researchers found a common thread in the approach to organisational design. They highlight the approach to organisation design as the "analysis of the design problem, the design of a solution, the implementation of the solution, and the evaluation of the solution in the light of the original problem." (Visscher & Irene, 2010, p. 714). Interestingly, the same study found that the variety in the design process was influenced by the characteristics within the environment of the organisation.

Modern literature on organisational design builds on the foundation provided by thought leaders in organisational design such as Galbraith. Worren (2016) encourages a new analytical approach to organisational design which is termed functional analysis. This approach focuses on the purpose of the organisation and encourages leaders to consider the effectiveness of their structures based on how well the organisation is aligned to its purpose.

This more modern view of organisational design builds on the elements of alignment or fit between the various components within the organisation and the purpose or vision of the organisation. This is echoed by Burton and Obel (2018) who define organisational design as a "systematic approach to aligning structures, processes, leadership, culture, people, practices, and metrics to enable organizations to achieve their mission and strategy." (Burton & Obel, 2018, p. 3)

## **2.8 Purpose of Organisational Design**

Robust organisational design models enable leaders to make sound decisions to design fit for purpose organisations. The concept of the decision-making paradigm can be used as a lens to understand the value of organisational design. Huber and McDaniel (1986) suggest that the purpose of organisational design is to design structures and processes that facilitate organisational decision-making.

This view is still relevant in the modern business environment, as business leaders are required to make more complex, faster and more frequent decisions in response to an exponentially changing environment. Decision-making can be defined as the “sensing, exploration and definition of problems opportunities as well as the generation, evaluation and selection of solutions” (Huber & McDaniel, 1986, p. 576). Therefore, organisational design can be viewed as a mechanism and process that enables leaders to design structures that ensure effective decision-making.

Building on this Allen (2012), who advises that organisational design is a mechanism that enables leaders to identify dysfunctional aspects of the organisation, such as work flow, processes, procedures or structures, and realigns them to fit with the current organisational strategy and goals. These views are echoed by Worren (2016) who proposes that one of the first tasks of an organisational design practitioner is to determine if the current structure is appropriate given the strategy and purpose of the organisation and to recommend how the structure may be optimised to achieve greater levels of effectiveness.

In addition, the focus of organisational design is “how best to partition tasks across organisational players and how to reconnect these organisational elements to best realise the organisation’s strategic goals.” (Agarwal, Anand, Bercovitz and Croson, 2012, p. 712). This clearly highlights the organisation’s need to achieve its objectives through organisational design. However, the organisational players such as leaders have a pivotal role to play. A contrasting view is that organisational design offers leaders, particularly those in new positions, to put their personal stamp on how work is executed on the business (Nadler, Tushman and Nadler, 1997).

Although there may be many different positions that theorists and researchers have taken on the concept of organisational design, it is clear that at the heart of organisational design lies the alignment of work, structure, report lines and many other organisational

components to achieve the organisation's overall purpose and objectives. The function of organisational design exists to ensure that there is sufficient alignment for the organisation to successfully deliver on its objectives.

## **2.9 Organisational Design and Organisational Architecture**

The concept of organisational architecture is a well-established concept in organisational design literature. This concept was first referenced in the book *Organisational Architecture: Designs for Changing Organisations* by Nadler, Gerstein, and Shaw (1992). Mostly notably Nadler, Tushman and Nadler (1997) see organisational design not only as a mechanism to identify opportunities for competitive advantage, but also as a tool for shaping the way work gets done in an organisation. The authors highlight organisational architecture, structure, capacity and performance as key components that make up organisational design.

Roberts (2007) further builds on this concept by suggesting that organisational architecture, people, routines and process as well as the culture are levers for organisational design. The components that make up organisational architecture include the boundaries of the organisation, which are both vertical and horizontal, reporting relationship as well as clustering of work into jobs and the clustering of these jobs into departments (Roberts, 2007). Organisational architecture contains a balance of hard elements, as expanded upon previously, as well as the personal networks throughout the organisation (Roberts, 2007).

Soda and Zaheer (2012) position organisational architecture as comprising of elements which include formal workflow, such as task-based interactions, and the authority relationship network which involves hierarchical vertical relationships that represent a network of connections amongst organisational members. Building on the social or network element of organisational architecture, it could be considered as a "platform that integrated the organisational structure with the human and capital resources, with an ultimate managerial goal to achieve desired outcomes and performance for both the short run and the strategic long run. The ultimate objective of organisational architecture is to design an organisation that would provide maximum value to the customers" (Mojsavska Salamovska & Lauterborn, 2015, p. 647)

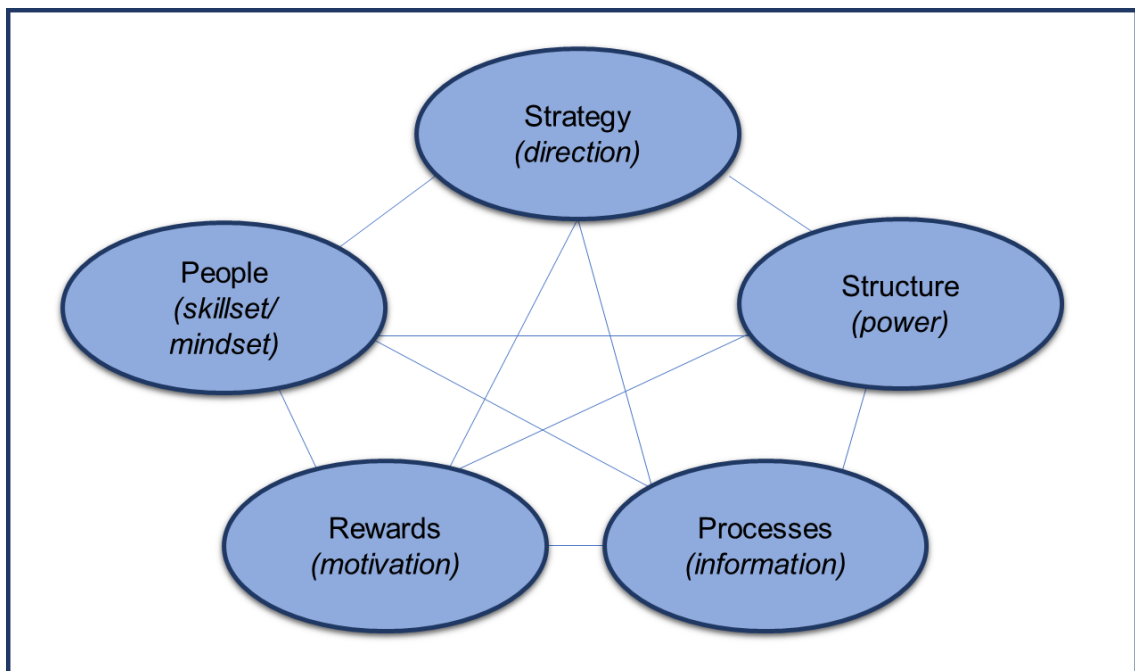
The literature on organisational architecture places emphasis on all the formal and informal networks and systems as well as how they interact with each other. This

positions organisational architecture in the realm of organisational design and perhaps puts a modern twist on organisational design as there are clear overlaps in the definitions of organisational architecture and organisational design.

## 2.10 Key Elements in the Organisation Design Process

A popular way to facilitate the organisational design process is through the use of the Star Model™ which was developed by Galbraith who is considered a thought leader in the organisational design space.

Figure 1: Illustration of The Star Model™ (Galbraith, 2016, p. 1)



The organisational design process as illustrated in Figure 1 indicates that strategy provides direction for the process, structure determines where the decision-making authorities are positioned, processes have to do with how information flows, reward systems influence how people are motivated to achieve the organisation's goals and lastly people polices which influence employees' mind-sets (Galbraith, 2016). In support of this prominent framework around organisational design which guides the process, each element will be unpacked.

### **2.10.1 Strategy**

Strategy is positioned as central to organisational design as it determines the direction of the organisation (Kates & Galbraith, 2010). Strategy determines the organisation's focus and organisational design should therefore enable the achievement of strategy. This is corroborated by Allen (2012), who positions the aligning of the organisational form or structure with the business strategy and purpose, which ensures that the business is well-designed, and that the organisation is best structured to meet the challenges and opportunities of the business environment.

### **2.10.2 Structure**

In early organisational theory work, organisational structure can be defined as "the relatively enduring allocation of work roles and administrative mechanisms that creates a pattern of interrelated work activities, and allows the organization to conduct, coordinate, and control its work activities" (Jackson, Morgan & Paolillo, 1986, p. 112). This formative definition of organisational structure highlights that it is not only characterised by reporting lines or hierarchy; it also encompasses the managerial accountability, decision-making authority and processes that occur in the organisation.

Galbraith (2012), positions organisational design as a far-reaching mechanism as it "applies to organizing at the enterprise, business unit, region, or functional levels." (p. 1). This succinctly emphasises that organisational design applies to all areas within the organisational structure. In addition, organisational structure can be used as a mechanism which provides insight into how an organisation considers hierarchy, assigns tasks and ensures integration and collaboration to achieve common business goals and objectives (Bussin, 2017).

The organisation's structure can provide insight into how the business value chain is structured, how support activities such as Risk Management, Human Resources or Finance enable the business and how important processes are integrated across multiple parts of the organisation (Campbell, Gutierrez, & Lancelott, 2017).

In addition, Bussin (2017) concludes that for an organisation to successfully deliver on its objectives there needs to be seamless alignment between the strategy and structure. The concept of alignment or fit in organisational design is key as it is beneficial to achieve fit between organisational structure elements and strategy as a misfit could create

inefficiency and disorganisation which could lower business performance (Donaldson & Joffe, 2014).

### **2.10.3 Process**

Information and processes run across the organisation and in Galbraith's Star Model™, processes facilitate the flow of information (Galbraith, 2012). Research has found that process orientated organisational design which incorporates continuous process improvement and a culture which supports process orientation correlates positively with the organisation's performance (Kohlbacher & Reijers, 2013). This emphasises the importance of processes in organisational design.

### **2.10.4 Reward Systems**

The reward systems should motivate employees and align with the structure and processes to execute on the organisational strategy and objectives (Galbraith, 2012).

### **2.10.5 People**

Based on over 25 years of practical experience, Capelle Associates found that organisational design is the alignment between positions, accountability and authorities, people, deliverables and tasks (Capelle, 2017). However, it is acknowledged that organisational design first and foremost begins with understanding strategy and culture.

More recent research categorises organisational structure into the formal organisation and the informal organisation. The hierarchical structure, reporting lines, reward mechanisms and controls form part of the formal organisation, where the informal organisation is the network of social relationships, such as friendships, acquaintances and alliances between people in the organisation (Overholt et al., 2000).

## **2.11 Modern Perspectives of the Organisational Design Process**

The mechanisms or processes used to determine how an organisation is designed are an evolving matter. There are many elements that remain constant in modern perspectives on the organisational design process such as the components that Galbraith originally highlighted in the 1970s; however how the process is executed and what is considered in the process is evolving. More recent views suggest that

“experimentation is at the heart of the science of organisational design.” (Burton & Obel, 2018, p. 11). The authors further suggest that the organisational design process should explore, through a number of experiments, ‘what might be’ for the organisation instead of a solid focus on ‘what is’. This suggests that organisational design should be viewed more as process than an end state.

A contrasting modern approach is functional analysis which is described as considering “...more specific *functions* that the organization performs – the *desired outcomes* that the organization seeks to achieve. Once the functions have been understood, one can identify how the organization has been *structured*... With this understanding, one may be in a position to *evaluate whether the organization has an appropriate design, given its purpose*, and to propose an alternative design that would be better aligned with the purpose.” (Worren, 2016, p. 775). This approach is intended to shape the organisational design process around the identification of organisational-specific functional requirements. The benefits of this functional analysis are that the rigour of the analysis is increased and a theory-driven approach can be used to guide decision-making in the organisational design process.

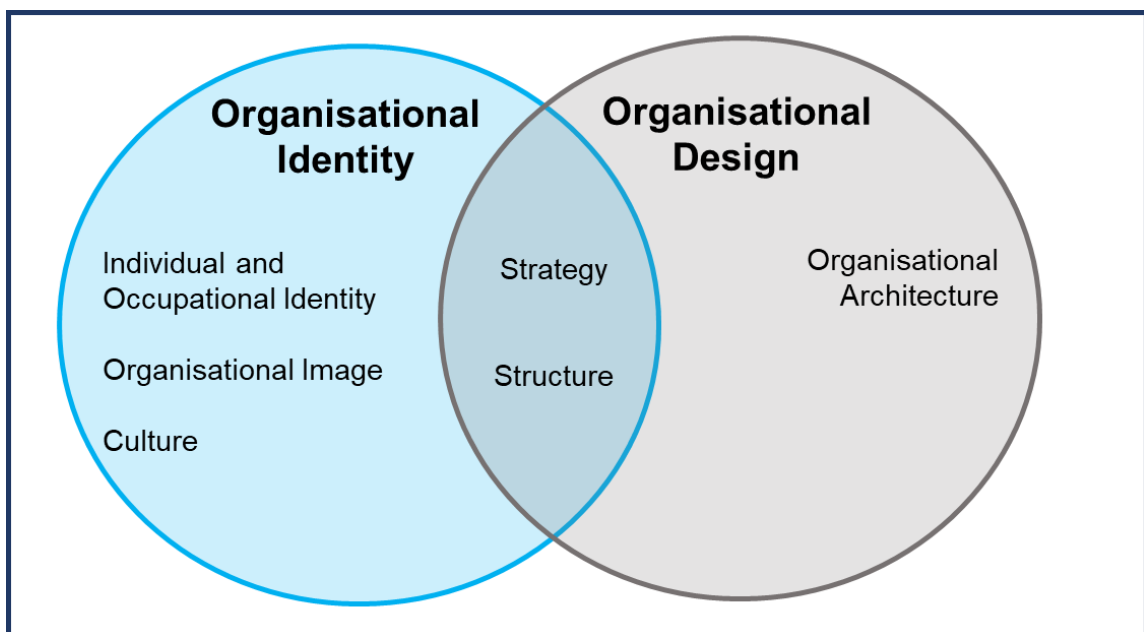
Embarking on an organisational design journey can be a daunting task for most leaders, however leaders embark on organisational design interventions to realise the potential benefits of organisational design. Many organisations find that a more effective organisation design leads to improved results from a profitability, customer service or internal operations perspective (Allen, 2012), it promotes teamwork, creates synergies and reduces costs (Bussin, 2017).

## **2.12 Conclusion**

Based on the literature review of both seminal and modern organisational identity literature, it is clear that organisational identity is a multifaceted concept which may be rooted in the thought provoking questions for individuals: ‘Who am I?’, ‘What is my place in this organisation?’ and for organisations: ‘Who are we?’ and ‘Who are we not?’. Organisational and individual identity are concepts that are undoubtedly intertwined. These fundamental questions challenge both organisations and individuals to understand their purpose collectively and determine if there is congruence between identity at an individual level and an organisational level.

Organisational design assists business leaders to reflect on the way work is structured to best meet the aspirations of the strategy and the purpose of the organisation. Through this process alignment should be created between structure, strategy and the purpose of the organisation in order to ensure that the organisation delivers on its objectives. It challenges leaders to reflect on the following questions for the organisation: 'What do we do?', 'How do we do it?' and 'What might be?'.

Figure 2: Links in Literature Between the Constructs of Organisational Identity and Organisational Design (Author's own)



The organisational identity and organisational design literature reviewed in this chapter has created a tentative link between these two concepts, which is highlighted in Figure 2. This link is created through the connection that both organisational design and identity have with strategy and the organisational hierarchy or structure.



### **3. Chapter 3: Research Questions**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Based on the literature review provided in the previous chapter; it is clear that there is a requirement to understand the relationship between organisational identity and organisational design. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this research is threefold and can be summarised as providing business leaders insight into how the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design are understood in the modern business environment; how organisational identity and organisational design interact in practical ways using observations from participants to inform these insights; and lastly, the overall influence organisational identity has on the design of structures and what impact this has on the organisational design process.

The below research questions were informed by the research problem which was provided in Chapter 1 and the literature review outlined in Chapter 2. The intent of the research questions is to provide focus to the study and delve into tangible areas of organisational design such as structure.

#### **3.2 Research Question 1**

**Establish the aspects that are used to define organisational design and organisational identity.**

The definition of organisational design relies on seminal research such as Fox (1971), Galbraith (1977), Hax and Majluf (1981), Daft and Lewin (1993), Nikolenko and Kleiner (1996) and Stanford (2007). In the modern world of work, it's essential to understand the boundaries of organisational design. Therefore, definitions can serve a variety of functions and for this research the intention is to create clarity and add to the body of research on how organisational design is understood in a modern context.

In addition, the most commonly referenced definition for organisational identity is Albert and Whetten (1985). Many authors such as Ashforth and Mael (1996), Scott and Lane (2000), Brunninge (2007), Anteby and Molnár (2012) and Schultz et al. (2012) have expanded on the definition of organisational identity, however these definitions are between 6 and 22 years old. Although, there has been more recent research on organisational identity such as Kreiner et al. (2015), Evans (2015), Carlsen (2016) and

Gulati et al. (2016) and the focus of the research was not to expand on the definition or understanding of organisational identity. Therefore, this research question will provide a more modern outlook on the concept of organisational identity.

### **3.3 Research Question 2**

**Determine if organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process.**

This question builds on the findings of Visscher and Irene (2010), who found that the design process is influenced by characteristics within the organisation. Therefore, the aim of this question is to explore if organisational identity is one of the characteristics which influences how the organisational design process is executed within organisations. This question is important as it investigates if organisational identity shapes how the organisation design process unfolds and provides an opportunity to gather empirical evidence of the ways organisational identity may influence organisational design.

### **3.4 Research Question 3**

**Establish if leaders are influenced by organisational identity when designing their structure(s).**

Worren (2016) positions the review of structure to be one of the first tasks an organisational design practitioner must tackle. In addition, Huber and McDaniel (1986) advise that the purpose of organisational design is to design structures. Therefore, based on the literature it is almost impossible to separate organisational design and structure or form. Therefore, this question will be used to determine if organisational identity influences the direction of the design of structure and highlight the potential impact on decision-making around the structure.

### **3.5 Research Question 4**

**Determine if organisational identity influences the successful implementation of structure(s).**

Building on Research Question 3, the aim of Research Question 4 is to determine after the structure has been designed if the implementation of the structure, which results from the organisational design process, is influenced by organisational identity.

### 3.6 Research Question 5

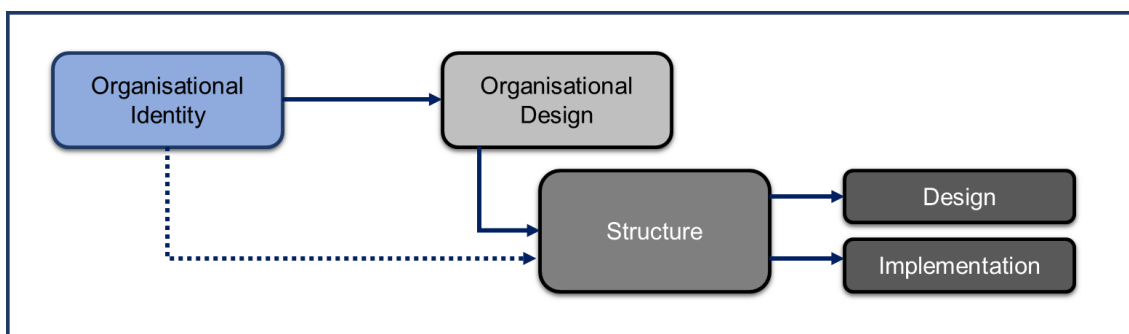
**Determine the overall effect organisational identity has on organisational design.**

The purpose of this research question is to build on the work of Gulati et al. (2016), who identified the opportunity to conduct further research to examine how these two constructs potentially shape each other. This question starts to provide insight into nature of the relationship between these two constructs.

### 3.7 Conclusion

The research questions highlighted in this chapter require empirical validation. The figure below represents the proposed pathway between constructs which has been orchestrated in the research questions. This research aims to understand if organisational identity influences organisational design. Therefore, in order to successfully measure these constructs, it's important to focus on a key output of the organisational design process which is structure(s).

Figure 3: Proposed Conceptual Pathways Between Constructs (Author's own)



The proposed conceptual pathway takes the conceptual constructs and turns them into practical business concepts that can be measured empirically. The research questions have been formulated to empirically measure and explore the interactions between these constructs.

## **4. Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The research methodology was selected based on the scope of the research questions and has been aligned to the achievement of the research objectives. Details of the research philosophy, approach, strategy, techniques and procedure that were applied to this research have been provided below.

### **4.2 Research Methodology and Design**

Organisational design requires that leaders go beyond reshuffling boxes on an organisation chart and instead a new organisational form should emerge (Yoo, Boland & Lyytinen, 2006). However, how employees view and identify with these new organisational forms may be different in comparison to how management view them. This ambiguity may be influenced by organisational identity. Scott and Lane (2016) propose that organisational identity is a reality independent of individual perceptions, rather its significance depends on a collective understanding. Given this complexity, an interpretivism was selected as a suitable approach as it requires that the researcher understands the natural environment of the organisation (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

As this research was aimed at contributing to organisational design theory, an inductive method was used. The inductive methodology created a connection between the specific observations to somewhat broader generalisations which could then be used to enhance organisational design theory (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

A mono method has been used in this research based on the time constraints and research objectives. Azorín and Cameron (2010) suggest that a mono or mixed method research methodology can be used for research. However, the selection of the research methodology depended on the methodology that would best achieve the objectives of the research. Therefore, qualitative research methodology was best suited to ensure that the research questions were answered and achieved the research objectives. Qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study as it involves delving into the realities, observations and insights of people from their experiences within organisations. This was achieved by gathering insights on attitudes, opinions and behaviours through the qualitative process (Kothari, 2004).

In the literature review it was concluded that organisational identity is undoubtedly a social construct. Therefore, qualitative methods have enabled the researcher to obtain an understanding of how the participant makes sense of their daily lives and it has allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the reality of the participant (Neuman, 2000). The intention of this approach has ensured that the concepts of organisational identity and design are fully understood.

Furthermore, the literature review highlighted that there is a wealth of research, theories and knowledge of organisational design and organisational identity. However, there is very little research that explores the relationship between these two constructs. Therefore, an exploratory approach was adopted as it was best suited to achieve the objectives of this research. Exploratory research aims to discover new insights and view an existing topic in a new light (Saunders & Lewis, 2012), which was congruent with the objectives of this research.

The interpretivism research philosophy requires a deeper understanding of the natural environment (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Grounded theory was used to operationalise the philosophy and inductive research approach. Grounded theory uses data generated by a series of observations or interviews to develop theory (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This strategy supports the achievement of the research objectives as there is a requirement to contribute to existing theory. This was achieved by conducting interviews with representatives of the population group. Furthermore, the researcher followed a non-linear method which involved a cyclical process of collecting data and results which guided the frequent refinement of the research questions and problem (Neuman, 2000). This approach enabled the researcher to add an additional research question during the data analysis process.

The time constraints of the study required a pragmatic stance to the time horizons. Therefore, this research is a cross-sectional study as it is a snapshot of the research setting at a point in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

### **4.3 Population**

The population for this study was selected based on knowledgeable and experienced individuals who have had exposure to organisational identity and organisational design. The population comprised of three categories of participants who have exposure to a wide variety of industries within South Africa.

Firstly, business leaders in senior management positions who have the authority to make decisions about how their business area is organised and who have been involved in organisational design interventions. Secondly, experienced senior HR practitioners who have supported or enabled a business leader to manage or implement an organisational design intervention. HR practitioners are in an excellent position to observe how decision-makers in leadership positions make decisions that could be influenced by organisational factors such as the identity of the organisation. Lastly, organisational design specialists who have advised business leaders on organisational design interventions such as restructuring or reconfiguration.

Organisational design specialists are a direct observer of the factors that influence the design of the organisation and are a neutral facilitator of the process. Often in practice these organisational design specialists are either external consultants or internal consultants from another part of the organisation. External organisational design specialists in particular have exposure to a variety of different organisations and would be able to pick up nuances between organisations especially where the influence of organisational identity is concerned. Both types of organisational design specialists have been included in the population.

This blend of population has ensured that the researcher has engaged with participants who are able to provide insight into the organisational design process and the relationship between organisational design and organisational identity. This population has ensured the achievement of the research objectives.

#### **4.4 Sampling and Unit of Analysis**

##### **4.4.1 Sampling**

A pragmatic stance was taken to sampling, as the exact size of the population of business leaders, HR practitioners and organisational design specialists within South Africa is unknown. It was therefore suitable to use non-probability sampling methods in the study. Saunders and Lewis (2012) recommend purposeful non-probability sampling techniques when a complete list of the population cannot be obtained, which is the case in this study.

Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants based on the scope of the study as well as ensure that only participants who meet the criteria are interviewed

and contribute to the study. Purposeful non-probability sampling ensured that participants have the appropriate experience to provide insight into the research questions.

In addition, snowball and convenience sampling techniques were used for this research. Snowball sampling allows the researcher to obtain additional participants based on the recommendation by sample members (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). This is advantageous as this method expands the number of relevant participants of the study. Convenience sampling allows the researcher to leverage off their network of relevant stakeholders to participate in this study. This has been beneficial as the researcher is in contact with many HR practitioners, business leaders and organisational design consultants as the researcher works in the organisational design consulting field and is exposed to the broader organisational design community. This has allowed a great breadth and depth of industries to be included in the sample, ranging from agriculture, financial services to telecommunications.

The sampling criteria for the selection of the participants were:

- Business leaders in senior management positions who have been involved in organisational design interventions.
- Experienced senior HR practitioners who have supported or enabled a business leader to manage or implement an organisational design intervention.
- Organisational design specialists who have advised business leaders on organisational design interventions such as restructuring or reconfiguration. The organisational design specialists can be external and internal consultants.

A sample size of 20 was achieved which is acceptable according to Saunders and Lewis (2012) who recommend that the sample size for heterogeneous population be between 15 and 25. In addition, the concept of “information power” was used to guide the sample size. This concept introduces an element of quality to determine a sample size, therefore the more powerful and rich the information provided by the sample, the quicker data saturation will be achieved (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2015).

All participants of the study were guaranteed confidentiality, therefore in line with the confidentiality statement within the consent form the names of the participants and organisations who contributed to this study have not been disclosed in this study.

#### 4.4.2 Overview of Sample

The below table highlights a summary of the profile of participants of this study.

Table 1: Overview of Sample

<b>Sample category</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Business leaders	5
HR practitioners	6
Organisational design specialists	9
<b>Total Sample Size</b>	<b>20</b>

Business leaders who were interviewed have exposure to a variety of industries, such as entertainment, management consulting, insurance and healthcare, to name a few. HR practitioners who have been interviewed in this study either focus on organisational development, change enablement or take overall accountability for the HR function in their business. The majority of organisational design specialists who were interviewed are external consultants who are seasoned experts in senior positions such as Managing Director, Practice Lead or Senior Organisational Design Specialist. The organisational design specialists who were interviewed were internal to the organisation held roles such as Organisational Effectiveness Executive and Organisational Design Specialist.

Additional information regarding the sample is provided in Chapter 5.

#### 4.4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study is individuals, namely business leaders, HR practitioners and organisational design specialists, who shared their experiences, opinions and perceptions of organisational identity and organisational design.

### 4.5 Data Gathering Process

#### 4.5.1 Measurement Instrument

Based on the qualitative nature of the study, a semi-structured interview format was selected as the primary data collection method, which is in line with the exploratory nature of the research. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to cover set



themes using predetermined questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Furthermore, this approach allows the researcher to probe for clarification and delve deeper into the statements made by the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This has allowed the researcher to fully explore the topics and themes that arose during each interview. Interviews have been found to be a suitable data gathering technique as they provide insight into what happens within an organisation and how employees make sense of the business environment (Silverman, 2016).

The questions in the interview guide, which has been provided in Appendix 1, were used to direct the conversation. The first two questions contained within the interview guide were structured in a manner that provided clarity regarding the constructs of organisational design and organisational identity, which could be established upfront. This ensured that participants and the researcher were in sync on a conceptual level regarding the core elements of the study. Thereafter, the questions in the interview guide were kept broad enough in order to stimulate meaningful dialogue between the researcher and participants. In addition, the questions contained in the interview guide were closely aligned with the research objectives to ensure that main constructs were discussed thus providing an additional dimension of validity to the interview process.

During the interview process relevant probing questions were posed to the participants to ensure the subject matter was fully explored. The interview questions and probing questions were based on the insight from the literature review and the themes emerging from the interview process. However, it is important to note that due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, the flow and direction of the dialogue were directed by the participants. This interaction provided a suitable method to gain experiences and insights from participants. However, the disadvantages of this method were the time-consuming nature of interviews as well as the lack of anonymity within the interview process.

Organisational design and structures can be considered a sensitive subject matter therefore it was essential that all participants were guaranteed confidentiality. Therefore, no organisation-specific information has been discussed in the study. This ensured that participants could freely share their experiences and insights.

#### 4.5.1.1 Alignment of Measurement Instrument to Research Questions

The interview questions provided in Appendix 1 have been mapped against the research questions provided in Chapter 3 to ensure that the interview covers topics in line with the research questions which ensured that quality data was collected. The below table contains the mapping of research questions and interview questions to illustrate the alignment.

Table 2: Alignment of Research Questions and Interview Questions

<b>Research Question from Chapter 3</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
<b>Research Question 1:</b> Establish the aspects that are used to define organisational design and organisational identity.	<b>Interview Question 1:</b> What do you understand by organisational design?
	<b>Interview Question 2:</b> What do you understand by organisational identity?
<b>Research Question 2:</b> Determine if organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process.	<b>Interview Question 3:</b> In your experience have you found that organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process?
<b>Research Question 3:</b> Establish if leaders are influenced by organisational identity when designing their structure(s).	<b>Interview Question 4:</b> Based on your experience in HR/ organisational design or as a line manager have you found that managers are influenced by organisational identity when designing their structure?
<b>Research Question 4:</b> Determine if organisational identity influences the successful implementation of structures.	<b>Interview Question 5:</b> Have you found that organisational identity influences the successful implementation of organisation structures?
<b>Research Question 5:</b> Determine the overall effect organisational identity has on organisational design.	<b>Interview Question 6:</b> What overall effect, either positive or negative, does organisational identity have on the organisational design process?

It is important to note that the interview guide provided guidelines as part of the semi-structured interview approach and doesn't contain all the questions discussed during the interview.

#### **4.5.2 Pilot Process**

During the initiation of the data collection process, pilot interviews were conducted in order to confirm the suitability of the semi-structured interview format as well as to test the content and positioning of the interview questions. The pilot testing process is invaluable as it ensures that the participants understand the meaning of the interview questions and that responses can be accurately recorded (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The intention of the pilot was to ensure that any potential validity and reliability issues could be detected timeously. In addition, the timing of the interview was verified, which ensured that an adequate amount of time was spent fully unpacking each question.

Two pilot interviews were conducted with a senior business leader and an organisational design specialist. This provided a valuable opportunity to test whether the questions were positioned effectively across the different groups within the sample. The feedback gathered from the piloting process was instrumental in reviewing and adjusting how the researcher positioned the research and the interview questions.

It became apparent during the interview process that interviews would be led by the experiences and observations of the participants. In addition, the pilot confirmed the approach of probing deeper into the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design as this elicited rich examples and accounts of both concepts in practice. Probing questions were used to ensure the researcher fully comprehended the participants' responses and the participants were encouraged to provide examples of their experiences in order to highlight how the two constructs interact in the business environment.

This process assessed the efficacy of the research questions as the process tested whether the interview questions were able to address the aim of the research study. A few minor changes were made to the interview guide before the balance of the interviews was conducted.

#### **4.5.3 Data Collection**

The initiation of the data gathering process was the identification of suitable participants for the study. As per the sampling criteria and approach, the researcher engaged with business leaders in senior management positions who have been involved in organisational design interventions, experienced senior HR practitioners who have

supported or enabled a business leader to manage or implement an organisational design intervention and organisational design specialists who have advised business leaders on organisational design interventions such as restructuring or reconfiguration. The researcher communicated with potential participants through a variety of channels such as email, LinkedIn and the use of the researcher's personal network to communicate with potential participants.

Potential participants who responded to the request for an interview were sent a summary page of the research. The summary page is provided in Appendix 2. The intention of the summary page was to provide participants with a brief overview of the research constructs in order create context and clarity regarding the focus of the research.

The data gathering process involved 17 face-to-face interviews and three telephonic semi-structured interviews using an interview guide. The three telephonic interviews were conducted in this manner based on the availability and geographical location of the participants. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in convenient locations for the participants. The locations ranged from the participants' offices to a quiet area in a coffee shop.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher and lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, with the average interview lasting around 45 minutes. The time required, and the recording of interviews were communicated to the participants at the time of soliciting their participation. An informed consent form, Appendix 3, was signed by all participants. Furthermore, it was highlighted to all participants at the beginning of the interview that the services of a transcriber would be used to document the interview.

The interview started with a brief description of the context of the study using the one-page summary (Appendix 2) as a reference. The interview was conducted using the semi-structured interview guide which consisted of six open-ended and non-leading questions. The first two questions were used to ensure that the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design were fully understood before proceeding with the rest of the interview. The interview approach involved prompting the participant with follow-up questions which were used to direct the conversation and elicit responses. This provided a framework for the interview that was not too rigid, so as to explore additional elements as they arose.

Participants were encouraged to share their experiences as the narratives and stories shared through the interview process is considered an essential part of everyday organisational life (Kupers, 2005) and is a useful way to understand the potential influence organisational identity has on the organisational design process. The interview continued until a point where all the critical elements were covered and data saturation was achieved when no new insights were provided by the participants.

Participants' responses were recorded throughout the interview and the researcher made notes of the conversation, particularly when the participant shared a story or observation that encapsulated key elements of the research. All interview recordings were transcribed by a professional in order to ensure accuracy of data.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis Process**

The interview recordings were transcribed into 1817 lines of data which translates into roughly 250 pages or 135,466 words. As this data is qualitative in nature, thematic analysis and frequency analysis was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is the "process of identifying patterns or themes within the data set" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 352).

The phased thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a solid guideline in which the analysis was conducted. In summary, the phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) involve extensive analysis of the transcripts to discover and validate the key patterns or themes that emerge from the data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six phases to thematic analysis:

1. **Familiarise yourself with the data:** This involves reading and re-reading the data to fully comprehend the content.
2. **Generate initial codes:** In a systematic fashion assign codes to the data set.
3. **Search for themes:** Collate codes into themes and identify data relevant to that theme.
4. **Review themes:** Validate the themes against the coded extracts and data set. A thematic map of the analysis may be generated.
5. **Define and name themes:** Ongoing analysis and refinement of the theme and the overall story the analysis tells.

6. **Produce report:** The report should contain selections of vivid, compelling extracts of examples that relate back to the analysis.

The data analysis process required an epoché perspective which required the researcher to suspend judgement and not draw conclusions until sufficient data and evidence had been collected and analysed (Patton, 2002). Based on the guidelines from Saunders and Lewis (2012) the findings are directly linked based on the research questions and are presented based on the thematic and frequency analysis. Given the iterative nature of thematic analysis, the entire data analysis process is estimated to have taken roughly 80 hours to complete.

The data analysis process that was followed has been highlighted in the steps below:

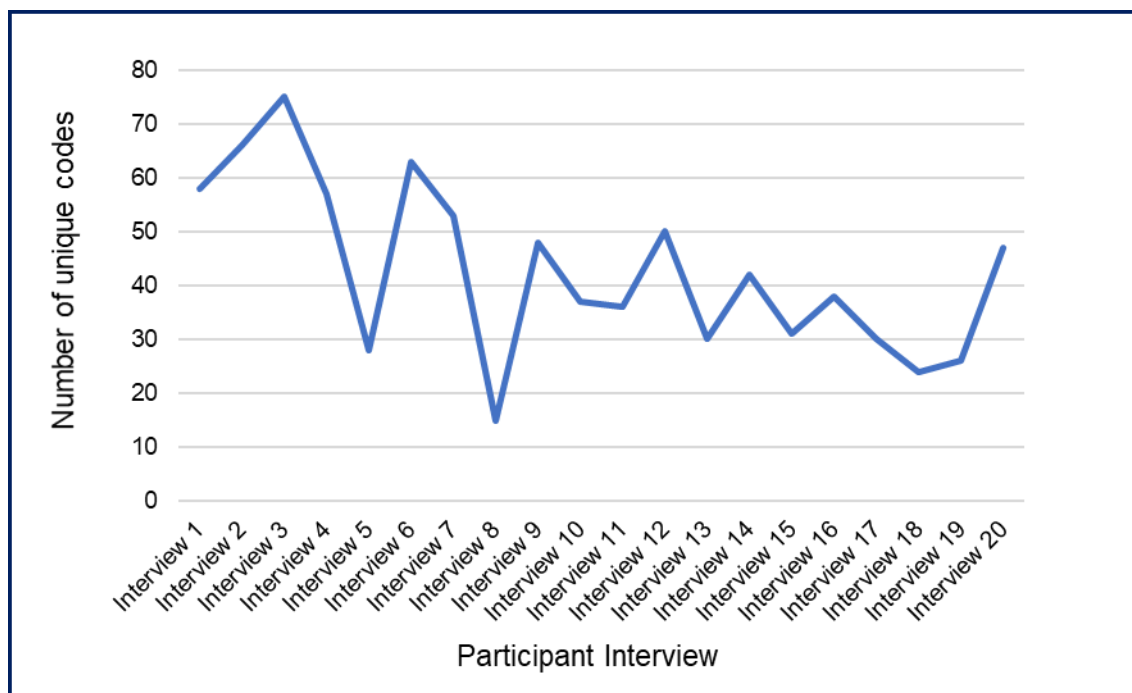
1. All the data from the transcripts was loaded into a Microsoft Excel worksheet, where the data was organised by interview and question.
2. Each interview transcript was read between two and four times in order to obtain a holistic perspective of the individual's perspective as well as compare and contrast reoccurring themes for each question.
3. Each individual cell was reviewed and code(s) were generated based on the insight from the data. Initial codes emerged from the analysis and were noted beside the cell (level one).
4. Themes emerged during the coding process and sections of data were highlighted that substantiated the theme (level two).
5. The level two themes from each question were reviewed and refined. The frequency of the codes was highlighted using a pivot table. A frequency table was generated through this process which highlights the number of times a theme was mentioned.
6. The level two themes for each question were refined based on the iterative nature of the data analysis process and the frequency analysis.
7. The pivot tables allowed the researcher to view the data at a more summarised level and enabled the researcher to identify trends and reoccurring themes.
8. Open coding was used through the process based on the inductive nature of the research. Therefore, no pre-set codes were used rather codes emerged and were modified throughout the coding process.

The above data analysis process ordered the data into themes and constructs in line with the research questions. The results are presented in a structured and logical manner in Chapter 5.

#### 4.6.1 Approaching Data Saturation

Literature indicates that the researcher should collect data until reaching a level of data saturation, however arriving at saturation is not a simple task (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During the data gathering and analysis phase the unique codes generated by the interviews were noted in order to assess if the research was reaching a point where the number of unique codes generated through the data analysis process was on the decline. The below figure highlights the general downward trend of the unique codes generated through the data gathering and data analysis processes.

Figure 4: Number of Unique Codes Per Interview (Author's own)



Data saturation isn't necessarily an event but more of a process which indicates that the collection of additional data may start to become counterproductive or where new data may not add anything to the overall story that is being developed through the research process (Saunders et al., 2017). Therefore, the insight that Figure 3 provides is that the data collection process was reaching a point where new data may not have added value

to the overall research objectives. In summary, this could be interpreted as the research having approached a point of data saturation.

#### **4.7 Research Ethics**

The following steps were followed to ensure that the ethical requirements of the research were achieved:

- A standard email containing the context and research objective was sent to all potential participants. The one-page summary document was included in the email to provide potential participants with additional information which has been provided in Appendix 2.
- After the participant consented to be interviewed a convenient time and place was arranged to meet. If the participant had to reschedule the interview due to work or personal commitments the interview was postponed without hesitation.
- At the start of the interview process, participants were taken through the informed consent form, which has been provided in Appendix 3, where it was highlighted that the interview would be recorded and that the services of a professional transcriber would be used to transcribe the interview.
- The informed consent form was signed prior to the interview commencing. The exception was two of the telephonic interviews, where the informed consent form was signed after the interview.
- All participants of the study were guaranteed confidentiality, therefore in line with the confidentiality statement within the consent form, the names of the participants and organisations mentioned in this study have not been disclosed in this report.
- In order to protect the participant's anonymity, during the interview recording the name of the participant was not mentioned by the researcher as far as possible.
- A non-disclosure agreement was signed between the researcher and the transcriber in order to ensure confidentiality. The recording was provided to the transcriber via an access restricted Google Drive folder and the recording was removed as soon as the transcription was complete.
- When concluding the interview, the participant was encouraged to share any final thoughts and the researcher ended the interview by thanking the participant for their time.



The above steps provided a rigorous approach to ensure the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to rights of the participants of the research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

#### **4.8 Trustworthiness, Reliability and Validity**

Trustworthiness, reliability and validity are key concepts when assessing qualitative research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Ali & Yusof, 2011). In order to ground these key concepts a brief definition has been provided. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is usually measured through concepts such as credibility, conformability, dependability, transferability or authenticity and provide an indication if the research findings are worth paying attention to (Elo, 2014). Reliability can be referred to as "the stability of findings whereas validity represented the truthfulness of findings." (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001, p. 523).

##### **4.8.1 Trustworthiness**

The findings and outcomes of a qualitative study should be transferable, confirmable and credible in order to establish trustworthiness of the findings (Anney, 2015). In order for this study to achieve trustworthiness the below actions have been implemented:

- For the research to achieve credibility, a lengthy period of time (45 to 60 minutes) was spent with each participant during the interview.
- To ensure transferability, the researcher has ensured that there is a purposive sample which means that the sample contains participants who have the relevant experience to provide insights into the main constructs of the research questions.
- To establish confirmability, the researcher kept an audit trail of interview notes and recording of interviews.
- To ensure dependability a detailed account of the data gathering and analysis process has been provided to ensure that if a researcher wishes to replicate this study there is sufficient information to guide the process.

##### **4.8.2 Reliability**

There have been many tactics deployed by the researcher to ensure reliability of this research. Reliability in this research has been achieved through the provision of

definitions of the main constructs at the beginning of the interview so that there was clarity about the subject matter. Pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that the interview guide was relevant and measured the constructs of the study. All interview recordings were transcribed by a professional in order to ensure accuracy of data capturing which further increased reliability.

In addition, the researcher has provided detailed explanations regarding the data collection and analysis processes to provide future researchers with guidelines to conduct the same research using the same process in order to determine whether the results can be re-created.

#### **4.8.3 Validity**

In qualitative research establishing validity can be challenging as it requires that the researcher apply both rigor and subjectivity into the research process (Whitemore et al., 2011). As qualitative research can be subjective, a variety of biases, such as interviewer bias or response bias, can influence the process (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The various forms of bias can influence the validity of the research.

To limit the impact, the various forms of bias have on this research, the following tactics were deployed. The semi-structured interview guide was used as a standard measurement instrument throughout the data collection process. Purposeful non-probability sampling was used to ensure that the participants of the research had prior knowledge and a wealth of experience with the constructs of organisational identity and organisational design. This ensured that quality data was gathered throughout the process. The above strategies will ensure that trustworthiness of the data is achieved.

#### **4.9 Limitations**

Like other research designs, qualitative research using semi-structured interviews have certain limitations when it comes to aspects of reliability and validity. Limitations may include respondent bias, interviewer skills and the research results may not be generalizable to the whole population (Boyce & Naele, 2006).

Due to the nature of the qualitative research as well the circumstances of the research the following limitations were identified:

- Non-probability sampling methods, convenience and snowball sampling used in this study provide a limitation in the sense that the sample may not statistically be representative of the population. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalised to the population.
- As this research is exploratory and qualitative in nature there is a requirement to follow up this research with more detailed quantitative analysis. This will ensure that the study is supplemented by statistical findings.
- There may be accuracy errors within the transcribing of the interview which could impact the validity of the research.
- Face-to-face semi-structured interviews may result in the respondents going off topic or telling the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear.
- There is always the risk of interviewer bias in qualitative research. The researcher needs to exercise caution not to incorporate personal experiences or allow opinions to influence the interview or the interpretation of the data. This is a difficult task as the researcher has opinions based on personal experience and had started constructing an idea of how the research should play out.
- There is a level of geographical bias in the participants interviewed as all participants were from the Gauteng province in South Africa.
- The cross-sectional nature of this study limits the scope of the research to a snapshot view of the participant's observations of organisational identity and organisational design. This limits the researcher's ability to measure changes to organisational identity and organisational design over time.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the chapter unpacked the research methodology which included the research design, population, unit of analysis and the sampling method selected for this study. The data gathering and analysis processes were discussed as well as information regarding the strategies and tactics the researcher deployed to ensure data reliability, validity and trustworthiness. An overview of the research ethics and limitations have also been provided. The findings of the data analysis will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **5. Chapter 5: Results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter contains the presentation of the results of the research, as well as an overview of the sample group. The results are structured in line with the research questions that were articulated in Chapter 3. This section provides the findings of the data collection and analysis process that were emphasised in Chapter 4.

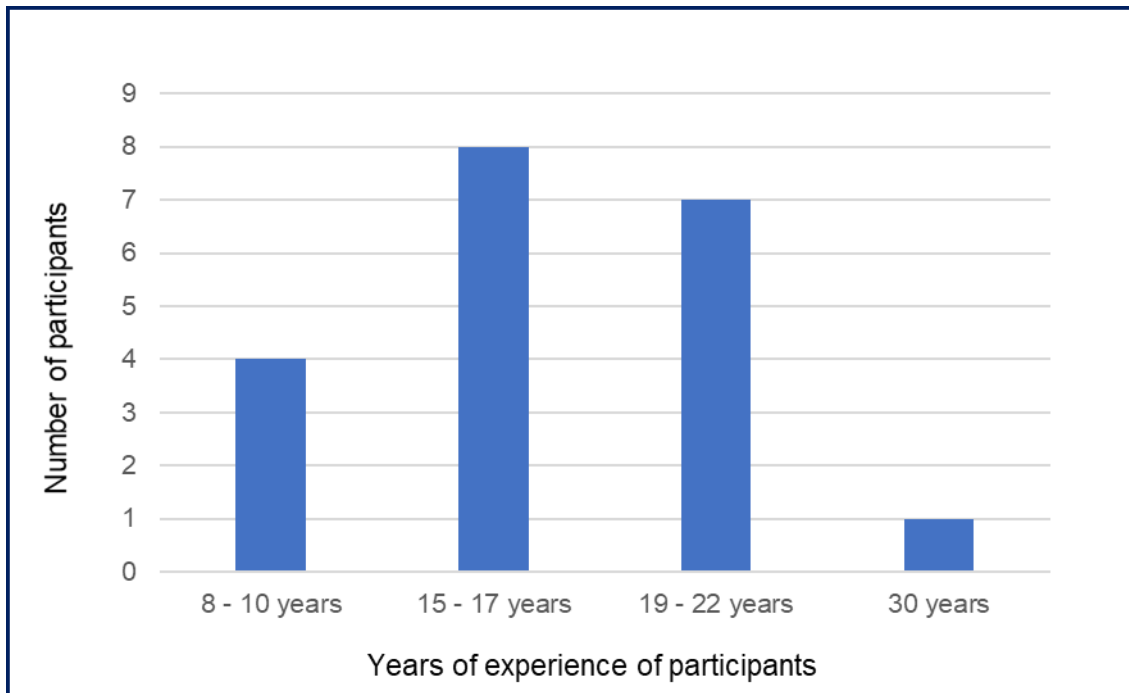
### **5.2 Description of the Sample**

As highlighted in the previous chapter, purposeful sampling was used to select participants. Sampling criteria was used for the three sample groups, business leaders, HR practitioners and organisational design specialists, as this ensured that the participants have suitable experience to meaningfully contribute to the study. In addition, to purposeful sampling, snowball and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the 20 participants who are considered knowledgeable and have experience with the subject of organisational identity and organisational design.

In order to determine the suitability of the 20 participants, consideration was given to their current role, depth and nature of experience, exposure to business, HR or organisational design as well as their perceived knowledge on the subject of organisational design or organisational identity. The complete sample consisted of five individuals who are leaders in a business-focused role, six HR practitioners and nine organisational design specialists. All participants hold senior or specialist positions such as Managing Director, CEO, Executive, Head and Consultant. All participants have sufficient depth of business experience across a wide variety of industries. The amount of experience that the participants possess has been highlighted in Figure 4.

A summary of the participants of the study have been provided in Table 3. This table provides information of the amount and type of experience the participants possess, as well as the industries they have had exposure to which provides insight into why they were selected to participate in the study.

Figure 5: Number of Years of Experience of Participants (Author's own)



However, it must be noted that organisational design may involve sensitive issues, such as restructures, which have implications for both organisations and individuals. Therefore, all participants of the study were guaranteed confidentiality and that this report would not contain any identifiers regarding the participants' names or where they work. Based on this commitment, participants shared their observations of organisational design and organisational identity generously and unreservedly with the researcher. There were many rich examples, observations and stories provided by participants.

As stated above, the ethics principles that underpin this research required that no personal identifiers of participants would be used in presenting feedback in this report. The examples that were pertinent to the data analysis have been included however all companies or persons mentioned have been changed to Company X, Mr X or Ms X. To further protect the anonymity of the participants the job titles have been sanitised to remove any reference to the business where they are employed and a high-level summary of their experience has been provided which doesn't contain specific information that could be used to identify participants.

Table 3: Overview of Sample Groups

Sample type	Job title	Amount of experience	Overview of experience	Overview of industries
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Director	16 years	IT management, development, data science	Management consulting, banking and entertainment
	Group CEO	15 years	Organisational design, strategy, organisational development, learning and development, employee engagement	Management consulting, mining, retail, logistics, telecommunications
	Deputy Programme Manager	9 years	Clinical, health care programme management	Health care, non-governmental organisation
	Business Head	15 years	Actuarial analysis, marketing, underwriting, credit risk, business development	Insurance
	Business and Technology Executive	22 years	IT, IT system implementation, business management	Automotive, public sector, financial services, retail, management consulting, supply chain
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	Chief People Officer	20 years	Marketing, communications, HR, fundraising, culture	Fundraising, education, non-governmental organisation, beauty
	HR Manager	16 years	HR generalist	Research, audit, construction, financial services, insurance
	Chief People Officer	16 years	HR generalist	Insurance
	Consultant	30 years	HR generalist, employee relations, change management	IT management, shipping
	Organisational Development Head	19 years	Organisational development, culture, organisational design	Financial services, banking, insurance
	Managing Executive	20 years	Learning and development, culture, talent management, change management, organisational effectiveness and development	Management consulting, retail, banking, financial services, mining, public sector, agriculture, telecommunications

Sample type	Job title	Amount of experience	Overview of experience	Overview of industries
<b>Organisational Design Specialists</b>	Organisational Design Consultant	8 years	HR generalist, assessment, organisational design	Financial services, insurance
	Organisational Design Consultant	16 years	Organisational design, change management, shared services	Management consulting, banking, financial services, telecommunications, mining, retail, petrol
	Managing Director	15 years	Organisational design, change management, business architecture, business analysis, process engineering, system implementation	Financial services, mining, retail, supply chain, agriculture, management consulting
	Organisational Effectiveness Executive	9 years	Organisational design, change management, process optimisation, coaching, employee engagement, training, assessment	Financial services, banking, gaming, hospitality, telecommunications, public sector, education, management consulting
	Business Architect	10 years	Organisational design, change management, financial modelling, financial feasibility	Agriculture, telecommunications, public sector, financial services, banking, management consulting
	CEO/ Thought Leader	22 years	Organisational design, executive management, call centre management, human resources	Management consulting, banking, financial services, healthcare, public sector, logistics, automotive
	Management Consultant	17 years	Organisational design, employee relations, human resources	Insurance, banking, mining, hospitality, manufacturing, public sector, management consulting
	Executive Chairman	20 years	Organisational design, culture, leadership development, human resources, strategy	Supply chain, logistics, financial services, insurance, banking, retail, mining, manufacturing, construction, entertainment, management consulting
	Organisational Effectiveness Head	19 years	Organisational design, change and business transformation, job architecture, job grading	Management consulting, financial services, oil and gas, mining, public sector, banking and insurance

### **5.3 Results for Research Question 1**

**Research Question 1: Establish the aspects that are used to define organisational design and organisational identity.**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

The original intention of the interview questions that make up Research Question 1 was to ensure that the concepts of organisational design and organisational identity were fully understood and explored by the participant before proceeding with the rest of the interview. However, the responses yielded such rich data that this research question emerged during the data analysis phase.

In addition, this research question contributes to one of the overall objectives of this research which is to enrich the understanding of organisational identity and organisational design. As highlighted in Chapter 3, there is a clear gap in modern literature regarding the definition of both concepts. Many authors and researchers rely on seminal definitions such as Galbraith (1977) for organisational design and Albert and Whetten (1985) for organisational identity. Therefore, this research question seeks to establish the aspects that are used to define organisational design and organisational identity in order to provide a deeper comprehension of these phenomena.

#### **5.3.2 Aspects Which Define the Concept of Organisational Design**

The first interview question was focused on ensuring the participants understood the concept of organisational design. The definition and positioning of organisational design have evolved with many components of business management (Galbraith, 1977; Worren, 2016; Girod & Karim, 2017). Therefore, it was important to create a common understanding of this concept at the start of the interview process. All participants were able to clearly articulate a definition of organisational design. Table 4 represents the constructs used to define the concept of organisational design. The most significant constructs which make up the definition of organisational design are structure, organisational architecture, alignment and work design which includes what work we do and how we do it.



Table 4: Constructs Which Define the Concept of Organisational Design

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Structure	32
2	Organisational architecture	13
3	Business strategy	12
4	Alignment	11
5	Work design (what work we do and how we do it)	9
6	Business process	8
6	Customer	8
6	Effectiveness	8
7	Business objectives	6
7	People	6
8	Technology	5
9	Operating model	4
9	Organisational design is a process	4
10	Capabilities	2
10	Product or service	2

When analysing the constructs that emerged from the analysis, there is clear interconnectedness of the constructs represented in Table 4. The individual constructs are often used in conjunction with each other when the participant defined organisational design. Therefore, these constructs should be viewed as the distinct elements that interact with one another to form the complex whole of organisational design.

### 5.3.2.1 Structure

The majority of participants agreed that organisational design manifested itself through structure, such as reporting lines, levels of authority or hierarchy, however the concept of what the organisation structures itself around frequently emerged. Many participants expressed this sentiment, with one participant stating:

*“...the business has a number of objectives or goals that they need to achieve and they use organisational design to essentially structure the reporting lines in such a way to best meet the objectives”.*

Another participant supported this view by stating that organisational design is:

*“structuring what we do with what we want to achieve”.*

Building on this concept, a participant with a wealth of organisational design experience stated:

*"[Organisational design is how the organisation] structures the innate capabilities or inherent functionalities in a very deliberate way to achieve a pre-set strategic objective".*

A Business Head highlighted that organisational design is:

*"...how you structure reporting lines in order to execute on your business strategy so that would mean if you see sales and clients as very important then you almost stretch your business around providing the best service".*

Another participant supported this view:

*"...the organisation is optimally structured to service its particular market segment".*

### **5.3.2.2 Organisational Architecture**

Through the interview process it was clear that organisational design is married with the concept of organisational architecture. Supporting this an organisational design specialist stated that:

*"organisational design is the process through which to connect your business architecture, your organisation architecture, your technology architecture, information architecture and people architecture to be able to successfully execute on that strategy..."*

Another participant shared a similar view that organisational design is the process of:

*"architecting how the business should operate, so the analogy that I always use is the scaffolding that you build for the business and everything else then happens or works within that scaffolding if you will, the structure, it's the logical rules of the way business works and how it engages in cycles".*

Another organisational design specialist used the concept of organisational architecture to define organisational design:

*“... so I would use the word organisational architecture, and with that I would mean a number of things, I would mean what is the requisite business involved with, what is the most appropriate operating model, what is the most appropriate business process value chain, what is the most appropriate technology, not only information technology but technology that is used in the organisation including IT...”*

A Managing Executive stated that:

*“organisational design could encompass operating model design, which identifies organisational accountabilities, it looks at structure, it looks at the hardware, structure, boxes, it could go into ways of working, I think what it boils down to at the end of the day, if you ask me about organisational design, it’s about making sure the hardware design of the organisation effectively gets the work done so how functions are structured and how people fit into those structures to get the work effectively done”*

This highlights that organisational architecture combines concepts around the hardware design of the organisation as well as connecting people to ensure the work is delivered. This is supported by an organisation design specialist who stated that:

*“organisational design is the hard-wiring of the organisation, so how ultimately your bums on seats [people] link up to the work that has to be done that link up to the strategy of the organisation so it’s everything around people, processes, technologies, systems and how they line up to delivering on the strategy”*

From the findings it is evident that organisational architecture is a process that connects and aligns the various types of architecture within the organisation with each other.

### **5.3.2.3 Alignment**

A consistent theme that emerged was how organisational design was used to create alignment within the organisation to achieve the organisation’s objectives or results. This alignment could manifest itself in many different ways, one thought leader in the organisational design space reflected on the alignment that is created between organisational design and organisational identity:

*“Is org design linked to identity? The answer is yes. Is org design linked to are we cheetahs or lions? Absolutely. Is org design linked to how we make profit in our business*

*and how do we need to make profit in the future which is around purpose and architecture in its own right? Absolutely. So org design is a permeating factor across the full value chain of the organisation”.*

Another senior organisational design specialist built on this to add the alignment between different organisational components, such as strategy, process, technology, structure and people:

*“It’s a process of aligning different components of the organisation...so we think through strategy, process, technology, structure and people...”.*

A business leader further reflects on the alignment as it is used to achieve business objectives:

*“...it is the way those organisations are structured to meet the business objectives so the way I see it, is the business has a number of objectives or goals that they need to achieve and they use organisational design to essentially structure the reporting lines in such a way to best meet the objectives”.*

This is supported by a senior HR practitioner who heads up the HR function of a successful South African organisation:

*“...[organisational design is a] reflection of how you’re going to structure your organisation for outperformance...so how does your structure reflect your strategy and your goals that you want to achieve in the business”.*

This alignment could also manifest in enabling an organisation to achieve its value proposition as one participant revealed:

*“...structure the innate capabilities or inherent functionalities in a very deliberate way to achieve a pre-set strategic objective or to deliver on your core value proposition or customer value proposition”.*

#### 5.3.2.4 Work Design (What Work We Do and How We Do It)

In addition, many participants highlighted that organisational design focuses on the design of work. Not only what work the organisation executes but also how the work is executed and how work flows through the organisation. The flow of work is introduced by a thought leader in the organisational design space:

*“...and if you understand all of those then what is the most appropriate flow of work through this organisation horizontally but also vertically.”*

A seasoned HR practitioner also placed emphasis on the concept of the flow of work:

*“I guess simplistically you would capture it in reporting lines but I think the key source is around the flow of work but it’s what is the ideal kind of structure”.*

This is emphasised by a participant stating that organisational design is:

*“...structuring what we do with what we want to achieve; so how do you get your strategy in actual tangible outputs? You need to look at what are we trying to achieve as an organisation and then logically what is the next steps, so how do we get there? That is org design, the entire process; its then the change process with role profiling, capabilities, competencies and all the architecture work that goes into that process”.*

In addition, an organisational design specialist supports the finding that organisational design is also about how the work is organised to effectively execute on business outcomes:

*“[Organisational design is about] helping the organisation understand how to organise work in order to best achieve their ambition”.*

The same participant condensed organisational design as a process of determining

*“what game are we playing here and how are we playing based on our business strategy and what we what to achieve”.*

This succinctly encapsulates that organisational design is focused on what work the organisation executes and how the work is performed. Another organisational design specialist supports this view:

*“structure for us follows process which follows strategy...structure enables the work to be performed”.*

Another thought leader in the organisational design space, eloquently reflects on organisational design roles of assisting the organisation to find a balance between structure and flexibility in how the work is delivered:

*“...organisational design is the deliberate process to find the mix between structure and flexibility married with where the organisation wants to go from a purpose perspective, purpose, business model, strategy perspective and going through a deliberate process to find ‘structuredness’ and ‘unstructuredness’, so architecture and where we actually want to avoid it because the organisation might feel it might slow them down or where we do it and we do it in such a way that the organisation wouldn’t feel threatened and in other places we are far more deliberate in structured processes because its where all the costs of the organisation lies and you want to be smart, effective, efficient in those structures.”*

### **5.3.2.5 Comparison of Findings by Sample Group**

An additional noteworthy observation was the similarities and differences in the constructs identified between the different sample groups to define organisational design which is provided in Table 5, in Appendix 4. All sample groups highlighted the construct of structure and alignment to describe organisational design. Where organisational design specialists focused on the process of designing the organisational architecture and business strategy which is different to HR practitioners who emphasised people as well as how organisational design leads to more a more effective organisation.

For both HR practitioners and business leaders, customer and effectiveness was a construct that appears on the top five constructs. Organisational design specialists emphasised organisational architecture, strategy and work design which wasn’t echoed in the other sample groups. This highlights how organisational design specialists have a different more specialised perspective on the subject of organisational design.

### 5.3.3 Aspects Which Define the Concept of Organisational Identity

The second interview question dealt with the definition of the concept of organisational identity. Participants were encouraged to draw on their personal experiences within the organisations to provide a deeper understanding of the elements which define the concept. Time was spent probing and unpacking the constructs in order to obtain clarity regarding the composition of organisational identity.

The table below illustrates the main constructs that were identified in the data analysis process. Collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation, 'who are we?', how the organisation is perceived internally vs externally, and the influence of individual identity and leaders are constructs that provided key insights into the concept of organisational identity.

Table 5: Constructs Which Define the Concept of Organisational Identity

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation	33
2	How the organisation is perceived internally vs externally	33
3	Who are we?	32
4	Influenced by leaders	24
5	Patterns of behaviours displayed in the organisation	18
6	Way of expressing culture	14
7	Influenced by individual identity	12
7	What we do	12
8	Employees' experience of the organisation	11
9	Informed by perceptions	9
10	Differences in identity across the organisation	7
11	Influenced by the nature of what work the organisation does	4
12	Identity is more than culture	2

When answering the question, most participants were encouraged to reflect on examples of how they experienced organisational identity, which ultimately led to insight around how organisational identity is defined as well as practically experienced in organisations. All participants were able to clearly provide a definition of organisational identity as well as provide elements which make up the definition.

### 5.3.3.1 Collective Belief System and Unconscious Thinking Patterns of the Organisation

Many participants highlighted that organisational identity was a concept that is deeply rooted in what is valued in the organisation, how people think and feel as well as the concept of a collective belief system.

A thought leader in the organisational design field highlighted an important construct around how organisational identity can be seen as the collective belief system in the organisation:

*"I would say it is the belief system in the organisation and that belief system is ultimately made up of every individual's belief system and the organisational identity then becomes a collective of this belief system, so what we as a collective group believe this organisation is about, so which in essence is made up of its behaviours but ultimately behaviours are driven by what is architected to be."*

Supporting this viewpoint another participant stated:

*"I see it [organisational identity] as the nature of the organisation and how people think and feel about it, the organisation, not necessarily themselves in it but the nature of it; and how they think about it and how they feel about it and therefore it then influences how they start to behave."*

Furthermore, a head of a business area detailed:

*"It [organisational identity] would incorporate stuff like obviously employees how they relate to one another and to the organisation. How they think about, talk about the organisation, how the organisation in its design is centred around stakeholders, or customers and therefore that drives the engagement from a process but also from an interaction and behaviour perspective; it's how they think about and behave and I think the thinking part is maybe the more fundamental bit because that involves ultimately behaviour, so really how do we think about us as an organisation who we are, what is our purpose, and therefore that state of purpose and how we think translates into what we then do and how we behave."*



This supporting evidence highlights that individual's belief systems and how they think about the organisation manifests into how individuals behave. This thought-provoking illustration of how the collective belief system of the organisation is represented by behaviours displayed by individuals in the organisation which influences the architecture of the business.

A senior business leader builds on this concept by including the patterns of decision-making into the definition:

*"I think you see it [organisational identity] in people yes, but I think you use it in the way that decisions are made or the type of decisions that are made. I think you see it in the choices that people make every day but also choices that are made for the longer term, I think you see it in the way they treat their stakeholders whether they are internal or external so I think you see it in a lot of ways..."*

Adding to this is a participant who provided additional insight into how organisational identity represents what individuals collectively value and that organisational identity is far more unwritten:

*'So where organisational design is the work we do, organisational identity is more around who are we? So what are the things we value, what are the things that we display, so not necessarily your value system but as a company what are the things we stand for so it's usually the unwritten part that we are; so org identity is what you feel when you're in the organisation, it's not the things that you write on policies, on the walls, it's the unwritten, between-the-lines stuff that says this is what we stand for.'*

An organisational design specialist builds on the concept of organisational identity being far more unwritten and obvious:

*"I guess that's where it becomes muddy and the reference to culture, because if you were to define culture as just the way we do things here, the behavioural patterns. Then the notion that it's above the water and you can see that, then the below the water stuff is the internal organisational identity. I put it below the water predominantly because I think it is often not only unconsciously so but is subconsciously."*

This standpoint was supported by another senior organisational design specialist who has a wealth of experience in consulting:

*“I think identity is part of culture; I think that’s the way I see it. I think it’s almost the subconscious of the organisation...it’s a subconscious of the organisation so even if you get leaders to behave in a different way until you shift the subconscious until the whole thing shifts I don’t think you have a shift”.*

This contribution reinforces the view that organisational identity is a more implicit and subtler concept as it influences what is valued in the organisation and encompasses the collective belief system within the organisation, which influences how individuals behave.

### **5.3.3.2 Who Are We?**

The majority of participants highlighted organisational identity as ‘who are we?’ or the nature or character of the organisation. This consistent element is expressed in various manners. A business leader highlights this point as well as illustrates ‘who are we?’ in his business:

*“...for me organisational identity is really about one who we pride ourselves to be and how we go about doing things. So you know when I look at my current environment, I mean we pride ourselves around the sort of federal owner managed businesses, so we tend to see ourselves as quite entrepreneurial which also makes it very centralised and decision-making processes very decentralised which also leads to its own complications but none-the-less if I look at our organisational identity relative to the rest of Company X it tends to be quite different”.*

In addition, another participant summarised this view of organisational identity being centred around ‘who are we?’ by highlighting:

*“it [organisational identity] is part of our explicit characteristic which is how we like to describe ourselves...”.*

Supporting this aspect, another participant stated:

*“It [organisational identity] is the persona of the organisation I think, so if we had to give personal characteristics to this person called the organisation we would describe a certain set of characteristics...”.*

A further participant stated this view, which builds on the concept of 'who are we?':

*"...organisational identity, in my view if I have to equate an organisation to a human being, organisational identity would be your character for me. It's who you are, inherent things that you won't necessarily will be able to change about this organisation; so if I am a bank in the banking industry there are certain traits and characteristics that I will have given the nature of the fact that I am a bank and it's the stuff that I am proud of being. So that's a character or personality."*

This finding of 'who are we?' incorporates the persona, characteristics or nature which makes up the organisational identity. An organisational design specialist provided this example of how 'who are we?' can be expressed in an organisation:

*"So the company I am thinking of is really an entrepreneurial company. So it's more around we don't have rules, you decide what you want to do and when you want to do it, structure is not really that important, and we not talking about org structure necessarily, but structure in general; but in terms of policies, guidelines, clarity, work clarity, it's those things...it's the belief that if you appoint the right person they will do whatever they need to do and that kind of behaviour comes through in everything. So you can think of a company that doesn't really have the policies, guidelines, procedures, processes, it's more around individuals and people within that and their capabilities."*

### **5.3.3.3 How the Organisation is Perceived Internally Vs Externally**

When defining organisational identity many participants highlighted the need for consistency in how the identity is perceived in the market through the brand and external messaging versus how employees experience the brand. In support of this one participant noted:

*"I think the internal brand largely correlates to the external brand and everyone that has a perception of that company is going to relay that in some form or the other to the outside world...I also think that the internal people like to belong to that identity but I think there's a lack of congruence often with that, which creates disillusionment."*

This also highlights that a lack of alignment between the how the organisation is perceived externally and experienced internally can create a sense of disillusionment. One organisational design specialist reflected on the external and internal identity:

*“So an organisation’s identity is its people, so you don’t walk into a building saying this is the identity it’s the building, so the brand may be part of that but it’s not just the brand; it’s what you know about the brand, what you feel about the brand and that you can get through the experiences of the people so people make the brand. So if you have a certain impression of the brand it’s the people, your interactions with the brand but the brand is lived through its people”.*

This adds the elements of how the brand is experienced and lived through the people in the organisation. Building on this another participant stated:

*“...so how outsiders would see the company and also how internal people would see the company and sometimes I think they are very different”.*

This again emphasises the challenge of aligning how the organisation is perceived internally and externally. Another participant with a wealth of business experience added to this point in their definition of organisational identity:

*“I guess who we are but also how other people see our organisation, it’s very easy you know, you can say you are rated South Africa’s top company to work for but everyone else around you thinks that you’re an ass so I guess it’s more the perception of who you are as a company”.*

Supporting this view of congruency in how the organisation is seen internally and externally, another organisational design specialist stated:

*“I think it’s a large extent of the internal brand but that is how the company perceives or organisation perceives itself and its role not only internally but in relation with the other companies in that industry and what it’s going to achieve.”*

This positions the notion that organisational identity has many perspectives and most notably an internal and external lens. A senior organisational design thought leader provided their perspective:

*“I just believe that one should see identity from multiple perspectives and probably, I don’t know if it’s the most important, but the first sort of perspective is how is the organisation perceived by external stakeholders, so I mean if you were to use a company*

*like Apple or any of those sort of big brands they have a particular identity to their consumers”.*

This perspective reinforces the view of organisational identity having two distinct lenses as well as the need for the alignment between ‘who are we?’ and who we intend to be. The alignment between the two may be difficult, but not impossible, as a senior HR executive provided a practical example of how their organisation keeps these lenses of internal and external identity in balance:

*“...well maintaining the brand internally and externally is hard work so we try to have a consistent message both internally and externally in how we position the brand and identity to the market, so you know whatever we try to do in the client space we try and reflect in the people and the HR space. Just to be consistent in the positioning of our brand. I’ll give you a simple example of that. One of the things we’ve done consistently for years now is use our staff in our adverts so if you look at our current 20th birthday adverts for example, 100% of people that appear in those adverts are staff, not actors or anybody, they’re telling a story of the staff...this is just to ensure that we have this fluidness and consistency in our identity and that what we putting out there is what we are like and if you walk into our organisation, and if you watch an advert of Company X, on TV and you physically walk in there you will see that there’s some consistency there.”*

A senior organisational design specialist with a wealth of consulting experience provided an opposing example, where the internal and external identity were misaligned:

*“I will give you a very practical example: so the casino I worked with, internally their messaging to the people was ‘we are at the bleeding edge of technology around the gaming world’ and how we organise and how we work, the products we offer, the services, the locations, we provide, etc. Now the reality was that this business was more than 25 years old so all their properties and games and all that type of stuff was outdated. Their properties, they have a very strong hotel chain within their business, was typically from a hotel chain point of view they said glam and glitz all that type of stuff yet the properties were old and the locations were rural. And the message from the market was ‘you’re tired’, ‘you’re outdated’, ‘you are no longer relevant’ and you found absolute schizophrenic view of people internally saying you are trying to drive from an identity point of view something that we are fundamentally not.”*

From the two practical examples provided the alignment between the perception of individuals external to the organisation and the internal experience of individuals within the organisation can manifest in different ways. This finding highlights that organisational identity has both an internal and external dimension; it is the perception of different stakeholders shapes it.

#### **5.3.3.4 The Influence of Individual Identity and Leaders**

The majority of participants highlighted the role leaders play in organisational identity. The concept of individual identity arose in conjunction with the leaders' identity, with participants emphasising that organisational identity is manifested through individuals. This is supported by the comments of a participant:

*“organisational identity cannot live if it doesn't live through people...”*

Supporting this view, a business leader indicated the need for alignment between individual identity and organisational identity:

*“if you are being true to your own personal identity you would then gravitate to the identity of the organisation or the parts of the organisation that resonate with you.”*

The role of leaders in organisational identity cannot be overstated with many participants raising the influence leaders and their identity have on shaping and directing how organisational identity is expressed and experienced in the organisation. Notably, a participant reflected on the role that leaders play in shaping the organisational identity:

*“Leadership is a big part of corporate identity and leadership behaviour sets the tone for corporate identity”.*

This view is supported by another participant who is a senior HR practitioner:

*“What I've noticed about organisational identity and culture is that if it [organisational identity] is intentional from the top of leadership, then it's going to be carried out in whatever shape or form throughout the organisation.”*

One participant who has an abundance of organisational design experience reflected that:

*“leaders are the identity; who are people watching?”.*

Another participant who supported the view that leaders’ identity shapes the organisational identity provided their observations based on their copious experience of organisational design in consulting for a variety of organisations in the organisational design space:

*“...when you engage with the senior executive team and you see how they engage with each other, what they value for the organisation, how they make decisions together, it speaks volumes about the persona of the organisation...”.*

This finding indicates that the character or persona of the organisation is influenced by leaders and the interactions between the leadership team. Another organisational design specialist shared an observation with a similar sentiment:

*“How I started to pick it [organisational identity] up is within the executive leadership team, the CEO was very strong in tasking his people for deliverables, giving direction, giving clear direction, etc. and everyone in those sessions would say ‘yes, yes, we are going make that happen’ and nothing ever happens. When you go and follow up with them, I started to sense this thing of but they are not going to start to action this because it’s going to change any way and I started to realise that he actually gives this direction every week and now it has created the identity amongst the team that we are a company that says we do things but we don’t actually, we just continue to do what we used to...”.*

This provides a sense that leaders can influence the leadership team’s identity which makes up the organisational identity.

### **5.3.3.5 Comparison of Findings by Sample Group**

An additional noteworthy observation was the similarities and differences in the top five constructs identified between the different sample groups to define organisational identity. This is highlighted in Table 7 in Appendix 4. There were consistencies across the sample group for the constructs of ‘who are we?’, and collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation.

The most notable finding is that business leaders acknowledge that organisational identity is influenced by individual identity and both HR practitioners and organisational

design specialists highlight the influence of leaders in organisational identity. This finding further verifies the role leaders have in shaping and directing organisational identity.

## **5.4 Results for Research Question 2**

**Research Question 2: Determine if organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process.**

### **5.4.1 Introduction**

In the third interview question, participants were asked to provide their views regarding whether organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process. This question aligns closely with the research question, which builds on the findings of Visscher and Irene (2010), who found that the organisational design process is influenced by characteristics within the organisation and the intention of this question is to explore whether organisational identity is one such characteristic which could influence the organisational design process.

During the interview process participants were urged to substantiate their views with their observations and experience in the organisational design process. Time was spent on reflecting on the tangible ways organisational identity may have influenced the way the organisational design process played out in the organisation. The majority of the participants agreed that organisational identity influences the organisational design process and how this influence is demonstrated in organisations is indicated in the constructs in Table 8.

The above table illustrates the constructs which emerged from the data analysis, with how the organisational design process is executed and 'who are we becoming?' being prominent constructs. In addition, the role of leaders in particular when it comes to leadership alignment, leaders' identity, readiness and power dynamics surfaced as a significant factor that indicated how organisational identity shapes the organisational design process.



Table 6: Constructs Which Highlight How Organisational Identity Influences the Organisational Design Process

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	How organisational design process is executed	39
2	Leadership alignment, identity, readiness and power dynamics	32
3	Ineffective organisational design process	26
4	Drivers of organisational design process	16
5	Who are we becoming	10
6	Scope of organisational design	8
7	Pace of the organisational design	5
8	Awareness	4
8	Mindset towards organisational design process	4

Many participants shared observations where the organisational design process was ineffectiveness as the process failed to acknowledge the influence organisational identity has on the organisational design process.

#### 5.4.2 How the Organisational Design Process is Executed

Participants recounted the manner in which organisational identity influenced the organisational design process through practical examples and observations of organisational design processes that they have either facilitated or been involved in. One participant, who has facilitated many organisational design processes, noted that the influence of organisational identity plays out in many different manners and its influences are far more subconscious and subtle:

*“I want to link the identity directly to the [organisational design] process right, so how we do things around here is the culture. But who we are around here is more the identity and that’s a lot more subtle I think, its more subconscious - I think it’s deeper stuff, and what I have come to realise because I’ve had a few big restructuring projects over the last five or six years is that what the leadership team values, how they behave or how they think they should behave, their appetite for change, their individual aspirations and positioning in the organisation, how polite or not polite the organisation is, how collaborative, the way of work in the organisation is or not, those things really impact the org design process and it definitely impacts the outcomes of the process.”*

Supporting this view, that organisational identity influences how the organisational design process is executed, a thought leader in the organisational design space reflects:

*“... an Afrikaans word would be so much more eloquent. It is ‘onbewus’ so ‘I don’t know’ ‘unconsciously’, ‘maar dit is ook onbekend’, it is ‘subconscious’. I think it’s useful if you really ask to what degree is organisational design influenced by organisational identity so much probably of what we do in organisational design, we try and accommodate culture with behaviour but we rarely, if ever, really explore the deep drivers of identity.”*

This reflection pinpoints the subtle and deeply subconscious nature of organisational identity which makes it difficult to articulate organisational identity’s influence on the process. In addition, a business leader builds on this view, by reflecting on the organisational design process that had been completed a few months prior:

*“I think especially if you understand the elements of identity and those elements that make you truly successful and unique as a business, that those things should also inform how you design the organisation so I think organisations have probably only two choices, but you can either have an identity influence design or design have contributed to identity and it’s probably a bit of both.”*

This raises the element of organisational design potentially influencing identity as well as organisational identity influencing design. This sentiment was echoed by another participant, with extensive exposure to organisational design:

*“... we mapped out the org design processes and there are different methodology approaches: it all works in different environments in different ways. I always wondered whether the org design process is not a way to explore or articulate the identity and you should almost find some way to act that out a bit better to say yes we are now talking about your value chain but actually we are talking about where you spend your energy. And energy is an identity question.”*

Supporting this view another organisational design consultant provided their observations on how they change their approach to the organisational design process based on how they experience the organisational identity:

*“Yes, we will also change the process to accommodate the identity. So to give you a practical example. So at one of the clients the sales team’s identity, when you listen to what they say and think about their team, we are thinkers, we are blue sky, we can accomplish anything and everything so the design process with them was at one stage extremely out of the box and unrealistic for that company and the type of services they*

*sold that was how they were being proud of their team identity so we had many conversations about what we could we be and it took much longer to complete the exercise in the context of this business. Whereas that same organisation's operational team were very grounded, realistic and very factual and fact based so the design journey was much less of a thinking and drawing pictures on flipcharts with different pens, it was more facts, let's go and look at the turnaround times of these processes, how many people do we need for this to be able to turn round here, etc., so it was more your data-driven bottom-up design."*

#### **5.4.3 Who Are We Becoming?**

A few participants highlighted that it was not who they are as an organisation but rather 'who are we becoming?' that influenced the organisational design process. This can be seen as the difference between the organisational identity of the organisation in the present moment versus the organisational identity of the organisation in the future. Supporting this finding, one participant reflected:

*"...org design is a very logical process if you think about it right, you figure this out that and that informs that just dependent on that and there's decisions and choices that you have to make each step and layer to be able to unpack it. I think we miss at the beginning of that there is almost an umbrella that has to inform this whole process I think is the identity that frames what we are designing aligned to who we are as an organisation or who do we want to become".*

This focus on 'who are we becoming' is reinforced by an HR practitioner who succinctly stated:

*"...but I think there is a large influence of who we want to be. It definitely influenced the design, in terms of what are we going to look at, what are we going to change, how are we going to re-compartmentalise, what are we going to do with certain roles".*

This view that organisational identity influences the process through the reframing of the organisational identity as 'who are we becoming' is supported by another HR practitioner who has exposure to the organisational development and organisational design space:

*“...given where the organisation is at and where they find themselves and what their ideal organisational identity is, what they keep aspiring towards and maybe they simplify it and they call it their mission, their reason for existence...”.*

An organisational design specialist reinforced the finding that the organisational design process is influenced by what the organisation aspires to be:

*“...I think we use organisational design as sort of this conceptual theoretical thing but the actuality is how we restructure work and how we perform certain tasks; and the way you structure that work is usually very much based on what you deliver, where you deliver it, how you deliver it and there’s always that and that influences how people perceive what the company is doing, what the company is, the way they see themselves as well, I can see the identity changing as a result to what the actual not the aspirational idea of this identity was but how it changes through what we deliver and how that’s perceived.”*

A contrasting view was provided by a business leader who works for a non-profit organisation, who shared their experience of an organisational design process that was driven by the requirements of an American funding organisation. This different perspective highlights how an external entity who provided funding shaped both the identity and design of the organisation much to the organisation’s detriment as they began to lose sight of who they are.

*“I think when we moved from our primary focus being a patient focus and in those days the American funder had less of an idea of what they wanted they were trying to, they were trying to combat the HIV epidemic...they didn’t know what or how but they knew they had to treat these people in the absence of them getting treatment from their government but now our government has the biggest roll out in the world, no one in this country that has HIV will not get ARVs...so our role has become less driven on service delivery but more on technical assistance...which was initially sort of training and mentoring but now it’s really they [American funder] don’t want us to train, they don’t want us to mentor, it’s about implementing interventions, monitoring interventions, giving output, showing changes in data because of those interventions, and it’s really hard if you have no control over the people that are actually having to enact whatever it is”.*

The participant reflected on what this change in organisational design meant for the identity and the organisation:

*“...well it [organisational identity] has changed because we’ve been forced to change from our funder but we don’t necessarily know who we are anymore and that’s why we performed poorly in that we don’t really know. So then the last bit of the story is that they realised that technical assistance isn’t helping so now there’s a push for us to perform for better service delivery again but we don’t have these people, we have now tried to employ mentors and trainers and all of these things now these people are going back to try and treat patients at the clinic so it’s almost like our funders are a bit bipolar, so for us to have our identity based on how they foresee the money being used and they keep changing their minds about how the money should be used and the funders that do well are those that are responsive.”*

This experience highlights that iterative and disruptive organisational design processes create contradictory views on ‘who are we becoming?’ and has a harmful effect on organisational identity. The uncertainty in organisational identity or ‘who are we becoming?’ created an ineffective organisational design process and created further doubt in what the organisational identity really is. This further reinforces the earlier finding that the influencing effect between organisational design and organisational identity may work both ways.

#### **5.4.4 Leadership Alignment, Identity, Readiness and Power Dynamics**

Different dimensions around leadership emerged with many participants raising leadership team alignment, readiness, leaders’ identity and power dynamics as factors that highlight how organisational identity influences the organisational design process.

A business leader reflected on a recent organisational design process that they were involved in that was not successful because not only did the organisational identities of the entities involved not align, but the organisational identity played out through leadership politics and power dynamics between leaders of the different entities. When asked what made the process unsuccessful, the leader responded:

*“the politics of the organisation, you are part of the organisation, who you report to so it’s largely based on who’s running it, so if someone else is running it, it could be different”.*

Power dynamics manifested itself in a slightly different manner for another participant:

*“Definitely it [organisational identity] manifests itself so beautifully in your decision rights stuff and your operating model, and then I think with examples where tenure plays a role and that is linked to power...”*

Another business leader found that leadership readiness and managing the dynamics in the leadership team in changing the organisational design and how it would potentially impact the organisational identity was a deciding factor in the organisational design process:

*“I take a look five to ten years down the line, I do think that a more centralised model will better suit the organisation given that we now expanding into Africa and Asia and it starts to become very difficult to manage appropriately with so many moving parts right. However, what I don’t want to do is change what had made the business successful. So when you go through this [organisational design] process you take into account quite a bit of the who we are and how the businesses identifies themselves around this owner managed entrepreneurial, quick to do things type style and you want to still leave that part of the culture, that part of the identity intact and therefore you tend not to potentially tweak with things that might break that so you almost limit scope of the organisational design because you not looking at everything from end to end.”*

This finding provides insights into how the leaders’ readiness to alter the organisational identity is an influencing factor in the organisational design process. A senior organisational design consultant took a different approach to managing the leadership dynamics by introducing a leadership readiness assessment to determine if leaders were ready to consider not only the organisational design process but also the potential change in organisational identity:

*“I give quite a clear view to say to the organisation, you are not ready for redesign and then we stop it and so it’s the stop go decision in our design journey, our design processes, you don’t continue after that, we might continue in teams were there is readiness but then it may become a very iterative process so when finance is ready so let’s do finance and lets do compliance and while we do that leadership readiness over three months then we tackle the business banking and then we do the wealth because their leadership journey is slightly different.”*

Supporting this adaptive organisational design process, is another senior organisational design specialists who considers leadership alignment in the process:

*“...the org design steps would be all the way from what is it that we trying to shift in the organisation, what is our appetite and how big do we see this change so there’s a strong leadership alignment component...”*

#### **5.4.5 Ineffective Organisational Design Process**

A few participants highlighted the contrasting side of the influence of organisational identity within the organisational design process. They provided insights into how the outcomes of the organisational design process can be ineffective due to the poor awareness of the influence the organisational identity has on the process. In support of this result, a participant recalled the following observation:

*“I think that when organisational identity is not aligned with an organisational design you get two different structures, the one that lives on paper and the one that lives in reality. So on paper you can write up whatever stories you need to write up, accountabilities, profiles. But if you don’t do the transition and the identity doesn’t support it, the structure never realises and you will find that within a few months that company would restructure again or make adjustments or there’s just an unofficial way of doing things in that structure.”*

Another participant reflected on how the consultative nature of the organisation could be a factor that influences the organisational design process. As the very consultative and loyal identity of the organisation could lead to a very slow and potentially ineffective organisational design process:

*“... so when I drive design everything is designed around it, but we must make sure we consult and consult and consult so that we collaborate and actually anything that’s too strong, a trait that’s too strong in that personality can also work against you so we always have to work on balancing our collaborative trait, you have to balance that loyalty trait, so if you’re overly loyal you can’t make difficult decisions...”*

Illustrating how organisational identity can make the organisational design process ineffective, a business leader provided insight into how an organisational design process failed due to two different businesses areas that had very different organisational identities that could not come together:

*“...it came down to within the restructure it was a business unit, which was created to be more flexible so their identity was flexibility, get things done, lower time to market and the restructure was then centred around bringing that into a larger organisation and that was bringing in a lot more could I say, a lot more structure, a lot more process, a lot more compliance so it was almost taking a smaller business unit and taking it into a larger monolithic process...So the process wasn't actually successful because of the identity, so realistically with both business units how the larger and the smaller business units are able to deliver however their identity or ethos is significantly different.”*

#### **5.4.6 Comparison of Findings by Sample Group**

To conclude, the comparative analysis between the different sample groups which is highlighted in Table 9 in Appendix 4, indicates that the role of leaders is yet again a consistent construct with leadership alignment identity, readiness and power dynamics appearing on the top five constructs of all sample groups. In addition, all sample groups indicated that organisational identity influenced the drivers and how the organisational design process is executed as well as how organisational identity could influence the organisational design which could result in the process becoming in effective. This comparison highlights that there is a great deal of consistency between the different sample groups.

Both the HR and organisational design sample group indicated that organisational identity could be seen from the lens of ‘who are we becoming?’. Whereas business leaders also indicated that the scope of the organisational design process was influenced by organisational identity.

### **5.5 Results for Research Question 3**

**Research Question 3: Establish if leaders are influenced by organisational identity when designing their structure(s).**

#### **5.5.1 Introduction**

The fourth interview question provided the participants with an opportunity to reflect on whether organisational identity influences the design of a structure, which is a critical element in organisational design. As highlighted in Worren (2016) the review of structure



is one of the first tasks an organisational design practitioner must tackle when facilitating the organisational design process.

The majority of participants agreed that managers were influenced, to varying extents, by organisational identity when designing their structures. Participants were urged to substantiate their views with their observations and tangible examples in the business environment where they have observed the influence of organisational identity.

Table 7: Constructs Which Indicate How Leaders are Influenced by Organisational Identity When Designing Their Structure(s)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Design of structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity	49
2	Leader and individual identity	36
3	Way decisions are made to determine structure	18
4	Change organisational identity for structure to be successful	15
5	Need to consider implications on organisational identity	10
6	Organisational identity determines or facilitates the process	9
7	Need to have clarity regarding organisational identity	8
8	Derailed process	5
8	Design towards an aspirational organisational identity	5
9	Behaviours required to support the structure and organisational identity	4
9	Organisational identity evolves with business	4
10	Organisational identity unintentionally influences design	3
11	Internal organisational identity not aligned with external identity	2

The most significant constructs that emerged that highlighted this influence were: design of structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity, the design is influenced by leaders and individual identity, the way decisions are made to determine structure and the most difficult structure designs required a change in organisational identity for the structure design to be successful. The table above contains the 13 constructs that arose.

### 5.5.2 Design of Structure Enabled or Preserved the Organisational Identity

When reflecting how organisational identity influences leaders when they design their structures, many participants noted that design of structure reflected or preserved the organisational identity. Some participants reflected that effects of these influences enabled the business to be more effective, however other participants noted that there

was a contrasting side to this influence. These opposing views shall be highlighted in the below narratives.

One participant who heads up the HR function in an organisation reflected that the structure enabled the identity of the organisation which included a very strong brand in the market. The CEO and founder was intentional from the inception of the business that there must be alignment in the organisational design and organisational identity:

*"I think that the intention from the very beginning was that everything is going to be linked, the organisational identity, the structure of the business and how we support franchise partners, everything is linked together and that this needs to foster the brand itself."*

This finding showcases how the organisational design of the structure and the brand enable the organisational identity. Another example provided by an organisational design consultant who reflected that a successful organisation aligned their organisational identity with their structure which created far more collaborative teams:

*"Business X is an example of a business that has an identity of being client centric and responsive to client needs I think you can definitely leverage off that to build a more collaborative team-based approach delivering to clients."*

Another HR executive who heads up the HR function with a successful organisation with a strong brand presence and organisational identity, noted that through the growth of the organisation the structure remained consistent with the organisational identity:

*"The core elements of our structure have ideally been the same, there have been subtle changes we've included, there's been some complexity as we've grown, as we've taken on new products, as we entered into new markets there's a little bit of complexity that's coming but the essence of our structure is that it's been a five-level structure."*

A business leader reflects on an organisation that had innovative and flexible nature and the structure supported and enabled this organisational identity:

*"So at that time it [organisational identity] was driven by the CEO of the organisation and it largely came down to the fact that large corporates to stay relevant and stay in the game were to fund these smaller business units who can actually sit outside the organisation and focus on smaller ideas or potentially disruptive ideas off the ground"*

*without being hindered by the larger organisation...so they structured themselves in a way that they had full-time employees, managers and they purposely had a lot of consultants so they could scale up or scale down their business so that meant if they wanted all of a sudden their project needed a lot of resources they could scale up and if they had proven the point they decided they could scale down.”*

This illustrates that the flexible and responsive nature of the structure reflected the organisational identity of the business area. Another participant who has extensive experience in organisational design shared their experience of how the nature of the organisation is reflected in what they are built to do or in other words their structure:

*“...the link to organisational design seems quite sound, so to give you an example, so a lion is architected to do something but a cheetah is architected to do something else and therefore their identity is also different, a cheetah is far more shy and far more selective and far more opportunistic in what it does... compared to a lion which is far more masculine, in its approach, it's deliberate, not scared of anything, if it wants it, it will go and get it. What is the right one? There is no answer to that, it depends on what you want to be and how you are competing in the market, I think what is important is, don't design yourself to be something and try to act in a different way because then you are potentially creating dissonance between what you are built to do and how you behave.”*

The above analogy begins to highlight that there should be an alignment between the nature or persona of the organisation and the design of the structure. The contrasting side of preserving or designing the structure around the current organisational identity is when the design of a structure requires a different organisational identity there may be challenges with the acceptance of such an organisational design.

In closing an HR practitioner reflects:

*“I don't think you would naturally choose a particular design that is contrary to your nature unless you are completely blind to your nature and it's a fad that you trying to follow”.*

### **5.5.3 Leader and Individual Identity**

A consistent finding has been participants reflecting that an individual's identity, and in particular the identity of leaders, has an influence on the structure. The organisational

identity is a network of individual identities that connect across the organisation. This finding is supported by a thought leader in the organisational design function who noted:

*“...so I don’t think organisations exist, I think they are a figment of our imagination...it’s just comfortable for us to almost think of the organisation as a thing out there but psychologically what that means is that I am separate from that because when I pick it up out there it’s not me, it’s Company X so if Company X has a really crappy culture, it’s not me, it’s the organisation, but if I understand that I am part of this network of networks then the crappy culture is in part me, and for many people it’s very uncomfortable to admit that they are part of a system but they are as much to blame probably as everybody else for the things that go wrong.”*

This result emphasises that individual identity has a fundamental role in organisational identity and that organisational identity is made up of the network of individual identity and in particular is influenced by the leaders’ identity. Supporting this finding another participant echoes this view:

*“I think this notion of organisations actually don’t exist because it’s a bunch of individuals together, so I think that organisational identity is very strongly related to individual identity. I think leaders are also individuals in this larger group of community of individuals, so I think that they play an individual role, I think leaders play and should play a strong role in where we want to build and entrench this identity in creating consistency in behaviour.”*

This is reinforced by another participant, who noted that leaders who align closely with the organisational identity of the organisation need to know when their leadership no longer supports who the organisation is becoming and the structure required for the organisation to be successful:

*“...so if you are a lion and you behave like a lion and you prey like a lion and processes are built like lions and you fundamentally realise you have to be a cheetah because our world is changing, the disruptors are driving us to be quite different and we actually need to disrupt ourselves potentially whatever the case might be you have to design to become something different and I don’t believe personally that those leaders that were lions can become cheetahs.”*

This finding is supported by another participant who shared a similar sentiment regarding leaders holding on to a strategy or organisational identity that resonates with them:

*“So it comes down to the leader, if they operate on old software or old strategy they chose. So at one stage the strategy resonated with them so that’s kind of where they’re at, the strategy might have evolved so the organisation’s strategy might have evolved but people could be stuck.”*

Another participant with a wealth of organisational design experience, shared their observation that expressed that without strong leadership regarding the organisational identity, the organisation has struggled to design the right structure:

*“...there’s not been strong leadership previously so my experience of the organisation is that it is currently without an identity, so you have multiple identities that sit with leaders but the organisation itself does not have a strong identity, the consequence of that is that they are not able to articulate in the context of strategy a clear architecture for themselves and that’s why for me that was evidence that identity and architecture are very much closely aligned because if I don’t know fundamentally who I am, what that identity is then it becomes very difficult to articulate a design.”*

In summary, these various observations highlight the dynamic influence leaders’ identity has on the organisational identity and the design of a structure.

#### **5.5.4 Way Decisions Are Made to Determine Structure**

The findings that arose highlighted that organisational identity influences the structure through the way decisions were made throughout the organisational design process. This indicates that organisational identity’s influence is far subtler. Supporting this finding, a leader who heads up a business reflected that the identity is so ingrained in leaders that it informs not only the way they view the world, but also how they make decisions:

*“I think that’s the difficult thing with identity and if you take it down to the individual level. We are not very mindful of what the identity is because it’s so part of who we are, it informs the way that we view the world, it informs the way that we make decisions, it informs the choices we make, it informs the way that we engage with people but not because I constantly think about my identity but because it is so part of me.”*

This ingrained identity, either at an individual or organisational level, has an influence on how leaders make decisions and in particular important design decisions that impact structure. This is supported by another participant who reflected that who the organisation is influenced the process to determine the structure and by extension the decisions that support the design of the structure.

*“...who they are really, in real terms can also influence on how you would do your org design, how you would manage the whole process, the fact that you are more internally focused on processes and efficiencies...”*

This sentiment is echoed by another participant who shared their observations:

*“...identity determines the process, but identity also has an impact of what the outcome of the process will look like, so another example: it was the same or the same client I’m referring to its one company, two different teams, the outcome of the design process which was different because the identities are different. The sales structure was much more of a network type structure whereas the operational structure was much more of a process type structure, so the outcome of the process reflected the identity and if one would swap the two structures around a network type structure in the operations team identity will just not work and the other way around as well, so a process type structure in the sales team, it would not have worked, so the identity impacts on the process to get to an output, identity also determines the nature of that output...”*

This observation supports the finding that organisational identity is an influencing factor when structures are designed. As illustrated above, two teams with different organisational identities made different decisions and went through a different decision-making process to determine the structure.

#### **5.5.5 Change Organisational Identity for Structure to be Successful**

It may be required when designing a structure that a shift or change is necessary in the organisational identity to support the structure and the objectives of the organisational design process. This process of changing or attempting to alter the organisational identity has a mixed outcome, as highlighted in earlier findings organisational identity is far subtler and tacit and potentially hard to change but not impossible to change. Supporting this finding, a business leader reflected on a structure design process that they were in

involved in. The design of the structure incorporated a change in organisational identity so that a smaller business area could be incorporated into a larger business area:

*“ [the] larger organisation has tried to absorb this and it’s been very difficult for them to absorb this because they have had to almost change the identity of the business unit so now, for example, they have now said you are no longer allowed to have as many contractors; you should have more full-time employees...they have almost gone through the process of changing the identity of the business unit to make it more like the larger business unit so they can try and absorb it so it’s almost like they’re changing aspects of it to make the absorption easier; so there were multiple attempts and they all failed so I think it’s now tweaking the identity to make the absorption easier.”*

This highlights that the process of designing a structure involves many iterations as well as requires subtle and not so subtle changes in the organisational identity for the structure design to be successful. Building on this, another participant reflects that they have made compromises on the design of the structure because of the organisational identity and acknowledged the structure needs to evolve with the maturity of the organisation’s identity:

*“...sometimes it can be forced, so like I said why a lot of mergers and acquisitions don’t work is because once a particular company takes over another one it seeks to impose its identity on the other organisation and unfortunately then the people who, for all intents and purposes, live the identity of the organisation; if they feel they don’t fit in with the new identity they leave and often it’s the people that have made the organisation successful and that particular deal then doesn’t work out as expected because you’ve lost out the heart of the engine.”*

This observation puts the organisational identity into perspective. An ideal or best fit structure may not be implemented as it requires a fundamental change in the organisational identity which is linked closely with individual identity. These changes may lead to individuals in the organisation who were part of creating the organisational identity to feel like they no longer identify with the organisation.

Another participant reflected on one organisation’s aspiration organisational identity of being agile:

*“Who we are is definitely aspirational because six months ago we hadn’t yet agreed on a definition of agile, it’s definitely aspirational and I think in terms of the agile identity I don’t even think they’ve taken macro context into account...and now they are going large scale agile restructure. I don’t know, also when they have no defined operating model. So it’s very difficult to put together your squads and tribes and go really agile when you don’t know who really owns those decisions at the end of the day.”*

### **5.5.6 Comparison of Findings by Sample Group**

There were a few consistent findings across the different sample groups as highlighted in Table 11, in Appendix 4. The three constructs that were highlighted by the different sample groups in the top five constructs were design of structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity, leader and individual identity and change organisational identity for structure to be successful. This comparison highlights that there is a great deal of consistency between the different sample groups.

The organisational design specialists sample group highlighted the need to consider implications on identity when designing structures. This is indicative of their specialisation as this sample group has many years experiencing the subtle influence of organisational identity.

## **5.6 Results for Research Question 4**

**Research Question 4: Determine if organisational identity influences the successful implementation of structure(s).**

### **5.6.1 Introduction**

Building on the previous interview question, the focus of this question is to determine whether once the structure has been designed, if the implementation of the structure, which results from the organisational design process, is influenced by organisational identity. Participants were prompted to provide examples and observations illustrating how this influence manifested in the implementation of a structure.

A large portion of participants indicated that organisational identity played an influencing role in the implementation of a structure. Table 12 highlights the constructs that emerged from the interview process. The most noteworthy constructs which illustrated



organisational identity in the implementation of structure were alignment of individual's identity and organisational identity, how the structure is implemented, resistance to implementation due to misalignment in identity and influenced by leaders' identity.

Table 8: Constructs Which Indicate How Organisational Identity Influences the Implementation of Structures

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Alignment of individuals identity and organisational identity	25
2	How the structure is implemented	24
3	Resistance to implementation due to misalignment in organisational identity	23
4	Influenced by leaders' identity	12
4	Requires change in mindsets and behaviour to support implementation	12
5	Change of organisational identity required for implementation	11
6	Inclusiveness in the process	10
7	Implementation supported organisational identity	7
7	Implications of the structure	7
8	Unsuccessful implementation due to change in leadership	6
9	Co-creation created a sense of ownership	5
9	External influencing factors on the internal identity	5
10	Holistic implementation required	3
11	Brand supports the implementation	2
12	The pace of implementation	1

### 5.6.2 Alignment of Individual's Identity and Organisational Identity

This finding indicates that organisational identity's influence manifests at an individual level. The structure implementation may result in individuals feeling like their identity is no longer in line with the organisation's evolving identity.

An organisational thought leader provided thought-provoking insight around the alignment between identity and organisational identity. When identity isn't acknowledged as part of the organisational design process, leaders make decisions throughout the process that create alignment on a conceptual level between the structure and who we becoming as an organisation. When it comes to implementation, changes to the organisational identity are required and the leaders feel their own identity being threatened:

*"I think for organisational design, but it's true for stepping into alignment, all sorts of entrenchment needs to be done and I'm absolutely convinced that often those things are not I think you used the word implemented, because at a rational level at a logical level we sit in a room and we decide on a structure and strategy and whatever and it makes perfect rational sense and we now nod our heads and we agree then when we sometimes even subconsciously our brains process the stuff and we then discover all the reasons why we shouldn't do that and then we get into, I guess from a change perspective we would call it, change resistance or the clinical psychologists would call it defensive behaviours but we then begin to find all the good reasons, there are many really fantastically logical reasons to not do what we agreed to do, if you have a look deep inside into your own subconscious and unconscious and have that conversation about structure you would have been able to say no to this, yes to that, in a truly informed manner."*

This further highlights the subtle and tacit nature of organisational identity and the importance of attempting to acknowledge and create awareness of the organisational identity throughout the organisational design process so that the alignment between individual and organisational identity happens sooner in the process.

One participant shared that when there is a little alignment between the individual's identity and the organisational identity required to implement a structure, the individual often no longer feels like they can work for the organisation:

*"...they don't identify [with the new structure] and the organisation takes a decision to put them onto the off ramp so you're never going to be part of this organisation in this way or identity doesn't suit you, it doesn't suit us and so people move out or the organisation takes the decision, individuals take the decision..."*

This concept was further supported, by another participant, who reflected that the implementation of a structure required different organisational identity which wasn't always in line with the identity of individuals within the organisation:

*"We paint the vision of what the identity of that organisation is going to be in five or six years...you find that a lot of people would leave in the four or five years that we are doing the transformation because the organisation keeps on shifting to this new [organisational identity] that requires a different type of person."*

Another participant shared a similar sentiment, where the lack of alignment between the individual identity and organisational identity often results in people leaving when the structure is implemented,

*"...you see that the people that are not in line with that org identity would leave the organisation so it's sort of a sad part but it's a very real part, the collateral damage in achieving this..."*

### **5.6.3 How the Structure is Implemented**

Another way that organisational identity influences the process is how the structure is implemented. Oftentimes a structure isn't implemented as intended and organisational identity is one of the influencing factors behind this. This is supported by an organisational design specialist who reflected that after they completed the structure design they checked in on the implementation and discovered that the organisational identity did not enable the structure implementation:

*"... it [organisational identity] will make it work or not work, so you can implement a structure, if it's not aligned to the identity, you try to implement it, it will just not work, it will not be implement and you will get kick back on it, and it will be implemented on paper but if you go back six months later it will just not be what you wanted to implement without a doubt and that is real life experience."*

Building on this, another participant reflected that the organisational identity needs to support the structure implementation or else people will revert to the way they used to do things:

*"...I think that's where a lot of org design comes completely unstuck, it's the implementation, because for it to be implemented successfully you've got to have the right environment and the right identity I suppose to make it work so you can have an agreed org design; but let's say we're redesigning the HR team in terms of geography and group and business, in order for that to be successful you've got to have your operating model understood and defined and decision rights agreed and that's where you can have the best design or the optimal design but implementing it and making it a reality I think that's where it falls flat because your old behaviours continue."*

How the structure is implemented is reflected in the employees' experience within the organisation which is related to organisational identity. What is valued throughout the structure implementation process highlights the organisational identity. This is illustrated by the comments made by a participant:

*"...it's your perspective about the employee experience that needs to be very clear, if your perspective about the employee experience is just about numbers, we'll get more bums in seats [people] they must just go then fine so be it but they'll bad experience on the floor, there'll be bad word of mouth in the market, your EVP will drop, best company to work for won't replicate next year, but that's fine you'll get more people because that's how you operate and that's okay so be it, you're ruthless, you're cut throat, good for you, if you are more of a family oriented more clan based from a competing values framework, all that kind of stuff where you care about the people because when you care about the employees because you care about the goodwill..."*

This example highlights that the nature of the organisational identity's influence on how the implementation plays out and what is important during the implementation is influenced by organisational identity. How the structure is implemented and the circumstances surrounding the implementation provide insight to the true nature of the organisation. A participant with HR experience shares:

*"I think a crisis lends a sense of urgency which means speed is valued and perhaps at the cost of something else, and maybe the cost of something else could be the cost of planning, the cost of impact to staff, those kinds of considerations because I think in times of crisis you will move, it is what it is and tough, because and I guess this is where the reality is and this is where you expect your executive team or your CEO just steps in and say it is what it is, we going, if this organisation is to be a business in the next year we don't have a choice and that's a business reality, you know, employees will get hurt but the organisation will not be here, what are the pay offs?"*

#### **5.6.4 Resistance to Implementation Due to Misalignment in Organisational Identity**

When a structure requires a fundamental shift in the organisation's identity, participants reflected that this often led to unsuccessful implementation as the shift was too big for the organisation. This is illustrated by an organisational design consultant, who

recounted a failed implementation. When asked how the structure implementation is influenced by organisational identity, the participant responded:

*“...similar to how your body fights an infection. You break it down into pieces and making it go away that’s pretty much what happens. It might not be like an obvious push against it, it can be subtle, it can be inside comments, snide comments, conversations. The point is you may adopt it on paper, the system may reflect certain structures but those structures don’t actually happen...people won’t stand up and say we not doing this but they will sabotage the structure in different ways or the change.”*

This provides a thought-provoking illustration that structures are less likely to be implemented when they are a fundamental shift from the current organisational identity and when not enough has been done to align individual identity with the evolving organisational identity. This is supported by an organisational design consultant who shared their experience with an organisation’s aspirational organisational identity:

*“The recommendation was always there but the actual implementation of it, in reality never, I’ve never seen the structures being adopted, I’ve seen it being adopted for a start-up but that’s a different case because then you’re still forging your org identity.”*

Another participant pinpointed where the misalignment originates. When the organisational design process is initiated organisational identity needs to be incorporated in the process in order to prevent misalignment in identity:

*“So I think one of the biggest mistakes people do on org designs is it’s happening behind closed doors and you don’t take people in, so when you open up yourself for a lot more misalignment between your core organisational identity and your org design because you haven’t deliberately got people involved to see how it is and how we are trying to achieve things so you coming in either as a consultant, or HR or a line manager or wherever this is coming from, you are invading our space and telling us to change and that’s how it plays out.”*

### **5.6.5 Influenced by Leaders’ Identity**

A common trend in the presentation of findings has been leaders’ identity influencing the organisational design process. The implementation of a structure is no different in the sense that implementation is impacted by the extent the structure impacts the leaders’

sense of identity, and if they can identify with the structure that is being implemented. This is demonstrated by a participant with organisational design experience, who recounted an organisational design process where the structure was not implemented:

*“...the mistake we made is by actually not considering those things [organisational identity] on the final design. So that org design should never have been selected as the best fit option because it was a given that it was not going to be implemented because there’s a component around the people in the structure. It [the structure] will never be implemented either because there’s a turf war or you’re going to lose your sense of control or authority or positional power so you actually start to derail or you purposefully hamper implementation...”*

The above finding highlights that leaders’ identity could derail the whole organisational design process including the structure implementation. Another participant suggested that leaders need courage to know when their leadership style no longer enables the organisational identity required for the structure implementation to be successful,

*“...well if you are a lion and you try to become a cheetah... lions are strong minded people who achieve things and if what a leader is driving is not in line with what an organisation needs to be it, it’s stuck and you know I could tell of numerous examples of organisations investing a host of money in organisational architecture and redesign projects and they just got nowhere because the leadership just believes this it is not what they want to do and often if you talk to them they actually understand that and that is not who they are and the leaders with courage will say I’m no longer the right leader for this business...”*

However, a contrasting view indicates that this influence can be positive. Another participant reflected that the most successful implementations have been when leaders own the structure implementation in what they call ‘leader-led’ structures. This reflects the leaders’ identity in the process as leaders won’t endorse something with which they don’t identify.

*“...we like to have leader-led structures, so what I mean by leader-led structures is if we have new strategies, new initiatives that we want to follow, get a leadership team in place and allow that leadership team to define new structures that will add value to their business...”*

### **5.6.6 Comparison of Findings by Sample Group**

When comparing the findings across the different sample groups, there is one consistent finding that emerges in the top five constructs. The construct of alignment of individual's identity and organisational identity is highlighted by the three different sample groups. In contrast, Table 13, in Appendix 4 highlights that the ways in which organisational identity influences the implementation manifest differently for the different sample groups.

## **5.7 Results for Research Question 5**

**Research Question 5: Determine the overall effect organisational identity has on organisational design.**

### **5.7.1 Introduction**

The sixth and final interview question, is intended to start exploring and gain insight into the nature of the relationship between the constructs of organisational identity and organisational design. Furthermore, participants were asked if the overall effect was positive or negative in order to elicit practical examples of how the overall effect manifested itself in organisations. This allowed participants to share their observations of what effect they witnessed organisational identity having on the organisational design process as well as provide their insight into how this effect could be managed.

Surprisingly, when asked to reflect if the overall effect was positive or negative, a large majority of participants indicated that the effect could be positive or negative based on the circumstances, the nature of the organisational identity as well as the scope and purpose of the organisational design process. There were many contrasting views with some participants providing reflections and examples of how alignment between the two constructs provided positive results for the organisation and supported the organisational design process.

These contrasting views are highlighted below by the instance provided by a thought leader in the organisational design function:

*“Positive and negative I think, I guess what you’re asking is can identity have a positive impact but then what is right and what is wrong, so it’s more yes it has an impact if the identity and the organisation in terms of where its heading and what it should be in its market and how it should look like in the market and the identity are not aligned so almost the corporate brand, external brand reputation and the internal identity is not aligned you could potentially run the risk of designing the wrong structure to deliver to customer requirements so it could have a negative impact in terms of the fit of the structure for the organisation yes but identity is a relative thing because one company identity or one team identity is not necessarily an identity for the other so it becomes a little grey.”*

In addition, an organisational design expert reflects on an organisational design process that they were involved in which was influenced by a misalignment between who they are and who they wanted to become. This example illustrated how it influenced the organisational design process:

*“...so this would be a good example where corporate identity created a misalignment between how they perceive themselves and what they were meant to deliver or perform. It influenced the inherent operating model, it was predefined, but the design principles were so saddled with the operating model was not equally weighted so what that means is in trying to get to the best fit structure to realise its operating model there were ideas or design principles that were over emphasised so the idea that we should A, more than we should do B, I think sometimes that might be the case but in this specific case that was a misalignment on the idea of how they perceived themselves.”*

Based on the insights from the data gathering process, the frequency of the constructs is provided in the table below. The following constructs are seen to be most noteworthy based on the analysis and insight provided: how the influence of organisational identity could support the creation of alignment, and influence the process of ‘who are we becoming?’ as an organisation. In addition, the constructs that focus on the health of the identity are reflected in the design and organisational identity should be acknowledged and incorporated into the organisational design process. There are noteworthy and will be unpacked in the below presentation of results.



Table 9: Constructs That Indicate the Overall Effect Organisational Identity Has on the Organisational Design

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Supports the creation of alignment	25
2	Acknowledge and incorporate organisational identity into the organisational design process	24
3	Who are we becoming	18
4	Leadership	13
5	Health of the organisational identity is reflected in the organisational design	12
5	Misalignment	12
6	Makes organisational design process ineffective	10
7	Could threaten individual identity	3
8	Alignment between individual identity and organisational identity	2
8	Depends on scope of change	2
9	Changes behaviours required in the organisation	1
9	Depends on what you are trying to achieve	1
9	Depends on who are we	1

### 5.7.2 Supports the Creation of Alignment

Alignment has been a consistent theme throughout the presentation of results. This finding suggests that organisational identity can support the creation of alignment between organisational identity and organisational design. A senior HR practitioner reflected on their recent experience of a merger between two companies where the identities created an alignment between the intention of the organisation and how work is executed:

*“I think in my experience organisational identity has a positive influence on the organisational design making sure that the intention the organisation has is carried out in the day-to-day operations and how the organisation is structured.”*

This view is echoed by another participant:

*“I think they [organisational identity and organisational design] are very closely aligned, if our identities are very closely aligned it makes the discussion of organisational design much easier where we can almost come to the party to design the organisation together in a collaborative manner so I would say there’s a lot more collaboration in the organisational design...”*

An organisational design specialist reflected on an example where the organisational design and organisational identity were aligned which created a very successful organisation:

*"...yes completely around that [organisational identity] and they've built in aspects to their structure like service management to make sure that the client-centric strategy that they have is actually delivered in a client-centric way so the way they built themselves is according to the identity that they want out there."*

Building on this a senior HR practitioner who heads up HR for a successful business with a strong internal and external identity illustrated how they create alignment in their organisation:

*"Positive, very positive. I mean the two are very closely linked, who we are as a business is reflected in how we structure our business so there's some aspects of org structure but also aspects of physical structure. So a simple one, I mean identity is about transparency, openness and access so we have a completely open-door environment, for example from CEO down. In fact, the only area in our building here that has an office is our payroll staff but everyone else from CEO through to call centre agent doesn't have an office. You reflect your identity in how you physically structure your environment as well, so part of that physical structure is there's no office for leaders they sit among the staff. They are accessible."*

Another participant provided a pragmatic view on alignment which suggests that there must be alignment between organisational identity and organisational design:

*"I think that's there is an alignment relationship between the two if you have the best design in the world but it does not speak to who you are. I don't think you will be successful if you have really bad design but your identity is really strong maybe you'll find ways to make the business work outside of the natural formal design."*

To further reinforce this finding, another participant highlighted the importance of alignment:

*"... if my identity is one thing and you bring me into a design which does not support that, I will not be successful, so it makes sense if the two aren't aligned and you don't speak to one another I think org identity will break org design..."*

### 5.7.3 Who Are We Becoming?

Another consistent construct that has emerged through the data analysis process is the reflection on 'who are we becoming?'. Often times the organisational design process will inadvertently require an organisation to start reflecting on 'who are we becoming?', which is how we see the organisational identity in the future. This finding is reflected in the response of one participant:

*"So I think the future has to become part of the organisational design. I think people too often avoid the question who do we want to be? So moving from who we are to who do we want to be and in line with the world is no longer, you can say this is who we are and be for the next 50 years and you'll be okay it's about who do we want to be in the future and are we flexible enough to be that? Are we flexible enough to change that?"*

This significant finding is reflected in the observations of a senior organisational design expert, who provides powerful insight into how organisational identity influences the organisational design process as well as what it means for the organisation and the individuals who constitute the organisation:

*"...then all of this [change management] almost makes the assumption that if we start by painting the bright future for people we can get them to eventually buy into this, if we tell them this often enough and give them the skills and handout balloons and posters and stuff...it doesn't work that way because the first thing under the water stuff that people have to deal with is not the excitement of the future but the loss of the past, because there's death of something, my job title changes and I really loved my job title and sometimes we will look at these things and say but that sadness that that individual experiences is totally irrational...it doesn't matter whether it's rational to you or not, it's whether it has unconscious subconscious meaning to that individual."*

The participant adds:

*"... one of the biggest challenges we had on an org design level was in a company, the job was so simple, it was a rationalisation of job titles ... no big deal until we got to the top 100 [leaders] of the company, then massive resistance, because you were called in your previous company Senior Vice President and now you are going to be called the General Manager now, so what? It's just a job title but really it's not, because this job title, particularly if I'm a man, it defines who I am and when I get home and I tell my wife*

*who I am and I say I am the Senior Vice President it sounds better than saying I'm the General Manager and when my wife introduces me to her friends now what is she thinking about me, or my kids or when we have a braai... it's all about how we define ourselves, what we are in the world... so when you go through these change processes we typically have these town halls or whatever and predominately they are conversations of invitation and they have these and then we jump to conversations of celebration, we miss the most important conversation in all of that which is the conversation of dissent, because if you don't have the right to say no, your yes means nothing, but we don't create the space for people to truly express this"*

This contribution provided insight into the process of 'who are we becoming?' and that it has a significant impact not only on the organisational identity but on individual identity. This finding is supported by another thought leader in the organisational design space who adds that the leaders shape this process of defining 'who are we becoming?':

*"I think if you are clear on what you are and what you need to be and you have the conviction to do what you need to do, what the design of the process tells you to do. It is the organisational identity that will make the design work but then you have to have the balls to have that conversation and if you are like a lion that's acting like a cheetah and knows that he's [the leader] a cheetah or knows that he's a lion and for a matter of fact he's a cheetah and knows the organisation needs a lion at this point then it's just not going to show the results and I think the identity of an organisation is strongly linked to leaders with courage and leaders who aren't threatened to say I'm not right for this business now."*

Lastly, another participant echoes the sentiment around 'who are we becoming?' and adds that the organisation must reflect on the past before defining the future,

*"I think you have to honour the past, so your identity is what it is because of your experiences as a person so it's the same for the organisation so when you say I'm going to rebrand myself in my career because I want to now start positioning myself as a more generalist person instead of just an OD person for example, does it change who you are, not fundamentally right, there's still a very strong value system in that person and therefore I believe in the organisation as well, so I don't think you fundamentally change the value system just through org design process but it depends on I think on how hard you drive this thing".*

#### **5.7.4 Acknowledge and Incorporate Organisational Identity into the Organisational Design Process**

In order to leverage this insight around organisational identity in future organisational design processes, participants reflected that it was important to acknowledge the influence of organisational identity and find ways of weaving it into the organisational design process. Supporting this finding, one participant stated:

*“I think that what we have to accept as a given is that organisational identity has an influence on organisational design, finish, that’s a fact, now whether that influence is good or bad or positive or negative is a function of the degree to which we do the work to understand the identity and its possible impact on design.”*

This is supported by another organisational design specialist who adds:

*“I think you can leverage it [organisational identity], I think you need to be open about the identity, surface the characteristics and then say which of these do we want to leverage to drive forward what we need to drive and which of these characteristics that we need to maybe downplay going forward are we over leveraging them already, I think it’s about being deliberate.”*

Another participant suggests that organisational design can prompt the organisation to start thinking about organisational identity:

*“I would say it depends on the situation, I think if you take what org identity from an action point of view, if you want to define that then its positive because it prompts the organisation of what do we want to be seen as in the industry or the ecology or the community, how are we going to enable our organisational design or structuring to establish this in the way that we do work, cluster work, form work, deliver services or products, the way that we do it and all of that.”*

#### **5.7.5 Health of the Organisational Identity is Reflected in the Design**

An interesting observation emerged through the process where participants reflected that the health or effectiveness of the organisational identity can be reflected in the organisational design itself. Quantifying this finding, an organisational design specialist detailed:

*“... that if org identity is tainted, corrupted or inversely over achieving or seen as sort of a benchmark standard to other companies then that has an effect on the structure as well or the org design as well, it might mean that, if it’s good, in spite of ourselves we over achieved what we wanted to be seen as or it might mean something totally different and inversely it might mean we are very inefficient in the way we structured ourselves to perform a service...”*

When concluding the interview, a business leader provided this disclaimer which highlights the importance of the health of the organisational identity:

*“...that in all of the examples in our conversations and examples I’m assuming or I’m working from the assumption that it’s a healthy identity, because if it’s not a healthy identity you will need to do certain things differently...”*

The health of the organisational identity is elaborated on by another participant:

*“...who we are is positive it would have a positive influence, if the who we are is negative, it could have a positive influence if dealt with positively in terms of initiating the change, but I think it would be harder to do...I’m saying if it’s unhealthy or whatever then I think it could be harder to implement or to change the identity and obviously the [organisational] design.”*

Another participant suggests that one must first deal with the identity issues and then focus on the organisational design:

*“...I do feel that the identity sometimes overshadows the organisational design, so you can’t design or come up with a design that deals with the ego or identity issues you need to deal with the identity issues first then do the design...”*

#### **5.7.6 Comparison of Findings by Sample Group**

In closing, the comparison of the constructs per sample group identified that all groups highlighted the constructs ‘who are we becoming?’ and that organisational identity supports the creation of alignment in the top five constructs. This is highlighted in Table 15 in Appendix 4. In addition, both the organisational design sample group and business highlighted that organisational identity should be acknowledged and incorporated into

the organisational design process. In contrast, the HR sample group emphasised that the health of the identity is reflected in the design as well as the role of leaders.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter contained the presentation of results from the interview questions that were aligned to the five research questions. There are many constructs that emerged during the in-depth interviews and comprehensive data analysis process. In the next chapter, the findings will be discussed in relation to literature on both organisational identity and organisational design. The findings that were presented in this chapter will be contrasted against literature to determine which findings support or contradict literature and which findings are potentially not supported by a substantial amount of literature.

## **6. Chapter 6: Discussion of Results**

### **6.1 Introduction**

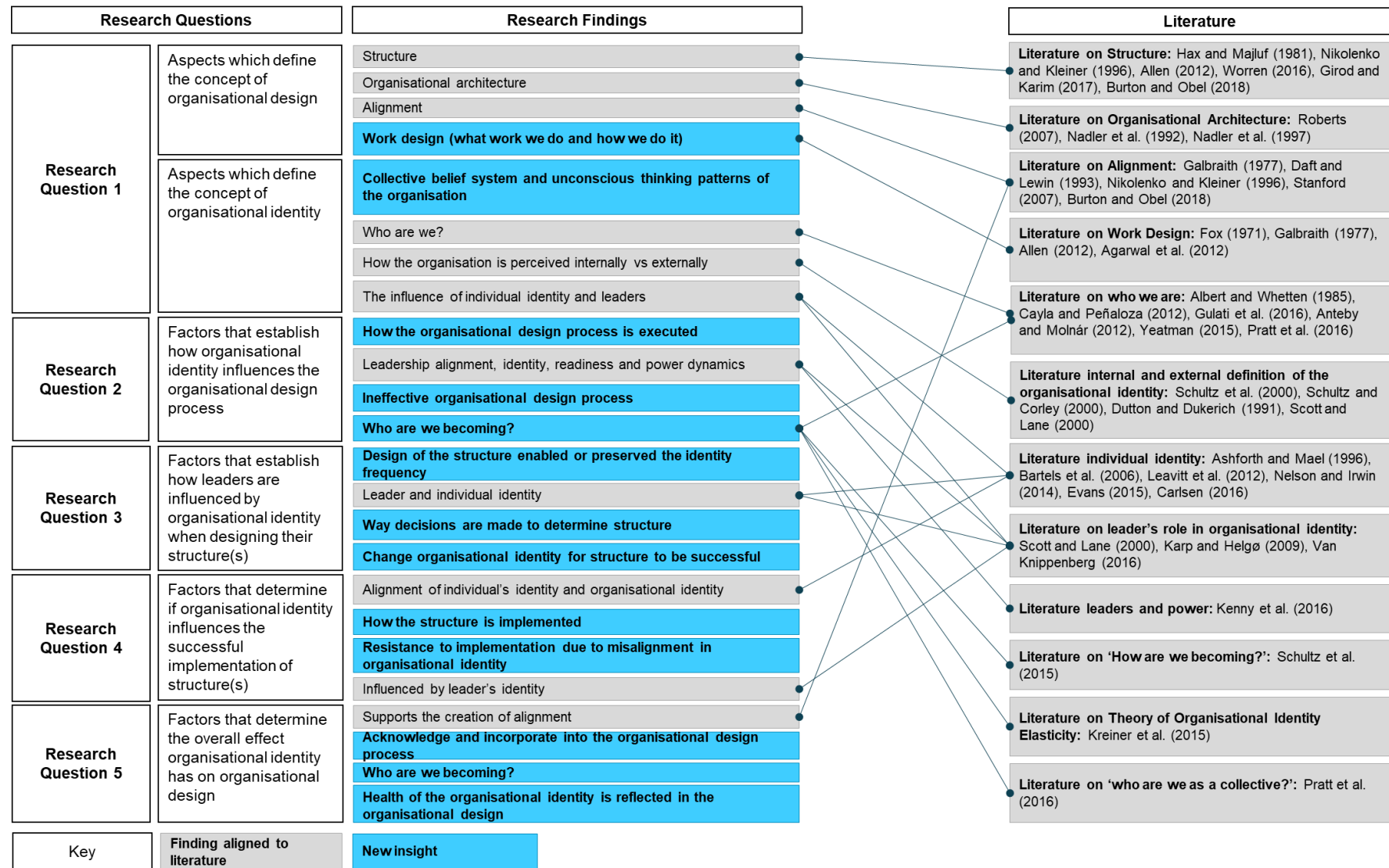
This chapter contains an integrated view of the research, where the research findings in Chapter 5 are compared and contrasted against the concepts contained in prominent literature on organisational identity and organisational design, which is contained in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the insights obtained through the findings will be used to answer the research questions that were posed in Chapter 3.

The contents of this chapter provide a dynamic view of how the research findings align with prominent literature in the fields of organisational identity and organisational design. In addition, the research findings also offer new insights and contributions that are currently unexplored in the literature that was reviewed. Figure 6 provides a summary of which highlights the research question along with the corresponding findings as well as the relevant literature that supports the findings. This illustration provides two key insights, firstly that there is a great deal of consistency in some of the findings, for example leaders' and individuals' identity is a theme that permeates the findings. Secondly, there are findings that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, are not supported by literature and can be considered as new insights. The key at the bottom of Figure 6 provides an indication of the colour coding of the findings that are supported by literature and the new insights are coded in a different colour.

The information and insights highlighted in Figure 6 are substantiated by a detailed discussion of the key findings and the literature pertinent to each research question in the following sections.



Figure 6: Summary of How the Research Findings Link to Literature (Author's own)



## **6.2 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1**

### **Research Question 1: Establish the aspects that are used to define organisational design and organisational identity.**

Research question 1 contains two elements, namely the definition of organisational design and organisational identity. The purpose of these questions were to ensure that the concepts of organisational design and organisational identity were fully understood and explored by the participant before proceeding with the rest of the interview. This research question contributes to one of the overall objectives of this research which is to enrich the understanding of organisational identity and organisational design. The findings for this research question will be compared to leading literature in the below sections.

#### **6.2.1 Aspects Which Define the Concept of Organisational Design**

The data regarding the definition of organisational design that was gathered during the interview process assisted in the creation of a consensus regarding this concept. The main constructs which define the concept of organisational design that emerged through the data analysis process are presented in Table 4. When analysing these constructs it is clear that the constructs that represent the definition of organisational design are interconnected. Therefore, these constructs are best viewed as the distinct elements that interact with each other to form the complex whole of organisational design.

The most significant constructs which make up the definition of organisational design are based on the frequency analysis and the importance or insightfulness of the findings based on the interview process. The highest ranked construct is 'structure' with a frequency count of 32. Many participants confirmed that organisational design manifested itself through structure, such as reporting lines, levels of authority or hierarchy, however the concept of what the organisation's structure themselves around frequently emerged. Organisational design's focus on structure is noted in both modern and seminal literature (Hax & Majluf, 1981; Nikolenko & Kleiner, 1996; Allen, 2012; Worren, 2016; Girod & Karim, 2017; Burton and Obel, 2018).

Both Hax and Majluf (1981) and Nikolenko and Kleiner (1996) agree that organisational design is a process around structuring the organisation to best meet the demands of the external environment in tune with the internal characteristics of the organisation. To

emphasise the importance of structure within organisational design, Worren (2016) indicates that the review of structure is one of first tasks in the organisational design process. Allen (2012) echoes this sentiment by stating that organisational design assists leaders in identifying dysfunctional aspects of the organisation such as structure. The above evaluation of both the literature and the findings confirms that the focus on structure is at the heart of defining organisational design.

The second highest ranking construct was 'organisational architecture', with a frequency count of 13. Throughout the interview process it was clear that organisational design is married with the concept of architecture. From the interviews it emerged that organisational architecture is a process that connects and aligns the various types architecture or hardware design, as some participants termed it, as well as connecting people to ensure the work is delivered. Notably, Roberts (2007) supports this definition by emphasising the balance of the hard elements and the personal networks throughout the organisation.

Furthermore, the literature highlights that organisational architecture's association with organisational design is a relatively new relationship with Nadler et al. (1992) being referenced as the first to use this concept to describe organisational design. Supporting this link Nadler et al. (1997) highlight organisational architecture, structure, capacity and performance as key components that make up organisational design.

The third most significant finding was 'alignment', with a frequency count of 11. This construct is clearly aligned to literature, as organisational design has always been positioned to create alignment between the strategy of the organisation and the work being executed within the organisation as a whole, business area or functional area (Galbraith, 1977; Daft & Lewin, 1993; and Nikolenko & Kleiner, 1996). This view around alignment is echoed by Stanford (2007) and Burton and Obel (2018) who all define organisational design as a mechanism to create alignment within the organisation.

Lastly, the fourth most significant finding is 'work design' which includes what work we do and how we do it, with a frequency of nine. The 'work we do and how we do it' emerges in different ways in the literature; some literature refers to flow of communication (Fox, 1971), patterns, division of labour (Galbraith, 1977), work flows (Allen, 2012) and the partitioning of tasks across organisational players (Agarwal et al., 2012). To elaborate on this Fox (1971) highlights organisational design as "the distribution of decision-making roles; the nature of the flow of communication and the methods of handling whatever

stresses, strains or conflicts are perceived as existing within the organisation.” (p. 12). This could be seen as a lens to view work design. Supporting this view of work design, Galbraith (1977) indicates that organisational design is “the patterns of division of labour and inter unit coordination and the people who will do the work.” (p. 5).

From the findings of the research and the literature, one can see that these aspects that define organisational design are intertwined. This explains why the concepts of alignment, structure, business strategy, business process, operating model and customer were constructs that emerged through the data analysis. In particular, the sample group that comprised of organisational design specialists frequently highlighted the concepts of organisational architecture and work design which are concepts that have emerged in more modern literature. This is not a surprising finding as the organisational design specialists would remain abreast of the emergent concepts in this field.

In addition, the large number of constructs and the interconnected nature of the constructs highlight the cohesive nature of the aspects which define organisational design. Most literature on the subject of organisational design or organisational architecture such as Galbraith (1977), Hax and Majluf (1981), Nadler et al. (1992), Nikolenko and Kleiner (1996), Allen (2012), Mojsovska Salamovska and Lauterborn (2015), Worren (2016), Girod and Karim (2017) or Burton and Obel (2018) to name a few, contains several aspects of the constructs highlighted in Table 4. This indicates a great deal of consistency between the research findings and the reviewed literature. The only notably aspect which was not as prominent in the literature that was reviewed was an element within work design - the how we do the work. Therefore, this aspect can be a contribution that builds on the existing literature.

### **6.2.2 Aspects Which Define the Concept of Organisational Identity**

The second interview question required participants to reflect on the definition of organisational identity in order to create a common understanding of the construct. The thirteen constructs which define the concept of organisational identity are presented in Table 6. The findings are somewhat consistent with the reviewed literature, with additional aspects and insights emerging from the research, that have not been illustrated in literature. An explanation for the new insights regarding the definition of organisational identity could be justified by van Tonder (2004) who noted that

organisational identity is a concept that is difficult to define as there is inherently ambiguity in the concept.

The highest ranked construct is 'collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation'; this emerged as a new insight with a frequency count of 33. Many participants indicated that organisational identity is a concept that is deeply rooted in what is valued in the organisation, how people think and feel as well as the concept of a collective belief system. In addition, the findings revealed that the organisational identity is a more implicit and subtler concept as it influences what is valued in the organisation and encompasses the collective belief system within the organisation which influences how individuals behave. This has emerged as a new insight as, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature that defines organisational identity in this manner. However, there is conflicting literature regarding organisational identity being a more tacit concept, with Carlsen (2016) indicating that there are more tacit dimensions to organisational identity where Hatch et al. (2000) believe culture is relatively more tacit, emergent and contextual than organisational identity.

An additional construct that was ranked the highest is 'who are we?' with a frequency count of 33. Most participants highlighted organisational identity as 'who are we?' and this construct was expressed in various ways in the research findings, with the nature, persona, character or characteristics of the organisation making up the organisational identity. This finding is supported by both seminal and modern research. To illustrate this, organisational identity has been defined as the central character of an organisation (Albert & Whetten, 1985), who the organisation is (Cayla & Peñaloza, 2012; Gulati et al., 2016) and also involves knowing 'who we are not' (Anteby & Molnár, 2012). Further literature that supports this proposition is Yeatman (2015) who indicates that organisational identity deals with the core question of 'who are we?' and Pratt et al. (2016) propose that organisational identity deals with 'who are we as a collective?'

The second highest ranked construct is 'how the organisation is perceived internally vs externally' with a frequency count of 32. When defining organisational identity many participants highlighted the need for consistency in how the identity is perceived in the market through the brand and external messaging versus how employees experience the brand. This positions the notion that organisational identity has many perspectives and most notably an internal and external lens.

These findings around the external perspective of organisational identity build on the literature which highlights how the internal and external definition of the organisation's identity interact (Schultz et al., 2000) and the powerful influence that organisational image has on organisational identity (Schultz & Corley, 2000). This is further supported by Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) research which found that external perceptions of the organisational influence how people internal to the organisation view the organisation's identity. In addition Scott and Lane (2000) further expanded on this concept by viewing organisational identity from a stakeholder lens and propose that it emerges from interactions between various stakeholders.

The literature and findings illustrate that organisational identity isn't a concept limited to the experiences of individuals internal to the organisation, as the perceptions of stakeholders external to the organisation have a significant impact on how the organisational identity is viewed.

Lastly, the third most prominent construct is 'the influence of individual identity and leaders' with a frequency count of 24. Most participants highlighted the role leaders and individual identity play in organisational identity. Numerous participants raised the opinion that leaders and their identity influence shape and direct how organisational identity is expressed and experienced in the organisation. This finding indicates that the character or persona of the organisation is influenced by leaders and the interactions between the leadership team.

There are many facets to the literature that support this finding. Firstly, there is literature that highlights occupational identity's impact on individuals (Nelson & Irwin, 2014), how individual's identity is intertwined with their career track or occupation (Leavitt et al., 2012) and how individual can be enabled by organisational identity when they experience similarities between organisational identity and their own identity (Bartels et al., 2006).

Secondly, the leaders' role in shaping the organisational identity has been noted by many researchers such as Scott and Lane (2000), Karp and Helgø (2009) and Van Knippenberg (2016). The consensus across the research is that leaders have a distinct role in shaping, influencing, directing and managing the organisational identity. Scott and Lane (2000) illustrate this best by framing the leaders' role in organisational identity by asserting "I am this kind of person; therefore, I lead an organisation that has these kinds of attributes and because I lead this kind of organisation, I am this kind of person." (p. 48).

### **6.2.3 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 1**

In closing, the research findings concluded that there are common themes in defining organisational design and more emerging themes when defining organisational identity. A common understanding of organisational design was established that closely aligns with the elements covered by literature, however emphasis needs to be placed on the latest aspects that define the construct, such as organisational architecture and work design (what work we do and how we do it). The concept of alignment is prominent in both the findings and the literature, which draws attention to the value that can be gained from understanding organisational design.

Participants were able to share their definitions of organisational identity which aligned somewhat to the definitions proposed by literature. However, organisational identity is a concept that is both complex and expanding, which is not openly stated in organisations or easily understood. New insights regarding the definition of organisational identity emerged from the findings. The findings specified that organisational identity is also illustrated by the collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation. This indicates that organisational identity is a concept that is deeply rooted in what is valued in the organisation which is more implicit and subtler. This concept influences what is valued in the organisation and encompasses the collective belief system within the organisation which influences how individuals behave.

### **6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2**

**Research Question 2: Determine if organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process.**

Research question 2 sought to determine whether organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process. This research question builds on the findings of Visscher and Irene (2010), who found that the organisational design process is influenced by characteristics within the organisation. Therefore, the purpose of this question was to explore if organisational identity is one such characteristic which could influence the organisational design process. The findings for this research question will be compared to leading literature in the below sections. Many of the findings emerged as new with little reviewed literature supporting the findings. The reason for this is highlighted by Gulati et al. (2016) who found that there is not enough research exploring how organisational identity and organisational design shape each other.

### **6.3.1 Factors That Establish How Organisational Identity Influences the Organisational Design Process**

The third interview question required participants to reflect on the tangible ways organisational identity may have influenced the way the organisational design process played out in the organisation. Furthermore, participants were urged to substantiate their views with their observations and experience in the organisational design process. Nearly all the participants indicated that organisational identity was a factor that influences the organisational design process. How this factor's influence is demonstrated in organisations is indicated in the nine constructs that emerged from the data analysis process which is highlighted in Table 8.

To reiterate, the most significant constructs that have been emphasised are based on the frequency analysis and the importance or insightfulness of the findings based on the interview process. Therefore, the highest ranked construct is 'how the organisational design process is executed' this appeared as a new insight with a frequency count of 39. As participants recounted, the way organisational identity influenced the organisational design process through practical examples and observations, it materialised that the execution of the organisational design process is adapted and changed based on the organisational identity. However, it must be noted that, at times, this influence is not conscious but rather a subtle cue in the business environment that indicates that the process must be adapted in line with the organisational identity. Organisational design specialists indicated that they change their approach to the organisational design process based on how they experience the organisational identity.

There is extremely limited literature that highlights how organisational identity influences how the organisational design process is executed. Hax and Majluf (1981) suggest that an organisation designs its structure in tune with its internal characteristic. From this one could infer that organisational identity can be seen as the internal characteristic which shapes the organisational design process.

The second highest ranked construct is 'leadership alignment, identity, readiness and power dynamics' with a frequency count of 32. This finding indicates the different dimensions around leadership which emerged with many participants raising leadership team alignment, readiness, leaders' identity and power dynamics as factors that highlight how organisational identity influences the organisational design process. The literature that was reviewed focused primarily on the leaders' role in shaping the organisational



identity (Scott & Lane, 2000; Karp & Helgø, 2009; Van Knippenberg, 2016). In addition, Kenny et al. (2016) provide a perspective that indicates that the role that leaders play in shaping or directing the organisational identity could be used as an insidious exercise of power and political positioning which can impact how the organisational identity is experienced in the organisation.

This finding can be seen as building on the literature, in particular the elements around leadership alignment and readiness. However, it must be noted that there is no literature, to best of the researcher's knowledge, which indicates that leadership alignment, readiness, leaders' identity and power dynamics are indicators of how the influence of organisational identity manifests in the organisational design process. This finding is supported by the earlier finding which highlighted how leaders and their identity influence, shape and direct how organisational identity is expressed and experienced in the organisation.

The third highest ranked construct is 'ineffective organisational design process' which presents a new finding with a frequency count of 26. This illustrates the contrasting aspects of the influence of organisational identity within the organisational design process. Participants provided insights into how the outcomes of the organisational design process can be ineffective due to the poor awareness of the influence the organisational identity has on the process. This has emerged as a new finding and, to best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature that explicitly states that a poor understanding of organisational identity may lead to an ineffective organisational design process.

Lastly, another significant finding is 'who are we becoming?' this emerged as somewhat of a new finding with a frequency count of ten. During the interview process, a few participants highlighted that it was not who they are as organisation but rather 'who are we becoming?' that influenced the organisational design process. This can be described as the difference between the organisational identity of the organisation in the present moment versus the organisational identity of the organisation in the future. The 'who are we becoming?' can be something that the organisation aspires to be.

This finding is somewhat supported by literature in organisational identity. Schultz et al. (2015) suggest that organisational identity is a 'process' which answers the question of 'How are we becoming?'. Kreiner et al. (2015) supported this view with their theory of organisational identity elasticity which indicates that the boundaries of organisational

identity can concurrently expand and contract. This expanding view of organisational identity could be a future expression of organisational identity or 'who are we becoming?'. The literature provides some alignment and support with this finding; however, it does not explicitly state that the organisational design process is influenced by the organisational identity by 'who are we becoming?'.

### **6.3.2 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 2**

The findings for this research question have begun to answer the proposal recommended by Gulati et al. (2016) who encourage organisational design scholars to explore how organisational identity and organisational design shape each other. The findings of this research question provide new insights and understanding regarding how organisational identity influences the organisational design process. Some findings like 'how the organisational design process is executed' is faintly supported by literature such as Hax and Majluf (1981). However, it has been discovered through the results that the execution and success of the organisational design process is influenced by organisational identity. This result viewed in conjunction with the role of leaders in both the organisational design process and organisational identity is not surprising. Literature points out that leaders not only have a role in identity forming but also lead organisations that are reflections of their own identities (Karp & Helgø, 2009). From this finding, it can be inferred that if the organisational design process goes in a direction that challenges the organisational identity, the leader may feel threatened and make the organisational design process less effective.

A significant finding is the notion of 'who are we becoming?' which builds on the rest of the findings of this question. This finding proposes a new dimension to organisational identity; this suggests that there is an expression of a future state of the identity. The concept that the organisational identity is evolving is not new, as indicated by Kreiner et al. (2015), however the notion that organisational identity can be expressed in a present moment by the question of 'who are we?' and in a future state by the question of 'who are we becoming?' is a noteworthy finding in the understanding of how organisational identity influences the organisational design process. If the organisational design process is a process of 'what might be' (Burton & Obel, 2018) then the organisational design process challenges leaders to answer the future-focused question of 'who are we becoming?'. This has implications on how the process is executed as well as leader readiness and the extent to which leadership power dynamics will filter into the process.

## **6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3**

### **Research Question 3: Establish if leaders are influenced by organisational identity when designing their structure(s).**

This research question was used to determine if organisational identity influences the direction of the design of structure and the potential impact on decision-making around the structure. Structure is an important part of the organisational design process as highlighted by Worren (2016) who stated that the review of structure is one of the first tasks an organisational design practitioner must tackle when facilitating the organisational design process. The findings for this research question will be compared to leading literature in the below sections.

#### **6.4.1 Factors That Establish How Leaders Are Influenced by Organisational Identity When Designing Their Structure(s)**

The fourth interview question provided the participants with an opportunity to reflect on whether organisational identity influences the design of a structure, which is a critical element in organisational design. A large number of the participants illustrated through observations and tangible examples in the business environment that leaders were influenced, to varying extents, by organisational identity when designing their structures. Thirteen constructs emerged which are illustrated in Table 10. The large number of constructs indicates the varying ways that organisational identity can influence the structure design process. However, there are common themes within the constructs particularly around how the structure design either needed to take organisational identity into consideration, or required new behaviours, or required a change in organisational identity.

Nonetheless, the highest ranked construct is 'design of the structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity' with a frequency count of 49. When reflecting how organisational identity influences leaders when they design their structures, many participants noted that design of structure reflected or preserved the organisational identity. Some participants reflected that effects of this influence enabled the business to be more effective, for example in one instance the flexible and responsive nature of the structure reflected the organisational identity of the business area and ensured the business was responsive. The contrasting side of preserving or designing the structure around the current organisational identity is when the design of a structure requires a

different organisational identity, then there may be challenges with the acceptance of such an organisational design. This is supported by the literature of Hax and Majluf (1981) who state that an organisation designs its structure in tune with its internal characteristic and the business environment. The organisational identity can be one such internal characteristic.

The second highest ranked construct is 'leader and individual identity' which is a consistent finding of this research with a frequency count of 36. Participants indicated that individual identity – and in particular the identity of leaders – has an influence on the design of the structure. This result emphasises the finding that individual identity has a fundamental role in organisational identity and that organisational identity is made up of the network of individual identity and in particular is influenced by the leaders' identity. This finding is validated by the literature that highlights the roles of leaders in shaping and enabling the organisational identity (Scott & Lane, 2000; Karp & Helgø, 2009; Van Knippenberg, 2016), as well as literature that details the interaction between individual and organisational identity (Bartels et al., 2006).

The third highest ranked construct is the 'way decisions are made to determine structure' which has surfaced as a new insight with a frequency count of 18. This finding indicates that the organisational identity influences the structure through the way decisions were made throughout the organisational design process. This suggests that organisational identity's influence is far subtler. This is supported by the earlier finding regarding organisational identity's characteristic of a collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation. This ingrained identity, either at an individual or organisation level, has an influence on how leaders make decisions and in particular important design decisions that impact structure. This has emerged as a new finding and, to best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature that explicitly states that organisational identity influences the way decisions are made to determine structure.

Lastly, the fourth ranking construct is 'change organisational identity for structure to be successful' which has materialised as a new insight with a frequency count of 15. When designing a structure, a shift or change in the organisational identity may be required to support the structure and the objectives of the organisational design process. Participants indicated that the process of changing or attempting to alter the organisational identity has a mixed outcome: as highlighted earlier organisational identity is far subtler and tacit which makes it harder to change but not impossible to change. Exploring the constructs involved in the organisational change processes are outside the

scope of this research, therefore there may be research which details how organisational identity is altered or changed. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge there is no literature that explicitly states that in some cases the organisational identity is required to change in order for the design of the structure to be successful.

#### **6.4.2 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 3**

When comparing the results of interview question 2, 3 and 4 it is apparent that leaders' identity is a consistent finding across this research. This underscores the role leaders have to play in shaping both organisational identity and organisational design. The findings of how the design of the structure enables or preserves the organisational identity and organisational identity's influence on the way decisions are made to determine structure provides new insights but is not a surprising finding. This sentiment is based on previous findings regarding leader identity and literature which suggests that a leader's identity is intertwined with the organisational identity (Scott & Lane, 2000). It is therefore understandable that leaders would guide and direct the design of the structure and make decisions in a manner that preserves the organisational identity that they endorse and with which they identify. However, an interesting dimension emerged in the finding that the organisational identity would need to change for structure to be successful. There are many interesting dimensions that could be further explored using this finding in future research.

#### **6.5 Discussion of Results for Research Question 4**

**Research Question 4: Determine if organisational identity influences the successful implementation of structure(s).**

This research question builds on the previous research questions and is used to determine whether once the structure has been designed if the implementation of the structure, which results from the organisational design process, is influenced by organisational identity. As indicated earlier, the design and implementation of structure is an important part of the organisational design process. The findings for this research question will be compared to leading literature in the below sections.

### **6.5.1 Factors That Determine if Organisational Identity Influences the Successful Implementation of Structure(s)**

Building on the previous interview question, participants were prompted to provide examples and observations regarding how organisational identity's influence was manifested in the implementation of a structure. In summary, a large portion of participants indicated that organisational identity played an influencing role in the implementation of a structure. The way this influence was experienced varied and resulted in 12 constructs emerging which is presented in Table 12. Individual identity and the leaders' influence emerged once again as a consistent and significant finding. The concept of the organisational identity changing for the design and implementation of the structure is also a consistent finding across research questions 3 and 4.

The highest ranked construct is 'alignment of individual's identity and organisational identity' with a frequency count of 25. This consistent finding suggests that organisational identity's influence manifests at an individual level. The structure implementation may result in individuals feeling like their identity is no longer in line with the organisation's evolving identity. One participant provided thought-provoking insight around the alignment between identity and organisational identity. When identity isn't openly acknowledged as part of the organisational design process, leaders make decisions throughout the process that create alignment on a conceptual or cognitive level between the structure and 'who are we becoming?' as an organisation. When it comes to implementation, changes to the organisational identity are required and the leaders feel their own identity being threatened. This further highlights the subtle and tacit nature of organisational identity and the importance of attempting to acknowledge and create awareness of the organisational identity throughout the organisational design process in order for the alignment between individual and organisational identity to take place sooner in the process.

However, the alignment can have positive effects when the individual identifies with the organisational identity which can facilitate structure implementation. It must be noted that many participants shared observations where the lack of alignment between the individual identity and organisational identity often results in people leaving when the structure is implemented.

Literature provides a stable base for this finding; as it has been found that organisational identity is shaped and formed through the individual members of the organisation (Scott

& Lane, 2000; Evans, 2015; Carlsen, 2016), individuals' identity within the organisation can be seen as an overlap between "the overlap between 'who we are' and 'what we do'" (Nelson & Irwin, 2014, p. 892) and provides individuals with context (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Furthermore, Bartels et al. (2006) express that individuals can be enabled by organisational identity when they experience similarities between organisational identity and their own identity. Based on this array of literature, the finding that the implementation of structure is influenced by the alignment of individuals' identity and organisational identity is not unusual.

The second highest ranked construct is 'how the structure is implemented' which has emerged as a new finding with a frequency count of 24. Participants shared that oftentimes a structure doesn't get implemented as intended and organisational identity is one of the influencing factors behind this. How the structure is implemented manifests in different ways, for example it could mean that the structure is implemented partially or not at all because the organisational identity did not enable the structure implementation. A few participants used the term 'implemented on paper' which highlights the superficial nature of some structure implementations that were not supported by the organisational identity.

In addition, another participant reflected that the organisational identity needs to support the structure implementation or else employees will revert to the way they used to do things. What is valued throughout the structure implementation process highlights the organisational identity. The nature of the organisational identity's influence on how the implementation plays out and what is important during the implementation is influenced by organisational identity. How the structure is implemented and the circumstances surrounding the implementation provide insight to the true nature of the organisation. This has emerged as a new finding as, to best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature that explicitly states that organisational identity influences the how the structure is implemented.

The third highest ranked construct is 'resistance to implementation due to misalignment in organisational identity' which has emerged as a new finding with a frequency count of 23. When a structure requires a fundamental shift in the organisation's identity, participants reflected that this often led to unsuccessful implementation as the shift was too big for the organisation. Participants illustrated that structures are less likely to be implemented when they are a fundamental shift from the current organisational identity and when not

enough has been done to align individual identity with the evolving organisational identity. Some participants suggested that when the organisational design process is initiated organisational identity needs to be incorporated in the process in order to prevent misalignment in identity. This finding builds on the previous finding and has emerged as a new insight. To best of the researcher's knowledge there is no literature that overtly indicates that resistance to a structure implementation is due to misalignment in organisational identity.

Lastly, the fourth ranking construct is 'influenced by leaders' identity' which has materialised as a consistent finding with a frequency count of 12. This common trend in the findings has been leaders' identity influencing the organisational design process. The implementation of a structure is no different in the sense that implementation is impacted on by the extent to which the structure impacts on the leaders' sense of identity and if they can identify with the structure that is being implemented. Some participants provided observations where the leaders' identity derailed the whole organisational design process including the structure implementation. It was also acknowledged that leaders need courage to know when their leadership style no longer enables the organisational identity required for the structure implementation to be successful. However, a contrasting view indicates that this influence can be positive. Another participant reflected that the most successful implementations have been when leaders own the structure implementation in what they call 'leader-led' structures. This reflects the leaders' identity in the process as a leader won't endorse something with which they don't identify.

A variety of literature regarding leaders' influence of organisational identity has been presented in the previous discussions (Scott & Lane, 2000; Karp & Helgø, 2009; Van Knippenberg, 2016). This finding merely emphasises the far-reaching implications of leader influence on organisational identity.

#### **6.5.2 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 4**

In closing, the findings provide a consistent theme around the influence of both individual identity and leader influence on the organisational identity and organisational design. An interesting conclusion to reflect on is the general impact organisational identity has on how the structure is implemented and on the organisational design process as a whole. Alignment has been demonstrated to be at the very core of organisational design and from the participants' observations it seems that alignment between the organisational



identity and organisational design is often overlooked. Supporting this conclusion is another noteworthy finding: participants observed resistance to the structure implementation due to misalignment in organisational identity.

## **6.6 Discussion of Results for Research Question 5**

### **Research Question 5: Determine the overall effect organisational identity has on organisational design.**

The purpose of this research question is to examine how these two constructs of organisational identity and organisational design potentially shape each other. The findings for this research question will be compared to leading literature in the below sections.

#### **6.6.1 Factors That Determine the Overall Effect Organisational Identity has on Organisational Design**

The sixth, and final, interview question was intended to start exploring and shed light onto the nature of the relationship between the constructs of organisational identity and organisational design. Furthermore, participants were asked to reflect if the overall effect was positive or negative in order to elicit practical examples of how the overall effect manifested itself in organisations. Participants shared their observations of what effect they observed organisational identity having on the organisational design process and surprisingly a large majority of participants indicated that the effect could be positive or negative based on the circumstances, the nature of the organisational identity as well as the scope and purpose of the organisational design process.

This interview question provided many contrasting views with some participants providing reflections of positive and negative effects. The 13 constructs, which are presented in Table 14, developed from the data gathering process highlight consistent themes around alignment, leaders, individual identity and 'who are we becoming?'. It must be noted that consistent elements around leadership and individual identity emerged as constructs for this research question.

The highest ranked construct is 'supports the creation of alignment' with a frequency count of 25. Alignment is a consistent construct in this research and in literature regarding organisational design (Galbraith, 1977; Daft & Lewin, 1993; and Nikolenko &

Kleiner, 1996), however alignment in this context is thought provoking. This finding suggests that organisational identity can support the creation of alignment between organisational identity and organisational design. This suggests that if correctly leveraged, managed and acknowledged that organisational identity can be a factor that increases the effectiveness of the organisational design process. This has emerged as a new finding as, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no literature that explicitly states that organisational identity supports the creation of alignment in the organisational design process.

The second highest ranked construct is 'acknowledge and incorporate organisational identity into the organisational design process' which has emerged as a new finding with a frequency count of 24. To leverage this insight around organisational identity in future organisational design processes, participants reflected that it was important to acknowledge the influence of organisational identity and find ways of weaving it into the organisational design process. This finding has emerged as a new insight and supports the previous finding around how organisational identity can support the creation of alignment in the organisational design process.

The third highest ranked construct is 'who are we becoming?' which has emerged as a consistent finding which provides new insight with a frequency count of 18. Participants indicated that the organisational design process will inadvertently require an organisation to start reflecting on 'who are we becoming?', which is how we see the organisational identity in the future.

A significant finding is reflected in the observations of a senior organisational design expert, who provides powerful insight into how organisational identity influences the organisational design process, as well as what it means for the organisation and the individuals who constitute the organisation. This participant suggested that organisational identity's influence should be brought into the organisational process not only by reflecting on 'who are we becoming?' but individuals should be given the space to mourn the loss of a change in either organisational design or organisational identity. It was suggested that two types of meaningful conversations should be engaged in during the organisational design process: conversation of dissent, where individuals can safely express their disagreement; and conversations of celebration, where individuals can share satisfaction. These conversations provide a meaningful and practical way that organisational identity can be incorporated into the organisational design process.

The researcher is doubtful that such expressions of how organisational identity influences the organisational design process have been experienced in such detail in current literature. Therefore, this finding has emerged as a new insight.

Lastly, the fourth ranking construct is 'health of the organisational identity is reflected in the organisational design' with a frequency count of 12. This interesting observation emerged through the process where participants reflected that the health or effectiveness of the organisational identity can be reflected in the organisational design itself. This finding has emerged as a new insight as, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no extensive research on the health of the organisational identity being reflected in the organisational design.

### **6.6.2 Conclusive Findings for Research Question 5**

Meaningful insights emerged from this research question. Firstly, the construct of 'who are we becoming?' emerged again, albeit in a different context and with a different dimension. In research question 2, the notion of 'who are we becoming?' suggests that there is an expression of a future state of the identity. This is supported by Burton and Obel (2018) who proposed that organisational design should involve experimentation and the discovery of 'what might be'. This finding of 'who are we becoming?' validates how the organisational design process can be used to explore elements of organisational identity and builds another dimension to this construct. This dimension is the reflection on the past or a sense of what is lost, which was alluded to by one participant who suggested that individuals should be given the space to mourn the lost that a change in either organisational design or organisational identity has on them. This could suggest that 'who are we becoming?' infers a loss of 'who we used to be'.

Secondly, an additional significant finding is that organisational identity could support the creation of alignment in the organisational design process. This is supported by many organisational design specialists who suggested that organisational identity can be used to make the organisational design process more effective, however it must be acknowledged and incorporated into the organisational design process.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter comprised of a comparative view of the findings, which were presented in Chapter 5, which was subsequently evaluated against the literature contained in Chapter 2. The results of this comparison revealed that there is a great deal of consistency in some of the findings, such as leaders' and individuals' identity and alignment. In addition, there were findings that emerged as new insights such as organisational identity containing the collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation. In the next chapter, these findings will be synthesized into a model which intends to enable both business leaders and practitioners to apply the insights of this research to the business environment.

## **7. Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 1 the research problem was outlined as well as the research purpose and in summary, the purpose of this research is threefold. Firstly, this research aimed to provide business leaders insight into how the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design are understood in the modern business environment. Secondly, this research strived to obtain insight into how organisational identity and organisational design interact and lastly, to explore the overall influence organisational identity has on the design of structures and what impact this has on the organisational design process.

Therefore, the essence and key findings of this research will be encapsulated in this chapter, as well as illustrate how this research has achieved its ambitions in terms of the research purpose and objectives. In this chapter, the Organisational Identity Lenses model that emerged through the findings of this research will be discussed and a more modern understanding of organisational identity and organisational design will be explored through this model. In addition, the implications of this research for business leaders and practitioners, such as HR practitioners and organisational design specialists, are presented based on the findings of the research and the model that has emerged. Recommendations and ideas for future research are also suggested.

### **7.2 Creating a Model to Comprehend How Organisational Identity Can Be Understood Within the Organisational Design Process**

As highlighted above, the intent of this research is to contribute to a greater understanding of how the concept of organisational identity influences organisational design. The insights that materialised through the research process have been distilled into a model that provides business leaders, HR practitioners and organisational design specialists with a greater understanding into how organisational identity influences the organisational design process.

Figure 7 is an illustration of the Organisational Identity Lenses model. The requirement for this model was initiated by the findings of research question 5, where one of the main constructs that emerged is 'acknowledge and incorporate organisational identity into the organisational design process'. This construct surfaced as many participants reflected that it was important to acknowledge the influence of organisational identity and find

ways of incorporating it into the organisational design process. The model was designed in response not only to this research finding but the need for a deeper understanding of how organisational identity and organisational design interact. The model aims to provide insight into understanding and navigating organisational identity.

Figure 7: Organisational Identity Lenses Model (Author's own)



The subsequent sections will detail how the model was developed, a detailed explanation of each element in the model will be provided, as well as how the model can be applied in the organisational design process will be covered respectively in each section.

### 7.2.1 How the Organisational Identity Lenses Model Was Developed

The Organisational Identity Lenses model, reflected in Figure 7, was created through a process of thorough consideration and integration of the insights and observations of participants which was distilled into the constructs and the themes that are presented in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 6. Consideration was given to the main constructs that emerged from the data analysis, in particular those that provided new insights or which emerged as a consistent finding. These constructs were discussed in section 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 of the previous chapter.

The model also considers the dynamic nature of organisational identity and the questions of 'who are we?' and how individual identity, especially those of leaders, shape the organisational identity which is supported by extensive literature (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Scott & Lane, 2000; Bartels et al., 2006; Karp & Helgø, 2009; Leavitt et al., 2012; Nelson & Irwin, 2014; Evans, 2015; Carlsen, 2016; Van Knippenberg, 2016). The most significant and thought-provoking elements of the aggregated data from this research were integrated and analysed in order to connect the findings and literature. Therefore, this model integrates and expands upon literature and the constructs that emerged

through the research. This has formed a model which is both emergent and grounded by literature.

## **7.2.2 Explanation of the Organisational Identity Lenses Model**

An understanding of the identity of an organisation can be gained through examining four different perspectives or lenses of organisational identity. Each lens is significant and necessary for a holistic understanding of the multi-faceted nature of organisational identity. Each lens contributes a different level of understanding about the defining characteristics of the identity of the organisation.

Viewing organisational identity through these four lenses will provide a deeper understanding of what the organisational identity is and where it's moving to. This understanding can be invaluable to the organisational design process, as it helps practitioners assess what the current identity is, what the future identity looks like and historical aspects of identity which could be incorporated in how the organisational design process is facilitated. In addition, this model can be applied to understand identity at an individual level or at a team or collective level. The application of the model can be used to assess individuals and leaders in relation to the current, historical and the future organisational identity.

### **7.2.2.1 Individual Lens**

Individual identity, especially leaders' identity is a powerful construct which arose as a consistent theme as highlighted in the previous chapter. Understanding 'who am I?' can be applied to leaders and individuals. Assessing individual identity in relation to the organisational identity can provide a window into how they align to the overall organisational identity. In addition, based on the consensus across the research findings and literature (Scott & Lane, 2000; Karp & Helgø, 2009; Van Knippenberg, 2016), leaders have a distinct role in shaping, influencing, directing and managing the organisational identity. Therefore, it is recommended that the leaders' identity be understood in a meaningful manner during the organisational design process. This understanding is critical, as practitioners would be able to assess the leaders' level of buy-in, if the organisational design requires a new or changed organisational identity.

Scott and Lane (2000) provide an eloquent assessment of a leader's identity which can be used to assess this element of the lenses "I am this kind of person; therefore, I lead

an organisation that has these kinds of attributes and because I lead this kind of organisation, I am this kind of person.” (p. 48). Furthermore, to support this need for an understanding of individual identity in relation to the organisational identity, the findings highlighted the importance of acknowledging and creating awareness of the organisational identity throughout the organisational design process so that the alignment between individual and organisational identity happens sooner in the process.

#### **7.2.2.2 Collective Lens**

This collective understanding of organisational identity is a construct that was present in both the literature (Cayla & Peñaloza, 2012; Anteby & Molnár, 2012; Yeatman, 2015; Pratt et al., 2016; Gulati et al., 2016) and the findings presented in section 6.1.2 of the previous chapter. It expresses the collective understanding of the most prominent aspects of organisational identity. Understanding ‘who are we?’, which is indicated on Figure 7, could involve assessing the nature, persona, character or characteristics of the organisation.

It is important to be aware of individual identity when assessing the collective identity as the alignment between the individual and the collective identity as it provides insight into organisational identity. Furthermore, this collective understanding of identity will provide meaningful insight into how the organisational design process is aligning to the existing organisational identity; as the collective lens can be seen as an expression of organisational identity in the present moment defined by the question of ‘who are we?’.

#### **7.2.2.3 Future Lens**

A critical dimension of organisational identity that emerged from the findings was the construct of ‘who are we becoming?’ which is discussed in section 6.3.1 in the previous chapter. This element, which is illustrated in Figure 7, suggests ‘who are we becoming?’ has a significant influence on the organisational design process. This future-focused and forward-looking view of the organisation can be described as the difference between the organisational identity of the organisation in the present moment versus the organisational identity of the organisation in the future.

This expression of a future state of the organisational identity can be articulated in the organisational design process. Based on the insights from the participants and the findings from section 6.6.1, which highlights that the organisational identity must be



understood and incorporated into the organisational design process, it is recommended that the organisational design process includes an intentional process of defining 'who are we becoming?'. This future-focused understanding of organisational identity has implications on how the process is executed and how the structure is implemented. If the 'who are we becoming?' doesn't resonate with leaders and individuals; the organisational design process may become ineffective.

#### **7.2.2.4 Historical Lens**

Another construct which emerged from the findings is a historical lens which is embodied in the question of 'who are we no longer?', as demonstrated in Figure 7. This emerged from the discussion regarding research question 5 in section 6.6.2 of the previous chapter. This dimension of organisational identity is the reflection on the past or a sense of what is loss. This is supported by a finding, which was elaborated on by one participant who suggested that individuals should be given the space to mourn the lost that a change in either organisational design or organisational identity has on them. This lens is closely linked with the future as it suggests that the organisation is changing or evolving and this could infer a loss of 'who we used to be'.

This could be used as a powerful reflection point within the organisational design process, as it provides the opportunity for individuals and teams to meaningfully discuss what the organisational design process means for them as they begin to describe who they will no longer be. This is an important part of the process that is overlooked and has the ability to help individuals and teams start understanding what the organisational identity means to them; and as a collective they can describe the parts of their identity that are important to them. This provides compelling insight for the organisational design process to understand and maintain alignment with the organisational identity.

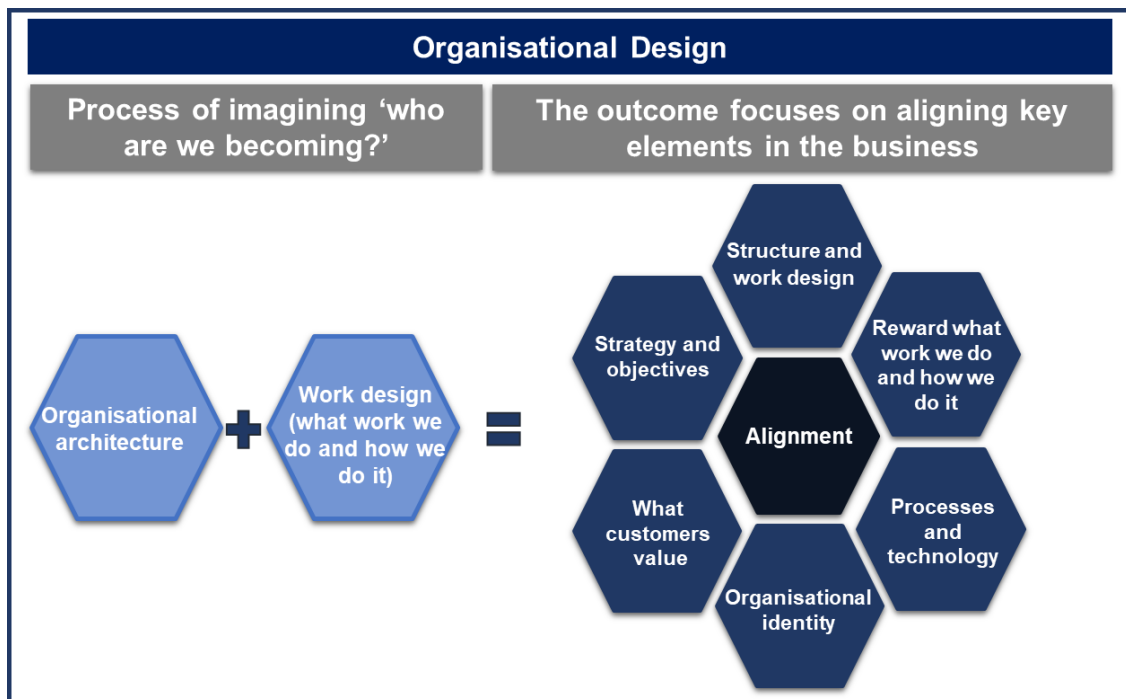
### **7.3 Building on the Understanding of Organisational Design**

One of the aims of this research is to provide business leaders with insight into how the concepts of organisational identity and organisational design are understood in the modern business environment. The Organisational Identity Lenses model provides a modern perspective into how organisational identity can be understood. From the findings that were discussed in section 6.6.1 in the previous chapter combined with the data that was analysed and the literature that was reviewed, there is an opportunity to expand on how organisational design is positioned and understood.

Figure 8 provides a perspective on organisational design that incorporates literature on organisational design, in particular Galbraith's Star Model™ (1993) and Burton and Obel, (2018), as well as the findings of the research as discussed in Chapter 6. As illustrated in Figure 8, there are two main components of organisational design. The process of imagining 'who are we becoming?' and the outcome which focuses on creating alignment.

Organisational architecture and work design, which includes what work we do and how we do it, was highlighted as important constructs in section 6.2.1 in the previous chapter. This forms the process of defining the future-focused view of the organisation which can be summed up as 'who are we becoming?' which has been established as an expression of organisational identity. This builds on the work of Burton and Obel, (2018) who suggest that the organisational design process should explore, through a number of experiments, 'what might be' for the organisation.

Figure 8: Illustration of a Modern Perspective of Organisational Design (Author's own)



Secondly, the outcome of the organisational design process is focused on aligning key elements within the business such as structure, work design, reward mechanisms, processes, technology, strategy, objectives and organisational identity. These key elements are grounded in the research findings which build on Galbraith's Star Model™ (1993).

## 7.4 Recommendations for Business Leaders

The findings of this research, in particular the Organisational Identity Lenses model and the perspective on the organisational design process discussed in the previous section, suggest that a different approach is required to managing the organisational design process. This has a meaningful impact for how business leaders think about, and engage with, the organisational design process. It is important for business leaders to recognise the powerful influence organisational identity has on individuals and teams.

It is therefore recommended that leaders use the Organisational Identity Lenses model and consider the below recommendations to obtain a deeper insight into the organisational identity when embarking on organisational design.

- A consistent theme in this research has been that organisational identity is more tacit and subtler. This means that leaders don't consciously influence organisational identity or consider it when engaging in the organisational design process. It's recommended that leaders reflect on their identity and examine how it influences the organisational identity. An essential personal reflection point for all leaders would be to assess if their identity manifests into something that is positive or negative for employees. Therefore, it is recommended that all leaders be more conscious of their identity and the influence they have.
- When reviewing the organisational design, leaders should be intentional about what this process means for the organisational identity. It is important to understand the context of the organisational design process as there are times when the organisation is in a crisis and needs to complete an organisational design in a responsive and timeous manner. However, leaders must be aware that they are making a trade-off. Quick organisational design processes or restructures could create more disruption as people have not made the shift in understanding about what the organisational design means for their identity.
- As highlighted in the Organisational Identity Lenses model, leaders should consider all aspects of organisational identity. It is recommended that leaders engage in meaningful conversations with their employees regarding the four different lenses of organisational identity when embarking on the organisational design process. This will help individuals and teams begin to understand 'who are we becoming?' in a proactive and constructive way. This can be done before

structure is even mentioned, as this allows individuals and teams a period of sense-making where they can understand ‘who am I?’, ‘who are we?’, ‘who are we becoming?’ and finally ‘who are we no longer?’. These questions are intended to provoke reflection and inclusion, so that individuals feel that they are part of crafting a new future for the organisation.

From the above recommendations it is clear that business leaders need to approach the organisational design process as an intentional process to shape the future of the organisation, which means considering both ‘who are we becoming?’ and ‘what might be’ at both an individual and organisational level.

### **7.5 Recommendations for Practitioners**

Both HR practitioners and organisational design specialists can use the insights and outcomes of this research to gain a deeper comprehension into the multifaceted nature of organisational identity and its influence on the organisational design process. Based on the implications of this research, the following recommendations are proposed for practitioners:

- Practitioners need to support and guide leaders through the organisational design process by ensuring that they are conscious about their identity as leaders and the impact that it may have on how they structure the organisation.
- When facilitating the organisational design processes, practitioners should incorporate the elements highlighted by section 7.3, so that the organisational design process becomes a process of discovering ‘what might be’ and ‘who are we becoming?’ instead of only focusing on ‘what is’.
- Instead of only focusing on the organisational design processes practitioners should facilitate integrated interventions, using the Organisational Identity Lenses model, where leaders and employees can openly discuss the question posed by each of the lenses. This blends change management, organisational design and organisational identity. This could lead to a more effective transition for individuals and teams as the process would be more inclusive and contain opportunities where they are allowed to make sense of the organisational design and what it means for their identity.

These recommendations highlight the value that the insights of the research findings and the Organisational Identity Lenses model can provide practitioners.

## 7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

As previously mentioned, there is very little research on how organisational identity and organisational design interact with each other. Although this exploratory research has provided some insight regarding these constructs there is a great opportunity for future research to delve into different aspects that have not been covered by this research. Therefore, the following recommendations for future research would add significant value to existing literature:

- There is a need to delve into the tangible and measurable aspects of the elements that make up organisational identity. This would enable researchers to measure organisational identity reliably so that this construct can be empirically and quantifiably measured at different points in time in an organisation's journey.
- Research into how organisational change processes act as a mediator in the relationship between organisational identity and organisational design. As managing organisational change is 'business as usual' for all modern organisations, this would provide insight into how change influences the relationship between the two constructs.
- Individual identity, and by extension leader identity, is a reoccurring theme in the findings of this research. It would be beneficial to explore this concept in relation to both organisational identity and organisational design in more detail.
- Additional exploratory research into the exact elements within the organisational design process that are impacted and influenced by organisational identity would be valuable research for organisational design specialists.
- Further research is required into understanding how organisational identity and culture interact with each other and how they separately and collectively influence the organisational design process.
- Understanding how organisations can change their identity. The research could explore how organisational identity is changed, what tangible elements of the organisation are changed through this process, and what are the implications of the change. The effects of this research could also contribute to organisational design and it would give insight to what extent the organisational design changes in response to the change in identity.
- Research into understanding how to measure the health of the organisational identity and the implications on the effectiveness of organisational design. This

would build on the findings of this research and determine how to assess the health of the organisational identity.

- Research into the implications of organisational identity and organisational design through important events in an organisation's lifecycle such as mergers or acquisitions. This would contribute great value to business leaders executing such projects.
- The Organisational Identity Lenses model could be further validated in different organisations who are navigating the organisational design process.
- External influences on both organisational identity and organisational design can be explored as a moderating variable in the interaction between these two constructs.

The above list of recommendations highlights many topics of future research that would add significant value to literature, business leaders and practitioners.

## **7.7 Research Limitations**

As previously highlighted in Chapter 4, qualitative research may include many limitations such as respondent bias, interviewer skills and the research results may not be generalizable to the whole population (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Boyce & Naele, 2006). The following limitations have been identified:

- Non-probability sampling methods, convenience and snowball sampling used in this study provide a limitation in the sense that the sample may not statistically be representative of the population. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalised to the population.
- As this research is exploratory and qualitative in nature there is a requirement to follow up this research with more detailed quantitative analysis. This will ensure that the study is supplemented by statistical findings.
- There may be accuracy errors within the transcribing of the interview which could impact the validity of the research.
- Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews may result in the respondents going off topic or telling the researcher what they think the researcher wants to hear.
- There is always the risk of interviewer bias in qualitative research. The researcher needs to exercise caution not to incorporate personal experiences or allow opinions to influence the interview or the interpretation of the data. This is a

difficult task as the researcher has opinions based on personal experience and had started constructing an idea of how the research should play out.

- There is a level of geographical bias in the participants interviewed as all participants were from the Gauteng province in South Africa.
- The cross-sectional nature of this study limits the scope of the research to a snapshot view of the participants' observations of organisational identity and organisational design. This limits the researcher's ability to measure changes to organisational identity and organisational design over time.
- The research's scope was focused on the constructs of organisational identity and organisational design and did not take into consideration the construct of organisational change processes and the effect it could have on the interaction between these two constructs.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

The literature reveals the dynamic nature of organisational identity and the benefits of aligning the organisational identity and organisational design. However, despite the benefits of this alignment and amount of research in organisational design and organisational identity, there has been little research on the influence that these two disciplines have on each other. This research intended to contribute to closing this gap in the literature. The research challenged the 20 participants to reflect on their observations and insights on organisational identity and organisational design.

The findings and analysis unpacked in this research contributed to the development of the Organisational Identity Lenses model, which integrated the understanding of organisational identity in a manner that can be used to enhance the organisational design process. However, this is not the only contribution this research makes; in addition, it contributed to literature by proposing more modern definitions of both organisational identity and organisational design which is supported by empirical evidence.

In closing, it is hoped that the findings of this study contribute to management, HR and organisational design best practices through the application of the Organisational Identity Lenses model and the findings of this research by business leaders, HR practitioners and organisational design specialists who seek to drive organisation effectiveness and performance to remain competitive.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

<b>Opening</b>	Discuss consent letter, recording and use of transcriber.
<b>Industry</b>	
<b>Job title</b>	
<b>Brief description of work experience</b>	
<b>Probing Question for Interview</b>	
<b>Interview Question 1:</b> What do you understand by organisational design?	
<b>Interview Question 2:</b> What do you understand by organisational identity?	
<b>Interview Question 3:</b> In your experience have you found that organisational identity is a factor that influences the organisational design process?	
<b>Interview Question 4:</b> Based on your experience in HR/ organisational design or as a line manager have you found that managers are influenced by organisational identity when designing their structure?	
<b>Interview Question 5:</b> Have you found that organisational identity influences the successful implementation of organisation structures?	
<b>Interview Question 6:</b> What overall effect, either positive or negative, does organisational identity have on the organisational design process?	



## APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION SUMMARY PAGE

### Understanding organisational identity as a factor influencing organisational design.

#### Why this research topic?

Often organisations are faced with a conundrum which jeopardises the fit between organisation design and organisation identity. Does the organisation either hold on to their current identity and face potential inertia or expand into new markets and products or even merge with other organisations to gain competitive advantage.

This research aims to understand if organisational identity is a factor that influences an effective organisational design. Furthermore, this research aims to understand the implications of organisational identity's influence on the organisational design process.



#### What is Organisational Design?

Organisation design is focused on creating alignment between business strategy and the work executed within the organisation. Robust organisation design models enable managers to make sound decisions to design fit-for-purpose structures.

Organisational design could be a restructuring where there is a significant change to the structure or a reconfiguration where there are more minor changes to the structure.

#### General Information

I will schedule an hour meeting with you and we will have a conversation where I will ask you to share your experience of organisation identity and organisational design.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. In order to accurately represent our conversation, with your consent, I will make a recording of our conversation. However I will keep your identity completely anonymous when compiling my report.

#### What is Organisational Identity?

Organisation identity captures “who we are” as an organisation. This emerges as the character or nature of the organisation that is distinct when compared to other organisations and is relatively enduring over time.

Organisational identity is formed through the rituals, activities and interactions between employees, managers and other stakeholders within the organisation.

#### How is Organisational Identity different to culture?

Organisational identity differs from culture in the sense that culture is a shared ways of seeing, interpreting, and doing things in the organisation. Culture is made up of assumptions, beliefs, and values.

However culture conveys, contextualizes and reinforces organisation identity.

## APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER



### Informed consent letter

*I am conducting exploratory research on the relationship between organisational design and organisational identity. This research aims to understand if organisational identity is a factor that influences an effective organisational design. Furthermore, this research aims to understand the implications of organisational identity's influence on the organisational design process*

*Our interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help us expand our understanding of the subject further. **Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.*

Researcher: Sandra de Sousa  
0839857877  
[sandrad@doubleuu.co.za](mailto:sandrad@doubleuu.co.za)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Sandra de Sousa".

Research Supervisor: Dr Mark Bussin  
0829010055  
[drbussin@mweb.co.za](mailto:drbussin@mweb.co.za)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Mark Bussin".

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4: COMPARISON OF FINDINGS BY SAMPLE GROUP

Table 10: Top Five Constructs Which Define the Concept of Organisational Design per Sample Group

Sample Group	Construct	Frequency
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Structure	14
	Alignment	4
	Customer	4
	Business objectives	3
	Effectiveness	3
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	Structure	7
	People	4
	Effectiveness	3
	Alignment	2
	Customer	2
<b>Organisational Design Specialists</b>	Organisational architecture	12
	Structure	11
	Business strategy	8
	Work design (what work we do and how we do it)	6
	Alignment	5

Table 11: Top Five Constructs Which Define the Concept of Organisational Identity per Sample Group

<b>Sample Group</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Who are we?	7
	Collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation	6
	Patterns of behaviours displayed in the organisation	6
	Differences in identity across the organisation	5
	Influenced by individual identity	5
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	How the organisation is perceived internally vs externally	12
	Who are we?	9
	Influenced by leaders	8
	Way of expressing culture	6
	Collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation	5
<b>Organisational Design specialist</b>	Collective belief system and unconscious thinking patterns of the organisation	22
	How the organisation is perceived internally vs externally	17
	Who are we?	16
	Influenced by leaders	15
	Patterns of behaviours displayed in the organisation	10

Table 12: Top Five Constructs per Sample Group Which Highlight How Organisational Identity Influences the Organisational Design Process

<b>Sample Group</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Leadership alignment, identity, readiness and power dynamics	9
	Ineffective organisational design process	5
	Drivers of organisational design process	3
	How organisational design process is executed	3
	Scope of organisational design	3
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	How organisational design process is executed	11
	Drivers of organisational design process	8
	Leadership alignment, identity, readiness and power dynamics	2
	Who are we becoming?	2
	Ineffective organisational design process	1
<b>Organisational Design Specialists</b>	How organisational design process is executed	27
	Leadership alignment, identity, readiness and power dynamics	21
	Ineffective organisational design process	19
	Drivers of organisational design process	5
	Who are we becoming?	5

Table 13: Top Five Constructs per Sample Group Which Indicate How Leaders Are Influenced by Organisational Identity When Designing Their Structure(s)

<b>Sample Group</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Design of structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity	18
	Leader and individual identity	11
	Change organisational identity for structure to be successful	8
	Way decisions are made to determine structure	6
	Organisational identity determines or facilitates the process	3
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	Design of structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity	12
	Leader and individual identity	6
	Needs to be clarity regarding identity	3
	Behaviours required to support the structure and organisational identity	3
	Change organisational identity for structure to be successful	2
<b>Organisational Design Specialists</b>	Design of structure enabled or preserved the organisational identity	19
	Leader and individual identity	19
	Way decisions are made to determine structure	11
	Need to consider implications on organisational identity	8
	Change organisational identity for structure to be successful	5

Table 14: Top Five Constructs per Sample Group Which Indicate How Organisational Identity Influences the Implementation of Structures

<b>Sample Group</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Implementation supported organisational identity	6
	Alignment of individual's identity and organisational identity	5
	Change of organisational identity required for implementation	5
	External influencing factors on the internal identity	5
	Resistance to implementation due to misalignment in identity	4
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	How the structure is implemented	8
	Unsuccessful implementation due to change in leadership	5
	Requires change in mind-sets and behaviour to support implementation	3
	Inclusiveness in the process	3
	Alignment of individual's identity and organisational identity	2
<b>Organisational Design Specialists</b>	Alignment of individual's identity and organisational identity	18
	Resistance to implementation due to misalignment in organisational identity	18
	How the structure is implemented	13
	Influenced by leaders' identity	8
	Requires change in mindsets and behaviour to support implementation	7

Table 15: Top Five Constructs per Sample Group That Indicate the Overall Effect Organisational Identity Has on the Organisational Design

<b>Sample Group</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Business Leaders</b>	Acknowledge and incorporate organisational identity into the organisational design process	7
	Supports the creation of alignment	7
	Leadership	4
	Makes organisational design process ineffective	3
	Who are we becoming	3
<b>HR Practitioners</b>	Who are we becoming	7
	Supports the creation of alignment	6
	Health of the organisational identity is reflected in the design	4
	Leadership	3
	Depends on what you are trying to achieve	1
<b>Organisational Design Specialists</b>	Acknowledge and incorporate organisational identity into the organisational design process	17
	Supports the creation of alignment	12
	Misalignment	11
	Who are we becoming	8
	Makes organisational design process ineffective	7



## APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

**Gordon  
Institute  
of Business  
Science**  
University  
of Pretoria

04 June 2018

De Sousa Sandra

Dear Sandra

*Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.*

*You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.*

*Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained*

*We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.*

*Kind Regards*

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

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