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Regulating Organizational Identity in Temporary Organizations

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 Organizational Identity	11
2.1 Origin & Key Definition	12
2.2 Organizational Identity: Enduring or Dynamic?	14
2.2.1 Enduring Identity Proposition	15
2.2.2 Dynamic Identity Proposition	17
2.3 Organizational Identity: Formation	19
2.4 Organizational Identity: Regulation	22
2.5 Summary & Research Questions.....	24
2.5.1 Research Questions	25
Chapter 3 Sensemaking	28
3.1 History & Definition	29
3.1.1 Definition	30
3.2 Sensegiving & Sensebreaking	32
3.3 Conceptual Developments.....	34
3.3.1 Discourse in Sensemaking	34
3.3.2 Sociomaterial in Sensemaking	35
3.3.3 Action in Sensemaking	37
3.4 Organizational Identity & Sensemaking	38
3.5 Summary & Research Question	42
Chapter 4 Temporary Organizations	45
4.1 Theoretical Development and Definition	46
4.2 Managing Temporary Organizations.....	48
4.2.1 Internal Coordination	48
4.2.2 Networks and Institutional Embeddedness	49
4.2.3 Task Completion	50
4.3 City of Culture Organizations as Temporary Organizations.....	51
4.4 Summary	53

Chapter 5	Research Design	55
5.1	Introduction	55
5.1.1	Philosophical Stance: Social Constructionism.....	55
5.1.2	Approach to Research: Inductive Inquiry	56
5.2	Research Questions	57
5.3	Methodology: Unusually Revelatory Case Study	58
5.3.1	Selected Context: Coventry UK City of Culture Trust	59
5.3.2	Case Context – Emerging Theoretical Interest	63
5.4	Instruments of Data Collection.....	63
5.4.1	Semi-Structured Interview	64
5.4.2	Observation	67
5.4.3	Document Analysis	68
5.4.4	Research Diary	69
5.4.5	Case Database	69
5.4.6	The Effect of Covid-19 on Methods	70
5.5	Analysis	70
5.6	Ascertaining Qualitative Rigour.....	75
5.7	Ethical Considerations.....	78
Chapter 6	Regulating Organizational Identity.....	79
6.1	Mobilised Identity Claims in the Temporary Organization	80
6.1.1	External Differentiation	81
6.1.2	Goal Articulation.....	84
6.1.3	Sanctioned Narratives	90
6.2	Sensechecking in the Temporary Organization.....	94
6.2.1	Ideation Feedback & Approval	94
6.2.2	Making Understandings Legible	98
6.3	Identity Claim Addition & Subtraction in the Temporary Organization ..	102
6.3.1	Identity Claim Addition: Disseminating Approved Programmes.....	102
6.3.2	Identity Claim Subtraction: Reconsidering Rejected Programmes....	104
6.4	Combined Model.....	109

Chapter 7 Sensemaking Attention	112
7.1 Empirical Accounts of Worker Sensemaking	113
7.1.1 Frontline Worker 1 (“Ariana”).....	113
7.1.2 Frontline Worker 2 (“Miley”)	118
7.1.3 Frontline Worker 3 (“Mariah”)	125
7.2 Goal-Attentive & Operation-Attentive Sensemaking	129
7.2.1 Goal-Attentive Sensemaking	132
7.2.2 Operation-Attentive Sensemaking	134
7.3 Summary	136
 Chapter 8 Discussion.....	 138
8.1 Temporal Origin of Organizational Identity.....	138
8.2 Organizational Identity Alignment.....	141
8.3 Sensechecking ‘Desired Sense’	143
8.4 Additional Implications for Theory.....	150
8.4.1 Action in Identity & Sensemaking.....	150
8.4.2 Sensemaking for Organizing.....	152
8.4.3 Sociomateriality in Sensemaking.....	154
 Chapter 9 Conclusion	 156
9.1 Summary of Thesis.....	156
9.2 Summary of Contributions	156
9.3 Limitations.....	160
9.4 Future Research	161
9.5 Implications for Practice	162
 References	 165

List of Tables

Table 1, Organizational Identity and Sensemaking Perspectives	41
Table 2, Instruments of Data Collection	64
Table 3, Timeline of Interviews	66
Table 4, First Order Coding Example	72
Table 5, Attaining Qualitative Rigour.....	77
Table 6, Mobilised Identity Claims.....	93
Table 7, Sensechecking	101
Table 8, Identity Claim Addition & Subtraction.....	108
Table 9, Goal-Attentive Sensemaking	130
Table 10, Operation-Attentive Sensemaking	131
Table 11, Summary of Contributions.....	159

List of Figures

Figure 1, CCT Timeline	62
Figure 2, Interview Questions Example.....	66
Figure 3, Full Data Structure.....	75
Figure 4, Regulating Organizational Identity.....	111
Figure 5, Expanded Model Of Identity Regulation.....	146

List of Abbreviations

UK – United Kingdom

CCT – Coventry UK City of Culture Trust

Declaration

This thesis is the personal work of Andrew Anzel. The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of PhD in Business & Management at the University of Warwick. The thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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Abstract

Organizational identity refers to the central, distinct, and enduring features that define ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’ as an organization. Extant scholarship posits that organizations use historical referents and projected futures to construct identity in the present; however, it is not yet known how organizational identity is formed when organizations are project-based or otherwise temporary in nature. This thesis addresses this research gap by exploring how a temporary arts organization formed aligned identity understandings without an internal past or anticipated future.

This thesis is grounded in a three-year, qualitative study of the ‘City of Culture Trust’ (CCT) a temporary arts organization. Data consists of 103 interviews and 178 hours of observation.

Data is presented that shows how managers constructed formal identity claims through which they hoped to shape the identity understandings of organizational members. Justified though the expediency required by temporary organizations, managers also established a system of sensechecking – a process induced within this research – through which managers evaluated whether organizational members developed identity understandings congruent with manager-derived identity claims. By rewarding aligned understandings and admonishing misalignment, organizational managers were able to quickly regulate how members viewed the organization’s identity.

However, this regulation process was not always successful. To explain why this is the case, additional research is recounted that explored how workers paid attention to different cues when they made sense of the organization’s identity. Worker sensemaking was either goal-attentive (whereby workers focused on ‘who we are’ as an organization) or operation-attentive (whereby workers focused on ‘what we do’ as an organization). Workers who engaged in both goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking were able to develop identity understandings aligned with CCT managers, while workers who engaged extensively in goal-attentive sensemaking but not operation-attentive sensemaking were unable to do so.

In total, this thesis provides several contributions to the scholarship of organizational identity and sensemaking. First, this thesis posits that organizational identity can be constructed vis-à-vis regulation rather than historical positioning. A theoretical model for organizational identity regulation in temporary organizations is put forward. Moreover, while previous literature has characterized the emergence of organizational identity as collaborative and organic, this regulation model complicates this core conception. Second, while extant literature posits that individuals extract and interpret cues from their environment to ‘make sense’ of ambiguous stimuli, this thesis expands this conceptualization to define two specific types of sensemaking attention relevant to interpreting organizational identity: goal-attentive and operation-attentive. Moreover, sense-shaping efforts related to organizational identity must address both types of sensemaking in order to ensure that workers develop aligned identity understandings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Art is a universal language. It can be used to help people see things in a different way or make them feel better for a short amount of time or give a sense of belonging, give a sense of identity.

(CCT Frontline Worker)

Organizational identity has captured the theoretical interest of scholars for decades. Organizational identity refers to the central, enduring, and distinctive features that define ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’ as an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Scholars have applied organizational identity to the full spectrum of management theory, including business ethics (Martinez et al., 2014), stakeholder management (Brickson, 2005), and organizational control (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), change (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996), hybridity (Cornelissen et al., 2021; Glynn, 2000), threats (Petriglieri, 2015; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), culture (Fiol, 1991; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011), legitimacy (Elsbach, 2014; Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Soewarno et al., 2019) and many others.

Throughout its theoretical development, organizational identity was subject to a longstanding feud between scholars who questioned its ability to change over time. Early scholars applied institutional theory to identity, positing that “organizational identity resides in institutional **claims**, available to members, about central, enduring and distinctive properties of their organization” (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 434). For example, conceptions of organizational identity may stem from historical claims to various organizational types (e.g., a bank, a school) (Whetten, 2006) that are relatively fixed and enduring (Albert, 1998; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Czarniawska, 1997; Weick, 1995; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Other scholars have explored organizational identity vis-à-vis social construction, suggesting that “organizational identity resides in collectively shared beliefs and **understandings** about central and relatively

permanent features of an organization” (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 434). Identity studies rooted in the social construction of reality conceptualise identity as dynamically and continually constructed and negotiation by organizational members over time (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

This theoretical disagreement was largely resolved with a series of articles that posited that organizational identity is mutually constituted through enduring claims and dynamic understandings (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2010; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). For example, Gioia and colleagues (2000) put forward that organizational identity is comprised of labels (claims) and a closely coupled set of meanings associated with these labels (understandings), wherein identity change can manifest vis-à-vis (i) a change in the labels, or (ii) a change in meanings associated with those labels (see also Corley & Gioia, 2004). Similarly, Ravasi and Shultz (2006) find in their study of Bang & Olufsen that organizational identity claims and understandings can both change over significant periods of time in order to retain competitive advantage.

Despite this resolution, there are still gaps in current literature regarding the temporal dimension of identity claims and understandings. Extant scholarship describes how organizational identity is developed through the use of the past (‘who we’ve been’) and projected future (‘who we want to be’) to distil the central, distinct, and enduring features which define an organization in the present (Ravasi et al., 2019; Sasaki et al., 2020; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). For organizations that have existed for years, the use of the past is literal – historical claims or actions taken throughout the organization’s lifetime help members understand the organization’s identity (Ravasi et al., 2019; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Sasaki et al., 2020). For newly formed organizations, organizations project themselves into the future in order to understand their identity in the present (Corley, 2004; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). However, in both cases, extant literature examines organizational identity under the assumption that organizations will seek to exist in perpetuity. Literature has yet to explore how identity is formed and managed when organizations are temporary in nature. Little is known about nascent organizations that have yet to

build coherent identity and even less is known about non-permanent organizations with no projected futures.

This gap is particularly glaring due to the recent reliance on temporary organizational forms in the public and private sector (Sjöblom & Godenhjelm, 2009). A temporary organization is “a temporally bounded group of interdependent organizational actors, formed to complete a complex task” (Burke & Morley, 2016, p. 1237). Temporary organizations are becoming the preferred form of public-private partnerships (Godenhjelm, 2013), primarily driven by the European Union’s classification of all reform activities as temporary organizations (Sjöblom & Godenhjelm, 2009). While hundreds of millions of pounds are being funnelled into temporary organizations, our scholarly understanding lags significantly behind.

This thesis studies the temporal dimensions of organizational identity by exploring how identity develops in a newly formed, temporary arts organization. To be specific, the main research question posed by this thesis is:

Without internal historical referents and projected futures, how is organizational identity formed and managed in newly created temporary organizations?

It should be noted that this study did not begin with this research question fully formed. Indeed, this research actually began by examining how workers in a temporary organization went about their work in order to achieve a social impact. However, during the first phase of analysis it was found that the data spoke more to concepts related to organizational identity than social impact.

The data-informed refocus on organizational identity brought about new developments and inspirations within the research. It became clear that managers in the case context were attempting to shape how others understood the organization’s identity. However, this process seemed to only work for certain individuals. When attempting to explain why this happened, it was found that identity theory alone was unable to explain this empirical surprise. When going back to the literature it was found that sensemaking and its related sense-shaping concepts provided improved clarity of what was going on empirically for this specific surprising phenomenon.

Sensemaking refers to “the process through which people work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 57). Applied to organizational identity, sensemaking explores how individuals construct and conceptualise organizational identity over time (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). While sensemaking occurs at the individual and collective levels, it is affected by wider processes of sense-shaping (i.e., sensegiving and sensebreaking) – ways in which actors attempt “to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). In this thesis, sensemaking and its related processes thus allowed greater exploration of the relational development of identity between organizational managers and workers.

In total, this thesis provides an expanded conceptualization of the temporal origins of organizational identity and its relationship to the sensemaking of organizational actors. The thesis finds that in lieu of internal histories and projected futures, managers were able to influence how frontline workers interpreted the organization’s identity by setting up coordinated systems of regulation. This regulation process involved mobilising identity claims to shape the identity understandings of frontline workers. Workers were then subject to sensechecking – a process induced and theorised from this research – wherein managers could evaluate how frontline workers viewed the organization’s identity and evaluate if their regulation had been successful. Furthermore, this thesis explores why certain workers were able to develop identity understandings congruent with those of managers and why some were not.

The thesis is structured as follows. It begins by reviewing pertinent foundational literature in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 2 reviews literature on organizational identity, focusing on the temporal facets of its development. Chapter 3 reviews sensemaking literature in order to further expand the cognitive processes of identity interpretation and its relationship to managerial intervention. Chapter 4 reviews literature regarding temporary organizations. It covers the empirical rise of temporary organizations as a novel form of organizing and discusses how they may provide a novel lens through which to explore temporal facets of identity. Moreover,

Chapter 4 links theoretical understandings of temporary organizations to the literature on temporary arts organizations (i.e., the selected case context).

Chapter 5 recounts all methodological considerations and procedures relevant to this research. This section bases all methodological choices on an underlying ontological commitment to social constructionism, positing that individuals perceive, act, build, and reflect upon their social world across time and space (Welch et al., 2011) and that reality can only be understood by examining how social actors dynamically perceive it (Gergen & Davis, 2012). Adopting a social construction lens requires a supporting epistemological framework through which to justify found understandings; this research utilises an inductive methodological approach to justify knowledge creation. Inductive approaches seek to identify a phenomenon of interest, find a relevant context to explore that phenomenon, and build theory upon the uncovered evidence (Welch et al., 2011).

The Coventry UK City of Culture Trust (CCT), a temporary arts organization, was chosen as an auspicious empirical context to base this inductive investigation. While a full justification for choosing CCT is provided in the Methods section, a brief sketch is provided now. First, arts organizations have proven to be a rich theoretical ground for previous scholarship of organizational identity (e.g., Glynn, 2000). Moreover, City of Culture and festival organizations have also been used to explore facets of temporary organizations (see examples in Clegg & Colleagues (2020); Porsander (2000); DeFillippi & Uriarte (2020); Uriate & Colleagues (2019)). Second, CCT sought to create lasting social and economic impact in the region despite an ex-ante completion date, making it typical of other project-based temporary organizations funded through public-private partnership (Godenhjelm, 2013). Summarising these aims beautifully, one CCT manager noted that:

“2021 will be an extraordinary year with major one-off events that open our doors to millions of visitors. Our producers are working hard to determine what those eye-catching performances and activities will look like... Equally, our programme will be driven by outcomes. We are committed to delivering real change and working closely to ensure that everything we create and present contributes to this. When mental health issues, food poverty, homelessness and the exploitation of young people are serious problems

across the nation, it's vital that our programme can inspire real social action and remove barriers to civic engagement" (CCT Manager 1).

Third, a high level of access was given by CCT from its nascency through to its main delivery period.

On a personal note, an additional reason behind choosing the Coventry City of Culture Trust is due to the author's personal connection with the cultural industry. I started my career as a cultural producer, designing and running cultural programmes in a multi-disciplinary arts organization. After a few years, I became interested in how cultural organizations were managed at an institutional level. To study this phenomenon further, I moved to the United Kingdom and began my career as a researcher in a cultural studies department. I quickly made my way over to the business school and began this study. This personal connection to the empirical context has its advantages and its drawbacks. Positively, this connection with the industry and the experiences of its workers might allow for a richer emic account of the empirical world. Negatively, this connection could predispose my inductive interpretation of events towards pre-existing cognitive schemas. To counteract this potential negative bias, I employed methods of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability in order to ascertain qualitative rigour. These are described in-depth within the main methods chapter.

Three main instruments of data collection were used to collect raw data from this research context: semi-structured interviews, observations, and a review of internal documents (Stake, 1995). **Interviews** were conducted with managers, frontline workers, trustees, and external stakeholders which focused on personal reflections of ongoing work. Interviews were used due to their ability to allow access into peoples' lived experience, providing a window into their accounts of reality and the meanings they attach to social phenomena (Silverman, 2013). Additionally, interviews were able to obtain real-time and retrospective accounts from the individuals experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). In total, 103 interviews were conducted. **Observations** of team meetings, daily operations, formal evaluation meetings, and live events were also used to compare against interview accounts. While interviews allow access to participant accounts of reality, observations allow access to the real-time accomplishment of organizational

working (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). The main purpose for observations within this study was to support (and, to a lesser extent, contradict) the accounts provided by interview participants. A total of 178 hours were spent observing in the field. **Internal documents** were also reviewed – most potently in relation to how organizational members spoke about their work as compared to how they wrote about it.

After a period of initial data collection, a thematic analysis on interview transcripts was conducted. This initial analysis informed the writing of a ‘thick description’ of the case context (Langley, 1999) wherein it was found that while CCT’s social impact goals and associated activity were important, they were also a means to an end – a mechanism through which CCT was able to construct aligned identity understandings even though the organization had just formed. This finding led to a further examination of organizational identity in further interviews and observations. In the second and third stages of analysis, raw data were put in conversation with existing literature to build a theoretical model that explained the findings.

Chapters 6 and 7 report these findings. Chapter 6 describes how CCT managers created organizational processes through which they regulated how frontline workers developed organizational identity understandings. As they started their operations, CCT hired a number of ‘Cultural Producers’ who would develop artistic programmes, collaborate with key partners on City of Culture activity, and commission artists. This thesis refers to these cultural producers as frontline workers in order to signify that these workers were the ones ‘getting their hands dirty’ in order to create the core functioning of CCT. Moreover, this label is used in order to align with other management literature and prevent confusion due to the context-specific title of cultural producer. As new workers joined CCT they were confronted with identity ambiguity, wherein they were unsure of who CCT was or what it did. In an attempt to develop aligned identity understandings, managers established mobilised identity claims to influence the identity understandings of workers. As workers began to develop identity understandings, they performed actions that they believed to be in-line with that identity. These actions were then subject to a sensechecking process of managers – a process induced through this research – whereby managers ensured that workers had developed aligned identity understandings. If they had, actions would be

rewarded with things such as approved budgets and would be added to the formal identity claims of the organization. If workers had developed misaligned understandings, their actions would be admonished and would be subtracted from the proverbial list of potential actions they could perform. These findings are then generalised into a process model of identity regulation in temporary organizations.

Chapter 7 explores the individual-level response to regulation by examining the sensemaking of frontline workers. While Chapter 6 explains how CCT managers attempted to influence worker understandings, Chapter 7 recounts how these understandings were developed in practice. This focus was prompted by an odd finding – even though all workers seemed to agree with the overall mission of CCT, certain workers were able to adapt their rejected ideas into approved initiatives while others were unable to do so. An unanswered question thus became: what cues do individuals give attention to when ‘making sense’ of organizational identity?

When re-examining the data, two distinct ‘types’ of identity-related sensemaking were found: goal-attentive sensemaking and operation-attentive sensemaking. Workers who engaged in goal-attentive sensemaking probed ‘who we are’ as an organization and developed understanding related to organizational goals, mission, and *raison d’etre*. Workers who engaged in operation-attentive sensemaking investigated how ‘who we are’ translated into ‘what we do’ as an organization. While all interviewed workers engaged in goal-attentive sensemaking only some additionally engaged in operation-attentive sensemaking. Those who were able to engage in both were also able to adapt their rejected ideas into approved initiatives. Relating these findings to the previous chapter, the data suggest that CCT managers focused specifically on engendering goal-attentive sensemaking which may have contributed to the lack of operation-attentive sensemaking within the organization.

Chapter 8 discusses how these findings contribute to the scholarship of organizational identity, sensemaking, and temporary organizations. While these key contributions are extensive, brief sketches are warranted here. First, this thesis offers a process for quickly arriving at aligned identity understandings, which creates a shared guide for action (Oertel & Thommes, 2018). While previous literature had characterised organizational identity as arising from internal historical referents and projected futures (Ravasi et al., 2019; Schultz & Hernes, 2013), this thesis

demonstrates that identity claims can be derived from networked referents (e.g., what positive and negative associations with existing organizations do we want to incorporate within our organization?) and intended future impact (e.g., what will the organization have done before it dissolves?). However, it should be noted that organizational identity is not only derived from the formal claims it makes about itself, but is also derived from the individual identity understandings of its members. Indeed, claims alone are insufficient at ensuring that all organizational members have aligned identity understandings. To that end, the model of identity regulation put forward by this thesis describes how identity claims are but one component in creating aligned identity understandings.

Second, previous literature has viewed identity formation as slow-paced and collaborative (Gioia et al., 2010; Weick, 2015). This research posits that a system of identity regulation can shape how people within the organization think about the organization, thus increasing the speed at which aligned identity understandings are reached. However, this system requires organizational managers to have significant oversight over the legitimising feedback of ongoing identity understanding development while at the same time diminishing the feedback of other potential audiences. In other words, organizational managers must be in a position to assess developing identity understandings while also being in a position of power to either encourage aligned understandings or reprimand misaligned understandings.

Third, sensemaking processes have been characterised as organic and emergent (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Monin et al., 2013). Moreover, present literature demonstrates that sensegiving and sensebreaking influence sensemaking which in turn affects the material available to the sensegiver in future sense-shaping efforts (Vlaar et al., 2008). This thesis induced a process of sensechecking that provides a mediating process for these cyclical processes. Sensechecking enables frontline workers to make their identity understandings legible to managers while also providing a platform for managers to give legitimising feedback and approval of these understandings. Rather than waiting for slow-paced sensemaking to occur and basing future sensegiving efforts on the resulting state (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), sensechecking allows organizational managers to have a real-time assessment of current sensemaking and enables personalised sense-shaping efforts in the moment.

Fourth, at the heart of sensemaking literature is the understanding that sensemakers draw on cues from the environment in order to ‘make sense’ of ambiguous or unexpended stimuli (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This thesis poses that there are two ‘types’ of sensemaking (based on what cues are given primacy during sensemaking) that are important when ‘making sense’ of organizational identity: goal-attentive sensemaking (focusing on cues related to ‘who we are as an organization’) & operation-attentive sensemaking (focusing on cues related to ‘what we do as an organization’). By delineating these related process, this thesis uncovers why sensegiving & sensebreaking may sometimes fail to create ‘desired’ sense (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022). This is because sensegiving & sensebreaking must address both goal-attentive sensemaking & operation-attentive sensemaking in order to further enable workers to develop aligned identity understandings.

Chapter 9 concludes this thesis by summarising its contributions and considers the limitations, future scholarship, and implications for practice of this research. The most prevalent limitation of this research relates to its generalisability. This thesis makes several contributions to organizational identity, but it uncovers these dynamics in a temporary organization. Temporary organizations are distinct from their permanent counterparts. On one hand, this distinction may have allowed for finding identity dynamics that are present in permanent organizations but usually hidden from view. On the other hand, found dynamics may only be present in temporary organizations and not in permanent entities. While this is a large limitation, future research could explore these boundary conditions to better elucidate the dynamics of identity regulation in organizations at large. Moreover, future research supported by this thesis could explore the sensemaking cues relevant to different empirical phenomena. While this thesis finds that organizational actors engage in either goal-related and/or operation-attentive sensemaking when ‘making sense’ of organizational identity, attention may be given to other domains when making sense of ambiguous stimuli unrelated to organizational identity. Knowing what types of cues or sensemaking attention is relevant to different phenomena or sectors may enable organizations to ensure that their sense-shaping processes are doing what their shapers intended them to. Moreover, this thesis outlines a model for organizational identity regulation that newly formed organizations can use in order to quickly arrive at aligned identity understandings.

Chapter 2

Organizational Identity

The study of organizational identity has received significant attention over the past several decades. Following the publication of the foundational text by Albert and Whetten (1985), the field went through a period of infancy, consisting of early work such as those by Dutton and Dukerich (1991), Fiol (1991), and Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). Scholarship of organizational identity then went through a ‘developmental’ period in the mid- to late-1990s, with key works by Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, and Mullane (1994), Elsbach and Kramer (1996), and Gioia and Thomas (1996). Corley et al. (2006) then labelled the concept as having reached “aged adolescence,” following works being published such as Fiol (2002), Hatch and Schultz (2002), Corley (2004), Corley and Gioia (2004), and Chreim (2005). After Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, and Corley (2013) posited that the field had finally reached maturity, with recent scholarship by Ravasi, Rindova, and Stigliani (2019), Sasaki, Kotlar, Ravasi, and Vaara (2020), and Ashforth, Schinoff, and Brickson (2020) pushing the field ever forward.

This chapter will review the theoretical development of organizational identity, mirroring how it matured within the literature. First, the conceptual seedlings and formal origins of the concept are tended to. Second, early literature is reviewed that mainly explore facets of organizational identity change. This scholarship develops into a bifocal field, with some viewing identity as ‘static’ (i.e., relatively *un*-changing) versus others who view identity as ‘dynamic’ (i.e., malleable). Third, research is reviewed that uncovers aspects of identity formulation and regulation. Fourth and finally, a summary of the concept is presented, along with a distillation of current research gaps and the main theoretical puzzles addressed by this thesis.

2.1 Origin & Key Definition

Organizational theorists have long noticed that organizations develop strong characteristics to help define what they do. Laying the foundation for current theorisations of identity, Selznick (1957) wrote that “organizations intentionally perpetuate their central and distinguishing features, preserving for tomorrow what has made them what or who they are today” (p. 16). While describing facets of institutionalisation, Selznick goes on to use the term ‘identity’ in relation to organizations. He writes:

“Despite their diversity, these forces [various elements that form the social structure of the organisation] have a unified effect. In their operation we see the way group values are formed, for together they define the commitments of the organization and give it a distinctive identity. In other words, to the extent that they are natural communities, organizations have a history; and this history is compounded of discernible and repetitive modes of responding to internal and external pressures. As these responses crystallize into definite patterns, a social structure emerges. The more fully developed its social structure, the more will the organization become valued for itself, not as a tool but as an institutional fulfilment of group integrity and aspiration” (Selznick, 1957, p. 16).

Beyond Selznick, another conceptual seedling can be found in Bartunek (1984), where she notes that “interpretive schemes” (p. 355) are used in organizational “self-understanding” (p. 358).

Despite these early prophets, the key text by Albert & Whetten (1985) is noted as the foundational text that birthed the formal study of organizational identity. Within their text, Albert & Whetten noted the similarities between notions of individual identity (e.g., how people think about themselves reflexively) and how organizational actors think reflexively about their organization. For example, they note that people in organisations often ask the self-reflexive question “Who are we?” when referring to the organisation as a whole. Importantly, Albert & Whetten call their approach an “extended metaphor analysis,” directly noting how facets of individual identity could be extended from the individual level to the organizational level. Albert and Whetten define organizational identity as:

*“those features of an organization that in the eyes of its members are **central** to the organization’ character or ‘self-image’, make the organization **distinctive** from other similar organizations, and are viewed as having **continuity over time**” (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 292 emphasis added).*

Moreover, the authors note that these facets are “each necessary, and as a set sufficient” (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 292). While scholars have put forward their own definitions of organizational identity, they are often seen as variations on a theme; each definition contain direct reference to aspects that are central, distinctive, and enduring (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013).

Organizational features that are **central** are deemed to be rooted in an organization’s sense of ‘who we are in a social space’ and are explicitly preserved and rarely questioned unless seriously challenged (Ashforth et al., 2020; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). These features are perpetuated by organizational members (Selznick, 1957) and are so important that other changes to the organization may be initiated so that these core features can remain the same (Gagliardi, 1986). Ravasi and colleagues (2019) observed that characteristics central to an organization are likely to be viewed retrospectively, as fundamental markers of ‘who we are’ as an organization (see also Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Van Rekom & Whetten, 2007). As a universal anchor for scholarship of organizational identity, ‘central features’ are largely accepted as uncontroversial within the field (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013).

The second core aspect of organizational identity regards the features that make it **distinct** from other organizations. While this aspect is logically self-explanatory, facets of distinctiveness studied in reference to the wider study of organizations aid in its clarification. Deephouse (1999) notes that “organizations should be as different as legitimately possible” in order to achieve financial success. Barney and Stewart (2000) relate this aspect to contemporary views of competitive advantage, positing that distinctives relates to key organizational capacities. Brewer (1991) takes this one step further, stating that organizations seek “optimal distinctiveness,” wherein organizations put effort into seeing themselves (and having others see them) as simultaneously similar to a desired referent group (e.g., a market category) while notably different from other organizations within that same group (See also Corley et al., 2006; Gioia et al., 2010; Snihur, 2016).

A key issue that has been lodged at this definitional feature is the extent to which organizations are demonstrably different from other comparative organizations (Corley et al., 2006). Referring back to Albert and Whetten's definition, what is important is that distinctive features are defined 'in the eyes of its members.' Whether or not differentiable organizational features are 'objectively' different to other organizations is less important (for Albert and Whetten and their advocates) than the perceptions of organizational members and their ability to frame their distinctiveness for outsiders.

The final feature of Albert and Whetten's definition of organizational identity refers to how identity must **endure** and have continuity over time. Distilling the importance of this feature nicely, Gioia and colleagues (2013) note that "an important part of identity is history because an organization can only know if it is acting 'in character' if it has a history of action consistent with its founding or adopted core values" (p.125). While the other facets of identity have received few foundational critiques, the 'enduring proposition' has encountered significant scholarly disagreement that has created a whole body of research that explores the 'enduring' aspect of organizational identity (Oertel & Thommes, 2018; Chreim, 2005; Corley, 2004; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia et al., 2000; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gustafson & Reger, 1995; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Ybema et al., 2009). This productive theoretical disagreement will be reviewed in the following section to give it the appropriate attention.

2.2 Organizational Identity: Enduring or Dynamic?

Following its landmark definition, the study of organizational identity emerged as a productive body of research. Stirring this production was a lively debate between scholars that questioned the continuity of organizational identity over time (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Scholars who support the 'enduring identity proposition' view organizational identity as static and unchanging (Albert, 1998; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Czarniawska, 1997; Weick, 1995; Whetten & Mackey, 2002) while those who support the 'dynamic identity proposition' view it as dynamic and malleable (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). This section will review these collectives in turn.

2.2.1 Enduring Identity Proposition

Scholars who support the enduring identity proposition view organizational identity as static, with one pair of authors going so far as to say that “if it changes, it’s not identity” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This group of scholars originates with Albert and Whetten themselves, who necessitate continuity in their conceptual definition (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Why they do so can be traced back to their metaphorical exercise of elevating concepts related to individual identity and extending them to the organizational level. In particular, they draw from the work of Erikson’s (1968) study of individual identity. In his study of WWII soldiers, Erikson observed a sense of disorientation (“identity crisis”) as soldiers returned home from the war. He found that soldiers struggled to reconcile who they were before deployment with who they were after deployment, with soldiers seeking a “personal sameness and historical continuity” (Erikson, 1968, p. 22) for psychological well-being. Erikson goes on to define “ego identity” as “the awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego’s synthesising methods and a continuity of one’s meaning for others” (Erikson, 1968, p. 22). Extending this concept to the organizational-level, Albert and Whetten posit that organizational identity has “features that exhibit some degree of sameness or continuity over time” (1985, p. 265). Applied to organizational members, they too have been portrayed as having an “intrinsic desire to sense and experience coherence and continuity” (Weick, 1995, p. 20).

From an ontological perspective, the enduring identity proposition is associated with a social actor perspective of organizational identity (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013; Haslam et al., 2017; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The social actor view “emphasizes the notion that organizations as entities are actors in society, gives prominence to the overt ‘claims’ made by organizations about who they are in society, and assigns great weight to the role of categories in determining organizational identity” (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013, p. 127). This view builds on the work from the institutional tradition (e.g., Friedland & Alford, 1991; Selznick, 1957), and emphasises how self-definitions contain functional properties that serve as the basic requirements of individuals and organizations as social actors: continuity, coherence, and distinctiveness (Albert, 1998; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Moreover, this view posits that organizational identity is derived from a set of institutional claims (i.e.

explicitly stated notions of what an organization is and does) that are expected to influence how its members perceive of the central, distinct, and enduring facets of the organization by supplying them with institutionalised narratives that enable them to construct a collective sense of self (Czarniawska, 1997; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). In total, these scholars conceptualise identity as “those things that enable social actors to satisfy their inherent needs to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and to be unique actors or entities” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 396).

As an empiric reality, Albert and Whetten (1985) do acknowledge that organizations may go through separate phases which may affect organizational identity. Recognising this fact, Albert and Whetten (1985, p. 275) put forward that organizations go through “four common life-cycle events (birth, growth, maturity, retrenchment) as markers for the temporal dimension” that go on to affect organizational identity. This conceptualisation aligns with what Van de Ven and Poole (1995) would go on to term as the ‘life cycle theory of change’. From this perspective, an individual or organization can change at critical transition points and that change is regulated by a “logic, program, or code” (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 515) internal to the entity and determines its future development. Building off this perspective, Phillips and Kim (2009) suggest that an organization’s founding identity will likely adapt amid market innovation. Phillips and Kim (2009) observed how the commercial music industry radically shifted from classical music to jazz music, adapting its identity to match market trends. They then further support the proposition that organizational identity is a “life-cycle construct” (Phillips & Kim, 2009, p. 496). All in all, Albert and Whetten (1985) acknowledged that “organizations change over time” (1985, p. 269), but posit that organizational identity only changes over extended periods and never easily.

Critics of the enduring identity proposition argue that the anthropomorphism of organizations may have led to improper analogies and to conceptual ambiguity (Ashforth et al., 2020). Christensen and Cheney (2000) assert that “. . . although it is widely accepted that continuity is an important dimension of individual identity (Erikson, 1968; Mead, 1934), it is not clear in exactly what respects this observation applies to organizational identity” (2000, p. 258). Other critics agree that institutional claims and categories matter for identity (“at the individual level, seeing oneself as

female, and not male is often a major facet of...identity; at the organization level, seeing oneself as a bank and not a bakery is similarly important” (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013, p. 170)), but argue that such claims and descriptors are unable to provide nuanced differences that may affect perception and action (i.e. knowing an organization is a bank is insufficient to know its identity) (Gioia et al., 2010).

2.2.2 Dynamic Identity Proposition

As the field of organizational identity developed, some scholars began to question the ontological basis for organizational identity. These scholars rooted their position on newfound empirical evidence that interpretations of organizations were dynamic and changed over time in the face of internal and external stimuli (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Focusing beyond formal claims, these scholars began to view organizational identity as “collective understandings of the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent, and that distinguish the organization from other configurations” (Gioia et al., 2000, p. 64). Moreover, they believed that organizational identity resides in ‘interpretive schemes’ that organizational members collectively construct to provide meaning to their experience (Gioia, 1998).

An early study of dynamic organizational identity was Gioia and Thomas (1996) in their empirical study of a planned identity change within a U.S. university. When organizational leaders wanted to shift the university’s orientation to be more ‘business-like,’ they found that in order “to induce change, the organization must be destabilised and convinced that there is a necessity for a different way of seeing and being” (Gioia & Thomas, 1996, p. 375). In so doing, Gioia and Thomas contrasted previously established life-cycle theories of organizational identity and highlighted that organizations can proactively and deliberately change their identity in a relatively short period of time. Gioia and Thomas also challenged the enduring identity proposition, stating that:

“The definition of identity as enduring obscures an important aspect of identity within the context of organizational change. What does ‘enduring’ mean if

organizational actors presume identity to be (and treat it as) malleable as a matter of practical necessity?” (1996, p. 394).

Additionally, Gioia and Thomas called on other scholars to “soften the stricture on the conception of identity as more or less fixed to include a dimension of fluidity” (1996, p. 394).

Another early study that further supported the dynamic view of organizational identity is Dutton and Dukerich’s (1991). In their study of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Dutton and Dukerich examined the relationship between how internal members interpreted their organization’s identity in relation to their construed external image (how outsiders view the organization). The authors describe how a discrepancy between internal member’s current (positive) identity and outsider’s current (negative) image instigated internal members to reconsider and change their overall identity from a ‘transportation’ organization to a ‘social welfare’ organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Further commenting on the dynamic relationship between internal identity and external construed image, Hatch and Shultz write that:

“Organizational identity is not an aggregation of perceptions of an organization resting in peoples’ heads, it is a dynamic set of processes by which an organization’s self is continuously socially constructed from the interchange between internal and external definitions of the organization offered by all organizational stakeholders who join in the dance” (2002, p. 1004).

Further unpacking how organizational identity change can occur, Gioia et al (2000) put forward that organizational identity is comprised of labels and a closely coupled set of meanings associated with these labels. The authors suggest that identity change can either manifest vis-à-vis (i) a change in the labels or (ii) a change in meanings associated with those labels. While shifting labels may be more explicit and obvious, changing the meanings associated with labels creates equally salient identity shifts. The authors suggest that shifting labels and meanings creates “adaptive instability,” positing that this characteristic of organizational identity enables organizations to adapt to environmental changes while appearing ‘to be the same organization today that they were yesterday’ (Gioia et al., 2000).

Taken as a whole, supporters of the dynamic identity proposition largely prescribe to an ontological commitment to the social construction perspective of identity (Corley et al., 2006; Haslam et al., 2017; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). This position underlines the view that organizational identity emerged from the shared interpretive schemes that members collectively construct (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Moreover, since identity derives from repeated interaction with others within an organization (Cooley, 2017; Kreiner et al., 2015) and is negotiated and shared between individuals, these scholars posit that identity is thus malleable and capable of shifting in a relatively short period of time. Finally, the social construction perspective views “organization members as meaning creators—as the ultimate generators of the labels, meanings, and other cognitive features that produce the ‘understandings’ that constitute the essence of organizational identity” (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013, p. 170; see also Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

2.3 Organizational Identity: Formation

While a significant body of research has examined how organizations maintain or change their identity over time, less is known about how organizations build identity from the ground up. A few sparse works have revealed facets of identity construction (Ashforth et al., 2011; S. R. Clegg et al., 2007; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998) with even fewer addressing this phenomenon head on (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Felix, 2020; Gioia et al., 2010).

An early work regarding organizational identity formation is Czarniawska and Wolff (1998). The authors put forward a study of two emerging universities (one in Italy and the other in Germany) and examined how strong identity could facilitate (or undermine) legitimacy in the highly institutionalised field of European universities. They found that the Italian university was able to ‘fit in’ to the organizational field by forming an identity similar to other field players, all the while pushing for reforms at the field level. Because the Italian university was ‘similar enough’ to other universities, they were seen as “one of us” and blossomed over time (Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998, p. 44). Conversely, the German university adopted an identity that was radically different to other established universities. This radicalism led other universities to view the new entrant as a perpetual outsider. Unable to attain field

legitimacy and continued investment, the new entity was eventually absorbed into an existing university.

In another study of the relationship between organizational identity and field legitimacy, Clegg and colleagues (2007) examine a newly forming field itself (business coaching in Australia). The authors found that without a clear identity of what business coaching was at a field level, organizations were described as having uncertainty about who they were. Clegg et al. (2007) posited that organizations in emerging industries need to form strong identities internally and “perform” as if they belonged to a pre-existing institutional norm. In particular, the authors noted that coaching organizations would attempt to present a stable (i.e., enduring) identity as they interacted with stakeholders while at the same time contrasting themselves with existing consultancy organizations (i.e., distinctive). Through ongoing actions, Clegg and colleagues found that coaching organizations were able to converge on a shared identity at the field level whereby organizations could eventually define themselves as legitimate members of the field. Additional research on organizational identity and field legitimacy is offered by Gioia et al., (2010) and Porac et al., (1995).

Exploring how multiple levels of identity influence each other in organizations, Ashforth et al. (2011) put forward their conceptual argument of identity formation. Drawing from Wiley’s (1988) levels of subjectivity (inter-, intra-, and generic) and Drori, Honig, & Sheaffer’s (2009) empirical example of a new entrepreneurial firm, Ashforth and co-authors argue that the intrasubjective meanings of organizational founders converge at the intersubjective level (i.e., moving from individual understandings to group understandings) in order to form a ‘social reality’ about ‘who we are’ as an organization. As time moves forward and organizational actors perform actions, these intersubjective meanings are reified and taken-for-granted, becoming “encoded in the goals, routines, information flows, and so on” (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146), and eventually elevating an organization’s identity to a generic subjective level. This influence then begins to work downwards, with generic subjective facilitating identity processes at the intersubjective and intrasubjective levels.

A work that directly speaks to the empirical formation of organizational identity is provided by Corley and Gioia (2004). The authors studied the formation of

an ‘internet-age’ company that spun off from a traditional Fortune 100 parent company. As newly independent and highly different in scope to its parent company, the authors found that organizational members were presented with profound “identity ambiguity” and struggled to understand current identity with a desired future identity. To be specific, identity ambiguity refers to being unsure about what is central, distinct, and enduring about the organization and not knowing what types of actions would be ‘acting in character’ for the organization. Through their study, the authors found empirical evidence to support the distinction between identity labels (i.e., claims) and the meanings (i.e., understandings) associated with those labels (Corley & Gioia, 2004), a notion that had only been theorised in prior work of organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2000).

Finally, another key study that speaks directly to the formation of organizational identity is provided by Gioia et al. (2010), who put forward a qualitative study of a new school of information. Developed from eight years of observation (from nascency to its early years), Gioia and colleagues put forward a grounded model of the organizational identity formation process, consisting of sequential thematic phases. The first phase of identity formation is the articulation of initial organizational identity claims made by its founders. These early claims act as a guiding vision about the ideals and goals of the new organization. Moreover, these founding claims demarcate how the new organization should be perceived as related to certain categories and not related to others (e.g., “we are a school of information, not a school of computer engineering” (Gioia et al., 2010, p. 16)). While founders attempt to define an organization’s identity, they are unable to account for how every facet of the organization relates to its desired identity. Thus, the second phase of identity formation is for organizational members to experience a ‘meanings void’ (i.e., “We don’t know what it means to be what the founding vision says we are supposed to be” (Gioia et al., 2010, p. 18)). The authors describe this meanings void as problematic for organizational members, as it impeded their day-to-day work. At first, the studied organization attempted to fill this meanings void by defining “what we are not,” because members found it more accessible than arriving at “who we are,” (termed by Gioia et al. as a “via negativa” approach). The third phase is comprised of organizational members attempting to fill this meanings void by engaging in ‘experimental contrasts,’ comparing the new organization to other existing

organizations within their field. Rather than focus on negative associations, this phase is described by the authors as arriving at positive (i.e., additive) associations. Finally, the fourth phase of organizational identity formation is when organizational members form a consensus about what they believe to be the central and distinct aspects that make up their identity (Gioia et al., 2010). In summary these multiple stages of identity formation can be characterised as:

“negotiating collective identity claims, performing ‘liminal actions’ (tentative, provisional structuring activities), attaining ‘optimal distinctiveness’ (in being similar to, but distinguished from a referent group) and assimilating legitimizing feedback to affirm the validity of their identity-related beliefs and/or to point out areas of identity that needed additional clarification because of internal discrepancies or divergences with external audiences” (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013, p. 159).

Similar to the other studies of identity formulation, this phased process highlights that as organizations begin to form an identity, its members will likely experience identity ambiguity or a ‘meanings void’ that they will seek to resolve.

2.4 Organizational Identity: Regulation

Scholars of organizational identity have examined how identity can be shaped or influenced by member action or environmental disruption (D. Oliver & Vough, 2020; Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Glynn, 2000; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). Building up to this point, scholars have long posited that organizational identity acts as a perceptual filter that influences how organizational members interpret issues (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Reger et al., 1994). For example, Tripsas (2009) found that Linco, an organization whose members viewed themselves as a “digital photography company,” failed to exploit a commercial opportunity of USB flash drives because “Linco’s interpretation of the flash drive opportunity was driven by the firm’s digital photography identity, and because USB flash drive did not fit with that identity” (p. 451). Since organizational identity can enable or disable organizational success based on how internal actors assess situations, it thus becomes clear why managers would want to shape its identity interpretations.

The way in which organizational managers attempt to shape identity interpretations has been studied in reference to ‘claim-making,’ a process whereby members or groups attempt to persuade internal and/or external actors towards their interpretation of what is central, distinct, and enduring about the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Doering et al., 2021; Glynn, 2000). Among these members, managers have a considerable advantage (Erat et al., 2020; Rodrigues & Child, 2008; Scott & Lane, 2000), as they are often perceived to speak ‘on behalf’ of the organization (Cheney, 1983). Their claims are thus viewed as important cues that often influence how other actors understand what the organization does and stands for (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; D. Oliver & Vough, 2020; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Moreover, organizations will often have a set of official identity claims – explicit statements about who the organizations is and what it does, in the form of formal vision statements, stated goals, public speeches by managers, etc., – that are seen as providing legitimate accounts for organizational identity (Czarniawska, 1997). Creating these official identity claims has been described as a key way in which organizational managers influence how other actors interpret the organization’s identity (Gioia et al., 2010; Whetten & Mackey, 2002) and support identity related actions (Scott & Lane, 2000).

Shaping the interpretation of organizational identity is particularly important when there are discrepancies between how different organizational actors view its identity. This review has already covered how identity discrepancies may arise between current and desired identity (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) and internal identity and external image (Corley, 2004; Doering et al., 2021; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). It is important to note that research has thus far focused on how organizations change in order to mitigate discrepancies between internal and external actors (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Sutton, 1992; Martins, 2005) and the tactics available to organizational managers to realign internal and external perceptions and aspirations (Elsbach, 2014; Gioia et al., 2000). Research has not yet examined how identity discrepancies are managed between internal actors (i.e., between claims made by managers and understandings by frontline workers).

Finally, a significant body of research exists that explores individual identity regulation in organizational contexts, however; it is important to note that this type of

literature *is not* about organizational identity itself. Such studies are often agnostic to the metaphorical use of identity, and directly tackle how individuals think of themselves in relation to organisations (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Knapp et al., 2013; Kong et al., 2020). Moreover, this literature captures the process by which individuals relate to organizations using identity terms (i.e., identification) (Bednar et al., 2020; Chreim, 2002; Demirtas et al., 2017; Empson, 2004). While this thesis does not contribute to this subset of literature, it is important to bring up in order to avoid inappropriate comparisons.

2.5 Summary & Research Questions

The scholarship of organizational identity has blossomed over the past several decades and has developed into a productive field within organization studies. Rooted on a foundational metaphor, organizational identity was first posited as the central, distinct, and enduring features which define how organisational members define ‘who we are and what we do’ as an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth et al., 2020). Early literature probed this enduring proposition in relation to organizational identity change, with some scholars putting forward that identity is dynamic and malleable (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) rather than static and unchanging (Albert, 1998; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Czarniawska, 1997; Weick, 1995; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This is not to say that the ‘dynamic identity proposition’ supplanted the earlier ‘enduring identity proposition,’ but that scholars began to additively supplement identity scholarship. This was mainly done by positing that organizations may put forward claims about who they are which stay rather fixed, while the identity understandings drawn from these claims can change over time (Gioia et al., 2000; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). While literature has begun to probe the theoretical permeability of these divisions, more empirical research is still needed to elucidate how these two literatures can be bridged.

Several scholars of organizational identity have moved beyond identity change to focus on facets of organizational formation. These scholars posit that the members of newly formed organizations experience identity ambiguity, where members are unsure about what the organization’s identity is or should be (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Felix, 2020). In order to clear this ambiguity Gioia and colleagues (2010) posit that

organizations pass through a series of phases in order to arrive at a shared identity – that is to say, an agreement on what is central, distinct and enduring about the organization and viewing each other’s actions as ‘in character’ for the organization. These phases involve using negotiation and experimentation to develop shared identity claims which act as a template for understanding and action. In current literature, this is posited as a long and cyclical process. What is still unknown is how these processes relate to time – is this process always stretched over multiple years? How do the various sub-processes of identity formation play out over time?

Finally, scholarship on organizational identity regulation was reviewed. This literature emphasises how identity is related to the overall act of organizing itself. These scholars put forward that organizational identity claims are political and actively used to shape how others develop identity understandings (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Glynn, 2000; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). Regulation scholars also examine how certain organizational actors or groups of actors are able to create claims and influence others to support their claims (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). It should be noted that this body of literature remains largely theoretical – while we know that identity claims shape identity understandings, how does this happen in practice? While we know that organizational managers have a privileged position to create identity claims, how are their viewpoints enforced?

2.5.1 Research Questions

Scholarship of organizational identity change, formation and regulation examine how identity claims and understandings develop over time. Key to this process is the use of the past (who we’ve been) and projected future (who we want to be) to distil the central, distinct, and enduring features which define an organization in the present (Sasaki et al., 2020; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). For organizations that have existed for years, the use of the past is literal – historical claims or actions taken throughout the organization’s lifetime help members understand the organization’s identity (Ravasi et al., 2019; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Sasaki et al., 2020). For newly formed organizations, literature seems to suggest that claims are derived from existing

templates for what similar organizations have done in the past (Oertel & Thommes, 2018; Gioia et al., 2010).

In empirical examples of identity formation (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Felix, 2020; Gioia et al., 2010) an underlying assumption is that all organizations are formed with the intent to exist in perpetuity. Indeed, scholarship of organizational identity often examines how organizations project themselves into the future in order to understand their identity in the present (Corley, 2004; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). What has not yet been addressed in the literature is how identity is formed and managed when organizations are temporary in nature. In other words, how does the absence of future existence impact the formation of organizational identity claims and understandings? Thus, a theoretical puzzle that has yet to be solved and will be addressed by this thesis is:

Without internal historical referents and projected futures, how is organizational identity formed and managed in newly created temporary organizations?

Previous literature posits that newly formed organizations build identity claims and understandings through collaborative processes (i.e., ‘negotiating collective identity claims,’ experimenting with ‘liminal actions,’ and ‘assimilating ‘legitimising feedback to affirm the validity of their identity-related beliefs’ (Gioia et al., 2010)). However, identity regulation scholarship casts doubt onto the extent to which these processes are truly collaborative (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Is it not organizational managers who are privileged to create identity claims and shape how others develop identity understandings? What then occurs when the identity claims of managers might be at odds with the identity understandings of frontline workers? How are these discrepancies dealt with? Thus, a second theoretical puzzle that has yet been addressed is:

How are identity discrepancies resolved when identity claims (of managers) conflict with identity understandings (of workers)?

To answer these theoretical questions, a lens is needed that enables observation of how members at multiple levels of the organization create claims and develop understandings. Thus far, this review has discussed broad expansions of organizational

identity literature, such as identity change, formation, and regulation. What has yet to be discussed is how these broad processes actually occur in real time. For example, how is identity ambiguity of newly formed organizations experienced by its frontline workers and what tools do they use in order to find clarity? Another body of literature has developed answers to similar questions and tackles the development of understanding head-on: sensemaking scholarship. The following chapter will review sensemaking literature to help answer the theoretical puzzles posed by this research. Additionally, chapter 4 will review literature on temporary organizations in order to shed light on how an organization's ephemerality may impact identity formation and sensemaking processes.

Chapter 3

Sensemaking

Sensemaking refers to the “the process through which people work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 57). If the reader begins this chapter directly following its predecessor, then it will be quite apparent how identity ambiguity and sensemaking may be natural bedfellows; however, this complimentary relationship was not apparent to the author at the onset of this research. At first, the author assumed that focusing solely on identity constructs would be sufficient to explain how identity was built and managed in temporary organizations. It took an empirical surprise during the inductive data collection to switch-on the proverbial lightbulb and elucidate the explanatory power of sensemaking in this context. To be specific, it was surprising to find that the same set of manager-derived identity claims were affecting the identity understandings of frontline workers differently (this empirical surprise will be fully fleshed out and elaborated upon in the Findings of this thesis). Sensemaking was then incorporated to better understand how frontline workers developed different meaning (i.e., identity understandings) over time.

While sensemaking literature was not reviewed before the start of the empirical research, it will be reviewed up-front in this thesis for clarity. This chapter will begin by reviewing sensemaking’s conceptual origins and will pin down a definition to be used within this thesis. Next, this chapter will review sensegiving and sensebreaking, concepts that explore the politics and subject-object relations of sensemaking activity. Other conceptual developments of sensemaking will then be reviewed, namely its relationship to discourse, materiality, and action. A section is then presented that directly links current scholarship of organizational identity and sensemaking. Finally, a summary of sensemaking literature is provided to uncover conceptual gaps and theoretical puzzles pertinent to this thesis.

3.1 History & Definition

While scholars have long noted that individuals attempt to understand their environment (Dewey, 1922; James, 1890), the first explicit use of sensemaking language was by Garfinkel (1967). He used the term “sense making” in his summary of ethnomethodology to signify how individuals interact, interpret, and account for their experience of reality during everyday practices (Garfinkel, 1967). Within the same year, Polanyi (1967) used the terms “sensegiving” and “sense-reading” to illustrate how people give meaning to speech and make sense of other’s speech. First to apply sensemaking to an organizational setting, Weick (1967) described sensemaking as necessary when organizations experience environmental discontinuities that gain the awareness of organizational actors and prompt recursive cycles of enactment, selection, and retention, meant to reduce equivocality.

Early work in sensemaking started to study aspects of meaning-making in various contexts. At the individual level, research examined how individuals made sense of their lives (Cicourel, 1974; Heap, 1976) and reconciled expectations with lived experience (Bugental et al., 1968; Manis, 1978; Staw & Ross, 1978). At the organizational level, scholars explored how beliefs underpin action and constrain future action (Salancik, 1977, 1977). Scholars also examined the cognitive underpinnings of sensemaking, including triggers of sensemaking (Louis, 1980) and how aspects of an individual’s environment were noticed and interpreted (Daft & Weick, 1984; Kiesler & Sproull, 1982; Starbuck & Milliken, 1988). Early sensemaking research also examined how actions resulting from sensemaking could alter the environment under consideration (Porac et al., 1989) or the outcome of crises (Abolafia & Kilduff, 1988; Weick, 1988).

The early roots of sensemaking crystallised in the 1990’s. An important advancement of sensemaking was the seminal text by Weick (1995), *Sensemaking in Organizations*, which summarised and distilled the core aspects of sensemaking. Other scholars in the 1990’s developed empirical research that explored how sensemaking occurred in the midst of a crisis (Weick, 1990, 1993) or how sensemaking was used after a crisis in order to retrospectively understand the crisis event (Gephart Jr, 1993; Gephart Jr et al., 1990). The use of language as a building block of sensemaking was also posited in the 1990’s (Boyce, 1995; Hill & Levenhagen, 1995). Additionally,

sensemaking was broadened to link sensemaking with key organizational outcomes such as social influence (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993), culture (Drazin et al., 1999), and strategic change (Barr, 1998; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Thomas et al., 1993).

From 2000 onwards, sensemaking has continued to be developed in relation to its conceptual components. Scholars have examined the social processes involved in sensemaking (Maitlis, 2005). Scholarship also began to develop on sensemaking's relationship to narrative (Brown & Humphreys, 2003; Dunford & Jones, 2000; Patriotta, 2003; Sonenshein, 2010), language (Cornelissen et al., 2021; O'Leary & Chia, 2007), and discursive processes (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Rouleau, 2005). The context in which sensemaking occurs has also received attention (Anand & Peterson, 2000; Colville et al., 2013; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) as well as the materiality and embodied nature of sensemaking (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011). Recent scholarship has also explored the phenomenology of sensemaking (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020) as well as the use of power in sensemaking (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022; Vaara & Whittle, 2021).

3.1.1 Definition

Despite the copious amount of sensemaking scholarship, there is no standard definition of sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Rather, some scholars allude to a “sensemaking theory” (Holt & Cornelissen, 2013; Jensen et al., 2009; Stein, 2004). As Weick (1995) puts it, there exists a “sensemaking perspective” which incorporates “a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities” (1995, p. ix).

This is not to say that many authors have not put forward their own definition of sensemaking. An early attempt at a sensemaking definition is offered by Starbuck and Milliken (1988), who write that:

“Sensemaking has many distinct aspects—comprehending, understanding, explaining, attributing, extrapolating, and predicting, at least. For example, understanding seems to precede explaining and to require less input; predicting may occur without either understanding or explaining; attributing

is a form of explanation that assigns causes. [...] What is common to these processes is that they involve placing stimuli into frameworks (or schemata) that make sense of the stimuli” (1988, p. 51).

Another definition is offered in Weick’s foundational text:

“Sensemaking is understood as a process that is (1) grounded in identity construction, (2) retrospective, (3) enactive of sensible environments, (4) social, (5) ongoing, (6) focused on and by extracted cues, (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy” (Weick, 1995, p. 17).

Over time, several authors have put forward their own definition (see examples in Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Gephart Jr, 1993; Maitlis, 2005; Sonenshein, 2010).

While it is out of the scope of this review to discuss all the nuances of each of these various definitions, this thesis will use the definition of sensemaking offered by Maitlis and Christianson’s (2014) literature review on sensemaking in organizations. In their review, they synthesise and find common ground amongst the various definitions offered over the past several decades. They posit that:

“Sensemaking is the process through which people work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 57).

While this definition is notably broad, it is brought into focus through the addition of various conceptual components posited to be inherent to sensemaking. Sensemaking satisfies an individual’s “need and capacity for turning complex and confusing circumstances into situations that can be comprehended, enabling purposeful action to be taken” (Hultin & Mähring, 2017, p. 567). Sensemaking is triggered when “organizational members encounter moments of ambiguity or uncertainty, they seek to clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and ‘makes sense’ of what has occurred” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 58; see also Brown, 2000; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking is not only the interpretation of cues, but involves the active authoring of events, recursively building the situations that are under examination (Sutcliffe, 2013; Weick, 1995; Weick et al.,

2005). Finally, sensemaking is a process and “meaning is grasped as an outcome of [the] sensemaking process” (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022, p. 23).

3.2 Sensegiving & Sensebreaking

As sensemaking scholarship matured, conceptual derivatives emerged that focused on various particulars of the sensemaking process: namely, sensegiving and sensebreaking (together, ‘sense-shaping’). While Polanyi (1967) is the first to use the term sensegiving, it didn’t develop into a subset of research until Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) elaborated the concept. In their study of organizational identity change at a US university, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) put forward that managers may attempt to shape how internal members view what is central, distinct, and enduring about an organization. They define sensegiving as “the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). Following this publication, other scholars began to study how actors or groups of actors shape how others act or interpret ambiguous stimuli (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Mantere et al., 2012; M. Pratt, 2000; Rouleau, 2005; Vlaar et al., 2006).

The developments of sensegiving are numerous. Sensegiving has been studied in reference to how organizational managers use symbols, images, and other techniques to influence organizational members (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). While organizational hierarchies have been shown to be an important factor in sensegiving (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007), research also shows that sensegiving can also be initiated by other internal actors (Sonenshein, 2010) or even external actors (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Sensegiving has also been studied in relation to impression management and issue selling (Dutton et al., 2001; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton & Duncan, 1987). More recently, sensegiving has been studied in reference to internal power relations (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022), which examine the “struggles over the appropriation and fixing of meaning” (N. Marshall & Rollinson, 2004, p. 74) within organizations.

While sensebreaking also influences how actors relate to meaning making, it does so in the opposite way to sensegiving. Sensebreaking refers to “the destruction

or breaking down of meaning” (M. Pratt, 2000, p. 464). While there is significantly less research on sensebreaking, it represents a key aspect of sensemaking and sensegiving. Sensebreaking can “motivate people to re-consider the sense that they have already made, to question their underlying assumptions, and to re-examine their course of action” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 69). Thus far, sensebreaking has been primarily explored as a process initiated by organizational managers, though its sensegiving counterpart alludes to the fact that other actors may also be able to initiate or shape sensebreaking processes (Mantere et al., 2012; Vlaar et al., 2008). It should be noted that sensegiving and sensebreaking are not the same – while sensegiving attempts to influence actors to move from current understanding to a new understanding, it does so additively (i.e., by offering a new account for how actors should understand ambiguous stimuli) (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Conversely, sensebreaking does not, in-and-of-itself, offer new accounts, but is merely concerned with casting current understanding as incorrect or insufficient (M. Pratt, 2000). Thus, sensebreaking can also be considered a prelude to sensegiving, as managers may purposefully create a meanings void that then needs to be filled with new meaning (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2005; M. Pratt, 2000).

Also receiving attention has been how organizational members respond to processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking. While these sister processes are largely top-down, scholars have examined how organizational members are “not simply passive recipients of meaning but instead engage in their own sensemaking and adopt, alter, resist, or reject the sense they have been given” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 78; see also Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; M. Pratt, 2000; Sonenshein, 2010). An indicative example of this process is offered by Monin and colleagues (2013). In their study of “carefully managed M&A,” the authors put forward that organizational managers continually engaged in sensegiving processes in order to promote an ethics of justice within their newly merged organization. Internal actors responded differently, with some accepting these given meanings, others expressing cynicism, and yet others actively opposing the sensegiving of managers (Monin et al., 2013). When sensegiving and sensebreaking are initiated by non-managers, scholars have found that attempts by multiple actors at the same time lead to struggles, termed ‘framing contests,’ over how others should interpret stimuli (Kaplan, 2008). What is still unknown in current literature is how processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking

directly result in sensemaking of organizational members. Also unknown is how those who initiate such processes come to believe whether or not their sensegiving or sensebreaking has created the ‘desired sense’ in those whom they were trying to influence. These points are returned to later.

3.3 Conceptual Developments

As the scholarship of sensemaking and sense-shaping developed, nuanced understandings of their dynamics have been uncovered. In order to fully explain the data presented later within this thesis, it is pertinent to explore some of these conceptual developments now.

3.3.1 Discourse in Sensemaking

A key development in sensemaking research investigates how discourse is used within sensemaking activity, namely discursive facets of narrative, metaphor, and language interpretation. The study of narratives has been referred to as being the largest body of discursive work in organizational sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), having been described as “the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1) and “the preferred sensemaking currency” (Boje, 1991, p. 106; cited in Abolafia, 2010, p. 349). Scholarship by Brown and colleagues explore how individual and collective identities come to be defined by narratives (Brown et al., 2008; Currie & Brown, 2003; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). They reveal that tension often arise when organizational managers and workers use narratives to attempt to define the central, distinct, and enduring facets of an organization (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). This work is further complicated due to the plurality of narratives present in organizations (Boje, 1991; Rhodes, 2001), with organizations being “polyphonic, socially constructed verbal systems characterized by multiple, simultaneous and sequential narratives that variously interweave, harmonize and clash” (Currie & Brown, 2003, p. 566).

Scholars have also examined the use of metaphor in the sensemaking process (Cornelissen, 2005, 2012; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2014). This research posits that

metaphor is able to make unfamiliar situations feel ordered as well as provide retrospective justifications for certain actions (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Since sensemaking is often used to explain previous actions to oneself and others (Weick, 1995), metaphors provide a powerful tool for validating some accounts while discrediting others. For example, Weick and Sutcliffe (2003) posit that the pediatric cardiac surgery staff at the Bristol Royal Infirmary used the metaphor of a 'learning curve' in their sensemaking in order to justify their consistently poor performance. Cornelissen (2012) puts forward a study of corporate communications professionals to posit that the use of metaphor varies depending on the role-related commitments of a sensemaker and their relationship to others' expectations. What this research demonstrates is that a sensemaker's use of metaphor (and by extension, discursive resources) changes based on their relationship to their audience and issue in question.

The use of discursive practices in the sensemaking process also highlights the link between how sensemakers turn discursive cues into meaning. Cues have been described as "the 'raw material' upon which sense is made" (Vaara & Whittle, 2021, p. 2). Anything can act as a cue as long as a person can perceive it with their senses (i.e., hear, see, touch, taste, or smell). However "cues do not arrive pre-packaged and ready-made as meaningful elements upon which we then act" (Vaara & Whittle, 2021, p. 8). Instead, Chia (2000, p. 551) put forward that cues, or the "undifferentiated flux of raw experience" has to be "forcibly carved out" for attention (Chia, 2000, p. 551; see also Weick et al., 2005). Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) describe this as the "bracketing of cues from the environment," which is based on their interpretation of "salient frames" (2010, p. 551). As mentioned previously, these frames are not always agreed upon by all organizational members but may result in 'framing contests' over how actors should interpret stimuli (Kaplan, 2008).

3.3.2 Sociomaterial in Sensemaking

Beyond discourse, scholars have explored how sensemaking relates to sociomateriality. This literature stems from the critique that sensemaking is often described as a "rational, intellectual process" (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012, p. 65) and ignores the embedded and embodied nature of sensemaking activity. Orlikowski and

Scott's (2008) summarise this critique nicely when they write that "attention has tended to focus on . . . processes of sensemaking and interaction with little recognition of the deeply constitutive entanglement of humans and organizations with materiality" (2008, p. 466). Scholars of the sociomaterial of sensemaking take the perspective that sensemaking studies need to incorporate the felt senses as well as the physicality of material cues and artefacts (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Hultin & Mähring, 2017; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011).

Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) do this nicely by studying the materiality of sensemaking within an ethnographic study of a U.S. product design consulting firm. By examining the interactions of three design teams, the authors posit that sensemaking emerges out of both material and conversational practices. They demonstrate how employees used a vast collection of physical artefacts (e.g., sketches, magazine images, cards, and maps) during stages of the sensemaking process in order to build, articulate, and elaborate their understandings of products they designed. Material artefacts acted as cues and "fragments of interpretations" that were permanently available to members and provided them with external repositories from which to build shared understanding. Additionally, the materiality of artefacts led employees to re-use ideas found earlier in the process because they were permanent, accessible to all, and concrete forms that could be reused. The authors posit that the material processes involved in sensemaking may enable the transition from individual to group-level sensemaking (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012).

The sociomaterial elements of sensemaking have also been studied in other contexts. Several authors have examined how field-configuring events such as conferences, tradeshow, and technology contests are all built around material elements and are important for field-wide collective sensemaking (Anand & Jones, 2008; Glynn, 2008; A. L. Oliver & Montgomery, 2008; Zilber, 2007). Others have explored the materiality of "free spaces," settings outside of the direct control of a dominant group within an organization (Kellogg, 2009). While the study of sociomateriality of sensemaking is taking off, several authors have encouraged further scholarship in this domain (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Hultin & Mähring, 2017; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011)

3.3.3 Action in Sensemaking

The role of action in sensemaking has been traced all the way back to Weick's early writing on the subject. Weick asserts that action is integral to sensemaking. He believed that individuals can only understand the world by taking action and seeing what happens next, stating that "cognition lies in the path of action. Action precedes cognition and focuses cognition" (Weick, 1988, p. 307). Others have examined the role of action in sensemaking (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Orton, 2000; Rudolph et al., 2009; Weick et al., 2005) and have put forward that actions create cues that can be used to create meaning. In other words, people can learn about a situation by taking action and paying attention to responses in order to build understanding (Weick, 1988). Action can also be used deliberately to test provisional understanding created from previous sensemaking. For example, Rudolph et al. (2009) found that medical doctors took action in order to gather information to help rule in or out plausible reasons for a patient's medical condition. In total, "action and cognition are thus recursively linked: action serves as fodder for new sensemaking, while simultaneously providing feedback about the sense that has already been made" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 84).

Action is also important to sensemaking because it shapes the environment in which sensemaking itself occurs. This happens because actions that help build understanding can later alter what people encounter and thus change the very situation that initiated the sensemaking to begin with (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This reciprocal relationship between sensemaking action and its environment is referred to as enactment, "the process in which organization members create a stream of events that they pay attention to" (Orton, 2000, p. 231). Enactment differentiates sensemaking from interpretation, as it denotes that people play a key role in creating their own sensed environment (Orton, 2000; Weick, 1988, 1995; Weick et al., 2005; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2003). Weick (1988) put forward that "people who act in organizations often produce structures, constraints, and opportunities that were not there before they took action" (Weick, 1988, p. 306). Describing this process further, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) state that actors are continuously "creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby

enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn” (2014, p. 67).

3.4 Organizational Identity & Sensemaking

The astute reader will have noticed the broad ontological and scholarly overlap between sensemaking literature reviewed in this chapter and identity literature reviewed previously. Indeed, these sister concepts are often studied together, with key studies drawing from both literatures to broaden our understanding of their symbiotic relationship (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Ravasi et al., 2019; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Thus far, these literatures have been reviewed separately for conceptual clarity, but their overlap is now reviewed.

The conceptual overlap between sensemaking and identity can most astutely be observed vis-à-vis the ontological underpinnings of identity research. Scholars of the social actor perspective of organizational identity regard identity as “those things that enable social actors to satisfy their inherent needs to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and to be unique actors or entities” (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 396). This view posits that organizational identity resides in “a set of institutional claims—that is, explicitly stated views of what an organization is and represents—that are expected to influence its members’ perceptions of central, enduring, and distinctive features of the organization by providing them with legitimate and consistent narratives that allow them to construct a collective sense of self (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 435; see also Czarniawska, 1997; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Sensegiving and sensebreaking are thus key conceptual components that help to facilitate understanding in relation to these identity claims. Sensegiving and sensebreaking provide a coherent guide for how organizational members should relate to – and conceptualise – the central, distinct, and enduring features of the organization. Moreover, organizational managers or groups of organizational members may use formal identity claims as a tool for sensegiving in order to influence how internal and external actors define and interpret the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ravasi et al., 2019; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

Conversely, scholars who focus on the social construction of organizational identity have shifted away from formal claims and emphasise the “collective understandings of the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent, and that distinguish the organization from other configurations” (Gioia et al., 2000, p. 64 emphasis added). These scholars posit that organizational identity stems from the shared interpretive schemes that members construct collectively to provide meaning to experience (Gioia, 1998). These shared understandings may or may not be consistent with the official organizational claims of managers (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Fiol (1991) relates the construction of these collective understandings to the sensemaking process, noting that “meanings and meaning structures . . . are negotiated among organizational members” (quoted in Godfrey, 1998, p. 36). Scholars have directly examined how organizational members use sensemaking within organizations in order to collectively understand the central, enduring, and distinctive features of the organization (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Fiol, 1991; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Ravasi et al., 2019; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

How these various concepts fit together can be clearly exemplified through the process of identity formation in new organizations. Current literature posits that members of new organizations experience ambiguity – a ‘meanings void’ – about the organization’s identity (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2010). This ambiguity prompts organizational members to engage in sensemaking in order to ameliorate this equivocality and give meaning to the new organization’s identity (Gioia et al., 2010; Weick, 1995). As an output of this sensemaking process, organizational members will eventually arrive at identity understandings – what they believe to be the central, distinct, and enduring features of the newly formed organization (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). While some literature characterises this sensemaking process as collaborative (Gioia et al., 2010), others posit that managers may engage in sensegiving and sensebreaking in order to effect the sensemaking of organizational members (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022; M. Pratt, 2000). Organizational managers may put forward identity claims to state what they derive to be the central, distinct, and enduring features of the newly formed organization (Ravasi et al., 2019; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Drawing further from sensemaking concepts, these identity claims can be discursive (e.g., mission statements, narratives of formation) (Boje, 1991; Brown et al., 2008) or material (e.g., vision boards, financial reports) (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Stigliani & Ravasi,

2012). In both cases, manager-derived identity claims may serve a sensegiving and sensebreaking function in order to shape the sensemaking and eventual identity understandings of organizational members of newly formed organizations. For a further distillation of how these concepts relate to each other, see Table 1.

Through this extensive example, it is clear that concepts related to both social actor (i.e., identity claims, sensegiving and sensebreaking) and social construction (i.e., identity understandings and sensemaking) ontological perspectives are necessary to understand how organizational identity is formed and maintained over time. While this example patches together several different studies in order to demonstrate how these concepts are related, no study has been put forward that addresses all these concepts empirically in relation to the identity formation of a new organization, not to mention a temporary organization. What is still unknown is if these concepts play out empirically as described theoretically. Moreover, it is unclear if all mechanisms related to these processes have been identified, or if additional processes exist that further stitch together sensemaking and identity formation.

TABLE 1, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AND SENSEMAKING PERSPECTIVES

Organizational Identity and Sensemaking Perspectives		
Characteristic	Social Actor Perspective	Social Constructionist Perspective
Theoretical foundations	Institutional theory	Social constructivism
Definition of identity	Organizational identity resides in institutional claims, available to members, about central, enduring and distinctive properties of their organization (e.g., Whetten, 2003).	Organizational identity resides in collectively shared beliefs and understandings about central and relatively permanent features of an organization (e.g., Gioia et al., 2000).
Emphasis on cognitive processes	Sensegiving/Sensebreaking: Identity claims are organizational self-definitions proposed by organizational leaders, providing members with a consistent and legitimate narrative to construct a collective sense of self.	Sensemaking: Shared understandings are the results of sensemaking processes carried out by members as they interrogate themselves on central and distinctive features of their organization.
Emphasis on endurance or on change	Identity claims are by their own nature enduring and resistant to change; labels tend to change rarely and never easily.	Shared understandings are periodically renegotiated among members.
Fundamental work	Czarniawska (1997) Whetten & Mackey (2002) Whetten (2003)	Dutton & Dukerich (1991) Fiol (1991, 2002) Gioia & Thomas (1996) Gioia, Schultz, & Corley (2000) Corley & Gioia (2004)

Adapted from (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006)

3.5 Summary & Research Question

The study of sensemaking and sense-shaping have enjoyed considerable attention over the past several decades. The study of sensemaking is rooted in the study of individuals and the process through which they come to understand their environment (Dewey, 1922; James, 1890). While several early scholars examined aspects of sensemaking (Garfinkel, 1967; Polanyi, 1967; Weick, 1990), Weick (1995) solidified sensemaking as a field of study. Since then, scholars have examined aspects of sensemaking, such as its relationship to discourse (Boje, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988; Vaara & Whittle, 2021), materiality (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Hultin & Mähring, 2017; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012), and action (Orton, 2000; Rudolph et al., 2009). Sensemaking has also given birth to related concepts, such as sensegiving and sensebreaking (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; M. Pratt, 2000).

Current conceptions of sensemaking view it as “process through which people work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations” (Burke & Morley, 2016, p. 57). Moreover, sensemaking is triggered when “organizational members encounter moments of ambiguity or uncertainty, they seek to clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and ‘makes sense’ of what has occurred” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 58; see also Brown, 2000; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005).

An important aspect of sensemaking is its role in organizing. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) remind us that “researchers need to approach sensemaking as an accomplishment” (2020, p. 24), wherein “meaning is grasped as an outcome of sensemaking process” (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022, p. 23). If organizational members can quickly arrive at collective understandings whenever presented with ambiguous stimuli, then organizations may be able to spend less time reducing equivocality and more time achieving their desired aims.

Vital to this process are sensegiving and sensebreaking, wherein managers or groups of actors attempt to shape the sensemaking of others towards the construction of desired meaning. Extant research has examined how sensegiving and sensebreaking occur in practice and the tools available to those who attempt to shape the sensemaking

of others (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; M. Pratt, 2000). However, scholarship has yet to close the loop; if sensegiving and sensebreaking are successful when the sensemaking of individuals matches the desired meaning of the sensegiver, how is this assessed? How does the sensegiver know that they have been successful? Thus, a research gap and theoretical puzzle that have yet to be solved and will be addressed by this thesis is:

How to managers assess if their processes of sensegiving & sensebreaking have created 'desired sense' in frontline workers?

The exploration of this question may also bridge additional scholarly gaps related to the boundary conditions of sense-shaping efforts. Extant literature acknowledges that sensegiving and sensebreaking may sometimes fail (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022); however, it is unclear why certain individuals may arrive at 'desired' sense while others do not. For this research, 'desired sense' refers to the alignment of identity understandings between organizational managers and workers. The development of desired sense does not arise purely through sensegiving; indeed, extant scholarship says that organizational members are "not simply passive recipients of meaning but instead engage in their own sensemaking and adopt, alter, resist, or reject the sense they have been given" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 78; see also Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; M. Pratt, 2000; Sonenshein, 2010). Thus, this research would be incomplete without also focusing on the sensemaking of individuals.

As mentioned previously, sensemaking literature has found that as "organizational members encounter moments of ambiguity or uncertainty, they seek to clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and 'makes sense' of what has occurred" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 58; see also Brown, 2000; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). These sensemaking cues are not pre-packaged, but need to be "forcibly carved out" for attention (Chia, 2000, p. 551), resulting in "salient frames" of interpretation (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010, p. 551).

While extant literature does explore empirical examples of salient frames, they have been characterised as overly retrospective and episodic (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). When researching sensemaking as an accomplishment, researchers have to

acknowledge that sensemakers are agents “always already entwined with others and things” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011, p. 343; see also Gehman et al., 2013) and “undertake purposive, temporally oriented organizational activities” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020, p. 24). Scholars have thus called for additional studies of sensemaking-as-accomplishment empirically, with an emphasis on obtaining “rich accounts” (Weick, 2007, p. 17) that “aim to capture, as much as possible, how agents continuously accomplish sensemaking in carrying out their organizational activities” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020, p. 24; see also Nicolini, 2016). This is particularly to counteract extant sensemaking literature that views sensemaking as an invariable “umbrella construct” (Hirsch & Levin, 1999; Kudesia, 2017), which obscures its different usages within management and organization scholarship and reduce its “construct clarity” (Suddaby, 2010). This research addresses this gap by exploring how ‘desired sense’ (i.e., aligned identity understanding) is accomplished longitudinally and vis-à-vis organizational activities.

Chapter 5 will outline the research methodology that explored the theoretical puzzle put forward here and in the previous chapter. Before that, Chapter 4 will close out these review chapters by reviewing current literature regarding the empirical context for this research: temporary organizations.

Chapter 4

Temporary Organizations

Temporary organizations have recently captured the theoretical interest of management scholars. Historically, scholars have studied organizations with the assumption that organizations are, or should be, permanent (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Herndon (1971) encapsulated this assumption perfectly, going so far as to say that “an institution must continue to exist. Every action must be undertaken with respect to eternity” (quoted in Weick, 1974, p. 499). However, empirical examples of temporary organization are rapidly increasing. For example, the European Union defines almost all reform activities as temporary project organizations (Sjöblom & Godenhjelm, 2009). The proliferation of temporary organizations in the contemporary business environment has “turn[ed] upside down the traditional notion of organizing” (Meyerson et al., 1996) and has ignited the scholarship of this organizational form.

Extant scholarship has yet to robustly study how organizational identity and sensemaking occur in temporary organizations. Moreover, in what literature does exist, organizational identity and sensemaking are often alluded to, but not addressed head-on. For example, Porsander (2000) explores how temporary organizations can project an organizational image similar to that of pre-existing organizations in order to use the image of others to gain legitimacy and financial resources for themselves. Another example, Bechky (2006) explores the ambiguity experienced by individuals in temporary organizations and puts forward how individuals rely on the enactment of specific, role-based jobs in order to build project-specific understandings. While neither of these examples address organizational identity or sensemaking directly, they both develop theory that are relevant for the theoretical positioning of this thesis.

Thus, to ground the theoretical and empirical exploration of this thesis, this chapter will review the scholarly understanding of temporary organizations. First, the theoretical development of temporary organizations will be presented, followed by a formal definition. Second, managerial challenges of temporary organizations are presented, focusing on internal coordination, network relations, and task completion.

Third, City of Culture management organizations are reviewed as a context-specific archetype of temporary organizations. Fourth and finally, a summary of the concept is presented.

4.1 Theoretical Development and Definition

Temporary organizations have existed within management literature since as far back as the 1960s. Early scholars such as Miles (1964), Bennis (1968), and Goodman & Goodman (1976), posited that organizations should be studied in relation to their permanence and outlined the possibility of temporary organizations as an organizational form. However, scholars in the seventies and eighties largely ignored these early prophets. The scholarship of temporary organizations reignited in the 1990s, with a Special Issue in the *Scandinavian Journal of Management*. Within that Special Issue, Lundin and Söderholm (1995) put forward an initial theory of temporary organizations, which is now seen as a theoretical cornerstone of the field (Burke & Morley, 2016).

Lundin and Söderholm (1995) put forward that temporary organizations are categorically different than their permanent counterparts vis-à-vis their relationship to four constructs: time, task, team, and transition. First, time within temporary organizations can be considered a bounded construct. While permanent organizations experience time as a continuous phenomenon, temporary organizations experience it only as a demarcated segment. Second, temporary organizations are formed to complete a specific task. These tasks are action-oriented and constitute the *raison d'être* for the temporary organization. Third, teams are specifically created to complete the tasks that constitute the temporary organizations. Teams focus individuals on tasks and view individuals as resources as well as bearers of conceptions and attitudes. Fourth, temporary organizations exist to achieve some sort of transition (i.e., turnaround, change, or transformation) before success can be proclaimed.

Reignited by Lundin and Söderholm (1995), the early 2000s experienced a rapid growth of scholarly interest in temporary organizations (Bakker, 2010). Studies used temporary organizations to explore trust (Creed et al., 1996), inter-organizational relations (Jones & Lichtenstein, 2008), innovation (Davies & Hobday, 2005), strategic

management (Cattani et al., 2011), and organizational boundaries (Kenis et al., 2009). The scattered study of temporary organizations was then synthesised in a review by Burke & Morley (2016), which gave conceptual clarity to the diverse subject. Recent scholarship has contrasted temporary and permanent organizations to study how organizational members develop a relational sense of community (Livne-Tarandach & Jazaieri, 2021), employee identification (Goetz & Wald, 2022), and creativity (Gemünden et al., 2018).

Throughout the theoretical development of temporary organizations, a formal definition eluded the field for a significant time. Sapsed and colleagues (2005) offered that temporary organizations did not fit neatly into conventional analytical categories in order to differentiate them from other cognate forms. Goodman and Goodman (1976) put forward that tasks are the sole defining feature of temporary organizations. As noted previous, Lundin and Söderholm (1995) define temporary organizations in relation to time, task, team, and transition. Other authors have noted how temporary organizations might be constituted through their relation to the use of diversely skilled individuals with specialised competencies (Lindkvist, 2005; Meyerson et al., 1996) who come together for time-bound tasks (Bechky, 2006). While each of these authors emphasise subtle nuances, all definitions agree that temporary organizations have an ex-ante determined termination point “fixed either by a specific date or by the attainment of a predefined state or condition” (Bakker et al., 2009, p. 203), that makes them ‘transient’ (Grabher, 2002a), of ‘limited duration’ (Goodman & Goodman, 1976) or subject to “institutionalized termination” (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 445). Reflecting this point, Burke & Morley put forward their definition of temporary organizations as:

“A temporally bounded group of interdependent organizational actors, formed to complete a complex task” (2016, p. 1237).

This thesis will adopt Burke & Morley’s definition of temporary organizations as it captures the overarching consensus about the core aspects of temporary organizations offered throughout the field without overemphasising specific aspects (i.e., task or team).

4.2 Managing Temporary Organizations

A large swath of literature has focused on how temporary organizations experience managerial challenges related to their temporal positioning. These challenges centre around internal coordination, network relations, and task completion. These theoretical challenges and associated mitigation strategies will now be reviewed.

4.2.1 Internal Coordination

One emergent challenge of temporary organizations relates to internal coordination. Since temporary organizations bring together new teams to complete a complex task, scholars posit that individuals within temporary organizations are often confronted with uncertainty about how to go about achieving this task (Burke & Morley, 2016). Some scholars have put forward that the repeated enactment and reproduction of role structures serve as a guide for how individuals within temporary organizations know what to do (Bechky, 2006; Whitley, 2006). For example, Bechky (2006) puts forward that individuals are able to quickly come together on temporary film projects base on specific, role-based jobs (i.e., ‘gaffer’ or ‘grip’). Meyerson and colleagues (1996) put forward a similar case, whereby repeated role-based interactions acts as a coordinated mechanism for building swift trust, “even if their histories would seem to preclude its development” (1996, p. 167). However, Jones and Lichtenstein (2008) posit that trust is built from prior relations and histories reduce transactional uncertainty and increase shared understanding required for effective coordination. While permanent organizations develop longstanding teams to develop this trust, temporary organizations are not afforded that privilege (Sydow et al., 2003). Also contributing to poor internal coordination in temporary organizations is that they are often comprised of “perpetual neophytes” due to the high turnover rate within temporary organizations that is attributed to role-related stress (Keith, 1978, p. 195).

Scholars argue that temporary organizations need to put in specific systems for internal coordination in order to overcome the idea of “undeveloped-group-developed-mind” (Weick & Roberts, 1993, p. 375). One way in which they do so is through temporal coordination (Söderlund, 2002). Implementing time-based controls manage ‘dispersed time orientations’ (Burke & Morley, 2016) whereby components of

organizational tasks are further distributed into time-bound segments. Positively, time dispersed tasks disrupt local knowledge process that prevent temporary organizations “from being guided by overly localistic and atomistic orientations” (Lindkvist et al., 1998, p. 948) and preserve “the diversity of, and tensions between, professional and organizational cultures from turning into collaborative paralysis” (Grabher, 2002b, p. 208). Grabher (2002b) also argues that temporary organizations prevent any single perspective from “becoming corrupted by a hegemonic view” and provides “antidotes against lock-ins into particular cognitive or aesthetic patterns” (2002b, p. 249).

4.2.2 Networks and Institutional Embeddedness

A second managerial challenge of temporary organizations relates to networks and institutional embeddedness. While independent temporary organizations are formed to complete a unique task, they exist within formal and informal networks that affect the ways in which they can achieve their task (Sydow & Staber, 2002). Jones and Lichtenstein (2008) posit that inter-organizational temporary organizations experience relational embeddedness (shared understandings and relations) and structural embeddedness (patterns of interactions), whereby individuals and structures within an ‘independent’ entity are still tied to relational and structural ties. Relating this point to stand-alone temporary organizations, Garmann-Johnsen (2011) used the emergent animation industry in Norway to demonstrate how temporary organizations are able to build relationships with permanent organizations based on different types of social networks between individuals located within different organizations.

Grabher (2004, p. 210) posits that temporary organizations “deliberately or unconsciously, [draw] on a range of institutional sources” in order to quickly develop working relations between organizational members. Temporary organizations thus rely on a “dense fabric of lasting ties and networks that provide key resources of expertise, reputation and legitimization” (Grabher, 2004, p. 104). Sydow (2009) posits that past collaborations between members in temporary organizations build network routines that resemble working relations of individuals in permanent organizations. Grabher (2002b) puts forward an ecology framework of temporary organizations that explores how the core team, the firm, the epistemic community and the personal

network all contribute critical resources to temporary organizations, but “also multiple perceptions and loyalties of the project members” (2002b, p. 208).

4.2.3 Task Completion

A third managerial challenge of temporary organizations relates to task completion. While temporary organizations are formed to complete a specific task, it is unclear how much agency temporary organizations have in relation to the entity that created them. For example, Lindkvist (2005) puts forward that tasks are explicitly stated and specified ex-ante, prior to the formation of the temporary organization. Moreover, “the explicitly stated, specific project goals are of great importance in enabling coordinated activity” (Lindkvist, 2005, p. 1201). However, other authors refute this claim and posit that temporary organizations have their own agency and are not “goal-fulfilling subsystems whose *raison d'être* is provided by a decisive and strategically aware super-system” (Packendorff, 1995, p. 326).

Regardless of who sets task goals, measuring the extent to which these goals have been achieved is a challenge for temporary organizations (Finney, 2008). This is largely because goal achievement is highly dependent upon context specific circumstances (Engwall, 2003) and “heavily dependent on the reaction of the environment, comprising multiple interest groups, both internal and external” (Goodman & Goodman, 1976, p. 496). Measuring goal achievement is further complicated by the fact that temporary organizations operate within existing networks, wherein network actors develop their own criteria for measuring success that “may be antagonistic to those of other actors” (Hellgren & Stjernberg, 1995, p. 387). Responding to this challenge, Blindenbach-Driessen and Van den Ende (2006) propose a measurement tool with multiple-scale criteria related to project performance, market performance and learning effects for future innovation; however, this tool has not been widely adopted (Burke & Morley, 2016).

4.3 City of Culture Organizations as Temporary Organizations

Temporary organizations have thus far been reviewed largely in the abstract. To further broaden this review, City of Culture management organizations will be presented as an archetypal example of context-specific temporary organizations. City of Culture organizations exist for 4-6 years in order to manage a year-long arts festival in government-sanctioned cities. These organizations often have government-aligned goals of urban regeneration, but are legally incorporated as independent firms that are free to operate as they see fit (Boland et al., 2019). As such, City of Culture organizations perfectly reflect the definition of a temporary organization: *a temporally bounded group of interdependent organizational actors, formed to complete a complex task*. To further explore this empirical context, this section will review the historical development and previous research of City of Culture organizations as temporary organizations.

In 1985, a trailblazing programme known as the European Capital of Culture re-envisioned what an arts festival could be and do. At its inception, the European Capital of Culture was intended to “highlight the richness and diversity of European culture” (Gomes & Librero-Cano, 2018, p. 59) in order to “bring the peoples of the Member States closer together” (Council of European Union, 1985). To do this, the European Council of Culture Ministers initiated a competition whereby aspiring cities would bid to be deemed the European Capital of Culture. While the number of winning cities has changed over time, the Council currently picks three winning cities every year from the bidding cities. Winning cities have a 5-6 year planning period to plan a festival that last exactly one calendar year (January 1st – December 31st) (Gomes & Librero-Cano, 2018). Since its inception, 65 cities have hosted the European Capital of Culture festival.

The underlying justification for the European Capital of Culture has shifted over the course of its 30-year history. The European Commission notes that, at its start, the European Capital of Culture was meant to be “a celebration of arts in the city,” but “since the 1990s there has been a major growth in the awareness of the role of culture in the ... prosperity of a city’ (European Commission, 2014, p. 4). This is in line with Colomb’s (2011) observation that “culture...has played an increasing role in strategies of urban regeneration and local economic development” (2011, p. 79). The logic goes

that cultural initiatives attract tourists, investment and jobs (S. Miles & Paddison, 2005; A. Pratt, 2010, 2011; Stevenson, 2004) and that Capital of Culture festivals can allow for the “transformation of culture into an economic resource” (Tretter, 2009, p. 112; see also Amin & Thrift, 2007; Castree, 2004; Miller, 2009; A. Pratt, 2014). Beyond economic regeneration, theorists now argue that cultural initiatives are framed as the “antidote to an ever-broadening range of social, economic and political problems” (Gibson & Stevenson, 2004, p. 2). The British Council even went so far as to posit that cultural initiatives like Capitals of Culture lead to peace and social bridging, saying “culture has a role in bringing people together, even those with very different world views” so that “countries emerge and recover from periods of conflict” (2014, p. 3).

The European Capital of Culture model has been adapted and instituted in specific countries – such as in the United Kingdom with the UK City of Culture festival. Since its initiation, the European Capital of Culture was held twice within the UK – with Glasgow hosting in 1990 and Liverpool in 2008. Both festivals were widely seen as successful, with Glasgow “no longer associated with its past stereotypes, but a vibrant atmosphere that people want to visit and live in” (Tucker, 2008, p. 30) and Liverpool enjoying “a remarkable image renaissance locally, nationally and internationally” (Garcia et al., 2010, p. 63). Liverpool’s European Capital of Culture festival was deemed so successful by the national government that a “permanent British City of Culture prize” (Burnham, 2009) was established (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2013). This UK City of Culture festival has since been held in Derry-Londonderry in 2013, Hull in 2017, and Coventry in 2021.

The UK City of Culture festival was set up to mirror that of its European counterpart. Potential host cities submit competitive bids that are assessed by the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport. Bidding cities are instructed to highlight how the successful nomination can expand their ‘creative industries’ in order to lead to economic and social regeneration. Moreover, cities have to outline ‘step changes’ in their bid document for how the City of Culture festival will trigger regeneration (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2013). Successful bidding cities are given four years to create an independent organization to plan and manage the 365-day festival programme (García, 2004; Mooney, 2004). Operational budgets for City of

Culture festivals have gradually increased with each iteration, with Derry-Londonderry having £22.8 million (adjusted for inflation) (Derry City and Strabane District Council, 2015), Hull having £39 million (adjusted for inflation) (Place, 2018), and Coventry having £44 million (Coventry City of Culture Trust, 2021).

Festivals such as the European Capital of Culture and the UK City of Culture have been used by scholars to explore the nature and ephemerality of temporary organizations. Porsander (2000) explored the operations of Stockholm '98, the temporary organization established to plan and manage the European Capital of Culture festival hosted in Stockholm. Porsander found that managers of Stockholm '98 attempted to reproduce organizational templates created by previous Capitals of Culture in order to produce legitimacy since this organizational type was fairly novel and unknown at that time. In this way, while Stockholm '98 was newly formed and temporary in nature, it was able to draw from the past in order to gain legitimacy and financial resources in the present. Clegg and colleagues (2020) use the case of the Umeå Capital of Culture in 2014 to argue that while the festival and its management organization may cease to exist following the Capital of Culture year, the memory of the festival continues to endure. Clegg and colleagues posit that this enduring nature of organizational memory obfuscates the temporal boundary of the organization in both temporary and permanent contexts.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the extant literature of temporary organizations in order to better elucidate the theoretical and empirical groundwork of this thesis. While the study of temporary organizations is not as mature as other subfields of organization studies, a focus on managerial challenges and potential mitigation strategies of temporary organizations has emerged. These challenges relate to internal coordination, network relations, and task completion.

The existence of these challenges further supports the main inquiry into organizational identity of this thesis. For example, if a temporary organization is able to develop aligned identity understandings, could the organization overcome the deficits of internal coordination native to temporary forms? Moreover, if temporary

organizations attempt to create an organizational identity, will these new identities reproduce those of permanent organizations within their field or will they be largely distinct and unique? Additionally, will ambiguity related to task completion be mitigated or exacerbated by the presence of a shared organizational identity? Rather than characterise organizational identity as a panacea for all the challenges of temporary organizations, this line of thought is meant to reinforce the importance of answering the main theoretical question of this thesis:

Without internal historical referents and projected futures, how is organizational identity formed and managed in newly created temporary organizations?

This chapter has also reinforced the selection of the Coventry UK City of Culture Trust as the empirical context for this thesis. Literature was reviewed which demonstrated how City of Culture management organizations are an archetypal example of context-specific temporary organizations. The history of UK City of Cultures (and their spiritual forebearer of European Capital of Cultures) was presented to better situate this empirical context. Finally, previous literature on temporary organizations that used Capital of Cultures as their own empirical context were reviewed, further evidencing the appropriateness of the selected context.

Chapter 5

Research Design

5.1 Introduction

This research used an inductive, single-case research design appropriate to explore complex processes and build theory in order to explore facets of organizational identity and sensemaking in temporary organizations (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). As is the case for most inductive studies, the research design for this thesis was not straightforward, but it was a cyclical process, iterating between collecting data, analysing data, and building upon existing theory. However, this section attempts to lay out this process in clear and concise terms, representing how this research went from faint idea to meaningful inquiry, eventually arriving at contributions to theory development.

To do this, the chapter (i) positions the research with a philosophical commitment to social constructionism; (ii) describes the inductive approach to research that underpins the study; (iii) presents research questions that were developed throughout the research process; (iv) reviews the specific type of case study used for this research; (v) describes the chosen context for the research; (vi) labels the instruments of data collection; (vii) reviews the iterative process of data analysis, and; (viii) concludes with remarks regarding qualitative rigour and ethics.

5.1.1 Philosophical Stance: Social Constructionism

An ontological commitment to the social construction of reality underpins the methodology presented in this chapter. Stemming from the interpretivist movement in the social sciences (Gergen & Davis, 2012), social constructionism views reality as built from the social interaction of individuals rather than from a realist, objective truth. Social Constructionism seeks to unpack how individuals perceive, act, build, and reflect upon their social world across time and space (Welch et al., 2011). The adoption of this philosophical commitment requires researchers to: (i) challenge

underpinned assumptions; (ii) contextualise perceptions as historically relative; (iii) focus on social processes, and; (iv) disentangle social action and knowledge (Burr, 2015; Gergen & Davis, 2012).

This research adopts a social construction perspective in order to understand how organizational actors ascribe meaning to experience while going about their everyday work. To be specific, social construction allows for a closer inspection about how actors develop identity understandings in relation to various stimuli, such as formal organizational identity claims. It should be noted that some scholars have adopted a social actor perspective to study organizational identity. Pinning this study's colours to the social construction perspective is not meant to deny the existence of the social actor perspective, rather; this thesis aligns with scholars who believe that these two perspectives are mutually constituted (Gioia et al., 2010), and that social constructionism can capture the intention of those who create identity claims as well as the various understandings related to those claims (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

5.1.2 Approach to Research: Inductive Inquiry

Adopting a social construction lens requires a supporting epistemological framework through which to justify found understandings; this research utilises an inductive methodological approach to justify knowledge creation. Inductive approaches seek to identify a phenomenon of interest, find a relevant context to explore that phenomenon, and build theory upon the uncovered evidence (Welch et al., 2011). This is in direct contrast to a more positivist, deductive approach which develops and tests a hypothesis. Through its bottom-up methodology, inductive inquiry has been attributed with the advantages of developing novel theory and explaining real-world contexts (Eisenhardt et al., 2016).

Over the course of the data analysis, abductive reasoning was also incorporated into the research. A compliment to inductive approaches, abductive reasoning is derived from the iterative dialogue between data and a combination of existing theories or propositions (Van Maanen et al., 2007). The purpose of abduction is to help explain and describe the interdependencies between pre-existing concepts (Rahmani & Leifels, 2018). Moreover, abductive reasoning is helpful to elucidate a

perceived mismatch between an empirical observation and an existing theory, leading to a ‘redescription’ or ‘recontextualization’ of the phenomenon (Danermark et al., 2001). Why this process was required for the present research is described within the data analysis section of this chapter.

5.2 Research Questions

This inductive inquiry was motivated by an initial question of interest: *how do workers in a temporary organization go about their work in order to achieve a social impact?* Over the course of the data collection and analysis it was found that the data spoke directly to the temporal and relational dynamics of organizational identity. Returning to literature on the topic, a series of research questions were developed in conjunction with the ongoing analysis to further develop identity theory. They were:

1. *Without internal historical referents and projected futures, how is organizational identity formed and managed in newly created temporary organizations?*
2. *How are identity discrepancies resolved when identity claims (of managers) conflict with identity understandings (of workers)?*

The data-led refocus on organizational identity brought about new developments and inspirations within the research. It became clear that managers in the case context were attempting to shape how frontline workers understood the organization’s identity. However, this process seemed to only work for certain workers. When attempting to explain why this happened, it was found that identity theory alone was unable to explain this empirical surprise. When going back to the literature it was found that sensemaking and its related concepts provided improved clarity of what was going on empirically for this specific surprising phenomenon. As such, an additional research question was formed. It was:

3. *How do managers assess if their processes of sensegiving & sensebreaking have created ‘desired sense’ in frontline workers?*

These three research questions form the basis for this study and are each answered over the course of the Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion chapters of the thesis.

5.3 Methodology: Unusually Revelatory Case Study

When this research began, a case context was sought that would provide particular insight into the initial phenomenon of interest. To be specific, the initial research required a longitudinal, in-depth exploration of how a cultural organization and its members value, plan, execute, measure, and reflect upon their social impact work over time. As such, this research sought out an ‘unusually revelatory’ context that would allow for a clearer picture than in a more-typical case (Eisenhardt et al., 2016; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Unusually revelatory contexts are typical in approach, but distinct in scope. Applied to the initial phenomenon of interest, an organization would be unusually revelatory if its approach to cultural production was typical of the sector while having facets of unusual attention, size, or scale. To be explicit, for a context to be unusually revelatory it would have to:

- **Produce original work.** Cultural organizations largely fall within three types: presenting organizations, producing organizations, or presenting and producing organizations (Hager, 2002). Presenting cultural organizations are those that exclusively curate seasons or exhibitions of cultural products which already exist. A ubiquitous example is a museum that curates art works by purchase or loan and does not commission artists to create works itself. Producing cultural organizations directly produce new works that they either bring to the market themselves or through a presenting organization. For example, the New York City Ballet creates new works from the ground up and performs these works on their owned stage. A smaller dance company may produce its own works but will not have its own building, thus necessitating it to be picked up by a presenting organization. Finally, cultural organizations may both produce and present. For example, a theatre organization may produce new work while filling out its calendar with touring productions that it presents. In order to address the initial topic of interest, the sought after organization must be either a producing organization or a producing and

presenting organization. This requirement allowed the research to capture aspects of the entire production process, from idea inception to product delivery.

- **Have an ambition to prioritise artistic and social goals.** While the contemporary funding environment of cultural organizations necessitates some degree of social purpose, not all organizations embrace this justification. The sought after context would have the ambition to prioritise artistic as well as social goals.
- **Employ multiple producers.** Typical to organizations at large (in the cultural sector or otherwise), individual managers are hired to make decisions that affect what an organization does. For producing and producing/presenting cultural organizations, managers with the titles of ‘cultural producer,’ ‘artistic producer,’ or simply ‘producer’ (in the American context ‘producer’ is replaced with ‘programmer’) decide what cultural goods will be developed or curated by the organization. While the number of cultural producers employed by an organization is relative to the size of an organization, the team is typically highly centralised and is overseen by an artistic lead (e.g. ‘artistic director’ or ‘creative director’). A found context would be unusually revelatory if it employed a large number of cultural producers, relative to the size of the organization, under the direction of a central creative figure. Through the employment of a large number of cultural producers, this research could examine how multiple workers conceptualise, act upon, and reflect upon their work and the work of the organization.

5.3.1 Selected Context: Coventry UK City of Culture Trust

The Coventry UK City of Culture Trust (CCT) was identified and selected as a relevant context as it fulfilled all selection criterions of an unusually revelatory context. When approached, a significant level of access was provided to the author for the duration of this research.

The ‘City of Culture’ distinction is awarded to a UK city every four years by the national government, with hypothecated public funds to programme and

administer a year-long cultural festival. The host city for the UKCC21 is Coventry, which elected to create an independent Trust to oversee the programming, management, and reporting of the festival. Over a five-year period (2017 – 2022), the CCT grew from three members of staff to over 90 employees, directly spent over £35 million, and leveraged over £1 billion worth of inward investment for the city (Coventry City of Culture Trust, 2021).

The CCT was set up as a producing/presenting organization, prioritising original work that responds to the Coventry context while bringing in national and international work to round out the year of programme. The CCT had the ambition to prioritise artistic and social goals. Reflecting this point, Chenine Bhathena, the creative director of CCT published an article in Arts Professional in February 2020 which said:

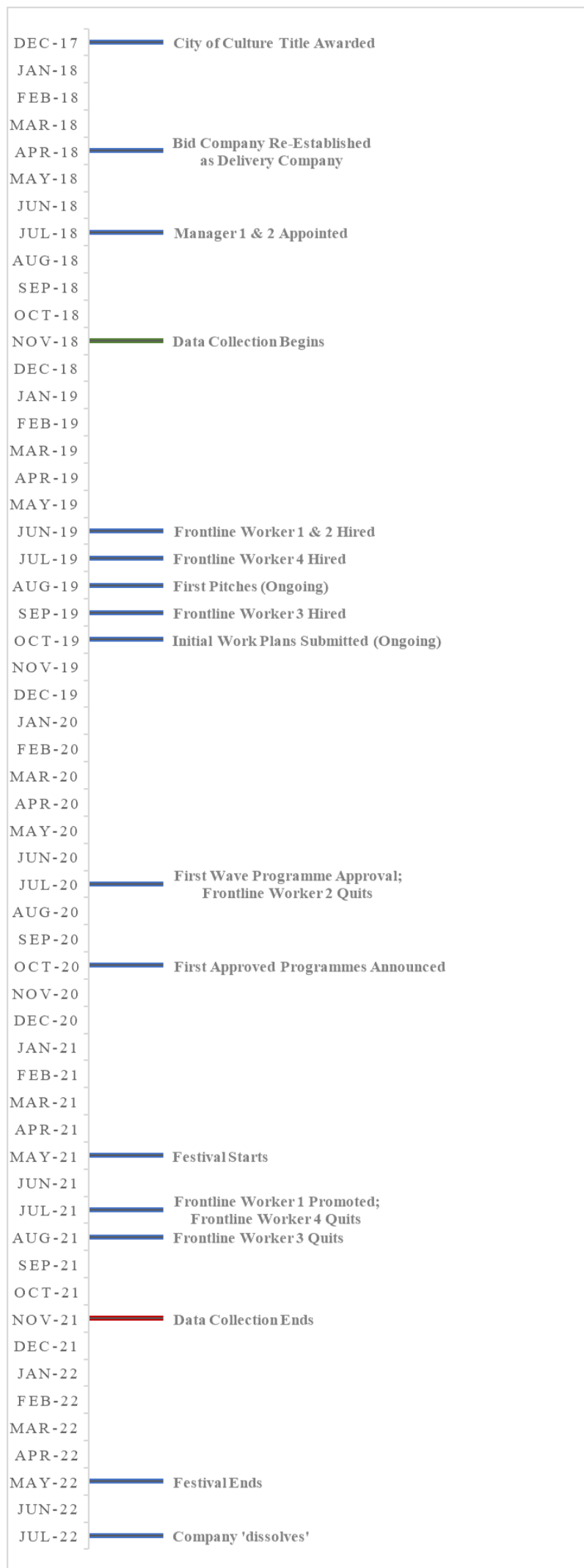
“We will of course be producing a huge festival. 2021 will be an extraordinary year with major one-off events that open our doors to millions of visitors. Our producers are working hard to determine what those eye-catching performances and activities will look like... Equally, our programme will be driven by outcomes. We are committed to delivering real change and working closely to ensure that everything we create and present contributes to this. When mental health issues, food poverty, homelessness and the exploitation of young people are serious problems across the nation, it’s vital that our programme can inspire real social action and remove barriers to civic engagement” (Bhathena, 2020).

In order to achieve these outcomes, the CCT employed over 13 ‘Cultural Producers’ (i.e. frontline workers) who were each tasked with developing multiple projects. Cultural producers were required to go out into the local context and collaborate with local communities. These collaborations would, in theory, lead to the development of various artistic programmes that would have a social impact in the present and a lasting legacy in the future. How this occurred in practice is described within the Findings chapters of this thesis.

Figure 1 details a timeline of the case context, outlining many key events that are referenced throughout this research. It should be noted that two early dates are left

off of the timeline due to formatting. They are: October, 2015 – City of Culture Bid Team Founded; and, February 2016 - City of Culture Bid Submitted.

**FIGURE 1, CCT
TIMELINE**



5.3.2 Case Context – Emerging Theoretical Interest

While the case context of the Coventry City of Culture Trust was selected to be an unusually revelatory context for the phenomenon of social impact creation, it remains one for the emergent theoretical interest of organizational identity (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). Typically, organizational identity is studied in permanent organizations. This has led to a significant gap in the literature which underpins the research questions explained previously in this chapter. As such, CCT remains a particularly relevant context to explore how facets of organizational identity play out in a temporary context. These dynamics may also play out in permanent organizations but have been previously obscured due to other possible conditions present within permanent contexts. The generalisability of the findings is deliberated at length in the Discussion and Conclusion of this thesis but are mentioned here to help explain why CCT remained an unusually relevant context despite the refocus on the emergent theoretical interest of organizational identity. Moreover, this context remains particularly relevant due to the rich scholarly history of using City of Culture and festival organizations as a context to study dynamics of temporary organizing (see: (S. Clegg et al., 2020); (Porsander, 2000); (DeFillippi & Uriarte, 2020), and; (Uriarte et al., 2019)).

5.4 Instruments of Data Collection

Three main instruments of data collection were used to collect raw data for this research: semi-structured interviews, observations, and performance documents (stake, 1995). A full breakdown of the application of these tools is shown in Table 2. Two additional instruments were used to supplement this inquiry: a research diary and case database. These additional instruments were kept in line with suggestions for case-base researched offered by Stake (1995) and Voss and colleagues (2002). This section offers a description of the design and implantation of these methods.

TABLE 2, INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

Method	Data Sources	Totals
<i>Semi-Structured Interviews</i>	CCT Managers (37) CCT Cultural Producers (27) CCT Funders (14) CCT Evaluation Team (9) CCT Trustees (8) CCT Partners (5) CCT Consultants (3)	103 Interviews
<i>Observations</i>	CCT Team Meetings (73 hrs) CCT Evaluation Meetings (80 hrs) CCT Events (25 hrs)	178 Hours
<i>Performance Documents</i>	Performance Management Formation (40) Ongoing Performance Management (27) Baselining Documents (9) Public Speech Transcripts (9) Funder Reports (10)	95 Documents

5.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Interviews allow access into peoples’ lived experience, providing a window into their accounts of reality and the meanings they attach to social phenomena (Silverman, 2013). The application of interviews is based on the assumption that “the people constructing their organizational realities are ‘knowledgeable agents,’ namely, that people in organizations know what they are trying to do and can explain their thoughts, intentions, and actions” (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013, p. 17). Interviews are able to obtain real-time and retrospective accounts from the individuals experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013).

Following Silverman (2013), a semi-structured interview style was utilised. Semi-structured interviews are structured around an interview protocol that is developed before the interview. Questions are structured in order to elicit free-flowing responses that allow the research to develop additional, unplanned questions in the moment. This style enables both flexibility to follow-up on a participant’s account and

comparability between multiple participants. Interview protocols were developed with no theoretical language (Kvale & Flick, 2008) and reframed theory into non-technical terms in order to enable participant understanding. Figure 2 demonstrates how the research questions were reframed into non-technical terms.

Interviews began in November 2019 and were conducted through November 2022. Interview participants were initially divided into two main groups, each with their own developed protocol: internal CCT workers and external CCT stakeholders. Internal CCT managers were interviewed on an ongoing basis in order to capture their real-time experience of planning, executing, and reflecting. In general, the creative director was interviewed monthly, the executive director bimonthly (the creative director and executive director are referred to collectively as ‘the managers’ within this thesis), and frontline workers quarterly. At the beginning of this data collection, frontline workers at CCT were asked to join this research and four (out of a total of 12 original frontline workers) came forward as willing to participate. As noted in the findings chapter, 3 out of the 4 interviewed frontline workers left the organization by the middle of the City of Culture year. While a 75% turnover rate is higher than the average for CCT frontline workers, the average was still high, about 50%. As these interviews were conducted with relative frequency, the interview protocol focused on flexibility and the ability to ascertain current working.

External CCT stakeholders were interviewed with a frequency relative to their closeness with City of Culture operation. Stakeholders working closely with the CCT were interviewed quarterly or semi-annually, with further stakeholders interviewed annually. The M&E team identified these external stakeholders as key to the success of the City of Culture festival. These stakeholders included key funders, key partners, and the local arts community. The protocol for external CCT stakeholders focused on their perceptions of CCT operation, goals, and barriers to success as well as their perception on wider City of Culture activities. As the ongoing analysis focused this research on internal perceptions of organizational identity, internal CCT informants were asked to continue with their interviews while external informants were not. All interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. A full list of interview participants is presented in Figure 2. A timeline of interviews is presented in Table 3. A justification on the qualitative rigour of interviews is given in Section 5.6 of this thesis.

FIGURE 2, INTERVIEW QUESTIONS EXAMPLE

- (1) *How are identity discrepancies resolved when identity claims (of managers) conflict with identity understandings (of workers)?*
- i. Have there ever been times when it feels like what you think CCT should be doing is different than what [the Managers] think CCT should be doing?
 - ii. Do you have an example of this? Did these different opinions ever get resolved? How?
- (2) *Why do processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking result in differing sensemaking of organizational members?*
- i. You mentioned that this project was (approved/rejected). Could you talk me through what you did in order to come up with this programme idea?
 - ii. Why do you think this programme was (approved/rejected) when some of your other programmes were not?

TABLE 3, TIMELINE OF INTERVIEWS

	2018		2019			2020				2021				Totals
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
CCT Executives		2	2	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	37
CCT Cultural Producers				4	2	3	4	2	1	4	3	4		27
CCT Funders	1	2	4	1	1	1	1	3						14
CCT Evaluation Team		1	1	2	2		2	1						9
CCT Trustees	1	1	2			1	2		1					8
CCT Partners		1	1		1	1	1							5
CCT Consultants				1		2								3
Totals	2	7	10	12	10	11	14	10	5	7	6	7	2	103

5.4.2 Observation

Observation within an academic context refers to the capture of a “systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study” (C. Marshall & Rossman, 1989). While interviews allow access to participant accounts of reality, observations allow access to the real-time accomplishment of organizational working (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). The main purpose for observations within this study was to support (and, to a lesser extent, contradict) the accounts provided by interview participants.

Observations undertaken for this research fell within two buckets: observations of cultural producers in situ and embedded observations of the CCT collaborative M&E working group. First, observations of cultural producers mainly took place in team meetings where they discussed programme ideas, reflected on their work, coordinated action, and planned for future programmes. In addition to team meetings, the researcher observed several programmed events produced by CCT. Event observations often involved observing pre-event meetings, the events themselves, and post-event reflection meetings. In general, observations of cultural producers focused on how they spoke about their potential programmes and reflected on previous programmes. Moreover, these observations examined how cultural producers actually went on to make decisions based on these spoken accounts.

Second, the author began this research while being an active member of the CCT collaborative M&E team. The researcher made embedded observations of this team throughout the process, noting how the team structured decisions, justified their working, and worked with various stakeholders on the reporting process. Additionally, this embedded role allowed the researcher to take note of how cultural producers and the M&E team reflected on each other’s work while actualising evaluation activity. In an effort to create distance between himself and the embedded context, the researcher made entries in the research diary of situations where he would have diverged from chosen decisions. This was to aid future reflections by the researcher in order to disentangle the researcher’s initial interpretations with any future interpretations during data analysis. Finally, the researcher left the CCT collaborative monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team in December 2020 due to time restraints.

Both types of observations were used throughout this research. During the data analysis, observations were also being reviewed for salient codes. It should be noted that while interview transcripts were typed and coded via NVIVO, many observations were done via pen-and-paper and were coded by hand. Beyond data analysis, observations were also vitally important for the shaping of ongoing interview question for all informants. For example, an observational note from a team meeting on 27 Jan, 2021 reads:

“[Frontline Worker 1] asked: ‘I may have missed it but how is best to communicate multiple programme updates and have them signed off when, say, 2 or 3 projects have changed scope/direction?’ (CCT Team Meeting, 27/1/21)

This led to the following interview question being asked as the next interview I had with Frontline Worker 1:

“In the last Producer Meeting you asked about getting programme updates signed off. Could you talk me through what that process is like at the moment?” (Interview with Frontline Worker 1, 3/2/21).

In this way, ongoing observations were vital to the inductive approach to this research, actively shaping what was being captured through the research process.

5.4.3 Document Analysis

The majority of documents related to CCT performance management and reporting were reviewed. Reviewed documents included: organizational Theory of Change, funder reports, KPIs reports, bid proposals, and meeting minutes. Where present, multiple drafts of performance management documents were reviewed. This was particularly relevant to early developments of the theory of change and its responding framework. Additionally, publicly available documents were reviewed, such as websites and brochures. A select few performance documents were shared with the researcher during interviews, but were not disclosed to the researcher for analysis,

namely, the organizational balance sheet and cashflow documents. In total, 95 documents were reviewed as part of this research.

The ways in which reviewed documents were used within this research varied dependant on the phase of research. Reviewed documents were first used during the initial phase of data analysis wherein they helped to develop a picture of what was important to the organization (e.g., which goals were inscribed in the overall monitoring and evaluation framework). Documents were then referred to within informant interviews in order to probe their understandings of these documents (e.g., posing questions such as ‘the Story of Change document says that the Trust will encourage co-creation for all projects. What does that mean to you?’). Finally, reviewed documents were constantly referred back to during the ongoing data analysis to compare against informant opinion (e.g., in what ways did informants view certain activities as successful and how did they measure up against formal reports).

5.4.4 Research Diary

In line with Stake (1995) and Voss and colleagues (2002), a research diary was kept over the duration of the study. The diary contains notes by the researcher on real-time reflections of process, specific events, and experiences worth remembering at the time. Notes were written both outside and inside the field, with the latter done subtly as to not disturb ongoing interactions.

5.4.5 Case Database

A case database was kept over the duration of the study in order to act as an administrative tool to aid the researcher. The case database included all reviewed literature, notes, schedules, transcripts, and documents relevant to this study.

5.4.6 The Effect of Covid-19 on Methods

During the data collection for this research, the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) occurred. How this effected the case context is discussed in the findings of this research (for example, see section ‘6.1.2 Goal Articulation’). However, a brief mention of the pandemic’s effect on these research methods is also needed here. This research began before the pandemic, with interviews and observations already in place before the major disruption of the pandemic. As the business environment largely moved online, so too did this research. In practice, this meant that interviews that had taken place in-person were now moved to the video services of Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Similarly, team meetings were moved online and I was invited to continue attending these meetings in their online spaces. Beyond the move to technologically mediated data collection, no major changes to the data collection process occurred (e.g., no changes to interview participants or meeting observation took place).

5.5 Analysis

A series of analytic techniques native to the social sciences were employed in order to move from raw data to theoretical interpretation. This iterative process passed between data collection, analysis, and literature review to reveal relationships within the data and generate insights (Eisenhardt et al., 2016; Gehman et al., 2018; Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013; Langlely, 1999). While this process was not strictly linear, three main stages of analysis are highlighted for clarity.

The initial analysis consisted of a review of early data in order to inform the writing of a ‘thick description,’ rich case study (Langlely, 1999) that detailed how organizational members went about their work during the early days of CCT’s formation. This analysis integrated various sources of data, including early interviews and observations as well as publicly available documents. This stage allowed for the definition of a conceptual lens through which to interpret CCT’s inner workings. It is important for methodological transparency to note that I was initially drawn to CCT in order to study how a cultural organization creates and measures social impact. CCT had been very vocal about its intention to produce a social impact, and I wanted to know how this was done within a temporary setting. However, during the first phase of data analysis it was found that while CCT’s social impact goals and associated

activity were important, they were also a means to an end – they were a mechanism through which CCT was able to construct formal identity claims even though the organization had just formed. After this initial analysis attention was turned to facets of organizational identity in CCT and interrogated literature regarding organizational identity in temporary organizations.

In the second stage of the analysis, raw data were re-examined to explore relationships between collected data and related literature. A process of open coding commenced, where common empirical themes within the data were noted, such as CCT managers defining a manifesto of artistic programming and implementing a system of programme approval. To demonstrate this coding process, Table 4 shows how first order codes were derived from the data. It was evident that CCT managers were attempting to shape how organizational members thought about CCT's identity and the longitudinal view afforded by the data allowed for the mapping and thematising of how this occurred over time. I then iterated between these empirical themes and extant literature to move from first-order codes to second-order themes that explained the different mechanisms at play during the regulation of organizational identity.

TABLE 4, FIRST ORDER CODING EXAMPLE

Indicative Quotes	First-Order Codes
<p>“How do we remain focused on being courageous because we have to do things differently than maybe what was expected when the city won City of Culture” (Manager 2, 29.1.19).</p>	<p><i>“Doing Things Differently”</i></p>
<p>“When we appointed the creative and executive directors, we deliberately went for people who had a bottom-up approach because we didn't really want to just do the same as Hull” (CCT Trustee 2, 4.6.19).</p>	<p><i>Hiring Priorities</i></p>
<p>“What the theory of change does is give you a sense of direction and it gives you an anchor point to return to” (Frontline Worker 1, 1.9.21).</p>	<p><i>Theory of Change Model</i></p>
<p>“We're an outcome-focused organization. The activities that we are devising are intended to deliver the outcomes” (Manager 2, 30.1.20).</p>	<p><i>“Outcome Led”</i></p>
<p>“The opening event will respond to our manifesto” (Manager 1, 15.11.19).</p>	<p><i>Programme Manifesto</i></p>
<p>“We came up with the word moving very early on - a city that's moved people by cycle, car and jet engine is now moving people through culture. I felt we found the distinctive character of Coventry” (CCT Trustee 3, 18.2.20).</p>	<p><i>Identity of Coventry</i></p>
<p>“Creating a space for the team to pause and to just have a moment to think about what they're doing, their practice, their work, and to think about what's working well” (CCT Consultant 1, 29.9.19).</p>	<p><i>Reflection Sessions</i></p>
<p>“We’ve looked at our progress against impacts and outcomes from the activity that’s taken place and we’ve put them into two progress reports” (CCT Evaluator 2, 7.9.20).</p>	<p><i>Quarterly M&E Reports</i></p>
<p>“She was like, ‘Oh, you’re not meant to be fundraising, that’s not your role’” (Frontline Worker 1, 27.8.20).</p>	<p><i>“Not Your Role”</i></p>
<p>“I had feedback indirectly from [Manager 1], which was, ‘You've got a lot, be realistic about what you can achieve’” (Frontline Worker 1, 19.11.19).</p>	<p><i>Inappropriate Pitch</i></p>
<p>“I'm hoping that in November we have a very clear sense of what we're moving forward with and where we still need to do some work” (Manager 1, 16.10.19).</p>	<p><i>Official Sign-off</i></p>

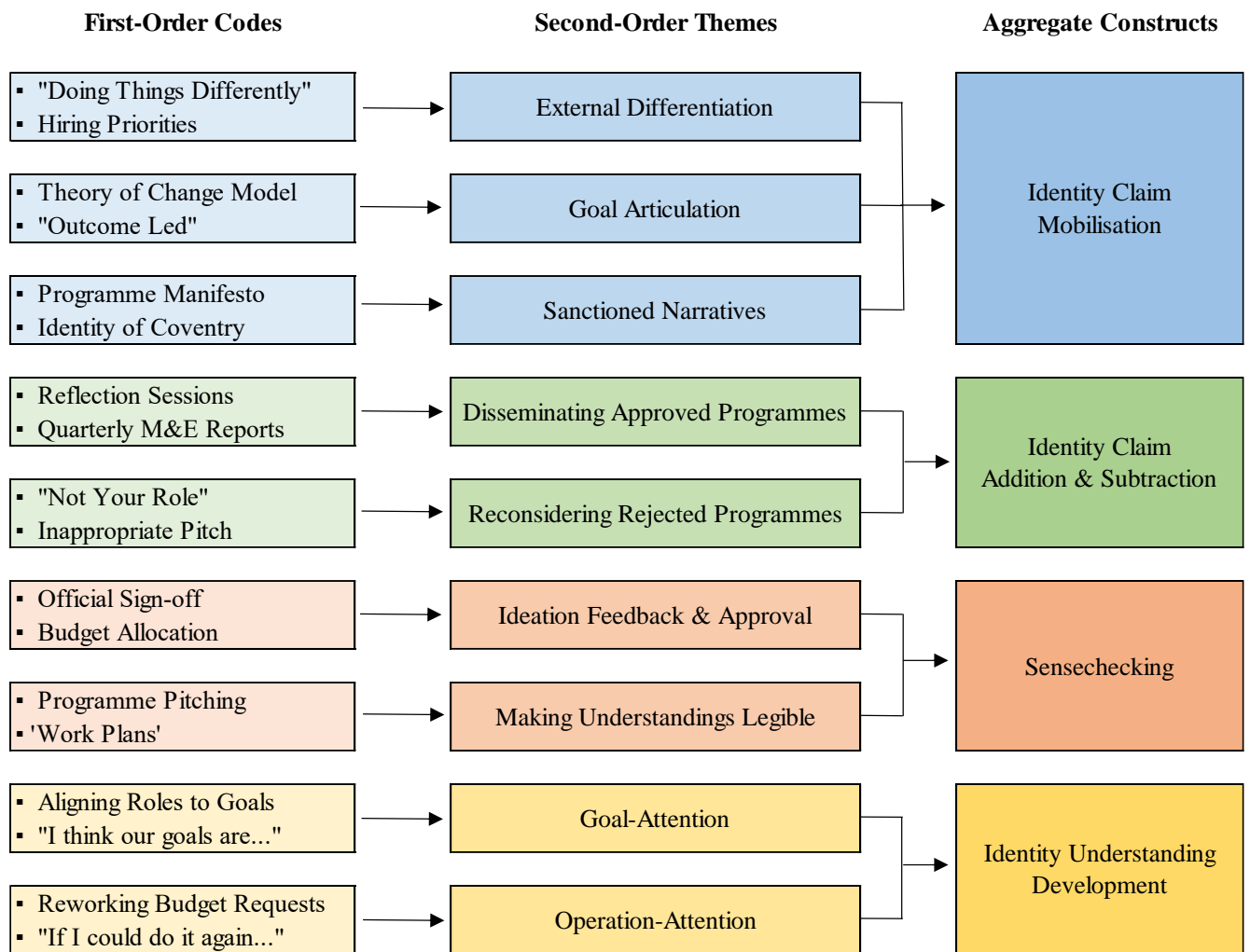
Indicative Quotes**First-Order Codes**

<p>“Then we got our budget [laughs]. I've never worked in a way before where I don't have my budget first” (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20).</p>	<p><i>Budget Allocation</i></p>
<p>“The pitching will happen and then we will select and we will see who is that we take forward” (Manager 1, 15.11.19).</p>	<p><i>Programme Pitching</i></p>
<p>“We're starting to encourage all of the producing team to create action plans and in there being really clear about what outcomes the projects they're thinking about are going to be delivering” (Manager 1, 5.9.19).</p>	<p><i>“Work Plans”</i></p>
<p>“My role is specifically looking at safety of Coventry” (Frontline Worker 2, 1.7.19).</p>	<p><i>Aligning Roles to Goals</i></p>
<p>“I'm still trying to work out my goals” (Frontline Worker 3, 18.9.19).</p>	<p><i>“I think our goals are...”</i></p>
<p>“It's no good saying to me you've got £300,000 and then it restricts what you're going to do because there is potential to bring in other money” (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20).</p>	<p><i>Reworking Budget Requests</i></p>
<p>“In retrospect, he should have started earlier” (Manager 1, 9.12.19).</p>	<p><i>“If I could do it again...”</i></p>

During this phase of the analysis, an empirical surprise was encountered. It was found that all frontline workers were experiencing the same forces of identity regulation, but it seemed to work for certain frontline workers and not for others. It was initially unclear why this occurred; why was the regulation process effective at creating aligned identity understandings for some frontline workers but not others? Through the iterative data analysis, it was found that the use of identity concepts alone were insufficient to explain this surprise; however, the incorporation of sensemaking theory was able to shed light on the mechanisms behind this novelty. Thus, sensemaking literature was then reviewed and interview and observational data were additionally coded in light of sensemaking theory.

Finally, the third stage of analysis put the conceptual themes in conversation with existing literature in order to build a theoretical model that explains the regulation of identity in temporary organizations. Notably, this stage of analysis found that CCT managers were using articulated goals, sanctioned narratives, and stories of external differentiation to construct formal claims about CCT's identity (*Identity Claim Mobilisation*). These formal identity claims were interpreted in various ways by frontline workers while they constructed individualised notions of CCT's identity (*Identity Understanding Development*). It was also found that CCT managers assessed whether organizational members had developed congruent identity understandings through a formal programme approval process (*Sensechecking*). Finally, it was uncovered how programme approval or rejection affected the formal identity claims available to organizational members as they continued to develop identity understandings (*Identity Claim Addition & Subtraction*). The full data structure is defined in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3, FULL DATA STRUCTURE



5.6 Ascertaining Qualitative Rigour

While qualitative research may engender creativity and revelatory potential, Gioia and colleagues question “how can inductive researchers apply systematic conceptual and analytical discipline that leads to credible interpretations of data and also helps to convince readers that the conclusions are plausible and defensible?” (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013, p. 15). Following the dimensions of Gioia et al. (2013) and Lincoln & Guba (1985), this research employs methods of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability in order to ascertain qualitative rigour. See Table 4 for a full summary of the rigour checks.

While qualitative analysis can be seen as stemming from a researcher's personal interpretations (Flyvbjerg, 2006), this study incorporates multiple stakeholder perspectives in order to act as confirmation for the suggested interpretations. Stakeholder accounts of the phenomenon of interest were collected from multiple perspectives (e.g., managers, trustees, frontline workers) through interviews. These interviews were framed in practitioner-centric terms in order to allow for analysis of shared understanding across actors. While the full analysis of data does require a 'creative leap' on the part of the researcher (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013), these interpretations were voiced back to participants in subsequent interviews and presentations in order to elicit participant views of the ongoing analysis. Additionally, ongoing analysis was discussed with the researcher's thesis supervisors and was presented at academic conferences in order to confirm that the researcher's analysis was in-line with current conceptions of the phenomenon of interest.

The credibility of the presented analysis was grounded in the active use of multiple instruments of data collection (Gibbert et al., 2008). Interviews provided a first, direct link between actors' accounts of their lived experience in relation to cultural production. Observations were then used to support the claims of these first-person accounts and offer-back the researcher's interpretation during subsequent interviews (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Comparisons between quotes, observations, and document analysis were then used to uncover discourse collinearity.

The maintenance of a research diary, analytic memos, and a case database were used in order to ensure dependable, consistent findings. A research diary was kept in order to track the researcher's thoughts and interpretations of events, processes, and developments of the case study while in the field. Diary entries were supplemented with analytic memos written outside of the field that captured the researcher's evolving position on related theoretical concepts and analysis. For example, analytic memos were kept during the development of interview protocols in order to remember and track the reasonings behind question articulation. A case database was maintained through the entirety of the study in order to track and label all documents, notes, and interview transcriptions (Voss et al., 2002). This database was constructed in order to ensure trustworthiness from a practical perspective (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). Through these multiple measures, the researcher was able to track the evolution of his

perspective over time, forgoing a reliance on a single ‘breakthrough’ moment near the conclusion of the study.

Case-study based research is often critiqued as providing limited potential for generalised findings (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). However, the aim of this study is not to predict how all other temporary organizations relate to organizational identity, but rather to distinguish patterns and interrelationships between temporal facets of identity and begin theorising on how these components could be regulated. Thus, the findings derived from this study may be transferable to other organizational contexts that attempt to regulate how organizational members develop identity understandings.

TABLE 5, ATTAINING QUALITATIVE RIGOUR

Rigour Criterion	Action Taken
Confirmability: demonstrating a degree of researcher neutrality, or at least non-bias	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple stakeholders’ perspectives obtained through interviews 2. Stakeholders’ language used to guide initial understandings 3. Emerging findings discussed and amended through ongoing discussions with thesis supervisors 4. Research presented at academic conferences
Credibility: confidence in the findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grounded analysis between multiple instruments of data collection: semi-structured interviews, documents, and observations
Dependability: consistent findings which are replicable	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Case database 2. Research journal 3. Theoretical developments captured in memos
Transferability: applicability to other contexts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relevant to other contexts that attempt to regulate organizational identity

(Adapted from Lincoln & Guba (1985))

5.7 Ethical Considerations

The design and implementation of research was undertaken with multiple ethical consideration applicable to all social scientists. As research involved human participants, the following best practices for ethical research were enacted throughout the study (Social Research Association, 2021; Universities, 2018):

1. Informed consent (the purpose, methods, and intended uses of research)
2. No harm
3. Free choice (voluntary participation)
4. Anonymity
5. Confidentiality
6. Data protection
7. Feedback

Informed consent of participants consisted of full disclosure from the researcher about what types of questions would be asked during interviews, how the data would be used for the writing of journal articles and a PhD thesis, and how their responses would be anonymised, digitally stored, and destroyed subsequent to research publication. The majority of participants also consented to the additional use of their data for the incorporation of evaluation reports written by the researcher and a collaborative research group, provided that the same approach to anonymity, storage, and destruction were undertaken.

Potential risks to research participants were minimised by anonymising participant responses during the transcription process and in all journal and PhD write-ups. Participants did consent to attributable quotes given that further, explicit consent for the use of their names was attained. Environmental impacts were minimised by reviewing relevant documents digitally whenever possible and by contributing towards carbon-offsetting programmes to ameliorate the use of air-travel when attending academic conferences.

Chapter 6

Regulating Organizational Identity

Through the iterative data analysis, it became clear that CCT managers were attempting to regulate how frontline workers understood the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. This regulation process had several components that worked together to create aligned identity understandings between CCT managers and frontline workers. First, the data shows that CCT managers put forward formal referents for CCT's identity, which are characterised by this thesis as mobilised identity claims. Mobilised identity claims had three forms: external differentiation, articulated goals, and sanctioned narratives. Second, nascent identity understandings of frontline workers were subject to sensechecking – a process induced from this research – wherein managers assessed whether frontline workers had developed identity understandings aligned with the formal identity claims of the organization. Third, actions indicative of aligned identity understandings were then added to CCT's formal identity claims and actions indicative of misaligned identity understandings were then subtracted from the proverbial list of potential actions that frontline workers could perform. This process of identity regulation continued indefinitely, continually ensuring that workers maintained aligned identity understandings. Overall, this process was so effective that managers and frontline workers were largely able to develop aligned identity understandings without internal historical referents or projected futures.

This chapter presents analysed data to define and evidence each step of the regulation process. These steps are then summarised at the end of this chapter, where a process model for identity regulation in temporary organizations is put forward. While this chapter focuses specifically on the organization-level process of identity regulation, the subsequent chapter focuses on the individual-level responses to the regulation process as well as the creation of individual identity understandings.

6.1 Mobilised Identity Claims in the Temporary Organization

The process of identity regulation within CCT started early. CCT managers recognised that as a newly formed temporary organization, frontline workers (and other key stakeholders) might have various interpretations about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the nascent organization. Describing how CCT did not initially have a cohesive organizational identity, Manager 2 remarked that *“We are a start-up creative business. We’ve come very quickly in our progression, but we’re only established in 2016 with one member of staff. The City of Culture title was won and then suddenly we’ve got this global spotlight and huge resources. It’s very fast, accelerating growth and inevitably that will drop off in ’22 in terms of the level of resource. But we have to bring a reason for the company to exist”* (Manager 2, 29.1.19).

Having a cohesive organizational identity was particularly important for CCT managers because they did not want to have a typical arts festival for pure entertainment purposes, but they wanted the organization to create a social impact within the region. This aspect of the organization was seen by CCT managers as central and distinct from other similar-type organizations, with Manager 1 stating, *“It isn’t just art for art’s sake, because that’s not what we’re here to do. We’re not a festival in that way - we are a change programme for the city”* (Manager 1, 5.9.19). However, since this was a novel approach towards artistic production, CCT managers wanted to quickly emphasise the centrality of this way of working.

CCT managers put in place mobilised identity claims in order to reduce identity ambiguity experienced by frontline workers and quickly galvanise frontline workers towards the creation of social impact programmes. To be specific, mobilised identity claims were manager-approved claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization; these claims were 'mobilised' because they were actively used by managers to shape how frontline workers thought about the organization's identity. Mobilised identity claims within CCT were composed of claims derived from External Differentiation, Goal Articulation, and Sanctioned Narratives. External differentiation characterises the ways in which managers defined how CCT was distinct from other similar-type organizations (such as previous City of Culture organizations). Goal Articulation refers to the process of inscribing claims into

the overall mission and purpose of the organization. Finally, Sanctioned Narratives refer to discursive claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization. Each type of claim will now be investigated in depth.

6.1.1 External Differentiation

As soon as the managers were in post, they often remarked that CCT would be ‘doing things differently.’ This phrase was used continuously, being uttered verbatim over 25 times by 12 different informants over the course of data collection. Some informants justified this sought-after distinctiveness by critiquing how other arts organizations were outdated and focused on programming ‘shiny-yet-meaningless’ programmes. When remarking about the previous City of Culture festival in the city of Hull, a CCT Trustee said *“What did Hull do brilliantly? They had a great shiny year and they drove a lot of investment in infrastructure investment, in private sector investment in terms of hotels in the fall of that year. End of year, full stop, job done, tick, move on. This is different. This is accelerating, energising, something which has got to be much bigger and better”* (Trustee 2, 11.3.19). This sentiment was echoed by Manager 2, who said *“If it had been about having to showcase Coventry as an international creative city, who cares? You know, because that's what old festivals do”* (27.6.2020). Taken to the extreme, one frontline worker remarked that *“our whole arts and cultural sector is fundamentally broken”* (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

CCT attempted to distance itself from pre-existing arts organizations by positioning itself as unique, distinct, and active in trying to redress the misgivings of other similar-type organizations. For example, Manager 1 outlined that CCT would be different to other organization in the way that it programmed work, saying *“Most big arts festivals or programmes that you might look at, ‘14–18 NOW,’ even Manchester International Festival, to a certain extent, they're all artist-led; it's about the Creative Director coming in, deciding who their favourite artists are, and asking them what they would like to do in that year. We're not doing that. We're doing it the other way around. I think it comes back to - what is this about, then? What is the role of culture? What is the role of an artist?”* (Manager 1, 5.9.19). This claim of being distinct in the way that CCT programmed work was acknowledged throughout the organization.

When describing how CCT was going about creating impact, one frontline worker noted *“That does feel a bit different to me”* (Frontline Worker 2, 26.2.19).

In a similar vein, CCT managers created identity claims that CCT would emphasise co-creation during the development of programmes, which was very unlike other similar organizations. While co-creation means very different things in different sectors, co-creation in the arts often means that the creation of arts initiatives (e.g., shows, workshops, sector development) use the active participation of potential audience members or other beneficiaries in the development of the initiatives themselves. Emphasising how this approach to co-creation is different to other organizations, Manager 1 remarked *“You've always been known as the Audience, or the potential audience, or whatever but actually now, you're the artist, you're the creators. This programme is for you and it's yours and you have to help us to make it, create it, present it, deliver it, perform it, stage it. Whatever it might be. You're no longer the audience. You're the artist”* (Manager 1, 16.7.19). This differentiation was not lost on frontline workers, with one saying *“That's what we're trying to get away from here. ...Historically, and this is across the art sector, historically [you'd] have a strong engagement team where they just bus people in, because it's good and it looks good for funding”* (Frontline Worker 3, 14.1.20). What this quote demonstrates is that while some other organizations might also do co-creation, these actions were always on the periphery and solely a means to an end (i.e., an attempt to get investment). What was different about CCT to this frontline worker was that these practices were central to what CCT wanted to do.

By addressing the misgivings of similar-type organizations and re-examining the role of the audience, managers claimed that CCT was creating a new model for what an arts festival could be. Addressing this point directly, Manager 2 stated *“Our way of working feels like it's a new model. A new model others are starting to consider. This notion of co-creation, cultural democracy, diversifying leadership, devolving power. All those things are still very new concepts, whereas we think we are [already] hackneyed”* (Manager 2, 30.1.20). Relating this new model to CCT's use of co-creation and wider social responsibility, one frontline worker remarked *“I don't know of any other producing team that currently exists in the UK, that is doing a whole*

years' programme of work, whilst working, and having to know these social issues, and all the people that work around them” (Frontline Worker 1, 19.11.19).

Identity claims related to external differentiation were further concretised in the ways in which job descriptions for CCT positions were written and the way in which the hiring priorities for these roles were talked about. For example, Manager 2 remarked that *“we specifically weren't looking for art form specialists. We were looking for producers who have ambition, who potentially share the values of the organization, who are motivated to make social change, and if that meant that they were theatre experts, then great, or dance experts, then great. But we weren't starting with the art form expertise, because these producers need to be able to work in a way that they are facilitating other people to create brilliant ideas”* (Manager 2, 16.7.19). This was very different to how other arts festivals hired staff, whereas *“if we had gone with the traditional model, we would have hired arts specialists, a theatre specialist, a music specialist and then they would go and create dance, music, and theatre programmes with their communities. Instead, what we're doing is we want to hire producers who can be amazing community facilitators, understand what talent exists in these communities, they understand the producing process, and they understand how to connect professional and amazing artists into community settings. So, they need to be more kind of community facilitators with brilliant art ideas or can spot brilliant art ideas and turn them into a product”* (Manager 2, 16.7.19).

The way in which CCT positioned itself and its worker's roles as distinct was embraced by those who eventually took these roles. At our first meeting, one frontline worker stated, *“We are a team of activists. We applied for these roles because they were issue-led. It's exciting”* (Pre-Interview Note, Frontline Worker 1, 8.7.19). Remarking how this process of co-creation was central to the organization and thus distinct from other organizations, this frontline worker continued, *“The way this post was put out was putting the issues first, not as a subsidiary to the job. It was like ‘this is what we need to tackle and you can work out-- We want you to come in, work with the city, and figure out how we tackle it together.’ It wasn't like ‘come in and run your producer's agenda,’ which so often it is. It's like, ‘Oh, what are you going to do then? How are you going to make the next biggest thing?’ I'm not interested in that, it's never been my background”* (Frontline Worker 1, 8.7.19).

In summary, organizational managers created identity claims through external differentiation by asserting how CCT was distinct from other similar-type organizations. These type of identity claims were largely discursive, inscribed in ways that people would talk about the organization's distinctives. However, some of these discursive claims became concretised through written statements, such as written-down approaches to co-creation. In total, identity claims created through external differentiation are claims about how the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization are different than those of other organizations. While these identity claims were important, they were also supported by those derived from Goal Articulation and Sanctioned Narratives.

6.1.2 Goal Articulation

While identity claims related to External Differentiation alerted organizational members about what CCT *wasn't*, identity claims related to Goal Articulation alerted organizational members about what CCT *was*. Initial goal articulation was fuzzy, with managers using ambiguous intention statements to describe the overall direction of travel for CCT. For example, in an early interview, Manager 1 mentioned that *"For us, we absolutely believe in the role of artists to make change happen, to transform lives, to bring happiness and joy and celebration, but what we're trying to achieve in the programme is to unlock the creativity of our citizens where maybe it's been latent but needs to be unlocked somehow and the role artists can play in doing that"* (Manager 1, 5.9.19). These ambiguous goals would also describe the overall purpose of the organization as creating some sort of social impact: *"We really think about the role and value of culture across the city outside of being entertainment or leisure or art for art's sake, actually how it can help to make a difference"* (Manager 1, 28.5.20).

These ambiguous goals became more refined in the early days of operation when CCT clarified its legal obligations with the Coventry City Council – its chief underwriter. To give an example of one of these overarching council-mandated targets, Manager 1 outlined that *"We've actually agreed with the city council that we will work towards delivering a million and a half extra visitors through the Trust's direct programme, and the city will take on the responsibility for the other million"*

(5.2.20). To be specific, the agreement between CCT and the Coventry City Council took the form of a service contract. This service contract outlined broad expectations from the Coventry City Council and potential ‘clawbacks’ if CCT was unable to produce agreed-upon results. This process was outlined well by Manager 2, who said, *“What you have to do when you have a service contract is you have to be able to demonstrate the ability to fail. That does mean within the contract there are clawbacks. So in the event of us not delivering, failing, they might pay us less. It's like, when there's a grant, it's unusual for somebody not to pay you a full grant. You'd have to catastrophically fail for you not to get your grant. Whereas for our service contract...we can be penalised”* (Manager 2, 30.1.20).

Beyond its legal responsibility, CCT managers wanted to develop specific strategic objectives to further refine the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of CCT. Justifying this refinement, it was noted that the starting ambiguous goals were insufficient at building common understandings between organizational members, stating *“The vision when it was created for the City of Culture year, was about exploring the impact of culture in a modern, diverse Britain. For me, the why is missing from that, because that's-- maybe explore a bit the why and the work I need to do now is to link the vision to outcomes, which it doesn't do yet”* (Manager 2, 29.3.19). Manager 2 further justified this refinement by speaking directly about defining a coherent organizational identity, saying *“How you behave in order to deliver against- - to achieve your objectives, your vision should be about your overarching direction of travel linked to your outcomes. The why. Why do we exist? How are we going to behave? What it's going to achieve?”* (Manager 2, 29.3.19).

The strategic objectives of CCT were outlined in the writing of an organizational theory of change framework. Such frameworks are premised on creating “an explicit theory or model of how the programme causes the intended or observed impact” (Coryn et al., 2011, p. 201). Theory-based models seek to define casual pathways which link organizational inputs (e.g., strategic resources, capacities, associations) to envisioned activities (e.g., arts events, community development, lobbying) that would result in the creation of direct outputs which would benefit a local population. These immediate outputs were then expected to result in longer term outcomes for the community over time. While the theory of change framework was

initially written as an evaluation tool, it was quickly embraced by CCT managers as further evidence for the overall goals and strategy of the organization. Addressing this point, it was pointed out that *“I think it's really helpful...to think of the theory of change as a way of also defining the organization's strategic objectives. I can totally see how it moves on from being about monitoring activity, and instead actually how does it become a framework for the business going forward”* (Manager 2, 30.1.20).

The process of goal articulation was not seen as a redirection from the initial City of Culture bid document or early ambiguous intention statements, but a further articulation of that previous vision. It was once pointed out that *“There are 16 outcomes and there are now five strategic objectives of the trust which are just about finessed, which we're working on as part of the business planning work. I think ultimately for 2021, the purpose is still to have this joyful celebratory year which attempts to improve the rights of the people of this city. That's still ultimately what needs to keep us focused. Doing so will allow us to achieve the economic, social, health and wellbeing objectives that our partners wish for us to achieve. I think the mission remains the same, an extraordinary year which makes some social change”* (Manager 2, 19.5.20). Speaking further about how these goals are only a further articulation of previous vision, it was noted that *“We've been brought here to deliver against a vision. My job is to absolutely remain focused on delivering against that vision that we've inherited. We finesse it, we may change the emphasis of delivery, but ultimately we've got to remain vision and mission-focused and my job is to keep us on that track”* (Manager 2, 29.1.19).

Articulated goals were not meant to be purely for evaluation or legal requirements, but were seen as a way to actively shape how frontline workers would go about their programme creation. This was an intention built into the recruitment process, with Manager 2 noting that *“we can be clear about what the outcomes are now going to be, now we need to start producing a team into place to respond against those”* (Manager 2, 29.1.19). As frontline workers were put into post, they were encouraged to use articulated goals when programming, because *“every activity we invest in has to deliver at least one of these outcomes”* (Manager 2, 27.6.20). This view was further driven by CCT evaluators, with one noting that *“The desire is that everything will be against outcomes. Any small project, big project will be tagged*

against one or more of the priority outcomes. We're getting everybody to clarify what it is that they're trying to achieve through what they do. But you got to get it in place quickly to capture that otherwise will already have begun to do, 'I fancy doing this, I fancy doing that,' in a more whimsical [way]" (CCT Evaluator 1, 9.4.19). Another evaluator echoed this point succinctly, saying "outcomes will ultimately help shape their [i.e., frontline workers'] thinking, their creative thinking around the programme" (CCT Evaluator 2, 5.11.19).

Encouraging the active use of articulated goals in the programme creation process was not meant to be an added burden on frontline workers, but a tool to help them programme in-line with CCT's identity. When asked about programme complexity directly, Evaluator 1 responded to the following question:

Interviewer: "[You mentioned that] it's outcome led. Does that add complexity or take away takes away complexity [for frontline workers]?"

Evaluator 1: "Takes away complexity. I'm learning all the time and I absolutely get it now that if you can agree on four or five areas of impact, 15 or so outcomes, that everybody can buy into and support it. Everybody commits themselves in working towards-- rather generating lots of additional ones that don't really fit anywhere then you really are creating a blast of change which is very focused and very targeted and therefore more likely to be successful" (Evaluator 1, 16.12.19).

Evaluator 1 continued this reasoning, speaking to the intention and widespread use of the theory of change framework within CCT, saying that *"Without an evaluation framework, we have no idea what impact it's having, what legacy it might lead [to], how it might guide us. I think the fact that it's got such a high profile within the whole thing is really significant, and it informs people's thinking and informs conversations. There's never a meeting or a discussion that doesn't include some reference or some detailed conversation around the PM&E [i.e., performance monitoring and evaluation]" (Evaluator 1, 16.12.19).*

The view that the theory of change clarified CCT's identity and informed the programme creation process was not only held by managers and evaluators, but was echoed throughout the organization. For example, Frontline Worker 1 described

CCT's theory of change as a base to build programmes from, saying *"I think what the theory of change does is give you a sense of direction and it gives you an anchor point to return to"* (Frontline Worker 1, 1.9.21). Trustee 1 remarked how articulated impact goals were necessary when creating programmes, saying *"Those things are not bonuses that could come because of the great programme, but that you choose the programme because that's the effect you want to have"* (Trustee 1, 26.2.19). This view was also held by Frontline Worker 3, who mentioned that *"I think it's actually really made me look deeper at the theory of change again and really go back to my projects and say, 'Does this really work? Does this really fit?' The theory of change in a way [inaudible 00:42:40] and it holds you accountable through the projects you're doing and you check yourself"* (Frontline Worker 3, 7.5.20).

While goal articulation mainly focused on articulating what was central and enduring about CCT, its approach to goal-led programming was also seen as a distinct aspect of the organization. Overlapping with claims of external differentiation, Manager 2 described this goal-led model as novel, saying *"All [programmes] need to be just a mechanism through which we deliver our longer-term impacts. We start with our outcomes and we create art to achieve the outcomes, which is quite an unusual way of working. Normally you would just put great art on and then count it, but we're starting from what do we need to carry and how does the art deliver against that"* (Manager 2, 29.1.19). This sentiment was shared by CCT evaluators, with Evaluator 1 saying *"The Trust is committed to an outcome-led festival, outcome-led programming. This has never been done in the world before. Traditionally you get your address book out, you find the most famous artists you can"* (Evaluator 1, 9.4.19).

Finally, it should be noted that when the Covid 19 pandemic started, organizational actors would continually refer to CCT's articulated goals as a way to highlight their continuity amongst a changing environment. For example, shortly after the first UK lockdown, Manager 2 noted that *"The vision hasn't changed. The outcomes haven't changed. ...Some of the activities are changed based on what resource you've got available, and that's the situation we're facing. ...The scale in which we can achieve those outcomes changes, but the desire to deliver against them absolutely remains firm"* (Manager 2, 21.5.20). In the following interview, he reiterated this point, stating *"we haven't in any way abandoned our 15 outcomes and*

our approach. ...We haven't adapted any of them. The activities will change, the scale of the activity might change, but the outcomes absolutely remain, 100 percent, you know, cast in stone” (Manager 2, 27.6.20).

Seeing the goals as unchanging amongst the pandemic was not a view only held by management, but was felt throughout the organization. For example, Frontline Worker 2 noted that *“The trust has been very, very good at responding actually ...[doing] a lot of thinking about the best way to pivot our plans and achieve the same objectives” (Frontline Worker 2, 29.4.20).* Moreover, a CCT Trustee noted that the pandemic had only strengthened the purpose for CCT, saying *“the reason we went for the 2021 City of Culture, I would argue— not argue, I was there so I know the reason, it remains more important now and not less important. If you remember, with the theory of change, the case for change, the power of why we wanted to do this – was about this super diversity of our city, the deep structural inequalities that existed around access and participation... [through City of Culture] we could in our own small ways start going after structural health inequalities, cultural inequalities, social justice” (CCT Trustee 2, 8.6.20).*

When asked why the goals stayed the same amongst the pandemic, multiple informants spoke of the robustness of CCT’s theory of change and objectives. CCT Evaluator 2 said that *“It comes down to a Theory of Change. Because what you're saying in the Theory of Change is that ‘these are the change that we want to see in the city.’ And we did have a conversation about the Theory of Change when the pandemic [hit], we talked about how it would change and we were very adamant that it **doesn’t** change. ...The scale changes but we are still committed to making those changes because that’s what we’ve been invested for, that’s what we’ve planned for” (CCT Evaluator 2, 7.9.20).* The stability of the theory of change and articulated goals was even seen as a source of pride, with Manager 2 saying *“I feel actually quite pleased, quite smug that they’ve got this model which was robust even to stand the worst sort of beating, you know, that the vision is still one which is worth backing, you know, and perhaps becomes more relevant” (Manager 2, 21.5.20).*

In summary, CCT managers created identity claims through goal articulation by outlining how various outputs, outcomes, and impacts defined what were central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. CCT goals began as ambiguous and

were largely defined by legal agreements, but were eventually developed into specific strategic objectives and a theory of change evaluation framework. These goals were not only intended to be about evaluating CCT's performance, but were intentioned to be used by frontline workers during the programme creation process to create projects aligned with CCT's identity. Goal articulation was seen as so central to CCT that even amongst a global pandemic, developed outcomes remained unchanged. In total, identity claims created through goal articulation are claims about the overall mission and purpose of an organization that are central, distinct, and enduring.

6.1.3 Sanctioned Narratives

Another way in which managers created identity claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization were related to overarching stories and narratives. These explicit narratives described who CCT was and what it did. The best description of these types of claims was provided by Manager 1, who stated "*[We] have created a narrative for the year, which we've been calling our manifesto. Which is really selling the story of Coventry, who we are, what we stand for, and hopefully really giving people a sense of why Coventry is such an amazing city and historically what it's achieved and the market's made on the world, but also currently and into the future, the opportunity that we have*" (Manager 1, 16.10.19). This manifesto was not just an ambiguous description of intention, but was meant to shape what types of programmes were created and when they would happen: "*We've got that manifesto and then coming out of that manifesto, month by month, we've agreed a theme. It's not really a theme, it's more-- I suppose it's more what is it that we want to say in that month. What's our message going to be? And so, it's not saying that everything in that month must deliver that message. It's just saying, in that month, this is one of our key messages and so ideally there would be some activity that supported that*" (Manager 1, 16.10.19). While these themes would provide a focus for specific months, it did not mean that these themes would not be considered during other months. For example, "*One of the months is about women, March, but it doesn't mean we don't work with men, or women at any other [time] in the year. It just means that in that month, we raise the temperature. We maybe have some slightly bigger moments, and we think of the diversity of that message and what we're trying to say. We think of all age groups and*

but obviously women feature all the way through the year. So yes, so we've got all kind of-- our areas of focus, if you like, for each month” (Manager 1, 16.10.19).

Sanctioned Narratives were not intended to sit on a shelf or solely be used as a marketing tool, but were intended to actively shape how frontline workers came up with programme ideas. For example, it was noted that *“[We've] written a little narrative as well that goes with each month. It kind of expresses who we are, why this is important, and why we're doing it. The producers will have this now. Alongside doing the pitching and the work plans and thinking about project development, I'm also asking them to think about in line with a storyboard we've got where they want to situate those projects” (Manager 1, 16.10.19).* Sanctioned narratives were described as useful and a tool that helped frontline workers develop appropriate programme ideas: *“Everyone's really excited by the storyboards. That's really good. It gives them something simple to work to and everyone's working off that so it's great” (Manager 1, 11.3.20).*

In addition to helping frontline workers think of programme ideas, Sanctioned Narratives also enabled organizational members to speak about the organization in a way that enabled partnership and identity clarity. In this way, sanctioned narratives were meant to cut through the noise of external expectations and distil what CCT managers claimed to be the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. Speaking to this point, Manager 1 remarked that *“It's been really hard for us to communicate the depth and breadth of everything that we're doing and it means that you only ever talk about the big events, and the big events are scratching the surface of what we're doing. They're the things that everyone wants to know about, because they're in the public realm. They're high impact, high footfall, and they cost a lot of money and all those things, but there's all this other stuff that we're doing, which is really about that long term legacy, partnership building, capacity development, understanding the role that culture plays in delivering a better, connected, and stronger society. [The manifesto] will start to go towards us explaining that. I think it's really important we do that, and it will help our colleagues and the council to work more closely with us so that they understand what we're doing” (Manager 1, 5.2.20).*

Sanctioned narratives were not meant to supplant articulated goals, but were intended to sit alongside them. Manager 1 speaks to this point when describing the

overall purpose of the manifesto, saying *“I suppose it's helping them understand what we're trying to achieve, what we're working towards. Not just in terms of our outcomes and impacts, but also in terms of the narrative and the vision. Then working with them to look at the shape of the programme they want to put together, and how we might influence who and what that is. It still delivers what they need, but has a bit of our vision in there because otherwise it will be disconnected”* (Manager 1, 16.7.19). In this quote, it is mentioned how these narratives prevent a ‘disconnected’ programme. Thus, this connectivity, or shared collective vision of the organization is of importance. Frontline Worker 4 echoed this sentiment, remarking that *“The storyboard is quite good for that I think, because then people feel like they're responding to something that is part of the trust and it will like become a collective”* (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20).

In summary, CCT managers created identity claims through sanctioned narratives by outlining discursive stories about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. These sanctioned narratives were largely derived from a ‘programming manifesto.’ The manifesto described important themes for the overall programme that frontline managers were asked to respond to when creating their programme ideas. These narratives were supplemental to goals and ‘rounded out’ how people could talk about and think about CCT’s identity. In total, identity claims created through sanctioned narratives are manager-approved stories and accounts that act as discursive claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization.

To review the argument thus far, CCT managers built various types of identity claims to define the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. CCT managers hoped that defining identity claims would prevent identity ambiguity native to newly formed organizations. CCT identity claims can be categorised into three forms. First, managers created identity claims through External Differentiation that defined how CCT was distinct from other similar-type organizations. Second, managers derived identity claims through Goal Articulation that defined the overall mission and purpose of the organization. Third, managers built identity claims through Sanctioned Narratives that defined what the organization did through approved stories and discourse. Definitions and indicative quotes for all three types of identity claims are collated in Table 6.

Construct	Description	Interviews	Fieldnotes
External Differentiation	<i>Claims about how the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization are different than those of other organizations.</i>	<p>“It isn't just art for art's sake, because that's not what we're here to do. We're not a festival in that way, we are a change programme for the city” (Manager 1, 5.9.19).</p> <p>“Most big arts festivals or programmes that you might look at, ‘14–18 NOW,’ even Manchester International Festival, to a certain extent, they're all artist-led; it's about the Creative Director coming in, deciding who their favourite artists are, and asking them what they would like to do in that year. We're not doing that. We're doing it the other way around. I think it comes back to - what is this about, then? (Manager 1, 5.9.19).</p>	<p>After a brief hiatus, CCT staff have started to use the phrase 'doing things differently' again. It came up in today's meeting when referring to Hull. Managers of Hull's City of Culture commissioned an evaluation of their impact after the completion of the festival year. CCT managers see their process as antithetical - with impact foregrounding all of their activity (Team Meeting, 11.5.20).</p> <p>Before today's interview, [Manager 2] spoke to me about an arts management conference that [they] just returned from. [Manager 2] mentioned that the conversation was held back by 'outdated venues,' that only wanted to talk about subscriber retention rather than more pressing issues, such as co-creation (Interview Note, 30.1.20).</p>
Goal Articulation	<i>Claims about the overall mission and purpose of an organization that are central, distinct, and enduring.</i>	<p>“We have been clear about what the outcomes are going to be, now we need to start putting a team into place to respond against those...Every activity we invest in has to deliver at least one of these outcomes” (Manager 2, 29.1.19).</p> <p>“All [programmes] need to be just a mechanism through which we deliver our longer-term impacts. We start with our outcomes and we create art to achieve the outcomes, which is quite an unusual way of working” (Manager 2, 29.1.19).</p>	<p>We are now discussing the format of the PM&E [i.e., Performance Monitoring & Evaluation] document. [CCT Evaluator 1] wants the document to easy to read so that producers can use it while they are talking to partners (Evaluation Team Meeting, 9.1.20).</p> <p>When I asked [Manager 2] about the goals of City of Culture [they] grabbed a piece of paper from [their] desk and read from the theory of change document. This is the second time something like this has happened when I've asked this question (3.4.20)</p>
Sanctioned Narratives	<i>Manager-approved stories and accounts that act as discursive claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization.</i>	<p>“[We've] written a little narrative as well that goes with each month. It kind of expresses who we are, why this is important, and why we're doing it. The producers will have this now. Alongside doing the pitching and the work plans and thinking about project development, I'm also asking them to think about in line with a storyboard we've got, where they want to situate those projects” (CCT Manager 1).</p> <p>“I suppose it's helping them understand what we're trying to achieve, what we're working towards. Not just in terms of our outcomes and impacts, but also in terms of the narrative and the vision. Then working with them to look at the shape of the programme they want to put together, and how we might influence who and what that is” (Manager 1, 16.7.19).</p>	<p>They are discussing the programme 'Classically Queer.' Apparently, they are putting together an orchestra of queer musicians for a performance in the cathedral ruins. [Frontline Worker 1] mentioned that they are going to do it in July because it fits with CCT's Harmony theme for that month. I think the double meaning is implied (Team Meeting, 17.5.21).</p> <p>After I turned off the recorder, [CCT Funder 2] asked me if I had seen the Trust's manifesto yet. I said I had not. He suggested I ask for it because it poetically sums up the Trust's vision for the year. He is excited to see how the Trust's activities match up to these major themes (Interview Note, 22.7.20).</p>

TABLE 6, MOBILISED IDENTITY CLAIMS

6.2 Sensechecking in the Temporary Organization

So far, we have seen how mobilised identity claims were used in an attempt to influence the identity understandings of frontline workers. The individual-level process of developing identity understandings through sensemaking is the subject of the subsequent chapter and will not be discussed here. Instead, this chapter focuses on the organization-level process of identity regulation.

Through examining the data, it was found that CCT managers would periodically assess the identity understandings of frontline workers. This process specifically looked to see if the identity understandings of frontline workers were aligned with those of CCT managers. This induced process is theorised as sensechecking. For clarity, sensechecking is defined succinctly as:

The process of comparing present sense between people.

Within CCT, sensechecking was achieved through Ideation Feedback and Approval and by Making Understandings Legible. The process of ideation feedback required frontline workers to present early programme discoveries and ideas to managers through ‘informal feedback’ and ‘one-to-one sessions.’ CCT managers would then direct frontline workers to refine their programme ideas before ultimately accepting or rejecting them. This process was made possible by making current identity understandings legible through discursive ‘pitches’ and tangible ‘work plans.’ These two facets of sensechecking are now evidenced in depth.

6.2.1 Ideation Feedback & Approval

In the early days of CCT, frontline workers were given a fairly free reign to creatively come up with ideas for CCT programme activity. These activities mainly took the form of specific performances, but also included workshops with specific audience groups, partnership building with community organizations, sector development with other arts organizations, and many other programme types. The only qualification of this creative freedom was that all programmes had to be aligned to CCT’s identity (as put forward thus far by manager-derived identity claims). Describing this early process, Manager 1 stated “*What's been happening, I suppose, is all of the producers*

have been going out, developing ideas with communities, whether it's residents or local artists or community organizations and then coming back in with loads of ideas and projects. Now we've got to look at those projects” (Manager 1, 11.3.20).

As programme ideas began to take shape, CCT managers implemented a process of programme ideation feedback to keep an eye on potential programmes and ensure that frontline workers were developing programme ideas aligned to CCT's identity. This process began as informal one-to-one meetings between a CCT manager and a frontline worker. Recalling this process, Manager 1 mentioned that *“[In August] I did all the one-to-one meetings with producers and went through their programme”* (Manager 1, 1.12.20). Describing what occurs in these meetings, Manager 1 shared that *“I asked all of the producers to start to really pin down what some of the projects are that they think they see themselves doing in 2021. Projects that may be inspired by conversations or partnerships or ideas, sessions or workshops or anything that they've been doing out and about in the city. That we can start to collect, I suppose. There's a long list so that we can start to really think about what the programme might start to look like, but also for me, understanding where people are putting their time”* (Manager 1, 16.10.19).

What shone very clearly from the data was that managers often required frontline workers to make explicit which identity claims their programme ideas related to and would work toward. For example, Manager 1 and Manager 2 would both ask frontline workers during this process how their programme ideas related to CCT's articulated goals. When discussing potential ideas with workers, Manager 2 stated that: *“We will have some very practical questions to ask, ‘well, how does this fit into our model?’”* (Manager 2, 29.1.19). Echoing this point, Manager 1 remarked that within these meetings *“You [i.e., frontline workers] need to explain to me what the change is, what we might need to make it happen, and why we're doing this. Not just that it's a lovely project with a certain great artist or whatever but actually why we're doing it, what the point of it is, and where it sits on the grand scheme of our theory of change”* (Manager 1, 30.7.20). It was important to make individual programme goals clear because *“If you're going to be outcome driven, you have to be very focused on what those outcomes are and kind of the change you want to make, or what the bigger*

objective is, so that when you're talking about the projects you're doing, you have really good debate, discussion, and provocation" (Manager 1, 30.7.20).

Feedback given during this process was seen as an opportunity for frontline workers to further refine their programme ideas. For example, to ensure that potential programmes would hit all articulated goals, Manager 1 shared that *"I'd said to all the producers is choose one outcome for each project rather than a list of five. Just choose one. That doesn't mean it's the only outcome you're delivering against, but it gives me a sense of what the most important one is. I think we're still reviewing that. What I've realised is we do need more than one [laughs] because actually a lot of people have gone with co-creation with communities as their main outcome. Of course, there are a load of other ones as well. We need to go back in and review that"* (Manager 1, 11.3.20). While feedback was largely about helping frontline workers adapt their programme ideas themselves, every so often managers would take a more direct approach to shaping programmes. Describing why this happens, it was stated that *"Sometimes, you've just got to push people or tell them what to do because time is against us or maybe there is a very quick solution and we just need to get on with it"* (Manager 1, 22.10.20).

Eventually, hard decisions needed to be made about which programmes were going to be officially approved by CCT management and which projects were going to be rejected. This first occurred in July 2020, with Manager 1 noting that *"There was a deadline which was the 13th of July which was to get all of the programme proposals [submitted]...just to really make decisions I suppose on budgets and if we are taking this project forward or not--how is it going forward, who's the project lead, and starting to just think about delivery"* (Manager 1, 30.7.20). The reason for this hard deadline was that *"Everything needs to be in place by the beginning of July so that we then go into getting ready for the launch of the programme in September"* (Manager 1, 11.3.20). To clarify, while CCT programmes would not formally begin until January 2021, programmes needed to be decided upon much earlier than that in order to build the programmes (e.g., write scripts, rehearse casts) and elicit organizational support from other departments (e.g., marketing support).

It is important to note that not all programmes were approved or rejected in July 2020. That is very far from the truth, rather, that was the first instance in which

programme ideas were formally approved. The process of ideation feedback and approval was continuous – as programme ideas were deemed sufficient by CCT management they were formally approved. Detailing this continuous process, Manager 1 remarked *“We need a core programme. It doesn't mean we stop. We'll still be creating and generating and developing and producing stuff, but we need a core programme that we're really pinning down, that we're really making happen...probably with a little bit of a focus of the first three months of the year and what that's going to look like”* (Manager 1, 16.10.19).

Frontline workers had various responses to the ideation feedback and approval process, which is discussed in the following chapter; however, it is important to say for now that frontline workers did understand what this process was and why this process was occurring. Frontline Worker 4 described this process as a way to define *“What are our projects. Getting them down and trying to get them to [Manager 1] to say ‘Look, this is what our programme might look like’”* (Frontline Worker 4, 24.4.20). In a separate interview, Frontline Worker 4 would continue, saying *“[This process is] really for [Manager 1] to say, ‘I like this, I don't like this, get that out.’ That will have to happen. That's a reality, that there needs to be one person, like at editorial control like what their shape of the year looks and what we can and can't afford”* (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20). While some frontline workers saw this process as a bureaucratic hoop to jump through, others enjoyed the reflective aspect of the process, saying *“It makes you check yourself on the theory of change, ‘Does that project really do what we're supposed to be doing?’”* (Frontline Worker 3, 7.5.20).

In summary, frontline workers developed programme ideas aligned to their own CCT identity understandings. As programmes were being developed, they were subject to ideation feedback and approval. This process began as frontline workers met with managers in one-to-one informal sessions. These one-to-one sessions would allow managers to give feedback on potential programmes to ensure that they were aligned with CCT's identity. These informal sessions were then formalised through the programme approval process. This ongoing process would formally allocate approval and budget to programmes that CCT managers deemed aligned to CCT's identity. Conversely, programmes indicative of unaligned identity understandings were rejected. In total, the process of ideation feedback and approval is conceptualised

as the manager-led process of refining, accepting, and rejecting potential actions of workers due to current alignment of identity understandings.

6.2.2 Making Understandings Legible

In order for sensechecking to occur, there needed to be a way for frontline workers to make their current identity understandings legible for CCT managers. As we have already seen, this occurred discursively through ideation feedback and approval. For example, during one-to-one meetings, frontline workers had to verbally pitch their programme ideas to managers. Moving beyond discursive means, this process was further concretised by requiring frontline workers to produce tangible ‘work plans.’ Work plans (sometimes referred to as ‘project plans’ or ‘briefing sheets’) were documents created by frontline workers for every programme they wanted to produce. Work plans were required to have information summarising the programme and how it related to CCT’s identity claims. Explaining the process in their own words, Manager 1 said *“We're trying to put a process in where we capture the work that everyone's doing. What we've asked everybody to do is [write] a work plan, which is basically a one-page document, which is an overview of what that project is, who the partners are, what outcome it's delivering, [and] how much it's going to cost. [Also,] a bit of a timeline so that we know roughly what's happening [and] when in terms of R&D or fundraising or whatever it might be that needs to happen”* (Manager 1, 9.12.19).

Tangible work plans were not static documents, but evolved as their underlying programmes evolved. If CCT managers didn’t feel like work plans were developed enough or demonstrated an alignment to CCT’s overall identity, then frontline workers were required to change their ideas or risk getting them rejected all-together. Demonstrating how this was a continued process, it was remarked that *“I've read through all the work plans now and it's still quite headlining. There's not a huge amount of detail, but we're getting to that point now where I need a bit more detail, I need some copy, I need to understand what it is, who we're doing it with, what the purpose of it is in terms of our outcomes and starting to piece together a bit of an understanding of what the programme is”* (Manager 1, 15.11.19).

Work plans were not meant to supplant discursive means within programming pitching, but to support them. This is perfectly encapsulated by Frontline Worker 1, who stated that, *“Producers, you know, we’re all quite creative. We can paint the picture of what you’re going to see if you’re watching the show. Then [Manager 1] goes, ‘Oh, yeah, I love that.’ But [Manager 1] might read it on a briefing sheet and go, ‘This sounds crap, [I] don’t want to do it.’ Sometimes it can undo six months’ worth of work. So, for me, I think having that direct connection with [Manager 1] is key. I really think it is. Because how can you share your vision if you’re silent and sit on a black and white piece of paper? It’s like choosing to marry someone on the basis of their dating thing. You’re only going to see a picture of them and read about them, but until you sit in front of them you’re not going to get that far...when you have that face-to-face conversation about projects, it creates a spark, it creates a connection”* (Frontline Worker 1, 27.8.20). This extensive quote should not be misinterpreted as meaning that discursive ability was more important than what was included in work plans. Manager 1 would continually speak about how they made decisions based on the tangible work plans, saying *“Also for me, it’s about how we decide which projects we’re doing and which ones we’re not doing. If I don’t have a clear workplan, that’s costed with a timeline and clarity on scale and location, all those kinds of things...It’s about how we start to do decision-making”* (Manager 1, 9.12.19). Thus, what frontline workers both wrote and spoke about were key in elaborating how their programme ideas were indicative of CCT identity.

Finally, it should be noted that sensechecking identity understandings (through ideation feedback & approval and by making understandings legible) was a novel way of working for frontline workers. Expressing this sentiment, Manager 1 remarked *“The pitching will happen and then we will select and we will see who is it that we take forward. What we realise is none of them have ever done anything like this before”* (Manager 1, 15.11.19). Despite this novelty, frontline workers seemed to step up to the plate, working hard to make their identity understandings legible through their programme pitches. Demonstrating this insight, Frontline Worker 2 stated, *“We’re actually still in that space where we’re pitching these projects and programmes to be a part of 2021, so to get the bigger funding and to get the green light above to see if we could actually do this. The last, I guess three months have been preparing for that”* (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19).

To summarise, sensechecking was made possible by having frontline workers make their current identity understandings legible for CCT managers. This was done discursively through one-to-one meetings and pitch session as well as done tangibly through written work plans. Through both discursive and material means, managers were able to assess the identity understandings of frontline workers. In total, the process of making understandings legible is the process of representing identity understandings in an assessable form through the means of discourse and materiality.

Overall, CCT managers instituted a process of sensechecking through which they could assess whether the identity understandings of frontline workers were aligned with their own. This process was composed of ideation feedback and approval and by making understandings legible. Ideation feedback and approval required frontline workers to continually adapt their programme ideas to better align with CCT's identity. These adaptations were based on the discursive and tangible evidence produced by frontline workers – e.g., the legible understandings of CCT identity. Definitions and indicative quotes for both sensechecking processes are collated in Table 7.

Construct	Description	Interviews	Fieldnotes
Ideation Feedback & Approval	<i>The manager-led process of refining, accepting, and rejecting potential actions of workers due to current alignment of identity understandings.</i>	<p>“You need to explain to me...why we’re doing this. Not just that it’s a lovely project with a certain great artist or whatever, but actually, why we’re doing it, what the point of it is, and where it sits on the grand scheme of our theory of change” (Manager 1, 30.7.20).</p> <p>“Sometimes, you need to use that kind of coaching technique of pulling information out of people or encouraging them to think about the challenge they’ve got themselves and use that, and kind of come up with solutions.” (Manager 1, 22.10.20).</p>	<p>[A frontline worker] vented to me that her ideas were not taken seriously at the last [pitch] session. She was continually asked to state how her programme ideas addressed the theory of change, but she didn't hadn't fully thought through that yet (Team Meeting, 27.4.20).</p> <p>[Frontline workers] are now discussing their projects that got approved by [Manager 1]. [Frontline Worker 1] is happy that her project 'The Story of Us' got approved, but she is unhappy with its current budget allocation (Team Meeting, 8.3.21).</p>
Making Understandings Legible	<i>The process of representing identity understandings in an assessable form through the means of discourse and materiality.</i>	<p>“We've asked all of the producers to create these workplans now, but I think there's a little bit of slight pushback on it because it's a different way for everybody to be working. ...We're saying, "Well, actually you do need to do that." It isn't just for me and Jacob, it's also for Laura and the marketing team, it's also for the fundraising team, it's also for Martin, so that when he's going to events and speaking, he's got content that he can quickly go into the workplans and pull out if he needs to” (Manager 1, 9.12.19).</p> <p>“I've read through all the work plans now and it's still quite headlining. There's not a huge amount of detail, but we're getting to that point now where I need a bit more detail, I need some copy, I need to understand what it is, who we're doing it with, what the purpose of it is in terms of our outcomes and starting to piece together a bit of an understanding of what the programme is” (Manager 1, 15.11.19).</p>	<p>[Frontline Worker 4] is reporting back from a Senior Management Team meeting. [Frontline Worker 4] is mentioning that work plans need more detail about how projects will fit into the wider purpose of CCT. Right now work plans are too broad and don't give a sense of operational demands or how they fit into CCT's purpose (Team Meeting, 12.11.19)</p> <p>After today's interview, [Frontline Worker 3] mentioned that she needs to go 'practice her speech' for the upcoming pitch session. She wants to make sure that she remembers to hit all the major points about why she is suggesting her project (Interview Note, 7.5.20)</p>

TABLE 7, SENSECHECKING

6.3 Identity Claim Addition & Subtraction in the Temporary Organization

The ongoing acceptance and rejection of programme ideas affected the range of identity claims available to frontline workers. As programmes were accepted, they gave CCT managers tangible examples of what types of programmes were indicative of CCT identity. The process of identity claim addition can therefore be understood as the incorporation of new manager-approved claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. Identity claim addition was derived from a process of **disseminating approved programmes** by CCT managers to ensure that approved programmes acted as new mobilised identity claims.

Conversely, as programme ideas were rejected, they gave CCT managers tangible examples of what types of programmes *were not* indicative of CCT identity. Moreover, while specific programme ideas were rejected, similar-type programme ideas were also discouraged. The process of identity claim subtraction can therefore be understood as the dissolution of potential or existing claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. Identity claim subtraction was derived from a process of **reconsidering rejected programmes**, whereby CCT managers ensured that frontline workers would eventually be able to suggest programme ideas that were aligned to CCT's identity. The process of disseminating approved programmes and reconsidering rejected programmes will now be discussed in depth.

6.3.1 Identity Claim Addition: Disseminating Approved Programmes

One of the first major moments of disseminating approved programmes was in the initial programme launch in October, 2020. This initial programme launch consisted of CCT announcing 15 major programmes that had been approved and demonstrated what types of programmes would be produced during the main festival period. This initial programme launch was very explicitly about showing CCT's identity as well as reassuring the public that they had been hard at work. Describing this launch, Manager 1 stated *"We wanted 15 projects that really help us to communicate the story. I think we obviously needed some high impact announcements like the Turner Prize and working with the Royal Shakespeare Company and working with someone like Terry*

Hall who is from Coventry and people love ...So, I think there was some stuff that we needed to do just to create a bit of excitement, just to get a conversation going and to build a bit of confidence really” (Manager 1, 22.10.20).

Approved programmes within the initial programme launch were chosen as particularly indicative of CCT’s identity. Demonstrating programmatic breadth, *“We need to make sure we’ve got really good representation across that programme... We need a green project. We need something digital. We need major events. We need some kind of visual, something visual artsy in there...something that really speaks about the way in which we’re working with communities...picking up on some of those key areas around mental health or the work we’re doing with refugees and asylum seekers or with homelessness” (Manager 1, 22.10.20).* Programmes within the initial launch were also chosen when they represented how frontline workers were successfully working with each other. When describing why they included one specific programme, it was remarked that *“I suppose wanting to show a bit of innovation so the Marshmallow Laser Feast Project, it beautifully fuses the work that [two frontline workers] are doing around green and digital features. But also, it’s an exploration of nature, human nature and the kind of symbiosis between us which is really nice” (Manager 1, 22.10.20).*

While disseminating approved programmes added to the identity claims available to frontline workers, they were not meant to replace the mobilised identity claims already in existence. In this way, approved programmes were seen as indicative (but not fully encompassing) of CCT’s identity. Recognising this fact, Manager 2 stated *“most people recognised that it was a taster and it was intended to demonstrate direction of travel rather than a complete picture” (Manager 2, 29.11.20).* While supplemental, disseminating approved programmes were particularly potent because it added identity claims created by frontline workers themselves. This organic process was seen as a nuanced way in which frontline workers could align identity understandings amongst themselves and their produced programmes. Evidencing this point, it was stated that one of the purposes of discussing approved programmes was because *“it’s learning about each other, building that understanding about who we are, who we believe in” (Manager 1, 16.7.19).*

Moments of programme reflection were also a way in which new identity claims were disseminated to all frontline workers. A management consultant was brought in to run 'reflection sessions,' regularly scheduled meetings for frontline workers where they could reflect on their success. Justifying these sessions, Consultant 1 remarked "*[Manager 1]'s thinking was about creating a space for the team to pause and to just have a moment to think about what they're doing, their practice, their work, and to think about what's working well*" (Consultant 1, 29.9.19). Moreover, Consultant 1 believed that these moments of reflection were particularly important in temporary organizations, claiming that "*People don't stop. Especially in these jobs where it's a time pressured-- You've got a limited time to deliver an enormous gig. They're just heads' down, getting on, don't look up, just do not look up. Unless you're forced to look up, it's very easy just to motor. For me, what I love about this is that moment of people pausing and stopping and actually, there's always a revelation, there's always a kind of, 'shit we need to do this'*" (Consultant 1, 29.9.19). While Consultant 1 trafficked in lofty justification, Manager 2 put forward their two pence rather succinctly, saying that reflection sessions help to determine "*which of our initiatives are worth repeating*" (Manager 2, 21.5.20).

To summarise, CCT managers instituted a process of disseminating approved programmes to ensure that approved programmes acted as new mobilised identity claims. This mainly occurred through public displays of approved programmes (e.g., initial programme launch) as well as through internal reflection sessions. The process of disseminating approved programmes is the process of publicising manager-approved operations that represent the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization. This process was one half of a pair, being in direct contrast to the process of reconsidering rejected programmes.

6.3.2 Identity Claim Subtraction: Reconsidering Rejected Programmes

While the programme ideas that were indicative of aligned identity understandings were approved and disseminated, programme ideas that were indicative of misaligned identity understandings were rejected and reconsidered (either completely cancelling rejected programmes or fixing them before they were assessed again by managers).

Demonstrating how Manager 1 and the sensechecking process prompted idea rejection and refinement, Frontline Worker 1 stated *“If [Manager 1] doesn’t feel like it’s right for the programme, [they’re] still the director and you’ve got to get on with it”* (Frontline Worker 1, 27.8.20). A discussion of *why* Manager 1 didn’t like certain ideas took place at a frontline worker team meeting, with workers saying:

Frontline Worker 3: *“Wait, so the Agency isn’t happening? What happened?”*

Frontline Worker 2: *“I don’t know. [Manager 1] didn’t like it.”*

Frontline Worker 3: *“Why not? What did [they] say?”*

Frontline Worker 2: *“Something about not having enough of an artistic output. I don’t know. Maybe I can change it to be part of CVX festival [i.e., an already accepted programme] or something”* (Team Meeting, 27.4.20).

While managers accepted or rejected programmes, it was the job of frontline workers to either abandon or fix rejected programme ideas. Putting the ownership onto frontline workers, Manager 1 remarked *“I have empowered them to create the programme they want to create, and so if at the end of this they have an issue where they’re not being diverse enough or not being representative enough or not doing the right storytelling, or not engaging with the right communities or artists, they had to look at themselves in that scenario because they are the producers, not me. And so for me, it’s about—reflect on your programme, reflect on the work, reflect who you’re working with, challenge yourselves to think differently. This is in your hands. It’s for you to decide how we do this programme. I’m not dictating it and we’re not flying a programme in, in the way the other programmes in the past may have been. We are working from the ground up and there’s an opportunity for us to listen, learn, respond, be able to test new ways of working, and work with different people. So I’ve really had to do that because I think people sometimes just want to be told what to do and I’m never going to be telling them that because they have to decide that”* (Manager 1, 30.7.20).

As frontline workers were called upon to fix rejected programmes, it became clear that certain programme ideas would never be approved by CCT managers. The ideas for similar-type programmes were also taken out of the realm of possibility for

what types of programmes could be approved. Discussing why their programme ideas needed to be fixed, Frontline Worker 2 remarked *“There has been bumps and bumps and bumpity bumps. In my programme, the things that I originally proposed were massive. I wanted to bring this programme called The Agency, which was an entrepreneurial programme in the high-risk areas, working with the most at-risk young people and that went through. The city [i.e., partners] were quite on board with it, but in terms of the creative output, that didn't match what we were doing and so that wasn't necessarily successful. It's been thrown up in the air and then back down again”* (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

A common strategy for fixing rejected programmes was to go back to the original partners of the programme idea and develop new ideas that were more aligned to CCT identity. For example, Frontline Worker 2 described their programme rejection and strategy for fixing their idea, saying, *“I'd love to do [a programme], but it didn't get a green light for me to do that. So, what I can do is work alongside the producer from positive youth foundation so that their whole stream of work feeds into my work directly, and so those are the young people that we're going to be working with”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). At the end of the day, rather than fix all rejected programmes, some programmes were abandoned rather than fixed. As one of the frontline workers put it, sometimes they needed to *“kill their darlings”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

To summarise, managers instituted a process of reconsidering rejected programme ideas to ensure that all programmes would be aligned to CCT's identity. Reconsidering rejected programmes was largely performed on an individual basis, with frontline workers taking ownership of their edited ideas, but was also performed in tandem with programme partners. When generalised, the process of reconsidering rejected programmes is the process of re-aligning operations that do not currently represent what managers believe to be the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization.

In total, the selection of manager-approved identity claims available to frontline workers was actively affected by the ongoing acceptance and rejection of programme ideas. Identity claim addition was derived from a process of disseminating approved programmes by CCT managers to ensure that approved programmes acted

as new mobilised identity claims. Conversely, identity claim subtraction was derived from a process of reconsidering rejected programmes, whereby CCT managers ensured that frontline workers would eventually be able to suggest programme ideas that were aligned to CCT's identity. Definitions and indicative quotes for disseminating approved programmes and reconsidering rejected programmes are collated in Table 8.

Construct	Description	Interviews	Fieldnotes
Disseminating Approved Programmes	<i>The process of publicising manager-approved operations that represent the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization.</i>	<p>“We wanted 15 projects that really help us to communicate the story. I think we obviously needed some high impact announcements like the Turner Prize and working with the Royal Shakespeare Company and working with someone like Terry Hall” (Manager 1, 22.10.20).</p> <p>“Most people recognised that it was a taster and it was intended to demonstrate direction of travel rather than a complete picture” (Manager 2, 29.11.20).</p>	<p>[Frontline Worker 5] has just shared her screen. She is on the 'What's On' section of the CCT website. She is now scrolling down, talking about which events she is most excited for and thinks are representative of CCT's vision (Interview Note, 9.8.21).</p> <p>[CCT Evaluator] just mentioned that [Manager 2] suggested we report on specific 'Hero Projects,' that might be particularly impactful or indicative of CCT's goals. We discussed this and are reluctant of the word 'hero,' but we agreed that we should have specific case studies within the evaluation that show off CCT's impact (Evaluation Meeting, 3.9.20).</p>
Reconsidering Rejected Programmes	<i>The process of re-aligning operations that do not currently represent what managers believe to be the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization.</i>	<p>"That's not my programme unfortunately. I'd love to do that but it didn't get a green light for me to do that. So, what I can do is work alongside the producer from positive youth foundation so that their whole stream of work feeds into my work directly, and so those are the young people that we're going to be working with" (Frontline Worker, 23.6.20).</p> <p>“I have empowered them to create the programme they want to create, and so if at the end of this they have an issue where they're not being diverse enough or not being representative enough or not doing the right storytelling, or not engaging with the right communities or artists, they had to look at themselves in that scenario because they are the producers, not me. And so for me it's about reflect on your programme, reflect on the work, reflect who you're working with, challenge yourselves to think differently” (Manager 1, 30.7.20).</p>	<p>[Frontline Worker 3] and [Frontline Worker 4] are brainstorming how [Frontline Worker 4] might change her HOME festival idea to make it more appealing to [Manager 1]. They are discussing how they could incorporate more individuals with lived experience of homelessness to plan the festival so that it is more co-created (Team Meeting, 25.1.21).</p> <p>It was just mentioned that [CCT Evaluator 1] and [CCT Evaluator 2] are going to lead a session with the Caring team on the Theory of Change. Apparently they were asked to present because the team wants to better understand how to make sure that their programme ideas fit and hit the appropriate CCT outcomes (Team Meeting, 8.6.20).</p>

TABLE 8, IDENTITY CLAIM ADDITION & SUBTRACTION

6.4 Combined Model

Thus far, this chapter has induced constructs for how CCT managers regulated identity understandings of frontline workers. These constructs are now combined in order to put forward a process model for identity regulation in temporary organizations. The combined model is presented pictorially in Figure 4. The combined model will now be described textually.

As a newly formed temporary organization, CCT managers recognised that frontline workers might have various interpretations about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the nascent organization. In order to reduce identity ambiguity, CCT managers put forward mobilised identity claims in an attempt to shape the identity understandings of frontline workers. These mobilised identity claims within CCT were composed of claims derived from external differentiation, goal articulation, and sanctioned narratives. External differentiation characterised the ways in which managers defined how CCT was distinct from other similar-type organizations (such as previous City of Culture organizations). CCT managers also articulated goals that inscribed the overall mission and purpose of the organization. Finally, sanctioned narratives acted as discursive claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization.

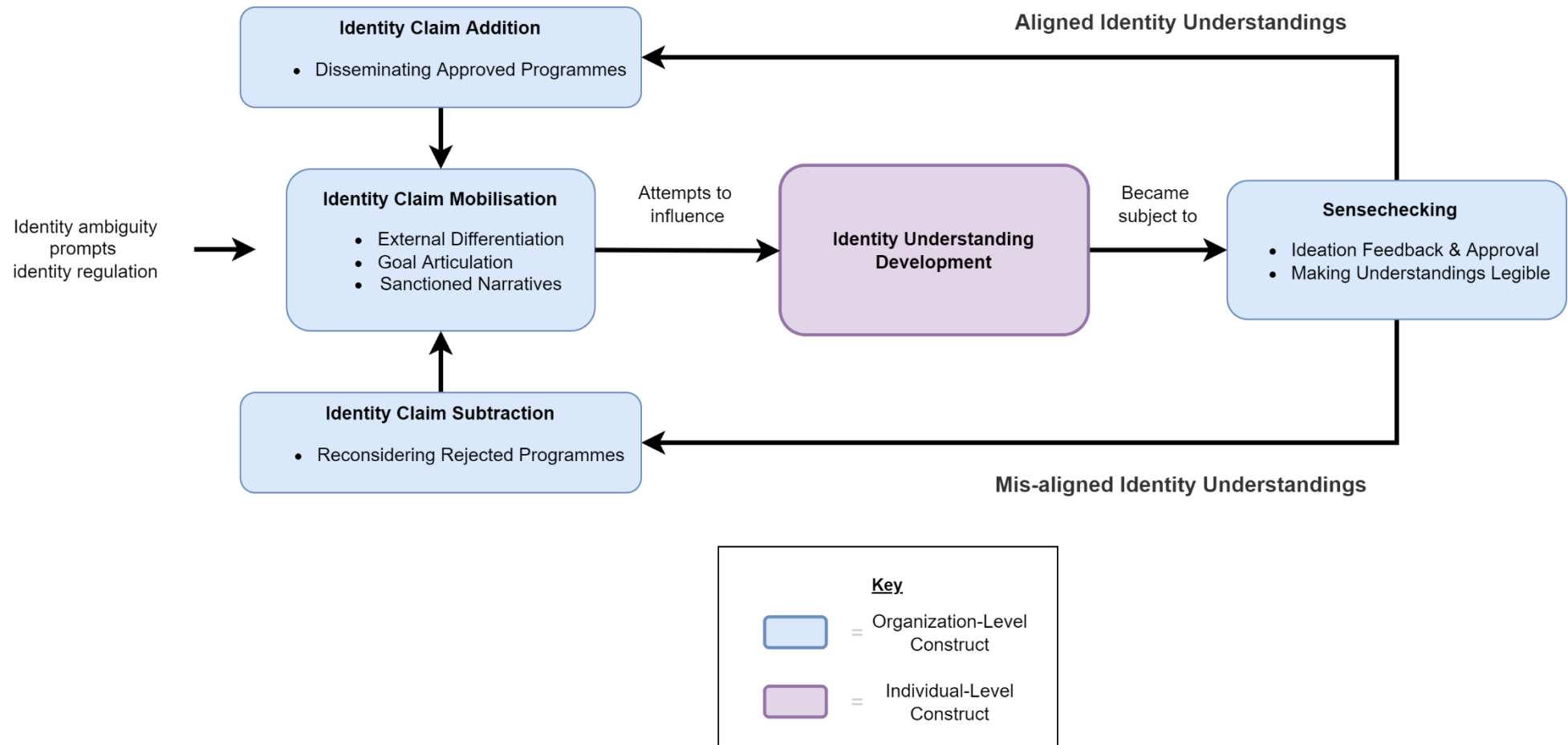
As frontline workers developed early identity understandings, CCT managers instituted a process of sensechecking – a process wherein CCT managers could assess whether the identity understandings of frontline workers were aligned with those of CCT managers. Sensechecking occurred through ideation feedback and approval and was made possible by making understandings legible. The process of ideation feedback required frontline workers to present early programme discoveries and ideas to managers through ‘informal feedback’ and ‘one-to-one sessions.’ CCT managers would then direct frontline workers to refine their programme ideas before ultimately accepting or rejecting them based on their alignment to CCT’s identity. This process was made possible by making current identity understandings of frontline workers legible through discursive pitches and material work plans.

As programmes started to be approved or rejected based on identity understanding alignment, these programmes began to actively affect the selection of manager-approved identity claims available to frontline workers. Accepted

programmes that demonstrated aligned identity understandings were added as official identity claims about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization. These approved programmes were disseminated by CCT managers to ensure that approved programmes acted as new mobilised identity claims. Conversely, rejected programmes that demonstrated mis-aligned identity understandings were subtracted from the available possibilities for what programmes could be. Frontline workers then engaged in a process of reconsidering rejected programmes in order to drop or eventually refine ideas until they were assessed by CCT manager to be aligned to the organization's identity.

The process of identity regulation continued indefinitely, continually ensuring that workers maintained aligned identity understandings. Overall, this process was so effective that managers and frontline workers were largely able to develop congruent identity understandings without internal historical referents or projected futures. While this chapter has focused on the organization-level process of identity regulation, the subsequent chapter focuses on the individual-level responses to the regulation process as well as the creation of individual identity understandings. The findings presented in both chapters will then be discussed in Chapter 8, further outlining how the process of identity regulation in temporary organizations expands extant scholarship, answers the research questions posed by this thesis, and constitutes a contribution to knowledge.

FIGURE 4, REGULATING ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY



Chapter 7

Sensemaking Attention

Data has thus far been presented that focused on how CCT managers implemented a system of identity regulation with the hopes of shaping the identity understandings of frontline workers. This chapter will now focus on how frontline workers experienced this regulation process and how their identity understandings changed over time. This focus was motivated by the finding of an empirical surprise during the data analysis – while all frontline workers were given the same set of mobilised identity claims and were subject to the same regulation process, some frontline workers were unable to develop identity understandings congruent with CCT managers. What was initially unclear was *why* this occurred; why was the regulation process effective at aligning identity understandings for some frontline workers but not others?

Through the iterative data analysis, it was found that the use of identity concepts alone were insufficient to explain this surprise; however, the incorporation of sensemaking theory was able to shed light on the mechanisms behind this novelty. The data suggest that as frontline workers engaged in sensemaking to develop their identity understandings they paid specific attention to different aspects of CCT's identity. Notably, worker sensemaking was either goal-attentive (whereby frontline workers focused on 'who we are' as an organization) or operation-attentive (whereby frontline workers focused on 'what we do' as an organization). The data indicate that frontline workers who engaged in *both* goal-attentive *and* operation-attentive sensemaking were able to develop identity understandings congruent with CCT managers. Frontline workers who engaged in *either* goal-attentive *or* operation-attentive sensemaking were unable to develop congruent identity understandings.

This chapter presents analysed data to define and evidence the process of goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking. These processes help to explain why CCT's process of identity regulation was effective at shaping identity understandings for some frontline workers but not others. To do this, the chapter first presents empirical accounts of how various frontline workers experienced the process of

identity regulation outlined in the previous chapter. These accounts will focus specifically on worker sensemaking during the development of individual identity understandings. Data presented in this first section focuses on a subset of 19 interviews across 3 CCT frontline workers and 73 hours of observation of team meetings. Next, patterns across the various frontline workers are recounted, putting forward a case for goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking. Finally, additional data from other key informants is reported that further develops these concepts.

7.1 Empirical Accounts of Worker Sensemaking

7.1.1 Frontline Worker 1 (“Ariana”)¹

In the second quarter of 2019, CCT hired a handful of ‘cultural producers’ (i.e., frontline workers) who would curate, create, and facilitate the main arts programmes of the City of Culture festival. Ariana was amongst this first batch of hired frontline workers. Ariana had come from a background of artistic producing, having worked freelance and for various museums over the past few years. Before joining, Ariana was intrigued by CCT’s early identity claims related to external differentiation that she had come across. For example, she remembered being inspired by the job listing itself, saying *“The way that the post was put out really inspired me, because so many times when you see a producer role, it’s usually art form led. Like ‘we need this, this, this, this.’ This was issue led. These are issues we’ve identified in our city as things we want to work on using culture and arts and we want to work with people who have done this kind of work, but maybe not on this scale”* (Frontline Worker 1, 8.7.19).

Instead of being hired to curate a specific artistic discipline – as is typical of festival organizations – Ariana was hired to use the arts to address health disparities throughout the Coventry area. Described in her own words: *“Within my remit is looking at mental health and well-being, specifically how we use culture and the arts to tackle some of those issues within that, such as isolation and loneliness”* (Frontline Worker 1, 8.7.19).

¹ Names have been changed.

During early partnership work and programme brainstorming, Ariana would think about how her potential programmes would align with the articulated goals of the organization. Particularly, Ariana spoke about how goals should drive ideas and not the other way around, saying “*You don't want to start retrofitting projects to fit an impact but equally the impact is the driving thing of why we're doing it*” (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20).

Demonstrating this push and pull of creative programme idea versus goal-aligned ideas is the planning of a programme entitled Sick Outfit. Described in her own words, “*The initial idea with Sick Outfit, was that it was a play on the word sick and then it would all be about the kind of outfits that we want to wear when we feel shit on the inside but we want to look amazing on the outside. I didn't have a clear outcome for it. I was like, 'It raises awareness to mental health?' [But] we've been doing slogan tees, 'It's okay to not be okay,' for years now. It's boring. What else can we do with fashion? Who isn't included?*” (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20). While Ariana wasn't sure how effective or meaningful Sick Outfit was going to be, she refined the idea in-line with feedback she was receiving during the sensechecking process. With this feedback, Ariana noted that “*I started to rethink that whole project. It's now become an inter-generational [project] with students, but the whole thing is also tied into the sustainable fashion work that we're doing. It's upcycling, it's second-hand materials, it's building communities. **It's hitting the targets much more than the original idea** was which feels better because it feels like now it can have three or four parts of that project*” (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20).

The use of articulated goals during programme formation was not constrained to Sick Outfit, but was a core facet driving Ariana's work. For example, Ariana described how she created a photography exhibition with the express purpose of hitting CCT goals, such as those of increasing civic pride amongst all age groups: “*It hits all the impact like raising civic pride or the production and programming means that people are influencing the city they want to live in. For me, that was massive because a lot of the older people were like, 'We don't live in a city where we feel visible.' A project like this makes them feel visible and influences how other people see them*” (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20). Another example of goal-centred programming can be seen when Ariana described the development of a socially

applied dance programme. She noted that *“I’ve been refocusing on the dance programme, which is funny because dance isn’t my background and then I’m like, ‘Okay.’ Because if you look within our logic model, the way which we’re coming at things like with health and wellbeing targets, that’s where dance sits because we’re not looking at things by art form, we’re looking at things with like outcome, right? So, I think that’s been a bit of an interesting thing for dancers as well, to kind of get their head around ...we [don’t] just want a programme for dance...we’re looking at the health benefits of dance. So, I’ve been really trying to work closely with those dance groups to make sure that ...[they’re] lining up to our outcomes rather than it just like saying, ‘Great! Cool! Turn up! Let’s do a boot camp for young people for a few weeks and they do some dance at the end of it,’ and I’m like, well, okay, that’s not where we’re at”* (Frontline Worker 1, 27.8.20).

While Ariana created programme ideas to embody CCT’s goals, she also considered how her programmes could be operationalised for further impact. For example, Ariana started to think about the funding sources for her programmes in order to multiply the impact of her original budget. She stated that *“I started to think, ‘Okay, how can we turn our budgets into three times that amount?’ By working with sponsors, by supporting local organizations, my host organization, and all the partners I’m working with to actually develop skills and understanding how to turn an idea into a funding application”* (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20). Ariana also considered how she could clarify the logistics of various programmes so that even a new project manager could successfully lead each individual programme going forward. Ariana remarked that *“There are certain projects that can sit in different programmes, but logically [I’m] just trying to think, ‘If I got someone in as a project manager, what is going to make most logical sense for them to hold within this programme?’ If you got three things ...[it can cause confusion if] it has a link that I know of but they don’t”* (Frontline Worker 1, 19.11.19).

Ariana experienced difficulty trying to reconcile CCT’s idealistic goals with the organization’s realistic scope of operations. Reflecting on how to scale up the impact of one of her programmes, Ariana expressed this challenge, saying *“The difficulty with that is always like, ‘Okay, but that doesn’t really fit with our impacts,’ because our impacts are for everybody and I was worried if we’d start funding pilot*

projects for social prescribing, we're going to be hitting numbers of 12 people at a time. I was trying to think what can we do on a big scale that could potentially have a social prescribing strung to it?" (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20). In another moment, Ariana reflected that operations and goals should be considered throughout a programme, not just at the end, *"Because I think we put too much emphasis on the quality of the output and not the process, and I think they're both as important if they're going to make any kind of impact on anyone's social, emotional, mental wellbeing, you know"* (Frontline Worker 1, 27.8.20).

Beyond practical difficulties of reconciling goals and operations, the reconciliation process also caused Ariana to experience the existential worry that CCT was approaching their purpose all wrong. Ariana shared this concern, saying *"How do you create with people living in severe poverty, and you're looking at your budget and you're like, 'Oh my God, this work is going to cost £700,000 and I got a guy sitting next to me last week who's asking me if I can lend him £1 to get a sandwich.' It's that, a constant existential crisis of life questions. Like, what, this is madness"* (Frontline Worker 1, 19.11.19).

Over time, Ariana's programme ideas became subject to the sensechecking process instituted by CCT managers. During this process, CCT managers would push Ariana to go about her work in ways more in-line with their expectations. For example, Ariana once remarked that *"I had a one-to-one with [Manager 1] and said, 'You know, at the moment, I'm fundraising.' And she was like, 'Oh, you're not meant to be fundraising. That's not your role.' And I'm like, 'How do I get these budgets through to the vision that we have for them then? Because if there's no more cash coming from our side, how do I do this?'"* (Frontline Worker 1, 27.8.20). While Ariana sometimes questioned the feedback she received during the sensechecking process (as shown within the previous example), she ultimately bought into this process and seemed to appreciate the developmental feedback she received therein. She noted that *"It didn't drive me or stop me from doing a project, it just made me rethink how and why are we doing it every time"* (Frontline Worker 1, 31.3.20).

In our last interview together, Ariana reflected on how she was able to edit her programme ideas to eventually get them approved by continually reflecting back on CCT's theory of change. By justifying programme ideas with formal identity claims

embedded within the theory of change, she was able to get them viewed as congruent with CCT's identity. This was because *"I think what the theory of change does is give you a sense of direction and it gives you an anchor point to return to and say you know, if anyone's saying 'well why this, why this,' for example I was asked the other day 'what role culture has to play in policy change and workforce payment change' and I say 'well, you know, in our theory of change, we're talking about cultural programme making ways to do activism. Activism can be many things and part of that activism can be— it doesn't always mean standing on the street with placards, it means working with the enemy and making allies with them'"* (Frontline Worker 1, 1.9.21).

It is important to note that Ariana did not think changing programme ideas was only important to get them formally approved; rather, she expressed that ideas should be edited to ensure that CCT programmes were goal-informed but operationally-realistic. For example, when further reflecting on programme development in our final interview she mentioned that *"I think through the reforming on programmes where everybody's involved, it's really affirmed or kind of making really clear why, like 'the why,' always start with 'the why' because it's easy to talk about 'the what' and 'the how' but 'the why' is crucial. So a lot of my role actually has been supporting [a new cultural producer] and kind of talking to the team about why we do what we do"* (Frontline Worker 1, 1.9.21).

It is important to note that by the time of our final interview (1st September 2021), Ariana had a strong track record of getting her programme ideas approved. Her ideas were often cited by Manager 1 as emblematic of CCT's identity. As such, Ariana was duly promoted midway through the festival year to a middle manager position. Moreover, by the time of this final interview, Ariana was the only frontline worker still in post of all of the frontline workers interviewed for this research.

In total, when Ariana joined CCT she was intrigued about the overall mission and operations of the organization. During her work, Ariana was introduced to the formal identity claims derived by CCT managers. While Ariana originally had some of her ideas rejected during the sensechecking process, she was able to edit her ideas relatively quickly to be indicative of manager-aligned identity understandings.

7.1.2 Frontline Worker 2 (“Miley”)

Miley joined CCT at the same time as Ariana, in the second quarter of 2019. While Miley was the youngest member of her programming team, she had several years of experience in freelance producing. Miley had recently won an award from a regional sector publication, lauding her as a rising star to watch within the arts field.

Miley’s programming remit focused on using the arts to prevent the exploitation of young people within the region. In her own words, *“My role is specifically looking at safety of Coventry. This is young people at risk of gang grooming and child exploitation. This means developing a framework to support these young people, change the narrative that the city may hold around these young people, but also to really shape the experiences going on to 2021 and beyond of how these young people may actually take ownership of the city in more of a positive route”* (Frontline Worker 2, 1.7.19). When asked what she thought success in her role would look like, she responded: *“I think surface-level success will look like the eradication of half crime in Coventry by 2021. That is our ultimate goal. One that's realistic? I'm not sure. I think what actual success will look like is to bring something into Coventry, embed it into the organization and see that replicated after 2021 and to see how young people have taken ownership of the city and create an identity for it. That's something fundamental to the approach that I'm taking”* (Frontline Worker 2, 1.7.19).

Miley reflected that CCT’s issue-led programming was unique and distinct from other arts organizations. She mentioned that CCT’s work was *“A lot different to normal producing where you're like, ‘this is a great project, let's work with one partner organization and let's just make it happen.’ Whereas when you're working in this way it's, this is a project but what are all of the other considerations”* (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19).

During her first few months on the job, Miley began to consider how she could build programmes that would align with CCT’s young people objectives. When asked about her goals during an early interview, Miley stepped away to get a sheet with her objectives written on it, saying *“Let me get my objectives out. My objective is young people at risk that have been identified to access arts and culture and [helping them] flourish”* (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19). In a later interview, Miley would reflect on

the overall strategic goal that inspires her work. She noted that *“Basically for my programme, I wanted to just look at the strategic goal, which is to ensure that a narrative surrounding criminal exploitation in the arts and culture sector opens and that more work continues after 2021. In terms of delivery to actually the young people and having impact for them, I wanted them to be a part of this artistic development process. Then actually to start a national conversation surrounding criminal exploitation. [To do this, I thought] Why don't we have a big festival? Have that mass moment for people to start talking about these really, really big issues that have just been swept under, because it's not mainstream information. All people really understand is that young people are stabbing each other left, right and centre, but they don't know why. It's really actually how can you encompass everything that I've learned and present it in a creative way”* (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

In order to present all that she learnt in a creative way, Miley had to consider how the arts would actually make the change she sought. She often considered *“How can a programme like The Agency actually stop knife crime? Or childhood exploitation in Coventry? And what impacts will it make on that community and how can we measure that impact in the short space of time that we have?”* (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19). Miley was not alone in responding to these programme considerations, and often collaborated with other frontline workers to ensure that all of CCT's work was objective-led. She remarked: *“I think it's about us as producers really collaborating to ensure that we are always aware of the considerations that we will have to take to ensure that we are hitting our objectives. Also, ensuring that the major events programme isn't all around really amazing capitalist organizations and how can we ensure that we're feeding back to the communities that we're trying to get to? That's off the record”* (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19).

An example of this collaboration is encapsulated in the early development of The Agency. The Agency was meant to be a creativity-based organization that would be run by and for young people in the city. While CCT would start the organization, it was intended to live on as a legacy project – a project that would continue after CCT ceased operations. Explaining the collaboration that went into this idea, Miley said:

Frontline Worker 2: “This is me and [another cultural producer] working together. A creative agency and consulting agency supporting these young

people to work closely with the city of culture [Trust] so they can become their own social enterprises after. That's it really."

Interviewer: "As a creative agency, but it's in the trust, or is it an outside thing?"

Frontline Worker 2: "For now it is, but it is the building of a legacy project."

Interviewer: "So the legacy project is this collective that will continue after the trust is done?"

Frontline Worker 2: "Hopefully if we do our jobs right yes. I think that will now mostly sit under [the other cultural producer's] work, which is fine. It's just really supporting those young people that may struggle with that transition and responsibility as well [from my purview to her purview] and ensure that their ideas are heard too" (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19).

After a period of programme brainstorming, Miley prepared for the one-to-one informal feedback from Manager 1 as part of the sensechecking process. Miley spent quite a bit of time preparing for this pitching process, even to the slight detriment to her partnership work with outside organizations. Describing this process, she noted *"The last, I guess three months have been preparing for [the programme pitches], which has been good, in a sense, but also, off the cuff, like a bit stressful for my host organization because they've been like, 'What're you doing?' [And I'm like] 'We're trying to design for you'" (Frontline Worker 2, 15.11.19).*

Unfortunately, during this first round of feedback, many of Miley's ideas were rejected, including The Agency programme. She noted, *"Ultimately, I can't produce an artistic development programme for young people because that's not my...I can't produce it...that's not my programme unfortunately. I'd love to do that but it didn't get a green light for me to do that" (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).* Miley expressed frustration about this rejection, voicing how her programme ideas had originated out of many months of on-the-ground research and collaboration. She remarked that *"We've had almost nine months to a year of asking really big and challenging questions. We've got to a point where we are upskilled enough to have some extra foresight and to be a bit more critical about how we're doing things. All of these*

sessions of being angry in the room and trying to wave a fist for our communities and ask these questions and scenario plan. We have spent weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks gearing up for moments similar to this” (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

In addition to frustration, Miley experienced confusion – she did not receive total clarity by CCT managers as to why some of her programmes got rejected. When asked why The Agency got rejected, Miley stated, *“I don’t know, I don’t know. It didn’t have a much of a creative output and it was very expensive?”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). Continuing this conversation:

Interviewer: “Why do you think some projects and programmes get a green light or [are told] that, no, we can’t go in this direction?”

Frontline Worker 2: “I don’t know. I wish I could tell you. Through this job, I realised that sometimes you have to kill your babies. ...You can have a really genius idea and it can be great, and then they just have to be put to bed. So, I don’t know. Yeah, I need that feedback loop to be a bit quicker because it’s stressful, because I need to feedback to my partners” (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

Miley did acknowledge that *“In terms of the bumps I’ve had, it was too research-y and not really performative or creative”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). In response to this rejection, Miley noted that she hadn’t yet thrown in the towel and was willing to fight for programmes that CCT should produce, saying *“I’ve decided that I’m asking for world domination in my programme because I can’t have The Agency. [Laughs] I was throwing them a tantrum, but in a really good way”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

While Miley was not certain why certain programmes were rejected, she was given direct feedback about how to edit some of her programme ideas in ways that were more aligned to CCT’s identity. Some feedback focused on expanding the scope of her programmes, with Miley reflecting that *“The initial kind of output was to look at knife crime, look at community cohesion, and look at county lines. But it was suggested that actually we look at a wider systemic issue”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). Miley was also encouraged to focus on one of her minor programme ideas, the CVX Festival. This festival would be a one-weekend music festival where young people and professional musicians would perform amongst stories of youth

empowerment and positive role models. Detailing this new focus on CVX, Miley stated that *“In terms of CVX Festival, that really wasn't my core focus until I was asked the question, ‘so what is your big moment then?’ I just said, ‘Actually, I don't know,’ because I was so deeply interested in the transformational role of arts and culture within young people at risk. I didn't really think about output until too far, until I think it was November, December time where that idea came about”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

As Miley continued to develop CVX and other programme ideas, she remained focused on the overall goals – and the reasons behind *why* CCT would create certain programmes. Miley would reflect that this focus was due to the creative focus and identity of CCT. For example, one time when the interviewer was giving Miley a compliment about the detail she gives to programme planning, she corrected him, saying that she focuses on the creative detail that constitutes programme building not its superfluous operational detail:

Interviewer: “I love that. I think that's so true. In everything that I observe and talk to all of you about, you think through everything so much and that's so appreciated, I'm sure, by all of your partners and everyone at the organization—”

Frontline Worker 2: “Just to be specific from a creative producing context, not a business context, can I just clarify that?”

Interviewer: “Yes. What do you mean by that difference?”

Frontline Worker 2: “I mean, because, I guess as an organization, we're really equipped to— and we're well resource to—test the ideas out. In terms of from a creative producing perspective, we have to ensure that our environments are safe and also free. Those are the two differences. Those are the fundamental differences in terms of actually building a programme as opposed to doing operational stuff” (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

Miley would often speak about how details related to the organization's goals were more important than details related to organizational operations. This was particularly apparent when operations seemed to get in the way of the achieving goals.

Using the budgeting process as an example, CCT managers only approved budgets once programme ideas were quite advanced, but Miley had trouble scoping her programmes amidst budgetary ambiguity. Once she did receive her budget for CVX and other tentatively approved programmes, it was significantly less than she had expected. This process was described, in part, through a funny exchange that could only occur during an online interview:

Interviewer: “How was your experience of the budget process or the budget approval process? Was that a tension for you or was that smooth sailing? Hello? Am I cutting out?”

Frontline Worker 2: “No, you're not cutting out. I just wanted you to see my face.” [Her face is seemingly frozen, deadpan].

Interviewer: [laughs]

Frontline Worker 2: “That's all. I have no comment [laughs]. It was quite difficult because it was the complexity of, how am I supposed to go out and co-design and build those communities when I don't know what my parameters are? Those parameters being my budget. I'd love to give you the world and I could promise that because that's when you have that co-designing process, you bring people into these ideas. Actually, when you don't know what you're working with, you disappoint a lot of people when you finally do. There's been just a lot of tension surrounding that with regards to how am I supposed to really bring these ideas to life when I don't know what I'm really working with. I do now, but it's just meant that a lot of decisions and ideas had to go because it was a bit too late down the line” (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

Miley would continue this budgetary critique, saying “*I would say that's been the most frustrating thing, actually, because if you know you've got £10, then you can do things with your £10. You can just try and try your hardest to make things bigger or make things smaller, but you know what your purse is. [If you think] you've got a million pounds when you've actually got 10, that's a problem and that leads to a lot of disappointment really” (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).*

Despite operational difficulty, Miley would continue to create new programmes that she thought were aligned with CCT's identity. A major programme that Miley came up with was called Arts Against Violence. This programme started in response to her previous rejections, with Miley saying that *"Because I couldn't do The Agency, I've just been thinking of all of the other ways that I can hold...use influence to start creating a new dialogue in order to prevent the exploitation of young people"* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). The aim of the Arts Against Violence programme was to *"Ultimately, what we want to do is strengthen the role of arts and culture in preventing youth violence through deep partnership...deep engagement partnership and shared intelligence"* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). Furthermore, she thought *"What do I need and how can we make this work? What's involved? What do we want to do? We set our aims, which is, we want to transform policy, we want to create neutral spaces, and we want to use arts and culture as a key method to prevent the exploitation of young people"* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

Key to achieving the aims of Arts Against Violence was partnership and a longstanding legacy after CCT had concluded. To do this, Miley stated that *"I set up an arts against violence movement where basically I realised that, if what I want to achieve is going to have legacy then I need to get more people around the city on board long term, so that's been in the pipeline, to get lots of people kind of on board and around the table to think about, you know, preventing violence long term in Coventry because we just can't do it alone"* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20). Moreover, Miley noted *"I was literally thinking what do I need to ensure we have legacy, and so that's why I was like, okay, I'm going to design a blueprint for Coventry so that they can keep it going, and so I needed everybody that I have been speaking to individually around the table to just talk, set the vision together and then move as a network"* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

Despite the amount of attention Miley was giving Arts Against Violence, it seemed that she was avoiding getting the programme approved through normal, formal channels. For example:

Interviewer: "How has that [i.e., Arts Against Violence] been received by people at the Trust? So, it sounds like the network itself really has been really supportive. What about the wider Trust [i.e., CCT]?"

Frontline Worker 2: “Well, she [i.e., Manager 1] should really know what that was, and I still don’t know if she does. We don’t know what it is, but I’ve spoken about it and we’re doing it, so that’s it. We’re not paying for it. It’s not that we’re not paying for it, we’re not... We’re not actively giving money directly to the people on the table right now, but they will be beneficiaries of the movement because of my programme has funding towards it. Yeah, once she sees the impact of what we’re actually doing, I think she’d be like, ‘oh my God’” (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

Unfortunately, Arts Against Violence did not receive formal approval during the next round of sensechecking. Soon after, Miley handed in her resignation. During team meetings following her resignation she expressed continued frustration with CCT managers, claiming that they were not ‘walking the walk’ and only talking about caring for young people in Coventry. In an email exchange after she officially left the organization, she noted that *“First of all, I loved that role at the city of culture so much to the point that I had to leave, because there was no reason why I was in that role if I couldn’t make any real impact on the lives of young people. That’s not what I signed up for”* (Frontline Worker 2, Email, 15.7.20).

In total, when Miley joined CCT she was inspired by the overall mission of the organization. During her work, Miley focused on creating programmes that responded to the articulated goals of CCT. Miley was less focused on, and avoidant of, how her programme ideas would be operationalised by CCT. Miley had several of her programme ideas rejected during the sensechecking process. Despite this setback, Miley continued to build new programme ideas that responded to CCT’s formal identity claims, such as formal goals (e.g., reducing youth exploitation) and sanctioned narratives (e.g., using co-creation and creating legacy). However, Miley continued to get her programme ideas rejected during the sensechecking process. Frustrated and burnt out, Miley eventually left the organization.

7.1.3 Frontline Worker 3 (“Mariah”)

Mariah joined CCT three months after Ariana and Miley, in the third quarter of 2019. Mariah had previously worked at a festival in the north of England. Rather than a

temporary festival, this previous experience was an annual festival that was managed by a permanent entity. Mariah was attracted to CCT due to its size (it had a significantly larger budget than her previous festival job), prestige, and its focus on social impact.

Mariah's remit focused on creating work with newly arrived communities (i.e., recent immigrants and refugees). In the early weeks of her job, Mariah spoke to me about the importance of creating work with refugees, saying *"They had a job and a career in their home country. There are illustrators, there are graphic designers, there are doctors. How are they expressing themselves here? I think there must be something like that. I still haven't found it yet. I've only been here for 13 days. One of my goals is to highlight that and be able to make sure that those people are brought to the forefront so that we can link them up with designers and artists from this country and create a massive, amazing programme of work that says—obviously you can always try and understand, but you can never walk in another woman/man's shoes"* (Frontline Worker 3, 18.9.19).

In the early days at CCT, Mariah seemed to express that in the first few weeks at CCT she was developing her own goals, rather than aligning with the goals of the organization, stating *"I'm still trying to work out my goals. I think in terms of the projects I do, but I'm really aware that they need to carry on or the projects need to start with giving people skills so that they can carry on something themselves"* (Frontline Worker 3, 18.9.19). However, as time moved on, Mariah would change the way she talked about her goals to be more aligned to CCT's overall articulated goals. For example, Mariah would talk to me about how she was often motivated by CCT's goal of co-creation, saying things such as *"You need to look at the outcomes and the impact. The project shouldn't be run by me in a sense, they should be run by the voices that are already here"* (Frontline Worker 3, 18.9.19).

To prepare for programming pitching, Miley put together all her ideas and conversations and sorted them into programme ideas. She remarked that *"In terms of the proposal process, it's a case of basically doing a massive brainstorm, just taking a day out to everything that I've learned, everything that I want to capture, anyone who's talked to me about something, I want to do this. Bringing that into a visual space where I can just look at it"* (Frontline Worker 3, 14.1.20). Similar to Ariana and Miley,

many of Mariah's early programme ideas were rejected during the first formal round of sensemaking.

As Mariah began to reconsider her rejected programmes to make them more aligned to CCT's identity, she focused specifically on the operational facets of her programme ideas. In particular, she attempted to take the inspiration and goals of her programme ideas and turn them into realistic programmes that would get approved. For example, when discussing how she needs to figure out her budgeting while staying true to CCT's storyboard, she noted that *"It's a case of, okay, I know I don't have £20 million to spend on my budget. Let's start looking at—'that links with that, let's cut that out because that's going to be too big.' Looking also at the themes from the storyboard, [figuring out] how my work fits into that. Making sure that refugee week isn't the only week in the year where we highlight the gifts that newly arrived communities bring to the city"* (Frontline Worker 3, 14.1.20). Another example of Mariah operationalising her aspirational goals can be seen in her use of programme surveys. When Mariah realised that the surveys being used to elicit feedback from immigrant communities were entirely in English, she pushed for translation services so that she could get a full range of responses from non-English speaking communities. Put bluntly, she remarked *"We are not going to reach the people we want to reach in terms of the lived experience unless we change the surveys into different languages"* (Frontline Worker 3, 30.6.20).

Mariah would go on to have many of her programme ideas approved. Even so, Mariah expressed doubt that this programming model made sense for the creative process of cultural production and that CCT was being ineffective in the way that it imposed this model. For example, when describing the back and forth between creativity and goal-informed working, Mariah stated *"[CCT goals are] in the back your head, like, they're there, they're not at the forefront of the work that I'm making because that's not the reason that creation happens. That's not the way creation happens. It's not like you look down the list and go, 'okay, does it do that? Does it do that? Does it do that? Okay, now we can do it.' It doesn't work like that. You have to look at it like— I need to make sure that it's organic in the way that it's made. It's person centred. It's kind of raw in terms what the project is. Naturally, because of what it does, those inputs and outputs actually naturally come through anyway.*

...There are the guidelines, there are pieces of paper to say 'this and this.' With the work that we're doing, in terms of on the ground, it's naturally happening with the projects that we're making. Yes, you have to check yourself, because that's the whole point" (Frontline Worker 3, 14.1.20). While Mariah continually used the goals to shape her programme ideas, she also made sure to always be people-focused, saying "I do look at the bigger picture, I do look at the objectives and the strategy and all that. But at the same time, when we're also here to help people, one individual, five individuals, a whole group of people, whether to support, whether to make sure that they have an opinion, have a say, and have a seat around the table" (Frontline Worker 3, 14.1.20).

Despite getting many of her programmes approved, Mariah still left early within the main festival year. To the public, she announced that she was accepting a job at the festival she had worked at before coming to CCT. Within her final interview, she disclosed that she could no longer take the role-related stress of trying to develop programmes amongst this highly regulated organizational environment. Putting it bluntly, she said *"I'm a guinea pig in a shit storm. That's what I am. (Laughter) That's literally how I would describe it. I'm a guinea pig in a shit storm"* (Frontline Worker 3, 25.8.21). These frustrations were not new and had been mentioned in previous interviews. For example, Mariah felt that CCT was not creating impact on the individuals and organizations that need it (as was the intention), but on those who were already established within the city, remarking *"The trust made an assumption on that thinking that it would help everyone but it's not. Because at the end of the day, if it helps the people who are established artists in the city who are used to filling out forms, it doesn't help the migrant artists that I work with who are underrepresented across the sector anyway, and they need help"* (Frontline Worker 3, 7.5.20).

In total, when Mariah joined CCT she was excited to create change in-line with the organization's goals. During her work, Mariah had several of her early programme ideas rejected, but focused on how her ideas aligned to CCT's aspirational goals as well as realistic operations. As such, she was eventually able to get many of her programme ideas approved. Despite this, Mariah eventually left CCT due to role-related stress and frustration that CCT was 'talking the talk, but not walking the walk.'

7.2 Goal-Attentive & Operation-Attentive Sensemaking

When looking across all three cases, clear patterns emerge that help explain why certain frontline workers were able to develop aligned identity understandings while others were not. All interviewed frontline workers expressed excitement about joining an organization that was mission focused, however; these nascent identity understandings of frontline workers were insufficient at producing programme ideas that were deemed by managers to be aligned with CCT's identity. Indeed, all frontline workers had their early programme ideas rejected during the initial sensechecking process. Frontline workers then diverged from each other, paying attention to CCT's goals, operations, or some combination of the two when making sense of CCT's identity. The data indicate that frontline workers who engaged in both goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking were able to develop identity understandings congruent with CCT managers. Frontline workers who engaged in either goal-attentive or operation-attentive sensemaking were unable to develop congruent identity understandings. Additional evidence of these two sensemaking 'types' will now be recounted. To further support this argument, data derived from informants additional to the highlighted accounts will be woven throughout. Data evidencing goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking is further collated in Table 9 and Table 10, respectfully.

Construct	Definition	Interviews	Fieldnotes
Goal-Attentive Sensemaking	<i>The process of producing organizational identity understandings by making sense of the organization's mission and purpose.</i>	<p>“I think through the reforming on programmes where everybody’s involved, it’s really affirmed or kind of making really clear why, like ‘the why,’ always start with ‘the why’ because it’s easy to talk about ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ but ‘the why’ is crucial. So a lot of my role actually has been supporting [a new cultural producer] and kind of talking to the team about why we do what we do” (Ariana, 1.9.21).</p>	<p>They are now discussing whether to turn the Instagram posts they created for World Citizen day into a full fledged programme. [Frontline Worker 4] asked what actual Trust objective this would actually hit. [Frontline Worker 3] agrees and thinks they should think about other ideas instead (Team Meeting, 12.10.19).</p>
		<p>“What I need to develop is a programme that changes some public perception through culture” (Frontline Worker 4, 20.9.19).</p>	<p>[Frontline Worker 2] just jokingly said "what am I supposed to be doing again?" She then reached for the papers in front of her which have the Trust's theory of change model on them (Team Meeting, 17.3.20).</p>
		<p>“So, we set the vision, what is the exchange of value, what do you need, what do I need, and how can we make this work, what’s involved, what we want to do? We set our aims, which is ‘we want to transform policy, we want to create [inaudible 00:11:45] neutral spaces, and we want to use arts and culture as a key method to prevent the exploitation of young people’” (Miley, 23.6.20).</p>	<p>After the show [i.e., a performance programmed by Frontline Worker 1 that had non-artists with mental health issues tell their stories] [Frontline Worker 1] came up to me and gave me a big hug. She said something like "Isn't this <i>so</i> City of Culture? I love it. It just worked!" I agree, it was lovely (Research Diary Note, 11.2.21).</p>
		<p>“Why are we here? What are we doing? We're trying to bring voices in the city to the forefront of the decision making. What actually is that? Those projects and that programme, the learning that we take from that is supposed to potentially change the arts approach within engagement across the country” (Mariah, 14.1.20).</p>	<p>We are not discussing what specific output indicators we should put in the evaluation strategy. [Evaluator 1] just mentioned his meeting with [Manager 2], and is describing all the things that [Manager 2] thinks should be the indicators (Evaluation Meeting, 22.11.19).</p>
		<p>“I think it's actually really made me look deeper at the theory of change again and really go back to my projects and say, ‘Does this really work? Does this really fit?’ The theory of change in a way helps and it holds you accountable through the projects you're doing and you check yourself” (Mariah, 7.5.20).</p>	<p>Everyone is now introducing themselves to [a new member of CCT's marketing team]. It's interesting because after giving their name, they are all saying what type of work they are focusing on (e.g., 'my work focuses on how we can change the stigma of people struggling with mental health through culture') (Team Meeting, 1.9.20).</p>

TABLE 9, GOAL-ATTENTIVE SENSEMAKING

Construct	Definition	Interviews	Fieldnotes
Operation- Attentive Sensemaking	<i>The process of producing organizational identity understandings by making sense of the organization's operations and workflow.</i>	<p>“I started to think, ‘Okay, how can we turn our budgets into three times that amount?’ By working with sponsors, by supporting local organizations, my host organization, and all the partners I’m working with to actually develop skills and understanding how to turn an idea into a funding application” (Ariana, 31.3.20).</p>	<p>As they are venting their frustration with all the forms they need to fill out [during their programme planning], [Frontline Worker 3] said “These work plans make me want to do my head in, but at least we know when everything is going to happen and why” (Team Meeting, 10.8.20).</p>
		<p>“People needed to see it because I think a lot of the stuff we talked about is a bit conceptual. It’s a bit like, ‘we’re going to co-produce a legacy project’ -- that doesn’t mean anything. Whereas if that is a dinner, it’s a photography exhibition, it’s some people doing their poetry then people felt a bit more like, that’s a bit more normal” (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20).</p>	<p>[A new frontline worker who replaced Frontline Worker 3] has just said that she is still figuring out the route for Little Amal [i.e., a giant puppet of a refugee girl that has travelled all the way from Syria to the UK]. She said she looks forward to mapping out the route, remarking that it’s like a puzzle trying to figure out all the stops around the city that would be worthwhile (Team Meeting, 7.9.21).</p>
		<p>“We are not going to reach the people we want to reach in terms of the lived experience unless we change the surveys into different languages” (Mariah, 30.6.20).</p>	<p>[Frontline Worker 4] just said “Sometimes I think we are more of a political organization or a project management organization rather than an arts organization. Whatever gets the job done” (Team Meeting, 22.2.21).</p>
		<p>“It was very much a question around the system. Working within the system. How do we get people to work with the system?” (Ariana, 27.8.20).</p>	<p>We are now discussing how to ensure that we capture all the learnings that are going on internally [i.e., about systems of working] as well as the external outputs (Evaluation Meeting, 5.12.19).</p>
		<p>“People were like, ‘Do we get any money?’ I was like, ‘No.’ That should be ironed out. Then they’re still asking, but it’s like that could have been like that before” (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20).</p>	<p>As I reflect on today’s interview [with Trustee 2] I am thinking about how it’s fascinating that she only knows about the Trust through what she hears at board meetings and through board reports. Is this how she understandings the identity of the Trust? (Interview Note, 29.4.20).</p>

TABLE 10, OPERATION-ATTENTIVE SENSEMAKING

7.2.1 Goal-Attentive Sensemaking

Goal-attentive sensemaking is the process of producing organizational identity understandings by making sense of the organization's mission and purpose. In other words, those who engage in goal-attentive sensemaking focus on understanding 'who we are' as an organization. Frontline workers engaged in goal-attentive sensemaking when they attempted to reconcile their individual objectives with those of CCT's wider goals. All four frontline workers interviewed for this research engaged in this process. For example, Frontline Worker 3 approached her work asking and answering "*Why are we here? What are we doing? We're trying to bring voices in the city to the forefront of the decision making*" (Frontline Worker 3, 14.1.20). Frontline Worker 4 mentioned that "*What I need to develop is a programme that changes some public perception through culture*" (Frontline Worker 4, 20.9.19). Frontline Worker 1 explained that "*[Our] impact is to look at public space within the city and to disrupt public space to create places that are putting issues such as mental illness and isolation really loudly on the table as a place for discussion, as a place for activation, as a place for change*" (Frontline Worker 1, 19.11.19). Frontline Worker 2 spent significant time elaborating these goals, wherein she explained that "*[My goal is to look] at changing trajectories, empowerment, and ownership, and tackling some serious issues around knife crime, around exploitation and grooming, but first we need to get to the root of the situation*" (Frontline Worker 2, 1.7.19).

Goal-attentive sensemaking was highly encouraged by CCT managers, as they urged frontline workers to actively respond to CCT articulated goals while reconsidering their rejected programme ideas. Describing how this reflective process focused particularly on CCT's theory of change, Frontline Worker 3 remarked that "*I think it's actually really made me look deeper at the theory of change again and really go back to my projects and say, 'Does this really work? Does this really fit?' The theory of change in a way helps and it holds you accountable through the projects you're doing and you check yourself... I'm very honest, but then again, if you're not honest, then how are you really meant to get a real clear idea of what the situation is and how to change it? Really [thinking] about what is the change that you want to see*" (Frontline Worker 3, 7.5.20).

Some frontline workers spent significant time engaging in goal-attentive sensemaking rather than thinking about the specific outputs that could achieve those goals. For example, Frontline Worker 2 was admonished during a one-to-one meeting with Manager 1 for ‘being too research-y’ and not developing realistic outputs. She remarked that *“I think what I’ve just been really, really trying to do has been looking at the strategic goal of this Arts Against Violence symposium and then Changing Trax and then thinking about that bigger moment slightly later on. But now it’s actually time to bring all of those worlds together. In terms of the bumps I’ve had, it was too research-y and not really performative or creative”* (Frontline Worker 2, 3.4.20).

Spending significant time engaging in goal-attentive sensemaking was seen by certain frontline workers as in-line with CCT’s sanctioned narratives of co-creation and long-term legacy. Indeed, developing programme goals congruent with CCT’s identity as well as conducive to partner organizations was seen as complex and time consuming. Describing this process, Frontline Worker 1 said *“We have great [partner organization] goals here, which [are about] shifting power, encouraging communities, and sparking action. Those three. Then we had the City of Culture [goals]. We sat down and it was like, ‘here are impacts. The four impacts that we have.’ Then we were given two impacts from [a funder], which was something around ‘people thrive regardless of their— Irrespective of their backgrounds. People feel they’re able to contribute,’ or something. Those two impacts. We were like, ‘Those are really broad.’ Great. It’s good that they are broad. How do we now bring in [the partner organization] and what we’re doing?”* (Frontline Worker 1, 19.11.19). Frontline Worker 2 also described goal-attentive sensemaking during the co-created Arts Against Violence programme, saying *“I needed everybody that I have been speaking to individually around the table to just talk, set the vision together and then move as a network... So basically, this is what I shared with the arts against violence network. So, we set the vision, what is the exchange of value, what do you need, what do I need, and how can we make this work, what’s involved, what we want to do? We set our aims, which is ‘we want to transform policy, we want to create [inaudible 00:11:45] neutral spaces, and we want to use arts and culture as a key method to prevent the exploitation of young people’”* (Frontline Worker 2, 23.6.20).

7.2.2 Operation-Attentive Sensemaking

Operation-attentive sensemaking refers to the process of producing organizational identity understandings by making sense of the organization's operations and workflow. In other words, those who engage in operation-attentive sensemaking focus on how 'who we are' translates into 'what we do' as an organization. Frontline workers who engaged in operation-attentive sensemaking looked to internal operations as a way to clarify what kind of projects CCT would produce. For example, Frontline Worker 4 said that, *"People needed to see it because I think a lot of the stuff we talked about is a bit conceptual. It's a bit like, 'we're going to co-produce a legacy project' - - that doesn't mean anything. Whereas if that is a dinner, it's a photography exhibition, it's some people doing their poetry then people felt a bit more like, that's a bit more normal"* (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20). Operations were also seen as clarifying because they set clear boundaries about what CCT could and could not afford. When developing her programme ideas, Frontline Worker 4 would ask, *"How much money have we got? How long have you got? Because that basically dictates what you can do as well. In terms of the co- production, because you're like, 'Okay fine, I've got two years, till the end of the year, now, or one year till we start.' That basically dictates a little bit about what your outputs can be"* (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20).

Those who engaged in operation-attentive sensemaking would think beyond the goals of the organization and reframe the idealistic goals into realistic operations. For example, Frontline Worker 4 once discussed how the work of one partner was very much in line with CCT's goals, however, CCT would never replicate this partner's practice because it wouldn't achieve the scale envisaged by CCT managers. She remarked, *"There's a young woman they [i.e., a CCT partner] supported that's gone to do a BA in photography. So, it's like a scholarship I guess, they're paying for that. But there's no audience, like there's no – do you know what I mean? But if you were like 'what are the impacts of this work?' Has it, if you looked at our logic model, will that help someone to understand career routes into the creative industries? Yes. Is it a use of creativity? Yes. Depending on what the course was and how it was run, maybe it would also inspire activism [i.e., CCT goals]. But there's no audience for that. Like it's not an audience focus. And then I guess these projects in between that as well, so like workshops have an output through small sharing from people that have*

never done anything before and then people that want to create stuff just for doing it and they feel really good about sharing it but that wouldn't attract an audience. ...they wouldn't sell in a City of Culture programme. They would on a small, small scale but that's not what they're trying to do" (Frontline Worker 4, 11.9.20).

As a brief tangent, it is fascinating to note that in the previous quote, Frontline Worker 4 refers to CCT in the third person, saying *"that's not what they're trying to do"* even though she is referring to the organization. Frontline Worker 4 would continually talk about CCT in the third person. It is an assumption of the author that this occurred because Frontline Worker 4 was specifically talking about Manager 1 and Manager 2 in these moments, rather than the organization as a whole. In fact, Frontline Worker 4 would often discuss in team meetings how the frontline workers needed to appease the managers and 'just do what they say.'

While some frontline workers were able to engage in operation-attentive sensemaking, others found CCT's operations overwhelming and focused instead on problematising CCT's goals. This frustrated Manager 1, who expected frontline workers to learn from the difficulties and sensechecking opportunities to develop CCT aligned programmes. Describing this frustration, Manager 1 remarked, *"We had that meeting in February, and some of the people there were crying because they're so committed to diversity and championing equity and equality and yet they have found it difficult in their roles to do that. So, my thing is, I've put you in new roles so you can change that, and what are you doing about it? How are you addressing the problem? So, just do it and don't give lip service to it now. Use your authority, use your leadership role to change that"* (Manager 1, 30.7.20). While managers expected frontline workers to 'just do it,' some frontline workers found it difficult to manage the breadth of their work, saying *"It was hard to come in and try and understand the trust and set that up and start the co-creating, it was too much really"* (Frontline Worker 4, 10.1.20).

When asked why certain frontline workers were unable to get their programme ideas approved, interviewees cited various reasons related to a lack of operational clarity. Frontline Worker 1 associated this problem with CCT being too ambitious and not giving workers the operational clarity required for programming, saying *"In an organisation that's ambitious and has really ambitious kind of outcomes for the year,*

sometimes the priorities get blurred and everything's too— I think when you've got too many roles to shoot into, it can be exhausting” (Frontline Worker 1, 1.9.21). Frontline Worker 4 associated this difficulty with the Manager's focus on goals without giving workers an appropriate idea about the types of programmes that would fit within CCT's operational remit, remarking, “If you don't direct someone from the beginning to create a public facing output, they might not [make one]. Like you might have that assumption like yeah, but what are people going to go and see? And you're just like, well, they're not” (Frontline Worker 4, 11.9.20).

Frontline workers often voiced that they were not given adequate operational support from CCT managers. Justifying why Frontline Worker 2 left so soon, Frontline Worker 3 remarked that, *“It's outrageous ...when you flag and flag again that a person needs support and then they don't get it— Hello? She couldn't also deal with that, which is one of the reasons that she had to get out” (Frontline Worker 3, 23.4.21). Frontline Worker 1 extended this criticism to the wider identity regulation within CCT, stating, “People not being able to feel like they're developing and that they're doing things wrong and go, you know? I think there's lots of questions that I would ask about—how do you make people feel valued? How do you share the values of culture? How do you listen and make people feel heard? How do you say thank you without having to you know, massage egos, like how do you really understand what the difficulties are and solve problems as a collective?” (Frontline Worker 1, 1.9.21).*

7.3 Summary

In total, this chapter set out to answer an empirical surprise: why were some frontline workers able to develop identity understandings aligned with CCT managers while others were not? The data suggest that as frontline workers engaged in sensemaking to develop their identity understandings they paid specific attention to different aspects of CCT's identity. Worker sensemaking was either goal-attentive (whereby frontline workers focused on ‘who we are’ as an organization) or operation-attentive (whereby frontline workers focused on ‘what we do’ as an organization). By examining how specific frontline workers engaged in sensemaking, it was found that frontline workers who engaged in *both* goal-attentive *and* operation-attentive sensemaking (i.e., Frontline Workers 1 & 3) were able to develop identity understandings aligned with

CCT managers. Frontline workers who engaged extensively in goal-attentive sensemaking but not operation-attentive sensemaking (i.e., Frontline Worker 2) were unable to develop congruent identity understandings.

The subsequent chapter will carry forward these findings in order to outline how the process of sensemaking attention (and the process of identity regulation in temporary organizations put forward in the previous chapter) expands extant scholarship, answers the research questions posed by this thesis, and constitutes a contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 8

Discussion

The previous two chapters have presented data that demonstrate the key findings from this research. In Chapter 6, data showed how CCT managers shaped the organizational identity understandings of frontline workers by implementing a system of identity regulation. Vital to this process was sensechecking, a coordinated system that assessed whether frontline workers had developed identity understandings aligned with those of managers. Chapter 7 presented the varied responses to the regulation process by frontline workers in order to parse out why some frontline workers were able to develop aligned identity understandings while others were not.

This chapter will extrapolate from these data chapters to define key contributions to knowledge on organizational identity and sensemaking. To do this, the findings of this thesis are put in conversation with extant literature, framed around the initial research questions. Subsequently, additional implications for theory based on these findings are presented.

8.1 Temporal Origin of Organizational Identity

Previous literature has explored how newly formed organizations experience identity ambiguity, wherein organizational members are unsure about the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization (Burke & Morley, 2016; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2010). Extant literature posits that permanent organizations can reduce this equivocacy by invoking historical referents (Ravasi et al., 2019) and projecting themselves into the future in order to understand their identity in the present (Corley, 2004; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Before this research, what had not yet been addressed in the literature is how identity is formed and managed when organizations are temporary in nature. In other words, how does the absence of future existence impact the formation of organizational identity claims and

understandings? A key theoretical puzzle that this research endeavoured to answer was thus:

Without internal historical referents and projected futures, how is organizational identity formed and managed in newly created temporary organizations?

This research found that while CCT did not have internal historical referents and projected futures, organizational managers were still able to leverage temporal associations through which they created initial identity claims about the central, distinct, and enduring features of the temporary organization.

Extant literature posits that organizational identity is largely constructed by relying on historical referents (Ravasi et al., 2019). For long-standing organizations, these historical referents can be constructed through previously created artefacts (Schultz & Hernes, 2013), invoked tradition (Sasaki et al., 2020), or a blend of discursive and physical means (Felix, 2020; Oertel & Thommes, 2018). For newly formed organizations, previous literature suggests that organizations look to similar-type organizations as templates for what the new organization should think about itself (Porsander, 2000). Rather than reproduce organizational templates, CCT developed identity claims that differentiated itself from similar-type organizations. Gioia and colleagues (2010) refers to this process as defining identity ‘via negativa’ and relates this process to how individuals reflexively think about who they are not, rather than who are (Bowker, 1997). Our data suggest that newly formed organizations may develop identity claims that rely on a historical comparator (i.e., external differentiation) rather than invoked internal histories to begin defining who they are as an organization. However, we found that this was not the only process that CCT used in order to reduce identity ambiguity.

Another strategy for reducing identity ambiguity outlined by previous literature is the process of projected organizations into the future to understand identity in the present. For example, Schultz & Hernes (2013) found that in periods of identity change, managers at LEGO would define what they wanted the organization to look like in the future in order to develop a ‘workable present identity.’ Since temporary organizations have an ex-ante determined termination point, it is assumed that they

cannot project themselves into the distant future (Burke & Morley, 2016). However, we found that CCT was able to project itself into the near-future, asking ‘what are we not yet doing but will do before our termination point.’ This was done by creating identity claims related to goal articulation and sanctioned narratives, both of which defined what CCT hoped to accomplish before the end of its festival year. Moreover, these types of identity claims relied less on what CCT would be in the future but were instead framed around what type of future impact would be created by CCT’s work in the present.

Elucidating organizational identity vis-à-vis future impact complicates key propositions of identity theory. Organizational identity has, since its formulation by Albert & Whetten (1985), been defined as the central, distinct, and enduring features that define ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’ as an organization. While the enduring nature of identity has been the subject of continued debate (Albert, 1998; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013; Whetten & Mackey, 2002), this thesis further complicates this core aspect of identity. Indeed, if organizational identity can be derived from intended future impact, then the ‘enduringness’ of an organization may extend beyond the organization’s lifetime. Indeed, CCT was able to use intended future impact to help define what it did in the present even though it wouldn’t be around to see the manifestation of that impact. This process raises natural managerial complications. For example, the intention of impact is not impact itself, so if organizations begin to define themselves by their intended impact they cannot introduce mechanisms of measurement to know whether that impact is actually being created (much less improve their activities to create a greater impact). Thus, intended future impact becomes a discursive tool to influence organizational identity but may not create efficient activities to actually create that impact.

In total, CCT was able to mobilise historical comparators and intended future impact in order to define what were the central, distinct, and ‘enduring’ features of the organization in the present. It did so by creating multiple types of identity claims that defined who CCT was in relation to historical comparators (i.e., external differentiation) and who CCT was in relation to their intended future impact (i.e., goal articulation and sanctioned narratives). While previous literature has characterised the development of identity claims in newly formed organizations as a collaborative and

slow process which occurs over the course of several years (Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013), we found that CCT managers defined these claims in a top-down fashion within the first few months of the organization's existence. The speed at which CCT identity claims were developed was rationalised by managers as necessary due to the speed at which temporary organizations operate.

It is important to note that these mobilised identity claims were only one component of the overall process of identity regulation within CCT. We now turn to how these claims grounded the process of creating aligned identity understandings of organizational workers and what this contributes to a wider conceptualisation of the temporality of organizational identity.

8.2 Organizational Identity Alignment

Extant literature suggests that newly formed organizations construct identity claims and understandings through collaborative means (Gioia et al., 2010). For example, Gioia and colleagues (2010) posit that new organizations go through phases of 'negotiating collective identity claims,' experimenting with 'liminal actions,' and 'assimilating legitimising feedback to affirm the validity of their identity-related beliefs.' However, scholarship on the manager-employee power imbalance casts doubt on the extent to which these processes are truly collaborative (Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). For example, scholars have described how organizational managers are in privileged positions to exert authority about what is a 'legitimate' identity claim (Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). What is less researched is what occurs when identity claims of managers might be at odds with the identity understandings of frontline workers. Thus, a second theoretical puzzle that had yet been addressed before this thesis was:

How are identity discrepancies resolved when identity claims (of managers) conflict with identity understandings (of workers)?

The findings from this thesis uncovered that the initial identity claims of CCT managers were often at odds with the identity understandings of frontline workers. Previous literature would suggest that CCT managers and frontline workers would

attempt to resolve this identity misalignment by engaging in experimental actions and assessing together whether these actions represent what is central, distinct, and enduring about the organization (Gioia et al., 2010). This collaborative process would result in either adapting the formal identity claims of the organization or in changing the meanings (i.e., understandings) associated with the initial claims (Gioia et al., 2000; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). This did not occur in the CCT case context. Rather, discrepancies between the identity claims of managers and the identity understandings of workers resulted in a process of identity regulation whereby workers either adapted their identity understandings to align with the formal claims or they left the organization.

These findings deepen the theorisation of organizational identity regulation. While extant literature has explored how identity can be shaped or influenced by member action or environmental disruption (D. Oliver & Vough, 2020; Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Glynn, 2000; Ravasi & Phillips, 2011), it was not yet known how identity discrepancies were managed between internal actors (i.e., between claims made by managers and understandings by frontline workers). This is important because organizational identity acts as a perceptual filter that influences how organizational members interpret issues (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Reger et al., 1994). As such, regulating the identity understandings of organizational members is key to ensuring that issues are interpreted similarly by different workers. This research addresses this gap and furthers the theorisation of identity regulation.

This thesis posits that identity regulation is an attempt to ensure that actions and initiatives are always in the organization's character. Actions and initiatives are deemed as 'in character' as long as they are aligned with the identity understandings of regulators. While extant research has characterised the development of identity understandings as a collaborative process (Gioia et al., 2010), this research complicates this theorisation and posits that managers can initiate coordinated systems of regulation to shape the identity understandings of organizational workers. This finding supports the theorisation of Alvesson & Jonsson (2022) and Vaara & Whittle (2021) that power asymmetries between managers and workers enable managers to exert control over organizational features not typically perceived as 'controllable;' the data shows that organizational identity is one such domain.

Regulation is an attempt to reduce identity ambiguity. While the previous section has discussed this at length, it is important to recognise that reducing identity ambiguity is an attempt to provide plausible accounts for who the organization is and what it does; an attempt to build understandings of what actions would be within the organization's character (Burke & Morley, 2016; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2010). Identity regulation takes this one step further, reinforcing this process with rewards and punishments. For example, frontline workers who were able to develop aligned identity understandings were able to get their programmes approved and themselves promoted, while those who developed misaligned understandings were able to get their programmes rejected and themselves replaced.

Regulation seeks the creation of a shared organizational identity but may only create aligned identity understandings. Previous research has focused on how organizations arrive at a shared organizational identity (i.e., a general agreement on who we are and what we do; viewing each other's actions as in character for the organization) (Gioia et al., 2010; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013). This research shifts the proverbial variable' of organizational identity literature away from 'shared organizational identity' and places it on 'aligned identity understandings.' To be specific, aligned identity understandings can be thought of as *either* 'we generally agree on the who we are and what we do. We view each other's actions as in character for the organization' *or* 'this is who I believe the regulator thinks we are and what we do. The regulator will view this action as within character for the organization.' This shift reflects the power asymmetries present in organizations (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022; Vaara & Whittle, 2021), and notes that everyone is continually developing identity understandings through the filtered prism of managerial oversight.

8.3 Sensechecking 'Desired Sense'

Extant literature describes how processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking are used by groups of actors to attempt to shape the sensemaking of others towards the construction of desired meaning (i.e., desired meaning being aligned identity understandings in the CCT context). Extant research has examined how sensegiving and sensebreaking occur in practice and the tools available to those who attempt to regulate the sensemaking of others (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991;

M. Pratt, 2000). Scholarship has yet to explore how initiators of sensegiving and sensebreaking assess whether the sensemaking of individuals matches the desired meaning of the initiator. Thus, a third theoretical puzzle addressed by this thesis is:

How do managers assess if their processes of sensegiving & sensebreaking have created 'desired sense' in frontline workers?

Before tackling this question head-on, it is important to describe how CCT used mobilised identity claims for the purposes of sensegiving and sensebreaking. Mobilised identity claims were justified, built, and used in order to act as processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking. Starting with sensebreaking, sensebreaking refers to “the destruction or breaking down of meaning” (M. Pratt, 2000, p. 464) and can “motivate people to re-consider the sense that they have already made, to question their underlying assumptions, and to re-examine their course of action” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 69). Moreover, sensebreaking does not, in-and-of-itself, offer new accounts, but merely casts current understanding as incorrect or insufficient (M. Pratt, 2000). Sensebreaking can also be considered a prelude to sensegiving, as managers may purposefully create ambiguity that needs resolution (Lawrence & Maitlis, 2005).

The data shows that CCT managers created claims related to external differentiation for the purposes of sensebreaking. This was seen as important because CCT managers understood that existing and potential organizational members would initially look to previous City of Culture initiatives as an identity blueprint for CCT. However, CCT managers wanted to operate markedly different than traditional arts organizations and the previous City of Culture festival in Hull.

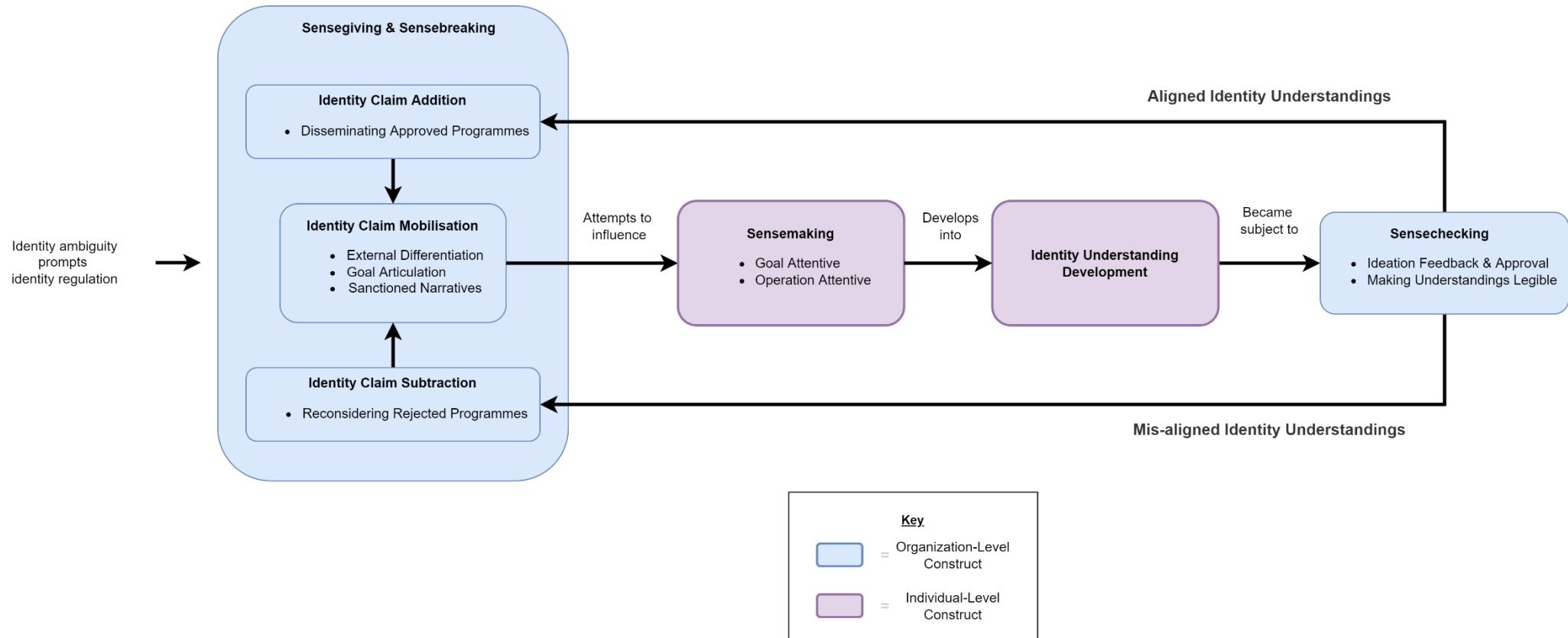
Ambiguity produced through sensebreaking served as a precursor to the sensegiving provided by identity claims related to goal articulation and sanctioned narratives. To review, sensegiving is defined as “the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). Moreover, sensegiving involves actors attempting to shape how others act or interpret ambiguous stimuli (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Mantere et al., 2012). Sensegiving involves the use of discourse (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) as well as the use of symbols, images, and

other techniques to influence organizational members (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rouleau, 2005).

CCT managers created identity claims related to goal articulation and sanctioned narratives for the purposes of sensegiving. When CCT was formed, organizational members referred to ambiguous vision statements created during the bidding process in order to begin thinking about CCT's identity. Managers quickly refined these vision statements into legal and theoretical outputs, outcomes, and impacts (sometimes referred to as 'strategic objectives') through which the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization became clarified. Managers then encouraged frontline workers to use these articulated goals in their programme planning in order to create projects that would be aligned to CCT's identity. Identity claims derived from sanctioned narratives operated similarly to those of goal articulation. Sanctioned narratives were developed to further shape how frontline workers went about programme creation through additional discursive accounts of what frontline workers should be doing (e.g., through 'storyboards' and a 'manifesto'). These explicit narratives were meant to be used in conjunction with articulated goals to distil what CCT managers claimed to be the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of the organization.

In total, CCT created identity claims through external differentiation in order to break the sense of any organizational members who may have developed mis-aligned identity understandings. Whether organizational members arrived to CCT with mis-aligned identity understandings or developed mis-aligned while at the organization is irrelevant. What is relevant is that CCT managers hoped to break these mis-aligned understandings in order to create identity ambiguity that they could then resolve with sensegiving. To do this, CCT managers created identity claims through goal articulation and sanctioned narratives through which they hoped to actively shape the sensemaking and eventual identity understandings of frontline workers. How sensegiving, sensebreaking, and sensemaking factor into the theoretical model of identity regulation put forward in Chapter 6 is presented in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5, EXPANDED MODEL OF IDENTITY REGULATION



It is now time to address the third theoretical puzzle head on. The data clearly shows that CCT managers attempted to use mobilized identity claims for their sensegiving and sensebreaking properties. In turn, CCT managers hoped to shape the sensemaking and eventual identity understandings of frontline workers. While these processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking are typical of those characterised in previous literature (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Mantere et al., 2012), the induced process of sensechecking departs from previously understood dynamics of these sense-related processes.

Sensechecking was a key component in CCT's identity regulation process. Sensechecking was composed of enabling frontline workers to make their identity understandings legible to CCT managers while also providing a platform for managers to give legitimising feedback and approval of these understandings. While previous scholarship has noted how sensegiving and sensemaking are cyclical organizational processes (Monin et al., 2013), this thesis is the first piece of research to induce the mediating process of sensechecking within this cyclical relationship. For example, Vlaar and colleagues (2008) found that sensegiving changed the sensemaking of organizational workers, which in turn affected the discursive material available to the sensegiver in future sensegiving efforts. We find that sensechecking disrupts this process that has previously been characterised as organic and emergent (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) by positing that those in a position of authority who engage in sensegiving/breaking efforts can ensure that their efforts are creating the desired effect by supplementing their sensegiving/breaking with a formal process of sensechecking. Rather than waiting for organic sensemaking to occur and basing future sensegiving efforts on the resulting state (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), sensechecking allows organizational managers to have a real-time assessment of current sensemaking and enables personalised sensegiving/breaking efforts in the moment.

Despite the sensechecking process, and the wider process of identity regulation, not all CCT frontline workers were able to develop aligned identity understandings. Scholars have long studied how organizational actors use sensegiving to shape how others act or interpret ambiguous stimuli (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Mantere et al., 2012; M. Pratt, 2000; Rouleau, 2005; Vlaar et al., 2006); however, organizational members are "not simply passive recipients of meaning but instead

engage in their own sensemaking and adopt, alter, resist, or reject the sense they have been given” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 78; see also Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; M. Pratt, 2000; Sonenshein, 2010). For example, Monin and colleagues (2013) found that organizational actors responded to sensegiving by either accepting given meanings, expressing cynicism, or actively opposing the sensegiving of managers. Previous findings contrast with those found within the CCT case. On the surface, it seemed that all CCT frontline workers seemed to accept and embrace CCT’s mission as it was presented by the sensegiving efforts of managers. And yet, some frontline workers were still unable to get their ideas accepted and were not able to develop aligned identity understandings. When examined closer, the data seems to suggest that this was due to the various types of cues that were being given attention during the sensemaking process.

The study of cues during the sensemaking process is long established. Scholarship posits that as “organizational members encounter moments of ambiguity or uncertainty, they seek to clarify what is going on by *extracting and interpreting cues from their environment*, using these as the basis for a plausible account that provides order and ‘makes sense’ of what has occurred” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 58 emphasis added; see also Brown, 2000; Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Indeed, cues have been described as “the ‘raw material’ upon which sense is made” (Vaara & Whittle, 2021, p. 2) and that anything can act as a cue as long as a person can perceive it with their senses (i.e., hear, see, touch, taste, or smell). CCT data extends the theoretical understandings of sensemaking cues by providing an empirical categorisation of two types of sensemaking that use different cues when making sense of organizational identity. First, goal-attentive sensemaking is the process of producing organizational identity understandings by making sense of cues related to the organization's mission and purpose. In other words, those who engage in goal-attentive sensemaking focus on understanding ‘who we are’ as an organization. Second, operation-attentive sensemaking refers to the process of producing organizational identity understandings by making sense of cues related to the organization's operations and workflow. In other words, those who engage in operation-attentive sensemaking focus on how ‘who we are’ translates into ‘what we do’ as an organization.

A note for clarity on cue terminology. Extant sensemaking literature argues for “the existence of different types, [suggesting] that sensemaking is not a singular but a variable phenomenon (Guiette & Vandembemt, 2016; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, 2020, p. 2; Schildt et al., 2020). While Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) elaborate these types in relation to phenomenology, recent reviews and contributions highlight that key components of sensemaking (e.g., temporality, materiality, and discourse) vary empirically and conceptually (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Holt & Cornelissen, 2013; Kudesia, 2017). This thesis extends the conceptualisation that there are different ‘types’ of sensemaking that attend to different cues during the sensemaking process. This is not to say that ‘sensemaking’ is phenomenologically different dependent on the attentive-type; rather, this delineation clarifies the process of identity-related sensemaking and illuminates how sensemakers pay attention to categorically different stimuli.

Sensemaking attention is important because “cues do not arrive pre-packaged and ready-made as meaningful elements upon which we then act” (Vaara & Whittle, 2021, p. 8). Indeed, Chia (2000, p. 551) puts forward that cues are the “undifferentiated flux of raw experience” that have to be “forcibly carved out” for attention (see also Weick et al., 2005). Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010) describe this as the “bracketing of cues from the environment,” which is based on their interpretation of “salient frames” (2010, p. 551). CCT data provides an empirical account of an organization that attempted to develop ‘salient frames’ through acts of sensegiving but were unsuccessful in appropriately shaping the sensemaking of all frontline workers. The data suggests that this was because the sensegiving material provided to frontline workers focused on organizational mission (i.e., articulated goals and sanctioned narratives), but no sensegiving efforts were directed at creating cues relevant to the operational sensemaking needed to turn ‘who we are’ into ‘what we do’ for the organization. This may help explain why sense-shaping efforts do not always achieve their ‘desired sense’ (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022); while CCT sense-shaping efforts relied on three different types of mobilised identity claims, none of these enabled operation-attentive sensemaking and left frontline workers to do this themselves. However, if CCT managers had provided additional identity claims that were aimed at aiding the operation-attentive sensemaking of workers, there is a possibility that

more workers would have developed aligned identity understandings. This point is picked up again in the future research section in the conclusion of the thesis.

8.4 Additional Implications for Theory

8.4.1 Action in Identity & Sensemaking

This thesis pushes forward several theoretical conversations related to the role of action in sensemaking and organizational identity. Starting with sensemaking, previous literature has explored how actions play a key role in an individual's sensemaking. Weick posited that individuals can only understand the world by taking action and seeing what happens next, stating that "cognition lies in the path of action. Action precedes cognition and focuses cognition" (Weick, 1988, p. 307). Action can also be used deliberately to test provisional understanding created from previous sensemaking (Rudolph et al., 2009). Action is also important to sensemaking because it shapes the environment in which sensemaking itself occurs. This happens because actions that help build understandings that later alter what people encounter and thus change the very situation that initiated the sensemaking to begin with (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

In total, extant literature views sensemaking as not only the interpretation of cues, but involves the active authoring of events, recursively building the situations that are under examination (Sutcliffe, 2013; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). CCT data departs from previous literature by questioning the extent to which organisational workers at different levels of an organization have sensemaking agency. The data suggests that while frontline workers were able to perform actions (e.g., pitch a specific programme to CCT managers), they were unable to 'change the very situation that initiated sensemaking' (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). It is true that frontline workers would test their provisional understandings (Rudolph et al., 2009), but the sensechecking process initiated by managers limited the extent to which provisional sense was actively effecting the organizational context. Indeed, it was CCT managers, not frontline workers, who were able to change the new, formalised identity claims of the organization vis-à-vis the process of identity claim addition and subtraction. Put in

another way, frontline workers were able to engage in actions to test their personal understanding, but were unable to change organizational actions (e.g., produce an arts exhibit) unless authorised by CCT managers.

The role of action in the development of organizational identity is similar to that of sensemaking. When describing identity formation, Ashforth and co-authors argue that the intrasubjective meanings of organizational founders converge at the intersubjective level (i.e., moving from individual understandings to group understandings) in order to form a ‘social reality’ about ‘who we are’ as an organization. As time moves forward and organizational actors perform actions, these intersubjective meanings are reified and taken-for-granted, becoming “encoded in the goals, routines, information flows, and so on” (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146), and eventually elevating an organization’s identity to a generic subjective level. This influence then begins to work downwards, with generic subjectivity facilitating identity processes at the intersubjective and intrasubjective levels. The CCT case context demonstrates a similar process of managers arriving at formal identity claims that they hoped would ‘work downwards’ to inform the intersubjective understandings throughout the organization. However, CCT data demonstrates a significant increase in pace described by Ashford and colleagues. Moreover, while Ashford and colleagues theorise this process of ‘working downward,’ CCT data is able to demonstrate how this happens through regulating identity understandings (i.e., managers putting forth mobilised identity claims; using sensechecking to ensure that ‘appropriate’ intersubjective meaning is developed vis-à-vis aligned identity understandings; correcting misalignment).

Moreover, previous literature has described how organizational members make choices about which actions they view as consistent with their developing identity understandings (Gioia et al., 2010). These actions are manifestations of Weick’s (2015) concept of “double interacts:” people take actions in line with experimental conceptions of who they want to be and see what kinds of responses those actions engender in various audiences. In particular, literature has suggested that individuals look for ‘legitimising feedback’ (Gioia et al., 2010), that their developing identity understandings are “desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p.

574). While extant literature has mainly explored this legitimising process through the feedback of external audiences (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al., 2010), CCT data suggests that organizational managers were in a privileged position to provide legitimising feedback to the provisional understandings of frontline workers. This was not by accident, but a concerted effort to shape identity understandings through a formal process of regulation. Moreover, while frontline workers received feedback on their actions and ideas from other internal members and external collaborators, organizational managers were the only ones who were able to provide legitimising feedback as to whether their developing understandings would eventually develop into actualised programmes.

This finding has significant implications for the coordination of action related to social purpose interventions and organizations. Extant literature notes that the ways in which interventions can create a social impact are multiple, with this multiplicity causing disagreements between organizational members (Battilana et al., 2022; Glynn et al., 2020; Smith & Besharov, 2019). For example, Ashford and Reingen (2014) describes workers in a food co-operative that agree on similar values of community and environmental care, but disagree on how these values translate into working practices. Put another way, this disagreement stemmed from a clear agreement on ‘who we are’ as an organization, but ambiguity regarding how ‘who we are’ translates into ‘what we do’ as an organization. While the study of sensemaking attention may alleviate these disagreements, these contributions towards action in sensemaking are also relevant. Indeed, workers may prioritise the opinions of impacted communities and beneficiaries (i.e., what they feel is the most legitimate feedback), but systems of identity regulation may provide managers with a way to seize control of this legitimising feedback. This shift may allow managers (for better or for worse) to coordinate actions in line with their own subjective beliefs about what is the appropriate way for the organization to create an impact.

8.4.2 Sensemaking for Organizing

In Weick’s (1995) seminal writing, he put forward that sensemaking is vital to the act of organizing because it coalesces into shared meaning that can be actioned by

organizational agents. Put theoretically, Sandberg and Tsoukas (2020) state that “agent substitutability, namely having interchangeable agents follow standard frames or plots of action (i.e., generic subjectivity), is required for organized action to consistently take place across space and time” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020, p. 19; see also Tsoukas, 2019; Weick, 1995). As such, “researchers need to approach sensemaking as an accomplishment” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020, p. 24), wherein “meaning is grasped as an outcome of sensemaking process” (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022, p. 23).

Sensechecking, as put forward in this thesis, further enables the process of organizing by further expediting the arrival of agent substitutability. Previous literature has posited that sensegiving and sensebreaking are instrumental to the organizing ability of sensemaking because it allows organizational actors to shape the sensemaking of others in order to quickly arrive at shared sense (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This thesis shows that by instituting formal periods of sensechecking, organizational actors can quickly assess whether their sense-shaping processes had been effective and, if not, direct sensemakers to the appropriate sensegiving or sensebreaking activity. As such, sensechecking may further enable the ability to effectively organize and ‘accomplish’ (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020) the development of shared understandings.

It should be noted that sensechecking was enabled vis-à-vis the broad scope of managerial oversight within CCT. Moreover, this scope may have stemmed from its ephemeral nature. Since CCT was a temporary organization, managers often remarked that they needed to quickly get everyone on the same page (which resulted in the creation of the identity regulation process). While scholars of temporary organizations have often wondered how organizations can quickly coordinate the actions of individuals towards project-specific goals (Burke & Morley, 2016), these findings provide a template for how they may do so vis-à-vis the regulation of organizational identity. Moreover, literature on temporary organizations questions the extent to which temporary organizations have agency, due to being created to achieve ex-ante derived programmes (e.g., to put on a festival). This data questions that assumption, finding that CCT had considerable support and leeway from its funders and underwriters (e.g., the Coventry City Council, DCMS, etc.). However, what the data does suggest is that the nature of temporary organizing may give managers increased agency while also

reducing the agency of frontline workers. This is made evident by the capacity for CCT managers to enforce their identity claims while requiring frontline workers to change their identity understandings to align with these formal claims.

It is important to note an unfortunate biproduct of the process of resolving discrepancies between identity claims and identity understandings: worker burnout and exit. Turning again to scholarship on temporary organizations, Keith (1978) posits that project-based work has a high turnover rate based on role-related stress. This research extends this theorisation by examining possible antecedents of this generalised phenomenon. To be specific, the constant regulation of worker activity in the name of ‘developing aligned identity understandings’ may produce the role-related stress theorised previously. Moreover, this finding raises a larger theoretical issue for future research: does identity regulation produce adverse effects that undermine whatever benefits regulation may engender (e.g., burnout or increased turnover)?

8.4.3 Sociomateriality in Sensemaking

Scholars have started to explore how sensemaking exists beyond purely discursive means (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014) and exists through sociomaterial means (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Hultin & Mähring, 2017; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011). Indeed, Orlikowski and Scott’s (2008) put forward that “attention has tended to focus on . . . processes of sensemaking and interaction with little recognition of the deeply constitutive entanglement of humans and organizations with materiality” (2008, p. 466). Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) do this nicely by studying the materiality of sensemaking within an ethnographic study of a U.S. product design consulting firm. They demonstrate how employees used a vast collection of physical artefacts (e.g., sketches, magazine images, cards, and maps) during stages of the sensemaking process in order to build, articulate, and elaborate their understandings of products they designed. Material artefacts acted as cues and “fragments of interpretations” that were permanently available to members and provided them with external repositories from which to build shared understanding. The authors posit that the material processes involved in sensemaking may enable the transition from individual to group-level sensemaking (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012).

While previous literature has emphasised how sociomaterial cues can enable group-level sensemaking (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012), we find another use for such cues – identity regulation. In the CCT case, organizational managers would periodically ask frontline workers to make their sensemaking legible through the sensechecking process in order to assess whether the identity understandings of frontline workers were aligned to those of managers. This process was enabled by the production of sociomaterial evidence that CCT managers would assess. For example, programme pitches would incorporate physical programme plans (e.g., draft budgets, inspiration photos, timelines) as well as discursive explanations of potential worker actions. This evidence, in tandem, allowed CCT managers to use sociomaterial means to assess current sensemaking and decide whether further sensegiving or sensebreaking efforts were required. Beyond a potential use of sociomaterial cues within processes of sensemaking, our findings expand other scholarship of power asymmetries in sensemaking (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022) by suggesting that sociomaterial allows sensemaking to enter a corporeal form, thus further allowing it to become subject to organizational control.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Summary of Thesis

This thesis has uncovered how organizational identity can be regulated in temporary organizations. It should be noted that the research underpinning this thesis did not commence with this intention in mind. Rather, this research was inspired by CCT's outlined mission to use the arts to create a social impact, and thus was meant to explore how organizational actors attempt to create a social impact. However, during the first phase of data analysis it was found that while CCT's social impact goals and associated activity were important, they were also a means to an end – they were a mechanism through which CCT was able to construct aligned identity understandings even though the organization had just formed. As a result, the following research questions were developed in conjunction with the ongoing analysis to further develop identity and sensemaking theory. These research questions were:

- 1. Without internal historical referents and projected futures, how is organizational identity formed and managed in newly created temporary organizations?*
- 2. How are identity discrepancies resolved when identity claims (of managers) conflict with identity understandings (of workers)?*
- 3. How do managers assess if their processes of sensegiving & sensebreaking have created 'desired sense' in frontline workers?*

While the direct answers to these questions were given in the Discussion, the resulting contributions to knowledge are summarised here.

9.2 Summary of Contributions

This thesis makes several contributions to the scholarship of organizational identity, sensemaking, and temporary organizations. These contributions are rooted in the process regulating organizational identity in temporary organizations, as induced and

evidenced through this thesis. Through this process, organizations can quickly arrive at aligned identity understandings, which create a shared guide for action (Oertel & Thommes, 2018).

The first component of this process is putting forth mobilised identity claims through which managers define what is central, distinct, and enduring about the organization. While previous literature had characterised organizational identity as arising from internal historical referents and projected futures (Ravasi et al., 2019; Schultz & Hernes, 2013), this research demonstrates that managers are able to draw from a wider set of networked referents and intended future impact in order to define the formal identity claims of a new organization. In the CCT case, this was done through three types of mobilised identity claims (i.e., external differentiation, goal articulation, and sanctioned narratives).

It is important to note that organizational identity is not derived purely by the formal claims that organizations make about themselves, but also by the identity understandings held by members throughout the organization (Haslam et al., 2017). As organizational members go about their work, they were continually developing their own identity understandings. The induced regulation model shows that organizational managers can introduce a system of sensechecking, wherein managers can assess whether the actions of organizational members are aligned with the formal identity claims of the organization. Sensechecking allows managers to reward aligned understandings and admonish misalignment, allowing managers to quickly regulate how members view the organization's identity. Moreover, member actions indicative of aligned identity understandings can be added to the organization's formal identity claims and actions indicative of misaligned identity understandings can be subtracted from the proverbial list of potential actions that members can perform. This process of identity regulation can continue indefinitely, ensuring that workers maintain aligned identity understandings.

This model of identity regulation creates several contributions related to the dynamics of time and managerial power within identity and sensemaking theory. Turning first to identity scholarship, previous literature has viewed identity formation as slow-paced and collaborative (Gioia et al., 2010; Weick, 2015). This research posits that a system of identity regulation can shape how people within the organization think

about the organization, thus increasing the speed at which aligned identity understandings are reached. However, this system requires organizational managers to have significant oversight over the legitimising feedback of ongoing identity understanding development while at the same time diminishing the feedback of other potential audiences. In other words, organizational managers must be in a position to assess developing identity understandings while also being in a position of power to either encourage aligned understandings or reprimand misaligned understandings.

Similar to organizational identity, sensemaking processes have been characterised as organic and emergent (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Monin et al., 2013). Moreover, present literature demonstrates that sensegiving and sensebreaking influence sensemaking which in turn affects the material available to the sensegiver in future sense-shaping efforts (Vlaar et al., 2008). This thesis induced a process of sensechecking that provides a mediating process for these cyclical processes. Sensechecking enabled frontline workers to make their identity understandings legible to CCT managers while also providing a platform for managers to give legitimising feedback and approval of these understandings. Rather than waiting for slow-paced sensemaking to occur and basing future sensegiving efforts on the resulting state (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), sensechecking allows organizational managers to have a real-time assessment of current sensemaking and enables personalised sensegiving/breaking efforts in the moment. Moreover, sensechecking makes identity understandings visible through sociomaterial and discursive means. While previous literature has shown how sociomaterial cues can enable group-level sensemaking (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012), this thesis thus shows how sociomaterial cues can also enable identity regulation vis-à-vis the sensechecking process.

Finally, this thesis makes additional contributions to sensemaking literature through its examination of individual responses to the regulation process. At the heart of sensemaking literature is the understanding that sensemakers draw on cues from the environment in order to ‘make sense’ of ambiguous or unexpended stimuli (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This thesis poses that there are two ‘types’ of sensemaking (that rely on different cues) that are important when ‘making sense’ of organizational identity: goal-attentive sensemaking (focusing on cues related to ‘who we are as an organization’) and operation-attentive sensemaking (focusing on cues related to ‘what

we do as an organization’). By delineating these related process, this thesis uncovers why sense-shaping may sometimes fail (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022). This is because sense-shaping must address both goal-attentive sensemaking and operation-attentive sensemaking in order to further enable workers to develop aligned identity understandings.

Table 11 offers a summary of the key contributions of this thesis in relation to the present conceptualisations of organizational identity and sensemaking literature.

TABLE 11, SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Previous theoretical conceptualisations	Theoretical extensions of this thesis
Organizational identity is derived from internal historical referents and projected futures (Ravasi et al., 2019; Schultz & Hernes, 2013)	Organizational identity claims can be derived from networked referents, through both positive and negative associations. Rather than projected future states of the organization itself, organizational identity claims can be constructed through future impact – i.e., what will the organization have done before it dissolves?
A shared organizational identity develops slowly over time as members throughout the organization collaboratively experiment with different facets of identity (Gioia et al., 2010).	A coordinated system of identity regulation can shape the identity understandings of organizational workers, whereby managers enforce formal identity claims while requiring frontline workers to change their identity understandings to align with these formal claims. Thus, aligned identity understandings (rather than a shared organizational identity) is created.
Organizational members make choices about which actions they view as consistent with their developing identity understandings and receive legitimising feedback from multiple internal and external audiences (Gioia et al., 2010; Weick, 2015).	Organizational managers who attempt to regulate the identity understandings of other organizational actors are in a privileged position to provide legitimising feedback while diminishing the feedback of other potential audiences.
Sensegiving and sensemaking are cyclical organizational processes (Monin et al., 2013) characterised as organic and emergent (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).	Sensechecking is a mediating process between sensegiving and sensemaking that allows organizational managers to have a real-time assessment of current sensemaking and enables personalised sense-shaping efforts in the moment.

When organizational actors experience ambiguity they seek to clarify what is going on by extracting and interpreting cues from their environment, which they use to create a plausible account that ‘makes sense’ of what has occurred” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Brown, 2000; Weick, 1995).	Two ‘types’ of sensemaking (based on their associated cues) are salient when making sense of an ambiguous organizational identity: goal-attentive sensemaking (‘who we are as an organization’) & operation-attentive sensemaking (‘what we do as an organization’).
Sensegiving & sensebreaking do not always create the ‘desired sense’ in individuals (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022), but it is not clear why this happens.	Sensegiving & sensebreaking efforts related to organizational identity must address both goal-attentive sensemaking & operation-attentive sensemaking in order to ensure that workers develop aligned identity understandings.
Sociomaterial cues can enable group-level sensemaking (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012).	Sociomaterial cues can enable identity regulation by making current identity understandings legible.
Sensemaking enables organizing and should be viewed as an achievement (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020).	Sensechecking enables the process of organizing by expediting the arrival of shared sense.

9.3 Limitations

As with all single-case research, there are natural boundary conditions that may limit the generalisability of these findings (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). First, the arts sector is notorious for its ambiguous goals and creative operations. This ambiguity may have been amplified for CCT due to their equally vague focus on social impact creation. These confounding factors may have required CCT managers to regulate identity more-so than organizations in sectors that have less-ambiguous tasks. For example, a temporary organization set up to manage a construction project may not implement such regulation processes due to task clarity. While all temporary organizations may not need to regulate organizational identity, the model put forward in this thesis provides a template for those that do.

Second, this research used an unusually revelatory case context (a temporary arts organization) to induce theory that may be relevant to permanent organizations.

That is to say that the dimensions of identity regulation, sensechecking, and sensemaking attention that were uncovered in this temporary context may exist in permanent contexts; indeed, the conditions present in this temporary context may have revealed theoretical dimensions previously obscured by the focus on permanent organizations. While this generalisability is assumed, it is outside the scope of this thesis to confirm this assumption.

Third, this research mainly focused on the organizational teams responsible for core operations, namely managers and frontline workers. While some administrative teams were interviewed, such as the evaluation team, others were not, such as the marketing and finance teams. Thus, it is not possible to claim that identity regulation was experienced similarly by CCT's support staff.

Fourth, as with all inductive research, there might be other possible explanations for why certain phenomenon occurred within the case context. Within this research, this is most relevant for the induced process of sensechecking; are there other factors beyond identity alignment that explain why certain frontline workers were able to get their ideas turned into approved programmes while others were not? For example, were there characteristics of certain frontline workers that came into play? Or perhaps considerations related to artists outside CCT that factored into manager approval? Inductive research enables the construction of theory (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Does this single case study generalise to every organization that tries to shape how its members view the organization? Maybe not, but what it does do is provide a convincing account of how this one organization regulated the identity understandings of its members and speaks to a key reason why this worked for some members and not for others. Future research can certainly explore if additional reasons (such as worker characteristics or partner reputations) have an additional influence on the ability of frontline workers to develop aligned identity understandings.

9.4 Future Research

The findings of this thesis support several productive avenues of future research. Addressing some of the limitations of this research head-on, one avenue could be paved by exploring how this model of identity regulation applies to permanent

organizations. Our research assumed that the ephemeral nature of temporary organizing gave CCT managers greater oversight of internal operations than managers of permanent organizations. Without this time-bound impetus, do organizational managers have the purview to implement systems of sensechecking needed to regulate organizational identity? Moreover, does the reduced agency of organizational members in regulated environments produce adverse effects that undermine whatever benefits regulation may engender (e.g., burnout or increased turnover)? Addressing a second limitation, future research could explore how sensechecking plays out in other contexts in which identity understandings are being regulated. This research could explore other factors other than identity alignment to further develop or complicate some of the contributions of this thesis.

An additional avenue for future research could explore how organizational actors give attention to specific cues while ‘making sense’ of ambiguous stimuli unrelated to organizational identity. This thesis found that there are two ‘types’ of sensemaking (based on what cues are given primacy during sensemaking) that are relevant to those attempting to make sense of organizational identity: goal-attentive and operation-attentive. These two processes relate to core aspects of organizational identity and are probably not relevant to a sensemaker attempting to construct meaning related to an emergency response. That is to say, other types of sensemaking, and their related cues, may become salient in other sensemaking contexts. Additional research could explore context-specific cues in order to better understand the overlap and contrast between different sensemaking environments.

9.5 Implications for Practice

This thesis has several practical implications for managers and organizational actors. First and foremost, this thesis puts forward a theoretical model for how organizational identity can be regulated in temporary organizations. Managers of newly formed temporary organizations may seek to reproduce this model in other organizations to overcome the ‘meanings void’ typically associated with newly formed organizations (Gioia et al., 2010) and actively regulate the identity understandings of employees. Moreover, previous practice has emphasised how organizational mission and goals may help internal actors navigate and understand identity (Tripsas, 2009). This

research found that this practice is insufficient when attempting to quickly arrive at aligned identity understandings. Rather, there needs to be an additional process in place through which identity understandings become assessable through action and socio-material. In other words, there needs to be a sensechecking process through which these developing understandings are assessed for alignment and corrected if unaligned.

Second, this research has implications for organizational actors who wish to engage in processes of sensegiving and sensebreaking when attempting to shape organizational identity understandings. This thesis found that frontline workers who engaged in goal-attentive sensemaking and operation-attentive sensemaking were able to arrive at aligned identity understandings while those who only gave attention to one of these domains were not. This is important because sensemaking relies on interpreting cues that are not pre-packaged, but need to be “forcibly carved out” for attention (Chia, 2000, p. 551). When using sensegiving or sensebreaking to influence identity understandings, it is important to provide cues that relate to both goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking. CCT managers relied mainly on goal-attentive cues (i.e., goal articulation and sanctioned narratives) in order to shape the identity understandings of workers. However, this was insufficient for frontline workers. Instead, a sensegiver should provide cues that relate to both goal-attentive and operation-attentive sensemaking in order to increase the chances of sensegiving efficacy.

Third, this thesis has implications related to the purview of managerial oversight in temporary organizations. Recent literature has uncovered the previously implicit perception that managers are in particularly privileged position within organizations to exert control over worker sensemaking (Alvesson & Jonsson, 2022). This research extends this conceptualisation to cover sensemaking of organizational identity. This is to say that organizational managers who wish to shape how actors view organizational identity must consolidate the legitimising force over what actions are taken in line with manager-derived identity claims. For CCT, this was creating identity claims and then withholding programme approval until programme ideas were proposed that matched the formal identity claims. This was made particularly possible because of the horizontal nature of CCT’s employment structure, with CCT managers

controlling the approval process. As organizations become more vertical, middle managers gain approval power and potentially complicate alignment of identity understandings between upper management and frontline workers. An immediate implication for practice would be that if managers want to strongly regulate organizational identity, then they should be encouraged to have a horizontal organizational structure and maintain this legitimising power.

Finally, this point about managerial oversight has wide-reaching implications for practice and policy of temporary arts organizations. The data clearly showed that CCT managers had a significant oversight over what programmes occurred as part of the UK City of Culture. CCT managers were able to directly control the budgeting and approval of programmes that totalled more than £35 million. For this iteration of the City of Culture festival (which happens every four years), CCT managers encouraged the creation of arts programmes that would have a positive impact on the local community. This was in-line with wider trends within the arts sector. However, managers could have easily prioritised other programme directions (e.g., ‘arts for arts sake’ programmes or pure economic regeneration programmes). If current policy continues, it should be noted that temporary arts organizations (such as City of Culture Festivals) are largely shaped by the leaders in charge, perhaps more than previously understood.

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