Stories and Organizational Change –

Participants and Sensemaking in Local Government

A thesis report presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Philosophy (Business) in Communication
Management at Massey University, New Zealand

Mary Day
2002

Stories and Organizational Change –

Participants and Sensemaking in Local Government

A thesis report presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy (Business) in Communication
Management at Massey University, New Zealand

Mary Day
2002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those people who have provided assistance and support during the time I have worked on this research project.

In particular, I give sincere thanks to my supervisor, Professor Judy McGregor, for her encouragement, valuable feedback, guidance and contribution of ideas based on her wide knowledge and experience.

In addition, thanks must go to Alec Hunter who provided assistance with the transcription of tapes, to Sharon Benson, Annalyn McGill and Rachel Stillwell for their cheerful and willing assistance with the document production.

I am also very grateful for the assistance and time given by Ainsley Simmonds at the editing stage.

Finally, I would like to thank Massey University, College of Business, for giving me the Wellington Academic Development Award (WADA), which provided the resources, (both time and money), necessary to complete this research project.

Stories and Organizational Change –
Participants and Sensemaking in Local Government

Abstract

This project explores the role of storytelling by individuals in times of organizational change. The study was carried out in a local body organization that, like other local body bodies in New Zealand, had been undergoing a series of changes over a period of several years as the result of central government reform.

There is a wide body of literature supporting the theory that the performance of stories is a key part of an organization's members' sensemaking. It has been shown that people reconstruct and interpret different experiences of organizational change and learning.

For this study a total of 21 employees from the local body were interviewed by way of storytelling. The main research question asked: "what do stories told by employees in an organization undergoing change indicate about the change?" Closely related sub-questions asked if stories indicated resistance or commitment to the changes, or degrees of resistance and/or commitment. Resistance to change is recognised as a critically important factor that can influence the success or otherwise of an organizational change. This resistance can be an impediment to progress. In times of organizational change, stories told by employees may indicate resistance to the change which, if not adequately addressed, may retard organizational change efforts.

The major findings from the employees' stories revealed some important key themes. They were that the participants had conflicting views of what the purpose of the current changes were. In addition, there was a general sense of, "here we go again", following on from previous changes in the organization. This perception gave the effect that participants had difficulty in viewing the current changes seriously. There was also a general perception that the right people were not being included in the change-making decision process. People felt left out and therefore expressed resistance in their stories. Further, a special group of people was selected from within the organization to carry out the change process and they too indicated feelings of isolation from and rejection by the organization's employees, and that created for them feelings of resistance.

Overall, it seemed clear the stories provided confirmed that participants resisted the change to varying degrees. Thornhill, Lewis and Millmore. (2000) states perceptions about change will affect its acceptance and may lead to resistance that could effectively minimise or even negate the purpose of the intended change. The analysis of these stories provided implications for change managers. This study has shown that the individuals' narratives or stories are a powerful vehicle and source of knowledge of how employees view happenings within the organization. A positive lesson to be learned from this research, and one which can be utilised by change managers in the future, is the significance of employees' stories and their importance to managers to listen to, gauge and assess the mood of the organization toward change.

A second round of interviews with a small group of the original interviewees, one year on, served the purpose of giving the participants an opportunity to reflect on the events and for sensemaking of what they didn't necessarily understand or were not aware of at the time of the first round. This proved to be a valuable opportunity to consider, reflect and learn for future organizational change processes.

It is suggested that it would be useful to conduct similar research within other local bodies that have also been undergoing series of changes over recent years following central government reform. Because of the uniqueness of local bodies and their position seated between public service organizations and the private sector, they are in a position where they are pressured to satisfy the demands of the stakeholders, both the community and the ratepayer-elected body of councillors. No doubt councils are continuing to investigate the most appropriate local government structures to meet their stakeholder's needs and the delivery of services.

Key Words

change, change management, commitment, culture, organization, organizational employees, resistance, sensemaking, stories.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

Content/Format of the Thesis Report

The format of this report mostly follows the formal style for empirical research reporting as described by Sumser (2001), with a few modifications and additions.

Sumser (2001) suggests three main sections. The first section is titled Conceptual Elements and consists of theory and a review of literature. The second section is titled Methodological Elements and consists of hypotheses or questions, definition of terms, design, sample and findings. The third and last section is also titled Conceptual Elements and consists of the analysis, conclusions and implications. Table 1 illustrates the format:

Table 1: Empirical Research Report Format (adapted from Sumser (2001) p. 45).

Conceptual Elements	Methodological Elements	Conceptual Elements
• **Theory** • **Review of Literature**	• **Hypotheses/Questions** • **Definition of Terms** • **Design** • **Sample** • **Findings**	• **Discussion/Analysis** • **Conclusion** • **Implications**

This report consists of the three main sections as described by Sumser (2001). The three sections are divided into chapters.

The first section covers conceptual elements over two chapters. Chapter One introduces the scope of the research project plan, rationale and context. It explores concepts, theories related to organizational culture, organizational change and stories and provides definitions. The project proposal and objectives are outlined, followed by a description of the local body organization where the research was conducted. A brief overview of local body reform in New Zealand in the last ten years is given.

Chapter Two, which is the Literature Review, covers some relevant theory of organizational culture and how storytelling can be viewed as a vital part of culture. Relevant research is also discussed.

Section two covers methodological elements in Chapters Three and Four. In Chapter Three the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are briefly compared.

Various methods of qualitative data analysis are described and reasons for the chosen method of data analysis are given.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the interviews conducted, and stories gathered from the interviewees in stage-one. Findings are grouped into eight main themes. Vignettes or excerpts of stories collected are included to illustrate the main points or themes identified from the findings. Following an introduction 4.1, this Chapter Four is divided into two sections: section 4.2, which provides findings to support the identified themes, and section 4.3, which provides interviewees' stories to illustrate identified themes.

Section three again covers conceptual elements in Chapters Five, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine.

Chapter Five contains an analysis and discussion of the main findings from stage-one, as outlined in Chapter Four. Excerpts of stories are included to support findings. Chapter Six pulls the results of the stage-one study into a conclusion, that sets the scene for the implications in Chapter Seven. The implications provide some pertinent messages for change management agents. Chapter Eight outlines the details of the second round of interviews (stage-two), carried out with five of the original 21interviewees one year on. Before the second interview all five had been provided with a copy of the main findings arising from the original interviews. Interviewees' hindsight views and reflections on the events of the organizational change are described and discussed. Chapter Nine provides a brief overall conclusion with further implications.

CHAPTER ONE:
STORIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

1.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a contextual background by defining organizational culture and story telling. It discusses their role in a business organizational setting, in particular during times of organizational change management. The chapter then outlines the project proposal and describes the local body organization on which the study centered. A brief general description of local body operation, with an overview of the reforms required by central government since 1988, is also provided.

The scope of the research carried out is presented figuratively in a research project plan in Figure 1.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Research Question:                                                    │
│ What do stories told by employees in an organization undergoing change,│
│ indicate about the change?                                            │
│ Do employees exhibit (indicate) personal resistance, and if so in what ways? │
│ Do the stories exhibit degrees (or a degree) of commitment?          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Organizational Change Management                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Stories and Organizational Change Participants and Sensemaking Operators │
│                          and Management                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Local Body Organization – City 79,000 population            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Stage-one – twenty-one interviews                        │
│           Story Transcripts – Natural Meaning Units –                 │
│                    Themes Sensemaking                                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 Stage-two – five interviews                           │
│                  Content analysis – Themes                            │
│            Hindsight – Reflections – Sensemaking                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                            Finale                                     │
│        Conclusions – Implications – Stages one and two                │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 1:   Research Project Plan: scope of research

1.2. Organizational Stories

Rationale and scene/context setting

The objective of this study was to test theories about organizational change and storytelling to determine whether research that found storytelling was generally a negative expression of organizational change was applicable/valid. The research project examined a specific episode of organizational change and collected stories from key participants.

As more and more companies are seeking to transform themselves through a 'managed' change programme, from cost-oriented organizations to growth- oriented organizations, they are running up against barriers. Resistance to change is recognised as a critically important factor which can influence the success or otherwise of an organizational change effort (Waddell & Sohal, 1998).

It is suggested that the failure of many large-scale efforts of corporate change can be traced to employee resistance. Spiker and Lesser (1995) state that any change, no matter how clearly beneficial to employees and the organization as a whole, will be met and often be sabotaged by resistance. Evidence shows that many Total Quality Management (TQM) and re-engineering efforts have fallen far short of expectations.

Does this mean that TQM and re-engineering are flawed? It is suggested that in theory they are not flawed. Both concepts provide frameworks for change. It may not be the changes themselves that are flawed, rather the way the changes are made. There would appear to be a failure to take enough consideration of the human factor. Any change programme, whether it is TQM, re-engineering, downsizing, merging or some other major transformation, will impact on individuals in the organization (Carnall, 1995). It is suggested upheavals are likely to provoke complex responses, particularly in large organizations, involving feelings of anger, denial, loss and frustration. We are now talking about culture within the organization. How then can management know/determine employee feeling and be more in tune with what is happening and how employees are reacting to the changes? Stories told by employees may provide the answer to this question.

In times of organizational change, stories told by employees may indicate their resistance to the change or, in turn, their level of commitment. It is suggested that it is important to understand whether an expression of resistance or commitment in stories about organizational changes, truly reflects employees' attitudes towards the changes. Clearly, if resistance does exist, and it is not adequately addressed, then it might retard organizational change efforts.

This section sets out to examine the role of culture in organizational change and in particular, focuses on storytelling in times of change and its effect on the success or failure of organizational change. It is argued that individual and/or collective stories conducted within and across cultures in an organization play a very important role in

organizational change. It is proposed there is a need to take note and listen more to the impact of stories, and how they can result in resistance to change and, more importantly, to possible failure of a change programme.

Literature suggests (Hatch, 1992; Watson, 1994; Gabriel, 1995) that storytelling is a function of the organizational culture of the participants. Given this context, the following section deals first with the definition of the terms "culture" and "stories."

1.3.   Culture defined and its relationship with stories

Storytelling, suggests Schein (1992a), is indicative of an organization's culture. He has defined culture as; "… the set of shared, taken for granted, implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determine how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments". (Schein, 1992a).

The storytelling that goes on in an organization is the culture spoken, (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Gabriel 2000a). Stories demonstrate the prevailing attitudes and assumptions. Where there is a tendency for stories to express negative feelings about the organization, this tells us something about the culture of the organization. Stories are part of organizational cultures (Gabriel, 2000a). The proposal in this study is that the use of storytelling within the culture of an organization is one way in which a culture may have an effect either to cultivate or resist cultural change. Thus the expression of negative views reflects fundamental matters about the organization's staff. It is the culture that affects a change programme.

As culture is integral to the concept of storytelling, it needs to be understood in the context of this paper. Researchers have found difficulty in defining culture. Lewis (1994) states that there is no agreement on what culture is. This problem arises, according to Meek (1988), when a term is borrowed from another discipline, as the term "culture" has been from anthropology.

Sinclair (1994) says that some see culture as intangible, shared meanings and basic assumptions, others as tangible forms, and yet others again see it as a mixture of observable forms and non-observable meanings and assumptions. The resulting confusion, says Sinclair, has led to conflicting ideas, particularly in the literature on how to study culture, how to change culture, and how to assess the effects of culture.

Allair and Firsirotu (1984) argue the way one views organizational culture will determine how one studies it. Schein (1985), Gagliardi (1986), and Kanter (1983) also argue that one's view of culture also determines how one goes about changing it.

So it would appear that different writers, when discussing how to change a culture, are not necessarily discussing the same thing. Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg and Martin (1985) state

> There is disagreement as to where the organizational culture originates,
> where the unconscious mind plays a role, whether there is a single
> organizational culture, or many cultures, whether an organization's culture
> or cultures can be managed, whether organizations have cultures or are
> places to study cultures, whether and how organizational cultures can be
> studied and whether they should be studied at all. (p. 18)

These difficulties should be borne in mind, but for the purposes of this study, we need to adopt a definition of culture. It is proposed that Schein's (1992a) definition, quoted above, be adopted because it has been accepted in much of the change management literature, see for example, Boyce (1996).

The shared assumptions, states Schein (1992a), which make up culture are never questioned or examined by members of the culture. Participants, he claims, are not even aware of their own culture until they encounter a different one.

Consistent with Schein's definition is one given by Campbell (1997), who says that culture concerns the organization's norms and forms of acceptable thought and behaviour. A number of words have been used to describe culture, where each one tells only part of the story. It is the shared beliefs, the 'smell', the 'feel', the 'morale', the personality and character of the organization.

Cronin (1996) explains it simply:

> Imagine that the president of the company has asked you to show a new
> employee around. It falls to you to explain the unwritten rules, the do's and
> don'ts as well as the nuances of the organization. What you are explaining

is your company's culture, its traditions, values, beliefs and perceptions (p. 35).

It is the 'way we do things here'.

Hansen and Kahnweiler's (1997) comments on culture are relevant to storytelling in that they mention the interactions of an organization's members. They reflect on the evolving nature of corporate culture. They view organizations as dynamic entities whose norms and values are also created through the social interactions of its members (Smircich, 1985). Thus interactive patterns reveal underlying conditions for work behaviour.

1.4.   Stories defined and their roles in an organization

Now that culture has been defined, it is necessary to explore a definition of story in the context of culture. The literature indicates that there is general agreement on this point: "… an exchange between two or more persons during which a past or anticipated experience was being referenced, recounted, interpreted or challenged" (Boje, 1991a, p. 4).

Martin (1992) states that organizational stories are not personal anecdotes, known only to one person. They usually focus on an event sequence. The central characters are organizational employees and the event sequence is, apparently, true.

It is relevant to the focus of this study at this point to examine the role of stories in an organization. The practice of storytelling in organizations, is used as a vehicle of communication management, a tool for learning and a medium for bringing about organizational change(Kaye & Jacobs, 1999).

Boje (1991a) states that an organization's storytelling is the preferred sensemaking currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders. People engage in a dynamic process of incremental refinement of their stories of new events as well as ongoing interpretations of culturally sacred story lines. When a decision needs to be made, the old stories are recounted and compared to unfolding story lines to keep the organization from repeating historically bad theories and to invite the repetition of past successes.

Gephart (1991) asserts that a story has no meaning apart from the occasions of its performance. Meaning varies from person to person and situation to situation, and depends on the occasions of its performance or telling. The meaning of the story is in the unique circumstances of each particular performance (Boje, 1991b).

Recent literature, (Gabriel, 1998; Boje, Alverez & Schooling 2001); Alvesson, 2002), suggests that the concept or understanding of stories and just what they are has become clouded. Gabriel (1998), p. 21, suggests the concept of a true story for proper narratives is that with a beginning, middle and end, held together by action and entertainment. He and Boje et al. (2001) maintain there are other narrative devices which are not true stories, namely cliches and platitudes; and, in an organizational setting, narratives which are not necessarily stories, but are participant's accounts of events, happenings and experiences from their perspective.

Gabriel (1998), p. 100, also identifies other narratives which he believes should be distinguished from stories. They are opinions, factual accounts based on the teller's perception of an event, which he calls descriptions; and proto-stories, which are fragments of stories.

However, for the purpose of this study a story is seen as participants' or employees' accounts or narratives of events and happenings of what is/has been happening within the organization from their own unique perspective. It is their sensemaking of events, whether it be a full story or a proto-story.

1.5. Introduction to study

1.5.1. Project description/proposal

The research proposal to explore the role of storytelling by individuals in times of organizational change focuses on the questions:

Main question:

1. What do stories told by employees in an organization undergoing change, indicate about the change?

Sub-questions:

2. Do employees' stories exhibit (indicate) personal resistance, and if so in what ways?

3. Do the stories exhibit degrees (or a degree) of commitment?

There is a wide body of literature that supports a theory of organizations that the performance of story is a key part of organizational members' sense-making and that stories are the members' vehicles for organizational communication and learning (Allaire & Firisirotu, 1984; Meek, 1988; Boje 1991a; Gabriel, 1995; Boyce, 1996).

It has been shown that people reconstruct and interpret different experiences of organizational change and learning. However, there is little known in the literature about whether the stories indicate personal resistance. In particular, it would appear there is little work done in that area in New Zealand, and the research project offers insight into narratives about change and organizational dynamics. It is important to explore this question in order to assist change agents, managers and others involved in the decision- making process when planning and implementing change in an organization.

1.5.2. Defining resistance and commitment

Schein (1998) states that resistance to change could be one of the most ubiquitous of organizational phenomena. There are many definitions of resistance in writings. Resistance is defined by Markus (1986) as; "behaviours intended to prevent the implementation or use of a system or to prevent system designers from achieving their objectives" (p. 433).

For the purpose of this study the following approach will be adopted: "Resistance in an organizational setting, is an expression of reservation which normally arises as a response or reaction to change" (Schein, 1998, p. 199).

This expression is normally seen by management in any employee actions perceived or seen as attempting to stop, delay or alter changes (Bernmels & Reschef, 1991). Thus, from a management perspective, resistance can be said to be most commonly linked with negative employee attitudes or with counter-productive behaviours.

Resistance to change is recognised as a critically important factor which can influence the success or otherwise of an organizational change. Resistance to change represents an impediment to progress (Schein, 1998).

In summary, in this study resistance means the behaviours or expressions that imply a desire or action that could/would impede the implementation of change in the organization.

This now brings us to the need to seek an understanding of commitment for the purpose of this study. Thornhill et al.(2000) state that attempts to define and measure commitment in the context of organizational behaviour have shown that it is a difficult concept. Coopey and Harley (1991) identify two categories-attitudinal commitment and behavioural commitment- and stress their different focuses.

The first, attitudinal commitment, refers to the strength of employees' identification with their employing organization, and an associated acceptance of the organization's goals and values (Thornhill et al., 2000). It is suggested attitudinal commitment is based on moral involvement and internalisation of organizational values.

In contrast, behavioural commitment is founded on employees' judgements about the investments they have made in relation to their current job and the organizations they work for (Thornhill et al., 2000). The length of time spent employed in the organization, together with associated concerns, such as superannuation schemes, pensions, insurance, and a perceived lack of alternative employment, will affect an individual's degree of commitment. These concerns are termed "side bets" (Becker, 1960).

This study combines the two aspects, attitudinal and behavioural commitment, under the broad -term commitment.

1.5.3. Specific objectives
To determine:

- whether employees express resistance to change in stories they tell during times of organization change;

- whether employees' stories indicate a level of commitment;

- whether the expression of any resistance in stories (and or commitment) is consistent among employees from the same level of the organization;

- whether the expression of any resistance in stories differs between levels of the organization, for example; whether there is any difference between managers and operators.

1.5.4. Case study description

The organization where the research was conducted known as The City, is a local body organization in a city with a population of approximately 79,000 people. The identity of the organization has been disguised to assure anonymity.

The City has a full time equivalent staff (FTE) of about 500 employees, and a structure of six departments or units, of varying size. The largest unit has a staff of around 300 FTE people. At the time of the research interviews, it is a fairly typical local body with a ratepayer elected mayor and body of councillors, a Chief Executive, senior managers, managers, supervisors and operating or ground staff. The tiers of management depend on the size of the section, with the larger sections/units having about four levels while the smaller sections/units have a flatter structure; which is also a fairly typical local body structure.

Figure 2 shows a chart of the units and their functions. The unit names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Sections	Activities
1. Chief Executive	
2. Mayor and Councillors	
3. Policy Unit	Democracy
	Corporate Management
	Corporate Investment
4. Client Services Unit	Customer Service and
	Regulatory Business
5. Facilities and Services Development Unit	City Water Business Unit
	Roading and Parking
	Stormwater
	Waste Management
	Waste Water
	Water
6. Community Services Unit (promotion and growth, property, sporting and recreational facilities, etc.)	Arts and Culture
	City Development
	City Property Business Unit
	Community Development
	Recreation
7. Strategies Unit	Strategic Planning
8. City Operations Unit	Operations, depots, parks, sports grounds, amenities

Figure 2: The City units and functions

Since 1989 The City has undergone successive changes- "waves of change" as an interviewee manager called it. Some of the changes have been driven by government policy, and some by the organization's own efforts and desire to make the organization operate 'better.' A major restructuring occurred in 1993, which gave rise to the organizational model in place today. The Chief Executive advised that most of the change that had gone on since 1993 had either been the refining of that approach, or responding to direct political (council) initiatives. Most of the later changes were the result of political initiatives, aimed at trying to achieve particular philosophical outcomes that the council had been interested in and to help achieve its goals.

The latest change, and focus of this study, began in 1999. It occurred almost entirely as a result of the council decision to immediately review its long-term financial strategy. If the statute-driven strategy was adopted, it was projected that there would need to be a citizen rates payment rise of 45% over 10 years. It was therefore seen that the money would need to be found in other ways.

It was agreed by council to review The City. Consultants were engaged to review the organization and to look for reduced operating costs. The Chief Executive believed there were quite a few political agendas behind this move. For some councillors, it was to do the job properly; for others, it was an opportunity to change, or remove, some of the philosophical constructions of the organization, and replace them with others; for others it was merely to "get better by getting some consultants to do a bit of a cleanup" (quote from one of the interviewees).

According to the Chief Executive, the consultants engaged later confessed they came in expecting to find an organization that was "ripe for change – as something for easy pickings"; that they could make some quick and easy recommendations about what to do to make savings. However, they were reported to have said they found the organization was generally well run, and that if it was really necessary to drive the costs down then there would need to be an investment in process improvement.

So the change project, that for the purpose of this report is known as Operation Change, was born out of a political desire to reduce the operating costs of the organization by $2m. Consequently, an Operation Change project team consisting of a group of 10 specially chosen people from within the organization was set up almost outside the organization. These Operation Change team members would be trained in process

improvement, and go back into the organization as coaches, set up teams, and look at establishing projects that would bring about process improvements within their own units which would spread with a conscious culture.

The number was later dropped to five people, and the process improvement function was absorbed back into the corporate part of the organization. "That was the theory" (said one interviewee). It was also decided to establish a steering group made up of a mix of councillors, some but not all management, the Chief Executive, and other staff. This group's function was to act as a guiding coalition, which guided and approved projects. Operation Change was disbanded June 2001.

1.5.5. Local government reform

In 1989 the then Labour Government set out to reform local government. The Local Body website (www.govt.nz) states local government has moved dramatically away from the static providers of traditional services to create a vision and direction for their community, identify and respond to local needs, and act as "smart purchasers" of local public goods and services.

Historically, New Zealand local government had been held tightly in by legislation as groups of authorities empowered to carry out certain restricted activities "in particular and narrowly presented way," (McKinlay, 1990, p. 59). Along with this, accountability had traditionally been poorly specified. Local government accounts were kept on a cash rather than an accrual basis. Forward planning was minimal.

The new framework set up by the legislation changed this. The set of reforms which the Government put in place were intended to encourage local government to make more efficient use of the resources under its control and the powers which it exercised. For the first time, local government operations, as well as the ratepayers, were to have clear information on the true costs of providing local government.

McKinlay (1990) predicted the outcome could be expected "to be a more efficient, if somewhat more hostile, local government sector" (p. 75). He stated that, because of the legislation, local government would, with citizen ratepayer support, assume a more "governmental" role. However, he also predicted the disclosure of the full cost of "significant activities" could result in pressure on councils to retreat on certain activities so to avoid or reduce the pressure on ratepayers for the cost of other activities.

The effect of the reforms created a structure which was to be more truly local governmental than previously. McKinlay (1990) predicted that the process of achieving this would not be smooth or easy, and was likely to be marked by debate over the adequacy of resources.

Drage (1999) said that with the restructuring of the state, local government had been forced to play an increasing role as advocate for its ratepayers and the community, and "must develop innovative approaches to local needs" (p. 3). This can be interpreted in part as the need for greater efficiency and accountability with financial resources.

The restructuring in 1989 also saw the beginning of local government being required to comply with rigorously upgraded financial management regimes. (Bush, 1995).

An important point to make here, of significance to this study, is a perception that local government continues to be inefficient (McDermott & Forgie, 1999). The argument is that if local government in some cases discards or reorganises its traditional infrastructure services its overheads should also be reduced. This was the line taken by the councillors who initiated Operation Change with the objective of cutting costs in the operation of The City. The reason for the cost cutting was that money was needed to finance their long-term financial strategy for the city and the prevalent belief that there was "fat in the system."
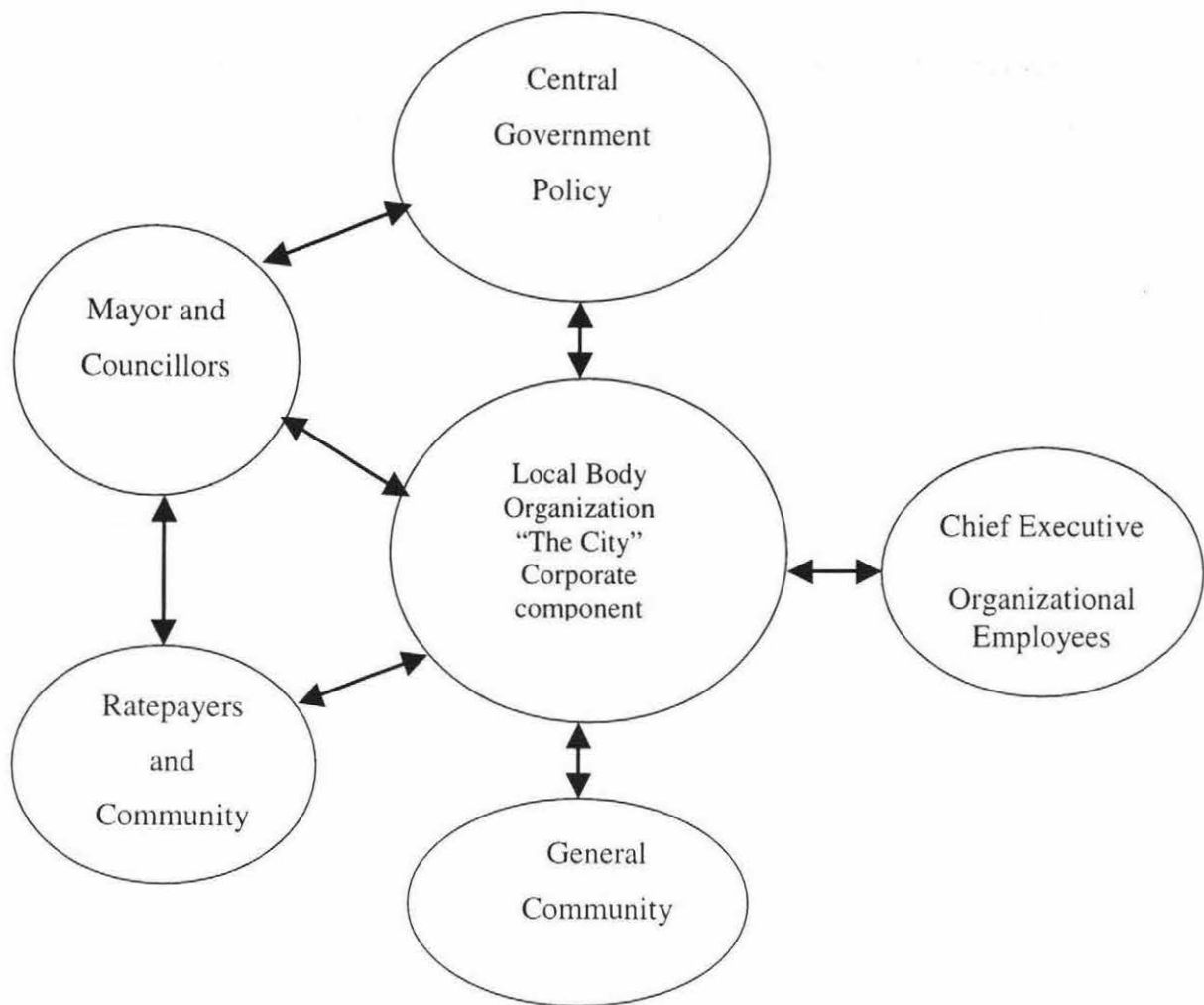
Figure 3:   Stakeholders in Local Body Organisations

Figure 3 shows the complexity of stakeholders associated with The City. This is typical of most local bodies. The elected council employs the Chief Executive to head the corporate component of the council. The Chief Executive (or those who work for him) advises councillors on matters of policy, and the elected Council decides which policies to adopt by vote. It is then up to the Chief Executive and his staff to ensure any policy adopted by the council is implemented correctly (www.wcc.govt.nz).

Many councils continue to investigate the most appropriate local government structures to meet their community's needs and the more efficient delivery of services. This may involve looking at new structures for delivering services such as contracting with inter-district and regional service providers, for example library services and water supply. (www.govt.nz, p. 4).

At this point it would seem useful to provide the comments of interviewees who took part in the study about the differences between the private industry sector of business,

public/central government organizations and local body organizations. It is important to note who the stakeholders are in a local body organization: ratepayers, the ratepayer-elected mayor and councillors, and the employees of the organization.

> … private sector is driven in the end by whether or not you're making a
>
> profit. If you're not, you have to make changes … that's that, and people
>
> understand that. Central government public service organization is a lot
>
> more slow - moving than private or local government. In local government,
>
> you get a much closer contact with the political body (councillors), and so
>
> they tend to interfere or disrupt some of those things. Sometimes in a
>
> political body (council organization), we had identified things we wanted to
>
> change, but they didn't want to see them changed, so we have that ... 'save
>
> money but don't change anything' kind of attitude – that close political input
>
> can be crippling …most of them have never been employers of any sizable
>
> numbers, so they've got no real understanding of what you need to do to
>
> take a big organization with you.

Another: "Local bodies are a little bit unique in that they are directly accountable to the community unlike your average central government department."

These descriptions, of local body organization and the political debate, provide the context for this study and the reason for the initiation of Operation Change by the elected body of councillors. There was a need to reassess financial output in order to implement and carry out the 10-year plan.

Now that the local government context and stories and their relationship to organizational culture have been discussed, and the research project proposal outlined, the following chapter examines relevant theory on the relationship between storytelling and culture. It becomes clear that there are also different levels of culture which may have an impact on the stories told. A review of relevant research in the area is conducted, including research on the effect of stories on organizations during times of

change and the role of resistance. Finally, research opportunities are identified and discussed.

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Review of relevant theory

Having earlier defined the concepts of culture and story, this section now reviews relevant theory about culture, the theory relevant to stories, and the role that stories play in determining culture. Story telling has been identified as an important vehicle for culture transmission in an organizational setting (Fletcher, 1996). In particular, this review is concerned with the effect of stories on an organization during times of change. Another facet of the literature review is the issue of resistance, particularly whether it has been found to be expressed in stories, and also to determine what other scholars have found in similar research. This information is important both in understanding the impact of stories on organizations during times of change and the role of resistance.

2.2. Culture

Schein (1992a) has postulated a model of organizational culture. He describes culture on three levels; basic assumptions, values and beliefs, and artefacts. Level three assumptions are our views of fundamental truths about people and the world, such as the basic assumptions that people are trustworthy, lazy or not. At this layer are the value systems that drive organizational behaviour. The second level of values and beliefs encompass an organization's espoused judgements about what is right and what is wrong and evaluates actions as exemplary or ineffective. Examples of both evaluations are if people are perceived as not trustworthy, or beliefs that one has to protect one's own interests. The first level of artefacts encompass what we see and what is done. These are made explicit through things such as, activities, rituals, logos, etc.

A difficulty recognised by Schein (1992a) in examining the levels of culture is that all three are not out in the open. It might be argued that artefacts are what we see and hear and do around us, that they are the adornments and the ways of speaking and writing. But it is suggested it is difficult when we look beneath the artefacts to discover why they are there. We enter a realm that is often partially hidden and not recognised even among members of our organization.

Some values can be made visible. Examples might be the promotion of honesty, or the idea that the customer comes first. Research has found that organizational behaviour sometimes reflects hidden values, especially in times of stress and uncertainty such as when an organization is undergoing change (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

As well as these levels just discussed, an organization can be analysed in terms of different types of culture that exist within the organization. Schein (1985) states there are three different types of culture in an organization. These he identifies as operators, engineers, and executives. Schein says that given these three cultures, there is the possibility the organization may not ever be able to be a reliable learning system unless it finds a solution to the inherent conflict or differences between these three cultures. These groups or communities have learned their assumptions from their own environments. He says we need to cross cultural boundaries to learn about the power of culture in an organization and its role in the process of change.

However, Schein's view may be rather a simplistic view of organizational life. Jordan (1996) views an organization as a web of interacting cultures. An organization as a whole has a culture, but each department may have a culture as well. He says there are also cultures cut across the organization, such as sales or secretarial staff. Also, individuals are members of national, ethnic, regional, gender and professional cultures outside the organization. So there may be a multiplicity of cultures that operate within and outside their particular realm and position within the organization. All these cultures and their influence can affect successful implementation of change programmes such as Total Quality Management or re-engineering.

Hatch (1992) argues for two basic changes to Schein's model. She expands on his work and introduces another element-that of symbols. Hatch believes Schein's model leaves gaps when regarding the appreciation of organizational culture as symbols and processes. She provides a dynamic model which includes symbols alongside assumptions, values and artefacts. Hatch takes Schein's explanation of the formation of assumptions which involves only a one-way chain of events further and brings in a cultural dynamics perspective which says assumptions are open to change at both ends. Change can occur through reaction to foreign or new values or it can occur through ongoing processes of interpretation in which each interpretation event brings the possibility for change in assumptions.

Sinclair (1994) takes this idea further again and suggests that in perceiving reactions to change, we may be ignoring the culture gaps which exist in the interactions between those in an organization. He suggests that theories and literature may be obscure and do not describe what is real in the majority of organizational workforces.

In this context Geertz's (1975) concept of culture is quoted:

> The concept of culture ... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, like Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning (p. 5)

"Webs of significance" are appropriate here, agrees Sinclair (1994). He says that people may spin their own webs, and these are also linked to other webs and require support so they can be spun. Each person may also be part of a web spun by another, which impacts on ourselves and our abilities to disengage or free ourselves from the significance of others. In addition, Sinclair maintains webs have been used in an attempt to "trap" prey. Efforts in the past to bring about change in organizations have attempted to use webs to require total commitment and participation from all employees. These may ignore other interactions in the workplace.

Bringing about change is all about getting people to conform to new ways of doing things, and new ways of seeing themselves, their roles and their interactions with others inside and outside the organization. So, says Sinclair, we have to be aware of both the influences that cause people to see change issues in different ways and the problems related to these.

2.2.1. Cultures in organizations - three perspectives

Martin (1992) provides an explanation of organizational culture by looking at aspects and analysing three social perspectives: the integration, differentiation and fragmentation views. Studies that follow an integration perspective have the view that all cultural manifestations are interpreted as reinforcing the same themes consistently across the organization. Members are said to share a consensus of views. The integration perspective would exclude ambiguity.

By contrast, the differentiation perspective to research follows the view that cultural manifestations are sometimes inconsistent, as when managers say one thing and do another. Consensus only occurs within subcultures, which often conflict with each other. Lastly, opposed to the integration perspective, the fragmentation perspective focuses on ambiguity as central to an organization. Consensus or disagreement are issue specific and fluctuate constantly. Nothing is really clear. Table 2 shows a summary of the three perspectives.

Table 2: Characteristics of the Three Perspectives of Organizational Culture and Storytelling

(Adapted from Martin (1992) Table 1-1 p. 37)

PERSPECTIVES

	Integration	*Differentiation*	*Fragmentation*
Orientation to consensus	Organization-wide consensus	Subcultural consensus	Many views (no consensus)
Relation among manifestations	Consistency	Inconsistency	Complexity (not clearly consistent or inconsistent)
Orientation to ambiguity	Doesn't exist Exclude	Channel it outside subcultures	Focus on it
Metaphors	Clearing in jungle, monolith, hologram	Islands of clarity in sea of ambiguity	Web jungle

This concept of the three perspectives bears out McDermott and Forgie (1999), who say there is a perception local government continues to be inefficient. This fits in with Martin's integration, organization-wide perspective. However, in light of government transitions and the different stakeholders involved in local government, fragmentation and differentiation are more likely to be exhibited.

2.3. Storytelling

This then brings us to the role of stories in the process of organizational change. It is suggested that stories told in organizations are based both on organizational assumptions, and on particular individual assumptions. Examining storytelling can help to focus attention on the 'webs of significance' (Sinclair, 1994). Organizational stories in the context of this study are viewed as vehicles for organizational communication and learning.

Jordan (1996) examines theories that suggest an individual brings to a setting a certain mindset developed from previous experience. The theories examined by Jordan are those of Lave (1988), which highlight the role of context in cognitive activity; Pierce's (1979) theory of natural languages, which maintains language is a classification system within a larger classification system called culture; and Hamada's (1995) work on organizations' cultures and shared cognitions, which stresses that interdependent self-schema have an organizational and "cultural existence". This mindset is described as "structuring resources" (Lave, 1988), a "classification system" (Pierce, 1979) or self-schema (Hamada, 1995). The individual determines how to act in a specific situation by drawing on a previous mindset. Hamada says that "schema help make sense out of actions in situ, which in turn create a new schematic connection".

But trying to understand the individual cognition processes is not sufficient to explain the importance of stories in culture formation. This is partly because when the schemas are shared by members of the group they become culturally shared schema. They must be sufficiently shared to provide the potential for collective and purposeful action. Shared "norms" reflected in statements such as "the way we do things here", and "we've always done it this way", are shared schema or ideas which are part of the culture. Pierce (1979) suggests that cultural conflict results when individuals with different schema or different shared classifications interact. They categorise the same phenomena differently.

Jordan (1996) suggests organizational stories may be a way of articulating schema. Accordingly, stories may be intentionally introduced by management in an attempt to direct culture change. Here the purposeful creation of stories attempts to create a new shared schema.

Other stories just happen. Jordan (1996) believes the natural creation of stories in the course of work behaviour is a powerful tool for influencing schema. Where change is occurring, individuals need to find a new schema- the way we do things around here is not that way any more. There is a void which needs to be filled, so it is suggested that when an incident occurs and it may be retold, the incident becomes a story which can contribute to the new culture formation. The story is shared, making it a shared schema, used to interpret context Boyce (1995).

Another theoretical approach or explanation is to view stories as collective sensemaking. Collective sensemaking is the process whereby groups interact to create social reality which in turn becomes the organization's reality. Whilst there is some meaning that is not shared by all members within a group, they do develop a certain body of shared meaning and act according to that shared meaning. Fisher's (1989) narrative paradigm proposes a way of interpreting and assessing stories by creating values and action. The link between story and action enables an examination of collective sensemaking and enacting shared purpose in organizational life. Boyce (1995) echoes Fisher's view when he asserts that shared storytelling can express shared experience and is used to build a collective sense.

Similarly, Martin (1992) says storytelling is "a pattern-finding or pattern-elaboration episode to make sense of wider organization processes and relationships" (Boje, 1991b p. 113). This reflects Peters and Austin's (1985) belief that storytelling is important in turbulent environments where stories and storytelling help to make sense of changing dynamics in the organization. By observing organizational life, the importance of the story in creating, identifying and maintaining organizational norms and relationships can be seen.

Boyce (1996) suggests that the study of story lies within narrative in the field of communication theory. Fisher's (1989) narrative paradigm presents a "… philosophy, reason, value and action …"(p. 64). The narrative paradigm postulates a fundamental form in which people express values and reasons which result in decision making about action. Focus is on the message of a story, and the reliability, trustworthiness and desirability of the message is evaluated. Applying the narrative paradigm to storytelling involves a method of identifying story themes and assessing the links between values, reason and action. Boyce (1996) believes it provides a valuable method for working with stories and storytelling in organizations.

This now brings us to the subject of resistance and whether there is literature providing evidence that employees have shown resistance in their stories about organizational change. To date, this researcher could find no such specific literature, although resistance as a theme in the change literature has been a feature of the writing of Waddell and Sohal (1998) and Thornhill et al. (2000). This clearly supports the notion of the value of storytelling in an organization. Storytelling can be cathartic for tellers and entertaining for listeners. But a vital point to note here, taking Boyce's (1996) comment about the value of stories further, is the importance of managers listening to what employees are saying. By listening and asking what the underlying message in the stories is, managers can access valuable information and if resistance is being expressed, they can then ask how it should be handled and, if commitment is evident-how can it be harnessed?

It is suggested that greater knowledge and understanding of 'resistance' narratives will help researchers better explain both the role of storytelling in organizations and the dynamics of change.

Galpin (1996) states that during a change effort, communication plans often concentrate on a one way flow of information (p. 72). He goes on to say that listening communicates to others that their opinions are valued. Sligo, Fountaine, O'Neill and Sayers (2000) state listening is important to many managerial tasks and has two basic purposes, obtaining information and enhancing relationships, and, most importantly, listening provides information needed for decisions (p. 88).

2.4. Review of relevant theory and research

This section provides a literature review of some of what appear to be significant contributions to the study of organizational stories and storytelling. The question is raised as to whether stories coincide with culture. Consideration is given to what (little) is known about storytelling and its relationship with organizational change and performance. Gaps are identified and consideration is given to some aspects of what remains to be learned. This section also considers the study of resistance to change, and implications for change management.

2.4.1. Research on storytelling

Boyce (1996) states that the stories told in organizations offer researchers and organization-design practitioners a natural entry point to understanding and intervening in the culture/s of an organization.

Boyce outlines studies that have contributed to the work in organizational story and storytelling. She believes it is appropriate to examine the studies individually and as a whole to assess their contribution to how we understand the role of stories and shared storytelling in organizational culture. She asks the questions: Who tells organizational stories? How, and by whom, are organizational stories interpreted? What meaning is attributed to the stories and to the process of storytelling?

Here some of the studies she outlines are reported to reflect on the perspective of the researchers, and in particular, their analysis of the cultural setting, and also the conclusions drawn.

2.4.2. The culture in which stories are told

Perceptions of uniqueness

Boyce (1996) notes that the most frequently referred to research in organizational story is the study by Clarke (1970, 1972). Clarke's definition of "organizational saga" (1972 p. 178) links a charismatic leader and strong purpose with a claim of unique accomplishment.

There are two other studies which explore uniqueness as an aspect of organizational culture. The first is a study by Mitroff and Kilmann on "epic myths" (1975) p. 18. That study defined an epic myth as encapsulating the unique quality of an organization. Their proposal was that an epic myth gives meaning to organizational members and is useful in new staff member orientation. Their method used the sharing of stories first about an ideal organization, and then stories about the actual organization. Boyce (1996) believes the study stands out from other research in this area because it describes particular storytelling as a piece of action research. The study is concerned with the value of stories for managers to understand employees.

The other 'uniqueness study' by Martin, Sitkin and Boehm (1985), involved a varied collection of organizations. They found what members hold to be unique about their

organizations is, in fact, not unique. This phenomenon they called the "uniqueness paradox".

The integrative perspective

Martin and Meyerson, (1988) looked beyond uniqueness and looked critically at the prevailing integrative perspective of cultural study. The integrative approach is that an organizational culture is that which is shared, that the founder is the culture-creator, and that the shared understanding reflects the person's convictions of the founder. Culture creation is attributed to leaders. There are many studies about leaders shaping and changing organizational cultures, including Clarke (1970), (1972) and Schein (1985).

Boyce (1996) challenges this research which advocates an integrative perspective. She quotes Martin and Meyerson (1988): "Given the conceptual centrality of the question of what is shared, and by whom, it is indeed an important weakness that integration paradigm research seldom makes a systematic attempt to determine exactly who shares what (p. 34).

Boyce believes the dominance of the integration perspective persists, and asserts that studies that demonstrate leaders in control of organizational change are still the norm. An interesting point noted by Boyce was that a particular journal editor found a study to be "disturbing" when it demonstrated that organizational members were resisting a leader's change efforts and reinforcing meaning within their own ranks.

The three perspective framework

Martin, Sitkin, and Boeham, (1985), expanded the study of culture and stories in an organization by examining and defining a three perspective framework involving integration (discussed above), differentiation, and ambiguity (also called fragmentation). The differentiation perspective takes the view that organizations are "umbrellas for collections of subcultures" (1985, p. 101) and that both leaders and members are active in the creation of culture, in other words, culture is shaped by forces beyond the control of the founder. The integration perspective takes the top management point of view, whereas the differentiation perspective expresses the points of view of those within the organization attuned to differences of class and power. There are some organization studies written with a differentiation perspective, including Van Maanen and Barley (1984, 1985) and Smircich, (1983).

The fragmentation or ambiguity perspective focuses on the complex array of relationships in the culture. Here we see unclear and inconsistent cultural manifestations, and differences are seen as irreconcilable and unavoidable. The metaphor that Martin and Meyerson (1988) propose for this perspective is a web in which individuals are connected by some, but not all, concerns. This is the view put forward by Sinclair (1994) and Geertz (1975), with what they call "webs of significance". It would appear that few studies have been carried out using the fragmentation perspective, apart from those of Martin (1992) and Weick (1991).

Boyce (1996) believes the application of a three perspective framework will make a textured, many-sided interpretation of stories and organizational culture more likely than if a researcher uses just one perspective. The integrative model, which focuses on the management's point of view, has been one of the main perspectives. If more focus is placed on the differentiation and fragmentation perspectives then the result should be an increase in understanding the sub-cultures or co-existing groups. This in turn should lead to some knowledge and understanding of how the sub-cultures interact in organizational life, particularly in times of change.

It is suggested that Martin et al.'s (1985) three perspective approach is getting to the heart of cultural transformation by stories. It challenges traditional studies carried out with an integrative perspective. It would seem important in the provision of a fuller expression of meaning in organizational change. Whilst it is recognised that the three perspectives exist, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. An organization could move between them, that is, be integrated in some aspects at certain points, and could be differentiated and/or ambiguous in some aspects at certain points. This approach would seem to be useful in studying informal stories in a changing organization.

However, Alvesson (2002) cautions that care must be taken and that the concept of the story mirroring an organizational culture even to some degree, "must be an open question" p. 146. He says that an organizational story may be biased and relate to the view of a handful of members rather than an impression of the whole organizational setting in which the story is told.

Stories for sensemaking

A frequently discussed study is that conducted by Boje (1991a). The study was concerned with how people in a large office-supply firm performed stories to "make

sense of events, introduce changes and gain political advantage". This is termed the "sensemaking approval".

Boje (1991a) supported a theory of organization as a collective storytelling system in which the telling of stories is a vital part of members' sensemaking and a way to assist them supplement individual memories with institutional memory. It is suggested that this same process is involved when employees express resistance to change.

Alvesson (2002), p. 146 challenges Martin et al.'s (1988) notion that stories generate and reflect changes in organizations. He asserts that the question of the degree to which a story mirrors an organizational culture cannot be answered or assumed and goes on to say that an organizational story may give us a limited and misleading impression of the larger setting in which it is told. However in this study, it is as Boje, Alvarez and Schooling (2001) suggest, that the telling of stories is vital to the individual's sensemaking of organizational happenings.

Do stories tally with culture?

An interesting idea is put forward by Jones (1991), who questions whether stories necessarily tally with the culture. This idea could support what is proposed in this review, i.e., that stories contribute to difficulties that may arise in organizational change. If stories are true reflections of employees' attitudes toward change, and those attitudes are different from the attitudes apparent in the culture of the organization, then change agents will have difficulty identifying employees' true attitudes. He says many writers or organizations have treated stories as a mirror of culture, for example (Siehl, 1985) and (Siehl & Martin, 1988). Only a few have noted ambiguities towards the themes of cultural norms in stories. Tales may differ from the culture because the teller is not well informed, (Siehl & Martin, 1988) or the tellers have different political motives (Boje, 1991a).

Another factor in whether stories tally with culture may be the way a story is told. A study conducted by Rhodes (1997) gathered stories from research participants, which were represented in three separate ways:

- as autobiographical accounts in the voices of the storytellers;

- as interpretation by the author; and

- as a narrative fiction (short story).

By providing a choice of representations of story, the study showed that each is in conflict with the others. "Playing with words" of the research text had the effect of extracting multiple truth effects in the same research. Rhodes concludes that research producing a final text is an illusion.

The relationship between storytelling and organizational change

One study that explores the relationship between storytelling and organizational change, is that of Lewis (1994), who conducted a longitudinal case study in an Australian College of Advanced Education undergoing transformation to a university. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, she studied the relationship between the espoused and observed reaction of staff to the changes, their actual behaviour, and the performance of the organization. Qualitative reactions to the forced behaviour changes were obtained. Quantitative evidence of the level of performance achieved by the organization during the same period is provided. Lewis drew the conclusion that on an organization-wide scale, patterns of staff behaviour may be changed without a corresponding positive change in values or assumptions. Here the stories being told by the so- called "operators" did not tally with the so-called or supposed new culture. Here also a question is raised which negates the view that culture needs to change in order to change the organization.

Another important aspect to question here is that both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study, with the different methods producing conflicting results. This indicates some issues exist with either the assumptions made or the methodology, which should be considered in any similar research. Lewis (1994) did not provide any theory to explain the differences, nor was any comment made on the validity or reliability of either method.

One study argues that while storytelling in police organizations functions on two well-known levels: the educational (learning organization) and the therapeutic; it also functions on a hidden level, the social. At this hidden level, storytelling serves to ratify some members and exclude or ostracise others (Fletcher, 1996). This study shows how the police organization members' "boys' club" in the USA consistently use storytelling, and one story in particular, to include and ratify certain members (male), to ostracise

others (female), and to perpetuate the myths that policing is primarily a male domain, and that effectiveness depends on the use of physical force.

The particular story tells of a policeman encountering a 250 lb young man in an alley who was overcome and arrested by a policeman. The story was reported to be told over and over. Policewomen hearing the story, recounted by policeman, were then told, "I have nothing against women on the job, but what would you do if you found yourself in an alley with a 250 lb man comin' at you"? (Fletcher, 1996, p. 8). The frame surrounding police stories, Fletcher suggests, indicates that female officers still have 'outsider' status despite their 25 years in full partnership (under the law) in policing, are cast as listeners only, and are often excluded entirely from the storytelling circle. It suggests a conviction held by men in police organizations that policing is a job where the primary qualification is the ability to use physical force.

The implications of storytelling in this example go far beyond policing itself. It is relevant to this present study because it reveals how powerful storytelling can be, how it goes beyond the sharing of information and entertainment to the point of obstructing an organization's structure and values in times of change. Another issue here is that gender stories could have a difference in impact depending on whether they are narrated from a male or a female perspective.

Wilkins and Thomson (1991) argue that success stories can provide assurance about outcomes and suggestions about how to go about changes. However, on the other hand, they can also foster discouragement and cynicism about the possibilities of change. Following a study of change in a large plant called "Silver Creek", a story by way of video was produced to chronicle what managers described as dramatically improved results. Wilkins and Thompson (1991) found the story told did not reflect the actions or point of view of all divisions of employees. Interestingly, they found that both executives and employees systematically decided what to leave out of the story. It is suggested this would often appear to depend on the context. Also, if the researcher is the one who is hearing the stories, either as an observer or as a participant observer, that could affect the way the stories are told and what is omitted or added.

The unmanaged terrain, stories, and the link to resistance to change

(Gabriel 1995 p. 20) argues that within every organization there is an area which cannot be managed. This area consists of people, both as individuals or in groups, "engaging

in unsupervised spontaneous activity". This is termed the "unmanaged organization".
The main force of the unmanaged organization or terrain is fantasy and includes stories,
myths, jokes, and gossip. Gabriel (1995) argues that on one level, the workers may
submit to management's cultural assaults, but at another level, they also resist them, by
developing their own sub-cultures and counter-cultures. Here it is suggested they may
challenge or even ridicule the organization, expressing cynicism and detachment at
managerial attempts to win commitment and enthusiasm.

According to Gabriel (1995, 2000a) the concept of control has featured prominently in
managerial literature and has been central to organizational theory since Weber's work
on bureaucracy (Mayer, 1956). However, he suggests control has not been a prominent
feature of discussions or arguments surrounding organizational culture, which have
focused on "concepts like means, values, symbols, artefacts," Sievers (1986), Willmott
(1993), have stated, control is rarely far beneath the surface.

Examples of this are given in Willmott (1990,1993), where the story is told of an
organization attempting to import Japanese management techniques into Western
countries. These techniques were aimed at ideologically dominating the workers.
Control, according to this view, was to be achieved through the use of language, for
example, by attaching labels such as "professional", "academic", or "ancillary" to
specific occupations or grades. Other examples were noted by Habermas (1977 p. 359),
with the use of symbols such as elaborate corporate headquarters and expensive logos,
and by Gagliardi (1990), with the use of rituals, such as corporate ceremonies.

This concept of the unmanaged terrain was examined by Gabriel (1995) in a study
which focused on an incident which was recounted to the researcher by four different
witnesses. The incident had been an important event in the working lives of the four
people. Their accounts "varied symbolically, politically and in the way the subject was
constituted within them" (p. 455).

The incident involved the explosion of a pressurised fire extinguisher where a brass
nozzle flew through a glass partition scattering glass everywhere, narrowly missing a
computer operator, causing substantial damage, but no injuries. The manager's account
of the incident emphasised the material damage, and did not enter into any emotional or
symbolic significance. This was at the level of the controlled organization and seen as a
break in organizational order.

The three remaining accounts, according to Gabriel (1995), were symbolic constructions. For example, the computer operator who had the narrow escape presented the incident not only as a sign of management's neglect of its employees, but as a personal attack. This came in on the level of fantasy and the level of the uncontrolled area or terrain. A third witness it is reported did not place blame, unlike the computer operator, but constructed the event as a test of character, with her being the one who did not get rattled as did others. The fourth witness placed blame on the service engineer and concluded in an unexpected manner by saying that next time they should make better aim by pointing the nozzle to management upstairs. According to Gabriel the last three different stories of the incident, demonstrate that stories may be a process whereby different symbolic fantasies are built on the incident, depending on the teller's perception. This supports the proposal that stories told in an organization can vary depending on the teller and whether they emerge from the controlled or uncontrolled terrain Fletcher (1996). This also bears out Martin's et al. (1985) three perspective approach; in this case the differentiated and ambiguous perspectives.

2.5. Conclusions on relevant theory and research and future directions for New Zealand research

Much discourse has been found on the role of stories in cultural formation and change, and examples of these have been discussed. However, there appears to be little literature which studies the relationship between employee resistance/commitment and organizational stories. It would seem important to gain a better knowledge of how stories impact on the resistance/commitment to change, particularly at the lower end of operational level of the organization. If we are to view the organization using Schein's (1996) cultural model of executives, engineers, and operators, it is possible that the content of stories may change depending on the level of the person telling it. Therefore it is important that each of these groups is represented in any study of stories in an organization. For example, one proposal is that members of the sub-cultures at the lower end of the organizational hierarchy may be telling stories that are different, given their own assumptions and values. These stories may be based on their own, "webs of significance" (Sinclair, 1994), and may be counter-productive to the speed with which change is taking place and indeed its success. If employee commitment to the employers and the organization wanes, it would be useful to gain a better knowledge of how stories exhibit commitment levels. Also, it is suggested that it is important to know

what influence stories have on changing culture, on resisting the cultural change or on maintaining the status quo.

This is particularly so for New Zealand, considering that all of the research has been done overseas, and there appears to be no research which considers any factors unique to New Zealand. There has been a significant amount of organizational restructuring in New Zealand in recent times, including the changes in the 'Rogernomics' era and deregulation of some industries, and in particular the resulting reform of Local Bodies (McKinlay, 1990). It seems likely that there will be future significant changes to the environments in which employees work. It is important to assess these changes, and it is suggested that the role of stories is valuable in understanding the process of change.

CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

As has been discussed in Chapter One Introduction, and Chapter Two the Literature Review, the chosen method of data collection was to collect stories, by way of conversations or interviews. The organization from which the data were collected has been described in Chapter One, where a brief description of the participants is provided.

At this point it would seem important to mention what Gabriel (2000b) calls the dangers of story-based research. "The most evident danger of story-based research is the selective use of organizational narratives to amplify or reinforce the researcher's preconceived ideas and assumptions" (p. 151).

The purpose of this research is to discover what the organizational member's sensemaking of the organizational changes is and focuses on the research questions which ask if employees' stories express resistance /commitment. Weick(1995) describes sense-making as when people make "retrospective sense of situations in which they find themselves" (p. 14).

In this case the selective use of narratives is valid because the objective of the research is to endeavour to find if participants' stories are expressing resistance or commitment. In order to answer the question the process needs to be selective.

This section covers firstly a brief overview of the qualitative versus quantitative research methodology debate. Following this, a rationale of the choice of a qualitative method approach is provided. Importantly, the ethical considerations of collecting data in this manner are covered in this section. Next, this section presents a brief description and justification of the chosen method, known as content analysis. Finally, this section describes various approaches to data and content analysis used in similar studies, in order to provide a rationale and context for the chosen method, which is Lee's (1999) natural meaning units (nmu).

3.2. Qualitative versus quantitative method debate

Merrian (1998) describes qualitative research as an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena. She states a key philosophical assumption of qualitative research is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. So it can be said that researchers using a qualitative approach are "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed" (p. 6). That is how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have. Qualitative research "implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman & Webb,1998, p. 7). The main concern is to understand the phenomenon, the experience or the world from the participant's perspective.

Qualitative researchers build abstractions, concepts and hypotheses, in the hope of developing theory, while quantitative researchers "hope to find data to prove theory". (Miles & Huberman, 1999), p. 3. Typically, qualitative research findings are in the form of themes, categories, typologies and concepts derived from data collected.

Table 3 shows a comparison of the characteristics of qualitative research with the seemingly more familiar or more commonly used quantitative research. The purpose is to show a comparison to highlight some basic differences between the two types of research.

Table 3:   Qualitative versus Quantitative: Characteristics of Qualitative and Quantitative Research

(Adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8)

Point of Comparison	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Focus of research	Quality (nature, essence)	Quantity (how much, how many)
Philosophical roots	Phenomenology, symbolic interaction	Positivism, logical empiricism
Associated phrases	Fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalistic, grounded, constructivist	Experimental, empirical, statistical
Goal of investigation	Understanding, description, discovery, meaning, hypothesis, generating	Prediction, control, description, confirmation, hypothesis testing
Design of characteristics	Flexible, evolving, emergent	Predetermined, structured
Sample	Small, non-random, purposeful, theoretical	Large, random, representative
Data collection	Researcher as primary instrument, interviews, observations, documents	Inanimate instruments (scales, tests, surveys, questionnaires, computers)
Mode of analysis	Inductive (by researcher)	Deductive (by statistical methods)
Findings	Comprehensive, holistic, expansive, richly descriptive	Precise, numerical

The quantitative versus qualitative debate is an interesting one, with strong views for each camp. For example, (Miles and Huberman, 1994 p. 40) quote the late Fred Kerlinger, a noted quantitative researcher 'par excellence' as stating, "There's no such thing as qualitative data. Everything is either 0 or 1". On the other hand, Campbell (1974) argues that all research ultimately has a qualitative grounding.

However, there are those researchers who argue that numbers and words are needed if we are to understand the world. To this end as Salomon (1991) -(cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 4) proposes, it should not be a qualitative, quantitative battle at all, rather, researchers should take an "analytic" approach to understanding controlled variables or a "systematic" approach to understanding the interaction of variables in a complex environment. The question to ask, therefore, is not which of the two types of data and associated methodologies is superior, but rather for what purpose, from where, and what sort of data do we want?

Finally, in providing a rationale for the choice of a qualitative method for this project, one can turn to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 44). They argue that when words are organized into incidents or stories, they provide a much more concrete and meaningful message and in turn become more convincing to the reader, whoever they may be; fellow researcher, policy maker, strategic planner, practioner or consultant etc. Hence the choice of the qualitative research for this project.

Table 4 displays the five types of qualitative research. In the case of this study what Merrian (1998) describes as the "basic or generic" type is followed.

Table 4: Types of Qualitative Research in Education

(Adapted from Merrian, (1998), p. 12)

Type	Characteristics
Basic or Generic	• Includes description, interpretation, and understanding
	• Identifies recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories
	• May delineate a process
Ethnography	• Focuses on society and culture
	• Uncovers and describes beliefs, values and attitudes that structure behaviour of a group
Phenomenology	• Is concerned with essence or basic structure of a phenomenon
	• Uses data that are the participant's and the investigator's firsthand experience of the phenomenon
Grounded Theory	• Is designed to inductively build a substantive theory regarding some aspect of practice
	• Is "grounded" in the real world
Case Study	• Is intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system
	• Can be combined with any of the above types

3.3. Method of data collection and process

The chosen method of data collection was stories, as described and discussed in Chapters One and Two. The collection of stories was by way of interviews. There were 21 participants, and each interview took approximately 1 hour. Merriam (1998) says that interviews can range in style from completely structured to semi-structured to completely unstructured.

Table 5:   Interview Structure Continuum (adapted from Merrian p. 72)

Highly Structured/ Standardised	Semi-structured	Unstructured/Informal
• Wording of questions predetermined	• Mix of more and less-structured questions	• Open-ended questions
• Order of questions predetermined		• Flexible, exploratory
• Oral form of a survey		• More like a conversation

Table 5 shows a continuum based on interview structure. At one end are highly structured questionnaire type interviews, while at the other end are unstructured, conversation-type interviews. The collection of stories in this study is at the unstructured end of the continuum. Lee (1999) calls this approach "Generic Conversational Interviews". As Lee describes, the interviewer pursues predetermined themes, and is free to pursue and probe for additional meaning. To assist with the gathering of stories from the unstructured interviews, a list of questions ranging from general to specific or leading, were prepared (see Appendix 4) for use where necessary. Most comments were followed by probes, which as Merrian (1998) states, can come in the form of asking for more details or clarification. Glesne and Peskwin (1992) point out that probes may range from silence to sounds, from various non-verbal body language signals to single words to complete sentences. The technique of having a list of general questions prepared and as well as the use of probing questions means the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection. This is the ideal method for the collection of stories. However, it can have its limitations, at times the interviewer can press too hard. In the case of this research, when listening to tapes it became clear there were opportunities where, in hindsight, a follow up on certain data or information being

discussed could have been maximised by gentle probing to gain more information, or an elaboration of the stories. Lee (1999) states that a major characteristic of the conversational interview is its openness.

As the conversational interview progressed, occasional notes were made of impressions being gained regarding such aspects as non-verbal cues, body language context, and environmental context.

All conversational interviews (stories collected) were recorded on tape with the informed consent of participants, (see the ethical concerns section 3.5 below, and Appendices 1,2 and 3). All recorded conversations were transcribed verbatim, providing a database for analysis. Lee (1999) points out that it is important to consider the reliability and validity of the transcripts. To ensure reliability and validity, each transcript was read in conjunction with listening to the corresponding tape three or four times. The main purpose of this was to analyse and identify themes. Another reason was to identify and relate the non-verbal paralanguage aspects of the words, such as tone, pause and emphasis.

There is a post modernist view, according to Lee (1999), that transcription decontextualises and detemporalises the text's meaning, with the result being that the meaning is altered, and that it is unlikely to be reflective of the interview. Kvale (1989) also says, "beware of transcripts" (p. 97). Transcripts, he argues, are transformations of one mode, conversation or oral discourse. He warns there are dangers of superficial coding, decontextualisation, missing what came before and after in the informant's account, and what the bigger conversation was about. But it is believed this concern was overcome by the concurrent reading and listening to the transcript as outlined above, and the note-taking techniques, which recorded non-verbal aspects of the interviews.

3.4. Selection of participants

Following the granting of permission from the Chief Executive to conduct interviews in the organization, a Senior Manager provided a list of possible participants. Each of the potential participants were provided with a letter (see Appendix 1) to determine their interest in participating in an interview. Following receipt of the letter, participants were contacted by telephone by a Human Resource Department officer to research their

interest. Those who agreed to participate were slotted into a timetable. At the beginning of the interviews all participants were provided with an information form (see Appendix 2) and requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3).

3.5. Ethical concerns/issues

The following ethical aspects were covered. Participants were asked to agree to their stories being taped, and were given the assurance that access would be confined to the research team. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage. They were all assured that the material would be handled in such a way that no one could be identified. All data gathering was carried out on the basis of confidentiality of names and identifying details. Tapes of the interviews when not in use for research purposes were stored in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Participants were assured the writing of the analysis would be carried out in such a way that no individuals or organizations would be able to be identified.

Approval to carry out this research project was granted by the Massey University, Wellington, Human Ethics Committee 01/111.

3.6. Data analysis methods

The analysis of qualitative research may be carried out in many ways, some with long traditions behind them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Merrian (1998) describes how, historically, data analysis strategies in qualitative research have been something like a "mysterious metamorphosis where the investigator retreated with the data and applied analytic powers and emerged butterfly-like with findings" (p. 156). However, more recently a number of publications have been devoted to describing and explaining the process of qualitative data analysis.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe data analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Table 8 displays and outlines this process. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying and abstracting, as part of the analysis process. The data are then displayed in an ordered, compressed form, using such things as phrases, and flow diagrams, which allow conclusion drawing and action.

Figure 4 shows the stages or steps involved in data analysis. There are several recognised methods for data analysis.
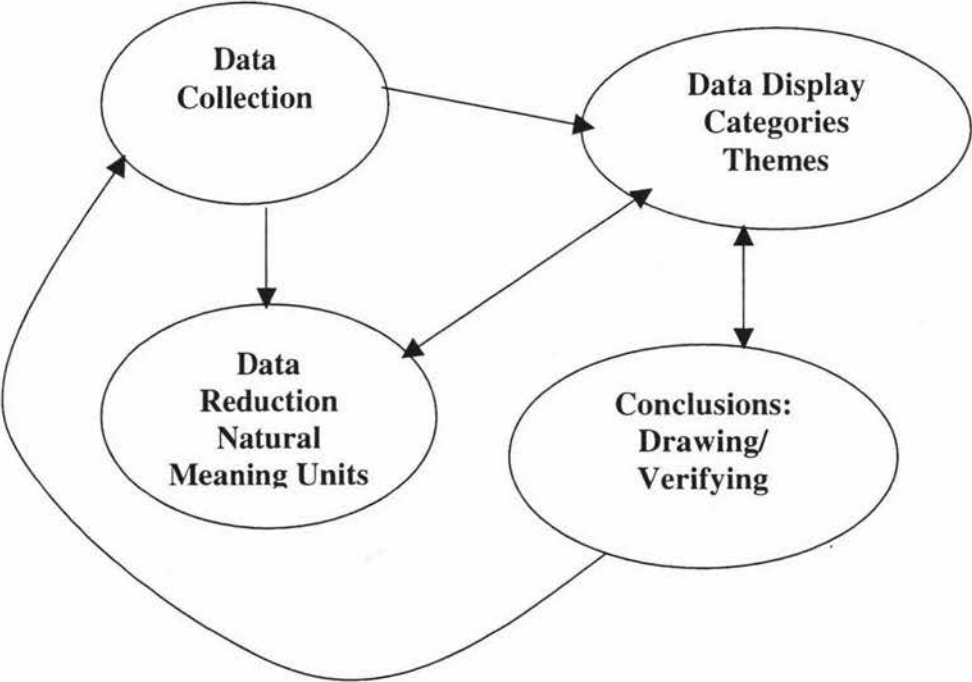
Figure 4:   Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model
(Adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 12)

In this section some methods for qualitative data analysis are described and discussed. The intention is to explore various methods to decide which one would be the most appropriate and productive in this research.

3.7. Grounded Theory

According to Larsson and Lowerdahl (1996), and Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory has been the dominant qualitative method used in studies published in the organizational sciences. This seems to be true as shown in management journals (Lee, 1999, p. 44).

As is true in other forms of qualitative research when using the grounded theory approach, the investigator as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis assumes an inductive stance and attempts to derive meaning from the data. The end result of this type of qualitative research is a theory that emerges from, or is "grounded" in, the data – hence grounded theory. As Strauss and Corbin (1994) note "The major

difference between the methodology and other approaches to qualitative research is its emphasis upon theory development", (p. 274); and again in Lee (1999, p. 17) "The type of theory developed is usually 'substantive' rather than formal or 'grand' theory."

Merriam (1998) describes a substantive theory as consisting of categories, properties and hypotheses (p. 18) The categories and properties that define them are conceptual elements of the theory. The relationships then drawn among the categories and properties become the hypotheses. These hypotheses are tentative and are derived from the study. Unlike quantitative research, they are not set out at the beginning of the study.

3.8. Content analysis

While grounded theory is concerned with the discovery of data-induced hypotheses, content analysis uses techniques that reduce texts to a "unit by variable matrix", and analyses that (Ryan and Bernard, 2000).

The researcher produces a matrix by applying a set of codes to the qualitative data (in this case transcripts). Unlike grounded theory, content analysis is based on the assumption that the codes of interest have already been discovered and described.

A commonly used definition of content analysis is that of Berelson (1952): "Content analysis is a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18).

Initially a hypothesis is formulated, then follows the sample selection, and then categories are defined.

Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) state that content analysis has become popular in recent times as a technique for "objective, systematic and usually quantitative description of communication content".

However, content analysis as a methodology should not be confined to quantitative research. It can also be applied in a qualitative study. In this study a qualitative content analysis approach is adopted with the inclusion of Lee's (1999) meaning condensation approach, which involves identifying and articulating significant themes-"natural meaning units"-from the text. Lees' approach is described in more detail below.

It should be noted at this point, as Kaid and Wadsworth (1989) state that there can be disadvantages associated with content analysis. These include the fact that content analysis is confined to the examining of recorded material and the context is no longer there to assist. Another disadvantage associated with the use of recorded material in content analysis, is that it can also provide some difficulties in the "drawing of inferences about the intentions of sources or of isolating effects" (p. 213).

But, as Kaid and Wadsworth (1998) point out, there are advantages, including the fact that content analysis can be carried out in a reasonable time and does not require a large financial input. On balance, a content analysis approach seemed appropriate for this study.

Lee (1999) describes four modes of analysing the interview data: meaning condensation; meaning categorisation; narrative structuring; and hermeneutic meaning interpretation. They are described briefly here.

During meaning condensation, the researcher strives to abridge or extract the most important themes from the interview's text. This mode involves data reduction, whilst at the same time articulating the significant themes. It also involves carefully reading the transcripts then identifying "natural meaning units", which are portions of the text that relate to an identifiable theme (or issue). These natural meaning units can be phrases, sentence fragments or longer units. The researcher pulls these out and assembles them into a continuous flow of text. The natural meaning units are then considered in terms of their relevance to an identifiable topic or theme, and the natural meaning units are then identified as themes.

The next step, as Yin (1994) describes it, is "interrogating the meaning units in terms of the specific purpose of the study" (p. 194). In other words, the natural meaning units are examined to see if they tie in with the research questions, and are judged on how well they capture and convey a major idea from the data.

Another approach to data analysis outlined by Lee (1999) is meaning categorisation, whereby statements from the interview data are distributed into quantifiable categories. These can be binary, for example, "it occurs"/"it does not occur", or they can be ordinal, such as rating 1-5. The subjects of these categories can be attitudes, characteristics, managerial phenomenon, etc.

The next approach is narrative structuring. While meaning condensation and meaning categorisation strive to simplify data, narrative structuring seeks to identify and reconstruct the interview text into longer stories. From responses to open-ended questions, continuing narrative can sometimes be detected. By extracting and rearranging relevant text, a more "continuous, coherent, integrative and engaging single story can be recovered" (Lee, 1999, p. 92). Ultimately, the desired outcome would be one or more "compelling narrations" as stand-alone stories.

In the three approaches to analysis briefly outlined above, the researcher's interpretation is drawn almost exclusively from the interview text itself. By contrast another approach described by Lee (1999), known as hermeneutic meaning interpretation, requires the researcher to impose meaning. For example, interview texts might be interpreted from known perspectives, such as "psychoanalysis, literary criticism, feminism, or the philosophy of Karl Marx", (p. 93).

Some of these hermeneutic meaning interpretation approaches have been described in Chapter Two, the Literature Review. Examples would be Martin and Meyerson's (1988) three perspective framework. In their study of culture and stories in an organization, they examined and defined a three perspective framework involving integration, differentiation, and ambiguity. Boyce (1996) believes the use of the three perspective framework is more likely to make a textured many-sided interpretation of stories and organizational culture, than if a researcher uses just one perspective.

Lee (1999) states that the logical and mechanical steps involved in data analysis can be more or less anticipated. However, often based on personal preference or trial and error, the researcher may take an ad hoc approach. This could involve application of several techniques.

In the case of this study, the meaning condensation approach was used most frequently. However, Lee (1999) advises the application of multiple techniques. He states that no method is perfect, and that it is wise to triangulate with multiple methods.

Finally, no matter which methods are used, the most important task for a researcher is to interpret and place meaning on the themes extracted. Figure 5 summarises the data analysis process that was carried out.

During		Post
Data Collection Period		
Data Reduction		=Analysis
Data Displays		
Conclusion / Drawing Verification		
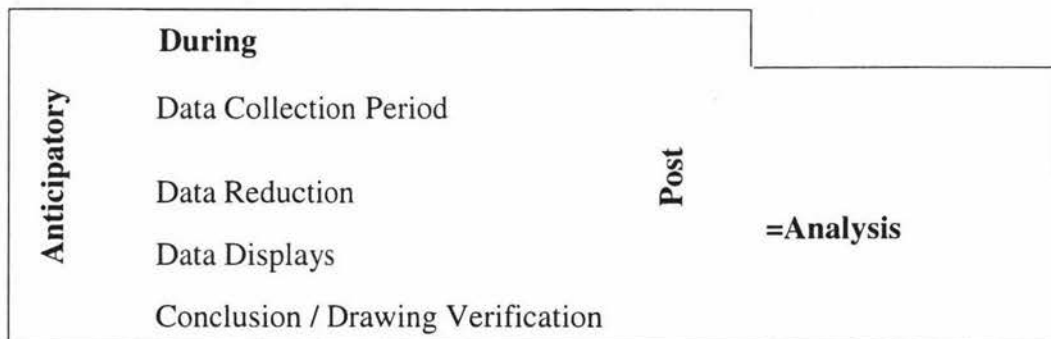
Figure 5: Components of Data Analysis: Flow Model illustrating the overlapping processes of data collection, reduction and the drawing of conclusions. (Adapted from Miles and Huberman 1994 p. 10)

3.9. Limitations

The interviews were conducted over two groups of 2 days, 1week apart. This allowed little time for reflection and reconsideration of questions around emerging themes. However on the other hand, a longer period of time between interviews could have the effect of important details being forgotten.

Participants were identified by management rather than by a general request for volunteers. As a result of this the following could be concerns:

a) participants were targeted by management for particular reasons and hence results could be biased and not representative;

b) participants chosen may have felt they were unable to refuse;

c) participants may have felt inhibited and not talked freely at the interview.

In fact, what did happen was that of the twenty-one participants interviewed, the larger percentage was from management. Nevertheless, this group provided valuable stories and, interestingly, there was a high degree of congruence in the stories from employees at different levels of the organization.

Miles and Huberman (1999) recommend early data analysis, i.e. to start analysis in the beginning stages of data collection. The reason for this is that it alerts the researcher to ideas, issues, themes or perhaps gaps needing filling etc, which may be useful to pursue as data continues to be collected. In this instance, data were almost fully collected

before formal analysis was commenced. This was necessary because of the way the interview times were made available by the organization, and also because of the need to clump several interview times together because of the distance the researcher had to travel to conduct the interviews. This could have had the effect of the researcher missing some themes or significant issues, which if alerted to could be explored at subsequent interviews. But this could also be true if formal analysis was immediate. Informal, ongoing analysis was also carried out. Overall the data collected were consistent and pertinent.

CHAPTER FOUR:
FINDINGS WITH SOME DISCUSSION

Stage-one interviews

4.1. Introduction

A total of 21 stories was collected from employees across The City organization. Figure 5 on the following page shows The City management structure and identifies the levels from which the interviewees were drawn.

The stories told by the employees were analysed to see if they provided answers to the original research questions which, paraphrased, ask if stories told by employees during times of organizational change show signs of resistance and/or commitment.

The stories were analysed for themes. Analysis of the stories told by employees about their perceptions of changes provided common themes relating to the events. The position held and length of time in the organization were taken into account. A wealth of data emerged, and the most difficult decision was how much of the data should be dealt with for this project. Space does not permit full recounting of the stories. Instead Section 4.2 of this chapter identifies and describes the main themes arising from the stories, and supporting anecdotes, phrases, metaphors and vignettes are given.

"The City"

Management Structure

The Chief Executive and six managers form The City's Management Team. The following diagram illustrates the City's management structure. (Note the names of units are fictitious).
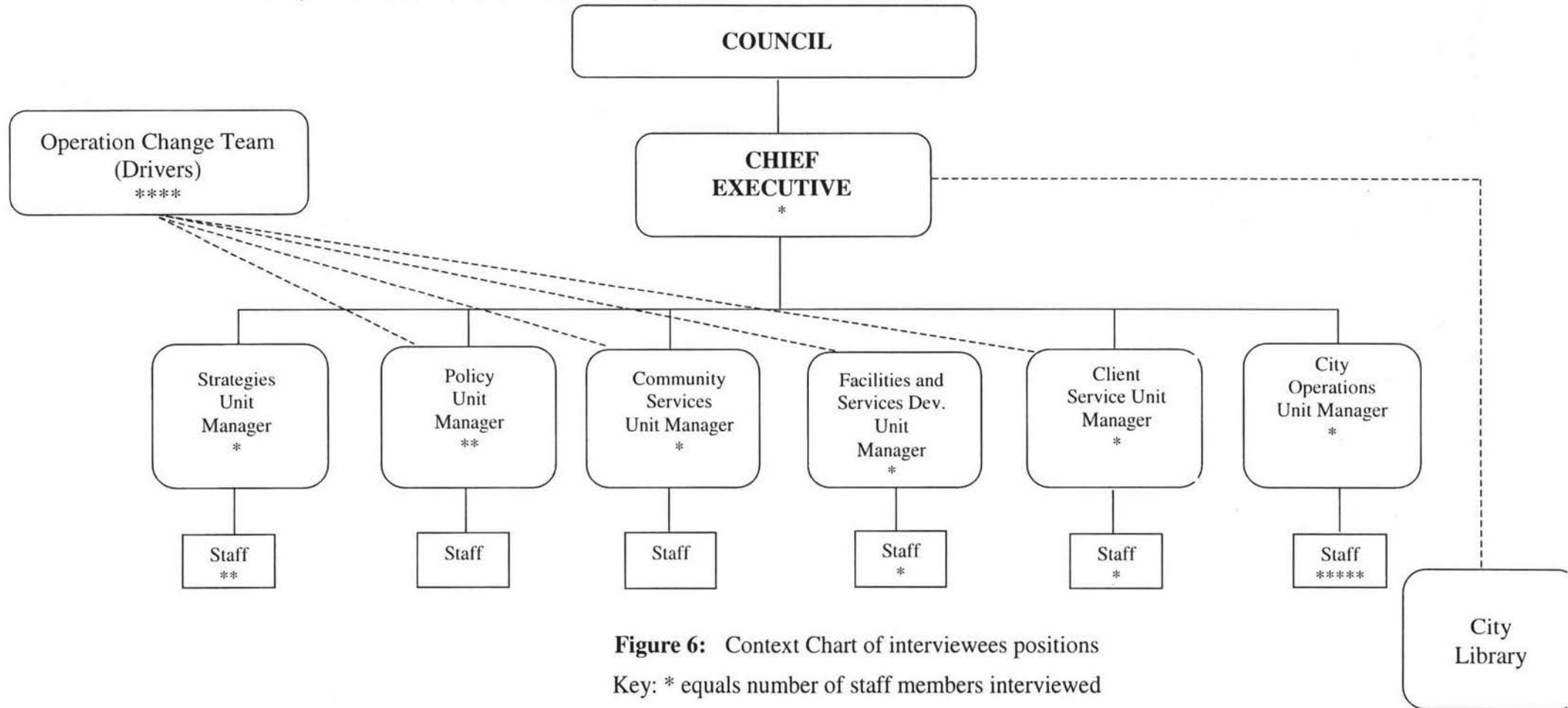
Figure 6:   Context Chart of interviewees positions

Key: * equals number of staff members interviewed

Metaphors were used by interviewees on occasions and some of these are quoted as it is suggested they signify the participants' sensemaking of the meaning of the organization and its happenings to them. Gabriel and Fineman (2000b) suggest that when people employ the use of metaphors, they are mapping one area of life on to another, as a way of expressing feelings and images of the experience.

Section 4.3 of this chapter is devoted to some examples of stories relevant to some of the main themes identified in Section 4.2, (see below).

The following general categories/themes of what were considered to be significant were identified. They are as follows:

- Operation Change – what is it?

- Operation Change team – perspectives / views;

- Staff perceptions / views of Operation Change;

- Management team perceptions / views of Operation Change;

- Staff perceptions /views of management team in relation to Operation Change;

- Signs of organizational resistance to Operation Change;

- Staff perceptions / views of consultants;

- Staff perceptions /views of councillors.

Background

As stated earlier, the CE reported The City had undergone successive waves of change during the 1990s. Some were driven by government policy, and some by the organization's own effort and desire to improve operations. The most recent changes were the result of political initiatives aimed at trying to achieve particular outcomes the elected Council had been interested in, and to help achieve their goals.

The latest change Operation Change, which is the focus of this study, was established as a project in June 1999, with the following aims as expressed by the Chief Executive, Tom and the later acting Chief Executive, Bill

a). the express purpose of finding better, smarter and more effective ways of delivering the services

b). net annual saving of $2 million in operation costs was targeted. It was anticipated this would be achieved over a three year period. (N.B. the implications of the two aspects or goals of Operation Change are reported later).

To use a metaphor provided by an interviewee:

"Operation Change was conceived by council."

The City employed some consultants to develop a 3 year strategy to assist the organization meet the objectives and goals of Operation Change.

Once this strategy was developed and accepted by the Council, another consultant was brought in to assist with the implementation. Again, a metaphor provided by staff:

"The consultants gave birth to Operation Change."

4.2. Main Themes

4.2.1. Operation Change – What is it?

Interviewees/staff perception of and feelings toward it.

The following section highlights the themes that emerged from the interviewees' stories showing staff perception of and feelings toward Operation Change.

The interviews for this research were conducted 18 months after the implementation of the Operation Change. Interviewees were drawn from managers and operators, see Figure 6, p. 59. It should be noted the themes and ideas that emerged from the majority of the interviewees about what Operation Change was all about were not dissimilar to any great extent. For the purpose of this section, interviewees were categorised according to position and their length of employment within the organization. This aspect and the responses will be dealt with later in this section. Longer term employees were categorised as being in the organization for more than 1 year, and shorter term employees less than 1 year. With all the interviews (apart from the three new employees), a feeling of déjà vu came through. There were comments along the lines of:

"We've done this before so often"

"Here we go again"

"Number of restructurings started and never finished"

" People hoped it would go away – like all the others"

"(In the past) change for change sake"

"Changes that are absolutely stupid and we've had to back track"

"Change for change sake"

"Useless"

"Wheel being reinvented"

"Start and never finish"

"Let's get on with it – get it done – then we can get on with life,doing our job"

"We've already tried this"

So feelings of – "we've done this before", and "here we go again", came through. One supposedly 'neutral subject,' said wryly, "just grin and bear it and it (hopefully) will go away".

Another factor of notable interest was the interviewees' perception, or understanding of just what Operation Change was or what it represented.

Some appeared to believe it was about improving processes; whilst others believed it was only about saving money. This latter group saw it as:

"Idea of the project changed"

"Agree with Operation Change – but difference is how we best might do it"

"I think staff are confused between what is Operation Change and what is just squeezing more juice out of the lemon"

"Operation Change is only interested in saving"

"Soon became plainly obvious that it was not about improving processes but about saving money"

"Operation Change was supposed to be improving processes but really it's just an excuse to get rid of people, it's about removing staff"

"Was about saving money"

What people are saying here is "that it's about saving money", but the parallel concept is that by improving processes, money would be saved. Overall there did not seem to be consistent agreement as to what Operation Change really was.

The next section outlining the views of the Operation Change team members, mentions that they did believe Operation Change was about process improvement, in the initial stages at least. But they too report a gradual realisation that the main objectives were to save money and consequently "get rid of people".

It seemed to be that the lower down in the organization the interviewees were, the less they knew of the specifics of Operation Change. There was a strong message of lack of awareness. But there also appeared to be stronger feelings towards the current events and the idea of changes:

"Depressed"

"Cynical"

"Managers lie to us"

"A need to keep them (managers) honest"

"A lot comes out of "bullshit" castle where the managers are"

In addition to the feelings of "here we go again" and the unclearness of just what Operation Change was all about, there was another message coming through from the people at the lower levels of the organization. This message was that the people themselves felt isolated from the decision-making. It seemed to them that various projects and tasks related to Operation Change were carried out by other people:

"Who didn't know anything about it"

"Didn't ask the right questions"

"Not enough staff involvement"

"No one listens to me"

"Communication poor – only told of change in passing"

"No involvement in decisions"

"No ownership – don't care"

"Communication poor – downfall"

"Who said?"

"If you'd come and asked me – I would have told you"

"It won't work"

"Those text book consultants"

"Not consulted"

"Didn't ask the right questions"

The feeling appeared to be, "if you'd asked me – (the one who has the knowledge) in the first place, I could have told you it wouldn't work".

This leads us now to general feelings towards the Operation Change Project. Coupled with the sense of "here we go again", and "if they'd asked me in the first place", it would appear a feeling of, "this is a waste of time", came through. People never believed in it, "lot of bad feeling about Operation Change", "Jaundiced view".

In addition to feelings of "here we go again' and "Operation Change is a waste of time", some people, particularly at the lower level, expressed deeper personal concerns such as:

"People feared for their jobs"

"Feelings of low morale"

"Like an axe hanging over us"

"Despondent"

"Don't feel valued"

"Depressed"

"If you don't care about me, I don't care about work"

Whilst strongly negative stories related to Operation Change came through there were some positive ones. Following are some extracts/comments taken from these stories:

"Lot of positive stuff"

"Operation Change is an excellent concept"

"I support the idea"

"Could be some useful stuff"

"I support the concept"

An interesting point to note is that the majority of the positive comments came from staff who had been in the organization less than a year. Hence, these people did not have the experience of having to go through previous changes and the pain and frustration associated with implementing them.

In fact it seemed at times that these people saw themselves as "counsellors" and "saviours". They had taken on the role of turning peoples' negative feelings around:

"Not focussing on improvement"

"First impression people not interested – picking up really well now"

"Morale better, now improving in our unit"
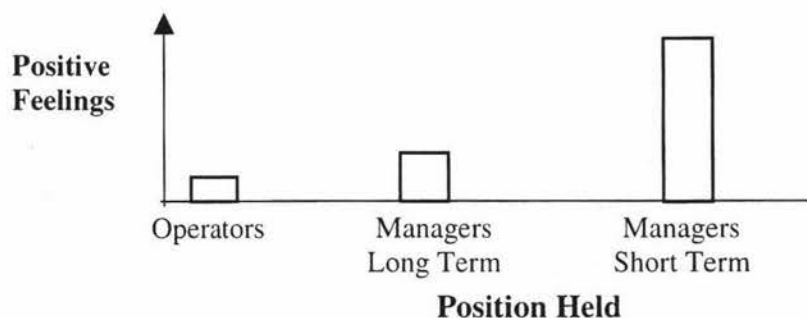
Figure 7:   Staff feelings and reactions towards Operation Change.

Figure 7 shows that the operator/workers were the most negative about the Operation Change project, whilst longer term managers were slightly more positive. Short term managers, those who joined the organization after the project had started, were the most positive.

4.2.2. Operation Change team – perceptions / views

This section sets out the Operation Change team's views and perceptions of everything, i.e. the task required of them, the management team's actions, other staff's actions and their own feelings.

The consultants recommended that a special group be set up for the purpose of working in the organization and to come up with projects that would meet the supposed objectives of Operation Change, i.e. to refine the operations within the various units to make them operate more effectively and efficiently. In the initial stages, the focus on saving money was not mentioned. It seemed to be suggested that changes to be made were based on the need for greater efficiency and not saving money. Greater efficiency by refining processes would in turn provide monetary savings, it was stated. This special group, the team that shall also be called the "drivers", initially consisted of 10 members who were drawn from across the organization. The members of this group were hand picked and shoulder tapped by senior management. Selection seemed to be based on ability and a reputation for "getting the job done". The drivers, it was reported, didn't really have a choice, but the general impression was they thought this would be a good thing.

The drivers were brought together in the one location for training in the first few months. One of the members said," it took 2 months to understand what the heck we were doing". They were told by the consultants and managers, "we weren't there to remove jobs – we were there to improve processes". The goal was to investigate what could be improved and how this could be done. Through their initial training they were supposedly provided with the tools and techniques as coaches to get out into the organization and develop projects for process improvement. However, in the words of one of the members, "it didn't work though".

When the Operation Change team drivers got under way, they were moved to another location. Their offices were over the road from the main council building in an almost empty building. This building was used for council meetings and elected councillors'

offices. No other staff used this building. As time went on this separate location became a symbol of "them and us," and "those over there".

At the start, the team members identified aspects of work with units that they believed could be improved upon and took their reports to management. It was reported that it soon became clear that not all management supported the idea of Operation Change and nor did a large number of staff. Certain managers were perceived to be blocking projects by agreeing in principle but not acting on the recommendations; they were described by some interviewees as— "dragging their feet"-"stone walling".

It also started to become clear the general staff were not supporting the projects either. There seemed to be an overall message from staff that "this won't work". Team members felt that they were becoming more and more isolated and alienated from the rest of the organization as a result of staff and management reaction to change messages from the "drivers".

At this stage the team members started to become disheartened. Comments made were e.g. "Operation Change team lost connection with the organization" – "we felt we were swimming uphill against the organization."

As part of their brief, members of the Operation Change team were required to report back to their own units on a regular basis. As time went on this became more and more difficult, and their former colleagues berated them both individually and in front of others.

"At unit meetings when I started to tell staff about Operation Change they would go red – angry – tell me what they thought – they were wild".

"Went to meetings, always had to spend the first ten minutes trying to convince staff Operation Change is okay".

One member reported of hearing how a group of staff members obtained a photo of one of the members and threw darts at it.

In addition to staff alienation, the team felt they were not getting the right support from management. They, the management team, were reported to have their own agendas. Some of the comments were:

"Projects presented to the management team were blocked or simply sat on"

"Management team not honest"

"No one thanked me"

"The organization wouldn't give us resources"

"The management team didn't support us"

"The management team played games and we wore the flak"

It was stated that in the team the general feeling was that the management team didn't support them or Operation Change. This was evidenced by the fact that the management team were told of issues to be resolved but avoided following up. This meant some matters were never resolved and suggested changes or improvements were often not implemented:

"The management team dragged their feet to protect their own patches"

As time went on it seemed the team members were pressured more to provide reports on projects, and they felt they had so little time to meet the deadlines:

"We were putting in stuff that was rubbish"

"They were good-looking reports with no substance"

All members of the team interviewed spoke of the increasing feelings of rejection and isolation from other staff members. As a result it was reported that team members became very close:

"We became best friends in defence"

"We often talked about it (in the team). These guys are giving us an absolute hammering and being rude to us"

"How dare they speak to us like that"

The group usually had morning and afternoon tea together away from the rest of the staff. They also organized their own social functions together at each other's homes:

"We'd play the guitar and have a few drinks"

"My team in Operation Change supported me and I supported them"

After 12 months the team members returned to their units. The "full time nature" of the team participation ended and some of the original members were required to carry out Operation Change related project tasks as well as their normal jobs. It should be noted that when the team members were taken out of their units, they were not replaced. This meant that those staff still in the unit had to pick up more work which added to the negativity about the project.

Some of the former team members reported continual isolation and feelings of hostility from their workmates:

"We literally lost friends over it"

"All members hate it"

"There's no reward, we work 40 to 50 hours a week"

"Everyone just didn't talk about it"

It was clear that over the period of the year the drivers experienced a wide range of emotions and feelings towards change. As time progressed they reported feeling more negative.

Figure 8 below, records some of the feelings stated by the change team (drivers). The actual terminology that was stated is quoted.

Initially

commitment

    initial feeling positive

        enlightening

           world simple easy

              frustration

                disillusionment

                  confusion

                    waste of time

                      unfairness

                        boredom

                          not achievable

                          alienated

                            hostility

                            angry

                              futility

                                cynical

                                defeat

                                  unhappiness

                                  rejected

                                    isolated

                                    depressed

Finally
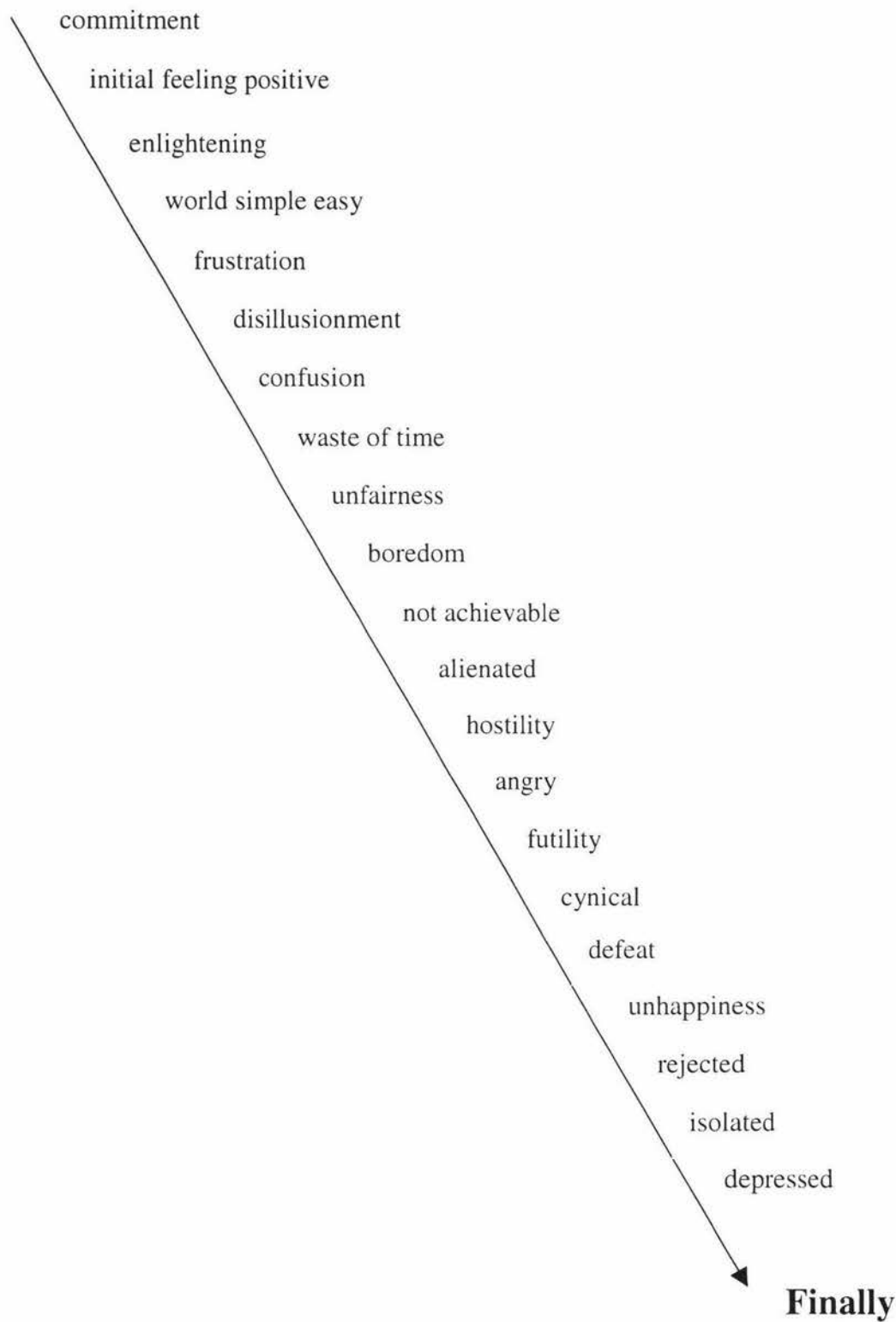
Figure 8:   Continuum of feelings toward Operation Change by team members

Having already dealt with the staff view or perception of Operation Change, and the Operation Change team members' view of the change process, the views of staff toward the Operation Change team are considered next.

The team members expressed feelings of isolation and told of the hostility of some staff towards them. These reasons for the actions and reactions of staff toward the team members are explained by some of the comments made:

"People we know who were not experts were dabbling in fields – no experience what so ever"

"Credibility gap and confusion"

"People not listening to those with the knowledge"

"Didn't consult"

"Consultation done with people who didn't know"

"Chosen members of team didn't have credibility"

On the other hand some people who were consulted showed signs of resistance or negativity:

"People were reluctant to give information"

"Didn't ask the right questions"

"Not listening"

"They ignored advice"

Again, the feeling of "them and us" came through. The Operation Change team was located in another building over the road. Therefore it was physically separated, which appeared to foster an attitude of "we're not included-we are not valued":

"Project out on a limb over the road"

"What's going on over the road?"

"Over the road, isolated"

"Who can be bothered going over the road?"

These comments show a general feeling of being kept out of the decision-making processes both by not being consulted and by the physical location of the Operation team, which produced a sense of isolation.

Interestingly, when people were consulted it was stated that some were reluctant to give information or that when they did, their advice was ignored.

4.2.3. Management team perceptions/views of Operation Change

The stories/perceptions of the Operation Change team and the staff provide insight into feelings toward and understanding of Operation Change. This section deals with the Operation Change from a management point of view:

"Did create savings but not without heartache and grief"

Some common threads were apparent, and these will be dealt with briefly. Whilst a few of the managers were involved in the Operation Change team, the rest who were not, felt locked out and believed they should have been consulted about issues, particularly the projects that were developed for implementation in their units:

"Trouble was, managers were shut out"

"No top down commitment, so it won't work"

"They just don't want to know"

"Some managers felt alienated"

"Them and us (managers – consultants)"

Managers also acknowledged the fact that the process of Operation Change had affected the general staff in a negative way. Some comments were:

"Staff thought the consultants were brought in to chop jobs"

"Lot of staff haven't been happy"

"Staff see it as taking on more work"

"Frustration of people"

"Staff confidence went to zero"

"Bad feelings from staff that they weren't involved in the process until much later"

Mentioned earlier was a perception of a lack of consultation and that the wrong people were making the decisions. Managers also expressed these views. There was a strong feeling that the initial consultants "made a poor diagnosis of the organization", which resulted in a "fundamental flaw at the beginning of Operation Change". Following this, pilot projects were developed:

"On bad assumptions"

"On bad advice"

"Unsuccessful – fraught with conflict"

As a result, management were reported, "not to be behind the changes from the word go" and "projects failed," and "pilots didn't achieve".

Another point made by managers that may be of significance was that "there was no sense of ownership". A general impression that came through from the managers was that the process had been difficult – "fraught with conflict" not only for the management but for the whole of The City:

"The whole operation has been a disaster in terms of the original objectives"

"Alienated the organization"

In a more positive vein, although the project was described as a "painful lesson", there were things to be learnt from it.

"We were able to reduce some costs – so successful"

"Managers learnt from the experience that they should include those who know"

"Did create savings but not without heartache and grief"

"There seems to have been a change in culture and attitude"

"Heightened awareness of the need to do better"

As stated, the initial "diagnosis" by the consultant of the organization was reported to be poor or wrong. This caused different reactions in different parts of the organization.

4.2.4. Staff perceptions/views of management in relation to Operation Change

This section deals mostly with operators' views of management in relation to Operation Change. Operators in this context refer to the non-management staff. Some perceptions of management have been dealt with in previous sections. Staff in that context included both management and operators. For example, in Section 4.2.1 which dealt with all staff, with both managers' and operators' views and perceptions of Operation Change, some comments were made about staff views of management. Also, perceptions of managers by the Operation Change team were dealt with in Section 4.2.3. However, it seems useful to provide a separate section to outline the staff views of management in relation to Operation Change.

There were some significant messages or comments about the staffs' views of management and how they acted or reacted in some cases. Stories and comments overall left an impression that staff believed management was not supportive of Operation Change or prepared to help staff, but were more likely to be protecting themselves. A point to note here is that whilst the majority of comments are from operators in this section, a small number of the comments/stories provided in this section came from managers themselves, and were therefore, managers' views of the management team.

Overall there was a feeling by staff that they couldn't rely on management to help them:

"No point in saying anything, they (managers) didn't want to know"

"They wouldn't listen, just shrugged their shoulders"

"They (managers) don't want to know about it – it's their way"

Staff felt they weren't getting the full story. The perception appeared to be:

"Management team supposedly didn't want some things revealed – they became nervous"

A prevailing theme was:

"Why won't management team be honest with us?"

"Management secretive"

"The union's job is try to keep (management) honest"

"They lie to us"

Some interviewees claimed that management action (or in some cases lack of action) pointed to the fact that they "dragged their feet", "went to ground and effectively disappeared", because they wanted to protect their patch:

"Management team wanted to keep jobs, so they dragged their feet"

"Management team enjoyed their position they were in, so they dragged their feet – stone walled"

They (managers) were reported as saying, "I absolutely support it as the greatest thing ever – then drag their feet– lots of occasions like this". The power of managers and their role both generally and in relation to Operation Change was summed up by one interviewee with the words;

"Don't underestimate the power of the middle management section"

Finally "still have ten managers but less staff", quoted by an operator.

"Management was not behind the changes from the word go" (from a manager).

4.2.5. Signs of organizational resistance/commitment to Operation Change

This section provides some findings as they relate to the original questions which, summarised, asked what stories told by employees during organizational change reveal and whether they exhibit resistance and/or commitment to the change. Some of the comments recorded in the previous sections could also answer this question.

Answers to these questions can be provided with specific stories told by interviewees. As the content analysis of the stories progressed and categories and themes were identified, it became clear that in order to address the resistance question, attention should also be paid to the employees' commitment to Operation Change. Indications of peoples' commitment or degrees of commitment can be considered an important indication of resistance and therefore should be considered simultaneously.

It is argued that commitment (or lack of) can be manifested in many different ways and can be demonstrated on a continuum:

- Total commitment demonstrates a lack of resistance-

- Lack of commitment demonstrates resistance-

Whilst there were some reports of resistance which will be dealt with shortly, there was evidence of degrees of commitment to Operation Change. This was manifested in what people said and also their reported actions. The following comments did not indicate resistance as such, but it is argued that there are degrees of commitment that could be associated with degrees of resistance:

"I haven't been all that interested really (about Operation Change)"

"Nothing will surprise me anymore"

"Initial feeling was positive after a while started to see it was not quite as we thought"

"Grin and bear it and it will go away"

"I'll just accept whatever as long as I've still got my job"

One new manager had a different view:

"Excellent concept, support it fully"

Furthermore a longer term manager reported:

"I feel differently towards Operation Change now – think we've got over a bit of a hump – if you'd asked me six months ago, I'd have said no"

The first example of resistance that was described by a member of the Operation Change team was about a manager. It tells the story of a manager who was required to sign off a particular project that was to be part of Operation Change. He kept on delaying the signature. After about 12 months, he signed it 3 weeks before he was due to leave and take up work in another organization. This same manager was reported to have outwardly given verbal support to Operation Change but covertly resisted it. Staff reported other examples of managerial resistance in that they were secretive when asked for assistance. A general feeling seemed to be that management team was resisting in order to maintain their positions.

"Management team wanted to keep their jobs so they dragged their feet....stone walled"

As mentioned earlier, it is suggested that resistance can be recognised as related to an individual or group's degree of commitment, which can be either verbal or expressed by way of actions towards change. This gave rise to people verbalising their feelings about their jobs during the change. One interviewee had had her job duties changed and increased without consultation. She reported:

"I used to look forward to coming to work and never took sick days, now I do"

Another said:

"Experience and loyalty don't matter anymore"

The section devoted to staff perception of Operation Change 4.2.1 reported mainly of people's feelings towards or as a result of Operation Change and how it affected their job and their feelings towards their job and the organization. They frequently mentioned the effect they felt Operation Change had on their job:

"A lot of people resist change first of all, they ignore it – think that change is not going to happen, they carry on as usual."

There was a common theme of:

"If you don't care about me, I don't care about work"

There was also a general feeling of:

"Low morale"

"People are depressed"

"Fed up"

"Operation Change is difficult because people never really believed in it"

People felt they were not consulted or involved:

"Distant – people not involved – people don't care if it works or not"

"People became disinterested in asking questions about it'.

Figure 9 illustrates the interviewees' comments on a continuum indicating their degree of resistance/commitment to Operation Change.

good idea

here we go again

"déjà vue"

old hat

distance

indifference – not really interested

apathetic

blinkered

resignation ⟨ to job
            to change

it'll go away

cynical

no one listens

no one asked me

I need the job

fear of job loss

depressed

don't care about job anymor

Figure 9: Continuum of degrees of resistance / commitment towards Operation Change expressed by Interviewees

4.2.6. Staff perceptions/views of consultants and councillors

Before moving onto analysis and discussion, it is useful to note here two other categories and the few comments related to them identified from the stories. Although

they did not seem to be as significant to staff and their relationship to Operation Change as categories one to six, none the less, they are worthy of mention.

These final two categories are:

- Staff perceptions/views of consultants

- Staff perceptions/views of councillors.

4.2.7. Staff perceptions/views of consultants

In The City at the beginning of Operation Change, consultants were brought in to assist with the review of the organization. The objective was for the consultants to devise strategies to assist in meeting The City's (council's) long- term financial strategy in order to save money.

The initial consultants hired were reported not to have performed as expected, and management terminated their appointment. Another consultant was brought in and reports about this person were more positive.

The interviewees provided several pictures of their perception of the consultants and their performance:

"Consultants were here to make people redundant" and "chop jobs"

"Consultants went about the job in a secretive way"

"Consultants are technical providers of change –they are not realistic"

"Consultants came in and made grand statements, but unfortunately the brain was not engaged when it got into gear"

"First consultants were rubbish"

"They came in with their text book knowledge","anti-consultant – just a box of books"

"Textbook consultants"

"Consultants gave bad advice"

"Early stuff not soundly based"

"Consultants didn't seek whole staff advice"

"Anti-consultants gave bad advice, it was a costly exercise" (manager)

"Savings were negative"

"Consultants arrogant – they made assumptions there was fat in the system – but in fact it was lean already" (manager)

"Management team was resentful of the consultants"

"Asked the wrong people"

"The new consultant did a good job"

4.2.8. Staff perceptions/views of councillors

Listed below are the comments made by the interviewees showing their perception of the elected 'body' of councillors.

One interviewee described his perception of councillors, "Councillors, they are only interested in the business side of things (not people)".

"Don't care about us"

"Don't have a boss anymore"

"There's no discussion, we are just told"

"Experience and loyalty doesn't matter anymore"

"Them and us"

"Communication was not good"

"Politicians used Operation Change as a political football"

"Saving costs"

"Political direction"

"Councillors pleased to see back of Operation Change"

"Councillors jerked us around"

"They (councillors) have their own agenda"

4.3. Stories and sensemaking

This section shows stories gathered from the participants and selected as examples related to the main themes identified and described in Section 4.2 of the findings. Gabriel (1998) states that organizational stories are studied in different ways. These include the following; stories can be studied as elements of organizational symbolism and culture, as expressions of unconscious wishes and fantasies, as dramatic performances, as occasions for emotional discharge, as narrative structures, as expressions of political domination and opposition, and as vehicles for organizational communication and learning.

The following stories, narratives or accounts would probably fit into several of the above categories. However, for the purpose of this section, they are selected as examples of participants' sensemaking of Operation Change, to relate to some of the themes described in Section 4.2 and which will be analysed and discussed in Chapter Five. Stories are set out under headings that capture themes. It is apparent that some stories could apply to more than one of the themes or categories described in Section 4.2, but each story is displayed under one heading only

Operation Change Stories/narratives/sensemaking – What is it?
Managers' and staff perceptions, views, accounts.

This story expresses the view or sensemaking of one manager about Operation Change and what he believed it meant to the organization.:

> I think Operation Change has been a difficult one because the staff never really
>
> believed in it. I think we had 2 million dollars to save in 2 years and I think many
>
> people had to be convinced that that was actually feasible. Whilst we started well,
>
> I think we set ourselves, we as in Operation Change steering group, set ourselves
>
> too big a target which we never achieved, and each quarter we continued to set
>
> targets which we never reached. Hence the non-belief, I believe by the majority

of staff, that Operation Change was just a waste of time and because of that and the costs which seemed to be going on and on, i.e. consultants, etc.

Another manager spoke of the confusion that existed within the organization; specifically, that the project was presented as a process improvement exercise, but really was a cost cutting one:

Did process improvements come about through Operation Change? Yeah well, Operation Change was looking at process improvement. But because it was having a bit of trouble in terms of meeting the 2 million dollar mark, each of the units was asked to look at anything that they could do in their own areas in terms of process improvement themselves to contribute to this 2 million dollar per annum saving. So it ended up becoming something more than just Operation Change. It became something across the organization. But having said that, I think staff got a bit confused between what is process improvement and what is just squeezing more juice out of the lemon. I think a lot of them just cut more out of their budgets, so there was a bit of confusion there, I think. There is a difference between slicing the budget and making savings, and actually changing something to reduce costs.

An operator or general staff member's view was expressed:

All over the place, generally, because we've seen, I guess, restructures within this organization a number of times, and they've started and never quite finished, and we've seen various areas implemented like K base, which is a knowledge based computer system, we have used down at the customer service centre. It started out with a hiss and a roar and died off as the money became too much, and it never had the impetus to continue. So I think the organization generally ... staff members saw this as just another one of those things where the management team

would start something and it would never get anywhere, and they were looking to just get rid of a few people. That's how they'll save money. Why don't they be honest with us, do that to start with and this whole palaver and façade of Operation Change, you know, and all that. I entered Operation Change thinking like that.

Operation Change as good

One senior manager, who had been with the organization for a long time, spoke in a positive vein of her thoughts, which had changed over time:

I think if you'd asked me that 6 months ago, I'd have said no, but I feel differently about it now, I think we've got past a bit of a hump and I think people are thinking generally positively, it was the right way to do it, but more of an openness to change, a more positive feel about the project as a whole.

A new manager, who had not been in the organization at the beginning of Operation Change and had not been party to previous change, spoke positively:

It's going very well from my unit's perspective, a lot of positive staff buy-in because they finally get a chance to get directly involved. A lot of interest and because we are getting quick wins on simple issues like calculators that didn't work before, and now we've bought new ones for cashing up. They used to have calculators, you pushed a button and nothing would happen. They're adding up lots of money, so they'd have to re-do the whole cashing up. So there have been a lot of immediate wins for staff that have had a good impact on morale and so on.

Another new manager spoke in the same vein, by saying that his initial impressions were negative, but once he became involved, he was positive:

So there's been a vast improvement in the structural component to achieve improvement that never was there before. When I first got here in September last

year my first impressions were totally, well Operation Change is ridiculous, it sends out the wrong message. No one at my unit level had any interest or knowledge. An Operation Change member turned up once a month, gave a spiel and walked out. The message wasn't structured to relate to the audience. It was just a general what's going on, everyone paid no interest, it meant nothing to them. Now things are different.

Operation Change team member's views of Operation Change

A member of the Operation Change team was initially positive about what lay ahead when he first joined the team:

> Operation Change evolved from process improvement. It wasn't about money, that was the big catch for us as members coming onto this team. We weren't there to remove jobs, we were there to improve processes from a sort of vertical solo mentality to cross organizational processes. That was our big goal, it was to do that, to investigate that and to put up reports as to how things could be improved, and then the organization could take that and improve the process. So it wasn't so much our job to do the improving, it was the organization that would do that. We were there to be the hands and the feet, the eyes and the ears of the organization, to investigate what could be improved and how to improve it. To take the tools and techniques that our coaches were to train us in, and apply those throughout the organization.

Team members recounted narratives of their feelings and the stages they went through from initial optimism, through concern, to frustration, to disillusionment. Initially they were reported to be keen and excited about having the opportunity to do something different and learn:

> The first couple of months it was great, we were learning stuff, I would go home every night with a blinding headache because there was so much to do and it was

so big and new and different. Once the first few reports had been put out and we started to see that perhaps it wasn't quite as we thought it was going to be, it wasn't so much about process improvement, it was about removing staff, and saving money. It became quite difficult to continue, particularly when we did rely upon other people within council, and for their assistance and for gathering information, and the conclusion you come to, is only as good as the data you can collect, and if people won't tell you what's truly going on and you come to a conclusion and you put it forward and those same people then stand up at the end of the day and say, no, you are wrong, it is this.

After some months the team was moved to a new location, which was situated over the road from the main building, where the majority of staff worked, with the result that they became even more isolated from the rest of the organization:

...as soon as they did, we complained bitterly about that, we said, it was difficult enough in the other building, where people could come through and see what we are doing, see that we are not hatchet men and we're not about sacking people. As soon as they put us across there, the numbers of people who came across stopped instantly.

As part of their brief, the Operation Change team members were required to report back on a regular basis, to the units where they originally came from. Members reported in their stories that as time went on this became more and more difficult, and their former colleagues and friends, berated them both individually and in front of others:

I absolutely hate it ... frustrated and depressed. At the unit meeting, we always had to spend the first 10 minutes trying to convince staff Operation Change is OK. They would go red – get angry ... tell me what they thought, they were wild.

One member told of hearing how a group of staff members obtained a photo of one of the members and threw darts at it:

'One of the chaps on the team had his photo, a photocopy of his face put up on the wall and they used to throw darts at it. Because he was directly involved in quite a serious piece of work that didn't go … well, now, none of us started this job to do that.'

A team member expressed his feelings and those of his fellow team members. He also described his disappointment in managers' attitudes towards the team members:

No, I think the whole team was like that. I don't think management team to this day realise what those people had to put up with, and literally lost friends and family over it. The big thing when I came back from Operation Change was, not a thing was said. No-one's yet said thank you for that, over and above the call of duty I believe, and actually at one stage there, after I came back, I thought surely the unit manager's going to come and say at a unit meeting, he's back, thanks for all the effort. Not that you want public applause particularly, but it's nice to be, … I can imagine, it's a bit tacky I suppose, but how the Vietnam vets felt when they came back from war, and everyone didn't talk about it.

After spending up to a year, and in some cases longer in the team, when members returned to their original work units it was reported there needed to be a period of adjustment both for themselves and their colleagues. As one of the members put it:

And I think when I came back there was all of that resentment together, it was like, we have carried you for this whole year, you know, what have you done for us? You know, you've put us in a right thing. You've brought trouble to our door, we've got these people coming looking at what we do. You were the one involved in that, and I think, fortunately I had a good relationship with all the people I worked with so that sort of won out at the end of the day. I would go up for cups of tea and things occasionally with them. Gee, I would get berated, not only just people in my unit, there would be staff from other units come up and

have a go at me about things, and I would go to the unit meetings. I like to still go

to our unit meetings to keep in touch with them, and the unit manager would say, '

Tell us how Operation Change is going?'; and I would start, and there would be

people who would literally go red in the face and tell me what they thought,

because they were that wild about it. And I thought, I did not start this to get

abused like this, and in the back room people would tell you what they thought.

An Operation Change team member spoke out on his view of management and their
handling of the Operation Change project and how they handled the teams' concerns:

What games did they play? Just the dragging of their feet, the protection of their

own patches, all those sort of things. The unwillingness to participate. The

changing of the direction of Operation Change. I remember at one stage, very

early on, we had a day, we spent a day with them over at the Convention Centre

where we voiced a lot of concerns, ... no, we spent the first day over at the

Steeple, over at the conference centre across the road, where we voiced a lot of

our concerns, and said, we don't believe this will work. We don't think you can

do this, because we don't see how you have put in place processes to support us to

do this, this and this. We had quite a long list and the result was that, yes, they

were going to talk about this at their next meeting and resolve those issues. They

never got resolved. We never got told formally how they were going to resolve

those issues that we put up to them right at the beginning.

Another story was told by a member of the change project team was about one
particular manger and his actions: "They say (managers) 'I absolutely support it as the
greatest thing ever – then drag their feet'".

Another team member said:

I had one dealing with a management team member-we had-one of the projects I

was on, I was project managing it and we had forms to fill out that said that we

would commit this amount of time each week to it, that this was our role and our task and what we were going to do, and yes our managers agreed. Some three months into the project he still hadn't signed for me, and a number of times I went to him and said, "You need to sign it, everyone else has signed it but you haven't", and in the quiet of his room he smiled and said, "no". There was nothing more I could do. At the end of the day he left the organization and about the week before he finally went, in the internal mail an envelope turned up on my desk, a signed piece of paper, but the project was over by that stage.

Another team member continued with the same story and described his view like this:

… I just thought, to me it's,… there's a number of ways of stalling an initiative in this organization, you can blatantly come out and say I don't support it, I won't support it and you can quit and leave, or you can say I absolutely support it as the greatest thing ever, and drag your feet. If you can drag your feet for long enough it goes away.

Staff views of Operation Change team

One of the outside staff who reported he was becoming more and more interested in union activities, took it upon himself to attend the monthly briefing meetings where the team Operation Change members gave staff an update on what was happening. He explained he was there to "keep them honest":

Sometimes I give them hard times at the monthly meetings and that, yeah, just that they might have said something two months ago, and said they were going to look into it and act on it and two months have gone past, and they hadn't said anything, and I'll get up and say, "Two months ago, you said dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, you still haven't done it, what's going on?"

Another participant expressed this view: "The wrong people were doing the job. They didn't know. They should have asked the people who knew the answers".

Staff also commented on the fact that the Operation Change team members were located over the road, away from the main building: "They were stuck over there in a little ivory tower, removed from the organization. We didn't really want to talk to them"

Management view of Operation Change

A manager spoke of Operation Change and how he had come to believe how staff viewed the change:

> And, of course, as soon as you do that the organization says, 'see I told you so, you're never going to sack the manager. You are going to get rid of two more of the rubbish trucks or another four secretaries or labourers. What about the management?' So at that point we very quickly lost any grace we had with the organization. They said, 'It's just the same as it always has been. You'll still have ten managers, but five less staff'.

This is how Bill, (not his real name), the Chief Executive told the story after he had moved away from the organization:

> Yeah, we went through again a competitive process to engage the consultants and we selected a firm which in hind-sight, probably wasn't as well prepared as we thought they might have been. There was some conflicts within the consultancy as well, because basically the joint venture was put together Another difficulty was that the particular person we had didn't really take the management team with him, so there was managers' resentment, plus there were councillors who weren't happy with the selection of the consultants. They wanted to have their own teams. So you had failings on three fronts, and so it was very divided, and I suppose the other thing, this is more a matter of circumstance than anything else. I had

planned, long term, to take some extended leave, just as it was getting underway and I was out of the country literally for 10 weeks. So I went away thinking, this was going okay, and came back and I found that things were starting to fall apart rather dramatically. So I'm not saying that my being here would have made a difference, but it probably would have. But personally I found I was sort of on the back foot after that, and it was a case of trying to get the thing going in the right direction. But the person who is acting Chief Executive now, Tom, (not his real name) was the person I put in charge of the project, and he made what I thought was a terribly insightful comment about the whole process improvement programme. He said these things should be entered into, (I'm paraphrasing,) for the purpose of organizational benefit, not with an aim to reduce costs by a stated amount, because what really happened was that we quite quickly lost sight of why we were doing it, and got fixated on the political directive if you like, about saving costs. We have to save money, so that was the sort of message that got drummed into everybody, from me too. I put my hand up and say I did it too, and really set the wrong reaction right from the start, set the wrong framework, the wrong atmosphere, because really in an organization like ours, which is labour intensive, if you talk about making large savings in costs, there is only one way that it is going to happen largely, and that is going to be to reduce the staff. People went, 'Oh yeah, if I go willingly into this, my job is going to go down the tubes'. So I think that it was a powerful observation that Tom made at the end of the project.

Tom (not his real name), the current acting Chief Executive summed his views up as follows:

….when the Bill (previous Chief Executive) left, the writing was probably on the wall. There wasn't, there hadn't been enough successes

to bind the staff in to making it succeed ultimately. The political arm was being openly publicly critical of the project, so it wasn't,... I don't think it came as a surprise to anyone that it's now been reported that in the final year of Operation Change, the savings targets were not met and that the Operation Change would meet a net loss in that respect. Tempering that I suppose, is the fact that we do have, we have had something in excess of $600,000 quantified and sustainable savings. So for the council they were able to take some relief from the fact that the payback period on the investment was very short and on-going beyond that. But for me anyway, I have an overwhelming sense of frustration, not just because we didn't achieve the stated objectives, and in that sense it was a failure, but more because I have a real belief that the savings were there to be made. So it's not a case of us not meeting the objective, because the savings weren't there. I believe the savings are there. But the project as it was delivered wasn't able to achieve them.

Staff views of management in relation to Operation Change

Stories were varied about management's role in the Operation Change project. General staff told some stories about their perception of management's involvement in Operation Change. In addition members of the management team themselves had some interesting accounts and observations to make.

A longer term employee had this to say about management and how they deal with change:

Depends how it is done. If people can see an improvement for what they do, they would be only too happy to be involved. The difficulty is that when you start saying, 'We're improving things here, so we don't need as many staff'. People go, 'It's not improvement, it's job loss, be honest and tell us. We want three people

stead of four, tell us that now, and we can start looking for work". It's when it comes under the guise of process improvement, we're going to make your lives easier, and we're going to get you better and faster and stronger, and we're going to have one less person, please tell us that first. And that's where I don't think management team were as honest with the organization as they should have been, and in saying that I don't think they understood that, that's what they were saying and doing. I do believe they were wowed by the consultant's brief and presentation about how it was going to be process improvements, lights, camera action. We were told very early on, if it's about $2,000,000, we won't succeed. It's got to be about process improvement. When we started to talk about process improvement, in many instances it probably meant more staff. Because in a number of areas we are so short staffed anyway. If you want to improve the process you actually have got to have two people come on before it gets better. Well, management team wouldn't buy that.

One of the managers spoke of his view of management and its approach to Operation Change:

For the Operation Change team that we set up initially, we drew from every unit in the council, and put forward members from there. The management team have been quite heavily involved from the beginning in terms of input and having reports to it. Once you get into this, you will discover for yourself, although there's a lot of heavy involvement, the management team have not been behind this right from the word go. So there's been a bit of tension about that as well, about needing to actually get out there, which is another story in itself.

The following account was also provided by a manager himself about management:

People just distrust management, when you've had change, when you've had the organization go through three or four restructures and people lose their jobs, with a nasty display often. How we ever can get that trust back, where the people on the factory floor think that the guy upstairs is doing the best for him. They are miles apart.

Signs of organizational resistance / commitment

Previous stories under each heading show some degrees of resistance. Here are some further stories to highlight resistance or degrees of commitment.

An example of what one of the operating staff said about the proposed changes:

Especially when you're bringing in teams to look at processes and new ways of doing it, people immediately latch on all the things in the new way that won't work and say we need to go back to the old. It's been quite a challenge for us. The resistance I was meaning before is where they don't want to help out, that sort of resistance. There is another side of it where you feel, because you feel threatened, I wouldn't go as far as to say sabotage or anything... but you just don't want to do it, so you don't.

One interviewee who had her job changed without consultation voiced her feelings clearly:

Yeah. Even if the boss wasn't there, I felt good about the work, for I've always enjoyed doing..., I've always enjoyed doing what I do. I'm good at it, I'm qualified, I'm skilled, I did a lot of interesting things. I don't do that now, though. When you are reduced to 3 days, you can't, you've got to knock out the interesting things straight away. You've got to do the basic boring stuff. The interesting things are always the icing on the cake. Like any job you've got the mundane things and you get to do the other things, and not only that, but I had, I was doing

other things beyond what I do for my own job; things for the whole place- and all of that had to stop. So it's like a big step backwards, and to me to be given the menial work to do, it's like a big step backward. And to me it was a big kick in the teeth actually, because before it had always been done by unqualified staff, because it's brainless stuff. Thought it was really short sighted of them to have someone with the qualifications that I had. There was no discussion. Instead of asking staff, we were told this had come about. It's like they just came up with this plan which seems to be a real backward plan.

Another interviewee recounted how changes had been made to her unit that affected her directly:

I didn't like the idea…no, not at the time, no, because it was done willy nilly,….but when we showed it to be a problem, and they weren't just saying it. They were writing reports, justifying why there were going to be problems, etc. They just shrugged their shoulders saying, 'Oh well, deal with it'. It was disheartening and we didn't want to do it.

Resistance is shown here:

On a number of occasions it took months and months to actually get the full story and now whether, I'd hate to say, though I think on some occasions it was, I'd hate to say that there were people that were deliberately not telling the full story for their own benefit; and on a number of occasions, I think people just had never thought it through, and when it was presented in a flow-chart sort of representation, they said, 'Oh, yes we do this and this, people just live their lives.

Another said: "I'm that close to just packing it in at the moment, just telling them to stick it, because I feel that I've been treated that way. Experience and loyalty doesn't really matter anymore."

A manager comments on general resistance and his perception of his management team and councillors:

A lot of reasons, a lot of reasons, I think there are perhaps a few main reasons, that really defeated us fairly early on in the piece. One of them was, I think, that the councillors and the management team did not understand the ramifications and the consequences of what we were going into, it really was a pandora's box.

An employee reports how a change of job for him because of Operation Change was communicated to him:

It was the supervisor who had to make the decision on what happened. Part of my grievance was that he hadn't dealt with it very well, because there was no meeting to tell anyone. I was just driving along on the tractor basically, he stopped me on the road and said, "I've got good news and bad news; you've still got a job but it's not here", and that's how I found out. I didn't know this was going to happen, no, and I mean that's part of my complaint to the managers at the way it was handled and that sort of thing and that's typical, isn't it?

This staff member maintained she was asking for what she believed was honesty from management, but said she didn't get it:

Depends how it is done. If people can see an improvement for what they do, they would be only too happy to be involved. The difficulty is that when you start saying we're improving things here so we don't need as many staff. People go, "It's not improvement, it's job loss, be honest and tell us that. We want three people instead of four, tell us that now and we can start...".

Here is an observation made by a staff member about her colleagues:

Because they didn't believe in it, it had gone past the point of no return. .They had decided for a number of reasons and because of other issues, that they were not

going to be bothered with this thing, just get on with their jobs because we were

down in staff numbers, still are, and people were very busy, and if they can make

themselves busy, they are shutting themselves off to what is really going on

around them.

Of those interviewed, both managers and operators had accounts of how they viewed
the involvement of consultants and councillors:

Operation Change was that consultants were really there as advisors. Initially

that's the way it was set up. The staff were there to do the work and look at places

where there could possibly be change. The consultants were advisers, but it

slowly got to the point, where the consultants became project managers

controlling everything, to the point where if you're going to do this, you need to

do this, this and this, without any real thought of the operation of the council.

They'd get advice from the staff about how things work, but they'd say you'd

have to do this or that was wrong. But it had to really come from the staff,

because the staff were the people who actually knew the system and the

individuals in it, and to use an outside consultant to formulate a process to do that,

I thought that was a bit of a mix up. So I believe Operation Change actually lost

direction along the way and there was just too much power given to the consultant

to do things.

Further sensemaking of consultants and councillors expressed by interviewees:

Well, the ending of Operation Change was almost phased in a sense. I think we

had come to the conclusion that the consultant- led approach wasn't achieving the

objectives that we really sought, but at the same time we continued to put into the

council's annual plan, assumptions that we would make significant savings of the

operation's budget, and we included even as late as last year, for this current

financial year, a sum of money to be invested in Operation Change. That was largely in the area of IT and financials, financial systems, but I think when Chief Executive (Bill) left, the writing was probably on the wall. There wasn't, there hadn't been enough successes to bind the staff into making it succeed ultimately. The political arm was being openly publicly critical. So I don't think it came as a surprise to anyone that the savings targets were not met. But for me anyway, I have an overwhelming sense of frustration, not just because we didn't achieve the stated objectives, and in that sense it was a failure, but more because I have a real belief that there were savings to be made. But the project as it was delivered wasn't able to achieve them.

One manager expressed his perceptions of both the consultants and councillors:

Oh, because they (staff) thought they were here to make people redundant, to chop jobs; because they went about their role in quite a, not exactly secretive way, some of their early stuff, they came to or put out just wasn't soundly based, only had half the data and that sort of thing. When they came in and went through the organization and had a hard look at what we did, they admitted there wasn't a lot of easy wins in the place. We were going to have to spend money to save money basically. But even then some of our councillors refused to believe that, you know. They wouldn't believe it from us, the management in the place, so they get in external high powered consultants and they wouldn't believe it from them either. This is not to say that there isn't always room for improvement or automatic savings, but we've got a couple of our political masters who, I think, believe we're still like the old public service was many years ago, back in '89 or something.

View of councillors

A lot of people don't have any idea of the other types of work that the council does, and so they see it as those sorts of things. Those are the real visual things they see yet, that is exactly what these councillors are wanting to get rid of and we've certainly gone through the most change to be business-like, which needed to happen, but it's gone way beyond that now, it's become the be-all and end-all.

CHAPTER FIVE:
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
Stage-one

5.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the findings and results of the study. The key themes that have emerged from the participants' stories are examined in terms of the research objectives, and the original questions.

The main question asked what the stories told by employees about the organizational changes indicated about the change. Two sub-questions asked if the stories indicated resistance and the other closely related asked if the stories indicated commitment to the changes. Resistance has been defined earlier as being the behaviours or expressions that imply a desire or action that could/would impede the implementation of change in an organization. Commitment has been defined as an individual's behaviours, both actions and words, which indicate belief in and acceptance of change in the organization.

Mention has been made earlier of Martin's (1992) work surrounding organizational stories. She talked about how the stories of the central characters (being the organizational employees) focused on event sequence; in this case, their sensemaking of the events that were taking place in the organization.

In this study, change processes in the organization were examined through the medium of employees' stories. It can be argued that bringing about change is getting people to conform to the new way of doing things, and new ways of seeing their roles and interactions within the organization. Sinclair (1994) states it is important to be aware of the influences that cause people to see change issues and the associated problems in different ways.

Martin's (1992) three perspective approach to the study of culture and stories in an organization, identifies a three perspective framework involving integration, differentiation and ambiguity (sometimes called fragmentation). The integrated perspective takes the view that all cultural manifestations reinforce the same themes and states there is a consensus of views across the organization. There is no evidence of

ambiguity. In contrast the differentiation perspective states that there are sometimes inconsistencies, for example, managers express commitment or belief, but their actions, as in one case in this research already mentioned, contradict this. There is both consensus and conflict.

The ambiguity or fragmentation perspective takes the view that while consensus or disagreement can be issue specific, they can also fluctuate constantly, and there is little clarity to be found. This perspective focuses on the complex array of relationships in culture and the associated stories.

In this study of organizational change the stories that emerged were considered with Martin's perspective in mind. From the wealth of data collected, there is a large amount of material that is differentiated, fragmented, goes off on tangents, and is ambiguous. There is also evidence of integration. Overall, some important key themes have emerged from the findings which are as follows:

- **Different views/perception of just what Operation Change is;**

- **Views of "here we go again" or "not another change";**

- **Frequency of change – string of changes;**

- **Change is started and not finished;**

- **Don't believe in it;**

- **Ignore it and it will go away;**

- **Theme of disinterest, lack of commitment;**

- **The wrong people were asked the questions, not included;**

- **Should have asked me;**

- **Strong feelings against the Operation Change team;**

- **The Operation Change team felt isolated and rejected;**

- **There was a general concern about job loss.**

These key themes will be grouped into four main clusters and discussed. Following this an overview will be provided.

At this point it is believed important to comment again on the use of metaphors by some interviewees. Morgan (1986) in Gabriel (2000a) says that when we employ metaphors we are mapping one area of life on to another to capture feelings and images of the experience.

"Bull-shit castle" in reference to the main building where management and councillors are located is one such example.

5.2. Theme One – Operation Change goals

Overall there did not seem to be consistent agreement as to the purpose of Operation Change. Therefore the goals of working towards a more efficient organization and improving procedures, was lost on some people. Rather, they saw it as a guise to move people from their jobs. Beer and Nohria (2000) maintain if the implementation of change is to be effective people need to be committed. Generally people did not understand what was going on and expressed dissatisfaction in their stories. This dissatisfaction would suggest resistance or lack of commitment.

Because this point came through frequently and clearly, it would seem that the purpose or objective of Operation Change was not sufficiently communicated to staff generally and therefore not understood.

In a survey published by Ingersoll Engineers, as cited in Deal and Kennedy (1996), poor communication was identified as the single substantial barrier to achieving necessary change within organizations.

> ….managers' apparent resistance to change stems from lack of understanding and the need for more or better communication, rather than any underlying wish to oppose change in principle. Only when communication and understanding of the benefits of change are achieved will commitment be given and behaviour change. (p .165).

It is interesting to note, in the above comment, the assumption that there are benefits in change. This, of course, is not necessarily the case. In fact in this case, the benefits that were supposed to come about because of Operation Change did not occur.

It would seem there is a strong issue of lack of communication here. How was the concept of Operation Change sold to the staff overall? Were they persuaded it was a good thing? Was it thought through? Was it sold to staff? It would seem that one of the reasons why people expressed resistance, or showed lack of commitment, in their stories, was because the whole Operation Change strategy was not communicated well and people were not consulted. Deal and Kennedy (1996) stressed the importance of communicating the reasons for change to staff.

5.3.   Theme Two –Weariness - Frequency of change

The next main theme that emerged was the view expressed over and over again – "here we go again", "not another change", "frequency of change".

As mentioned earlier, The City had been undergoing a series of changes for the past decade. This was, in part, because of the Local Body Reform required by central government and the resulting statutory requirements including financial accountability. So The City was forced to meet much of it with financial underpinnings. The need to make savings within the organization was necessary to avoid a substantial citizen annual rate levy rise. So the recent change project, Operation Change, was directly related to statutory obligations, meaning central government law, but so too were the earlier changes already mentioned.

So over time there had been a series of changes. In the words of the Chief Executive:

Since 1989 when the new government structure came into being, the Chief Executive was charged with implementing the new regime. So over 12 years the City has gone through successive 'waves of change' some of which had been driven by central government policy, some by The City's own efforts and desires to make the organization go better. So it's just as you finish one thing you start to tend to look at others.

The Chief Executive reported that the basic organization model, which was a major change or restructure, was put in place in 1993, and is the same one that is in place today. It was stated that a large part of the change that had taken place since 1993 refining the approach or responding to direct political initiative.

But the most recent changes, including the particular initiative of this study, Operation Change, would seem to be the result of political initiatives aimed at trying to achieve philosophical outcomes that the Council (as in elected officers) was interested in, or to help achieve goals relating to the long-term strategy (as required by central government).

However in relation to Operation Change, the long-term strategy was considered not to be financially sustainable. So the Council (elected officers) along with the Chief Executive, decided, to hire consultants to advise on how to save money in the organization so that those savings could be used to achieve the long -term goals. The objective was to save this money under the guise of improving processes. All of this was decided with no consideration of what had gone on before, how staff would react, or the change/savings/operation would be sold to staff.

As mentioned, many changes had been carried out over a 12 year period. Staff members who had witnessed and been involved in these changes regarded this new one as more of the same, "here we go again", "we start these (changes) and never finish", "déjà vu".

So the result was that staff did not take the current change seriously. They did not buy into it because of their history of organizational change. Literature states the importance of staff commitment to organization change as Berry (1994) states "an equally important aspect of change is the employees' commitment to change". It is unfortunate there was this strong feeling of "déjà vu", and "here we go again".

Staff seemed weary. There were strong signs of employee weariness with the successive changes. It would seem that the successive changes reduced energy and enthusiasm. We could develop here a concept of "negative repetition" and apply it to organizational change theory. If successive changes are undertaken which people are required to experience, and which do not, as reported in this case, seem to have a point, and do not work, then there is a high possibility of a lack of commitment and the exhibiting of resistance. This phenomenon might be viewed as a new industrial illness and termed "change fatigue syndrome".

Organizational change can be reported to have been a rapidly increasing phenomenon worldwide in the 1980's and in particular the 1990's. It is suggested that organizational change is now inherent and an almost everyday part of working in an organization. In

the face of continuous change, as Thornhill et al. (2000) state, if employing bodies want staff to sit up and take notice of changes to be made then different strategies need to be employed.

To return to the issue of communication and selling the importance of the change, if the communication of the objectives and goals of Operation Change had been achieved, the outcomes might have been different, or at least been more positive.

A point to note at this stage is that of the 21 people whose stories were collected, three spoke positively about Operation Change. Important here is the fact that all three had been employed in the organization for less than 1year. (However, to be fair, one longer term manager stated belief that after 1 year Operation Change was working).

These new people would have no idea of what it had been like experiencing the previous changes that prompted other staff generally to say:

"Here we go again"

"...start and don't finish"

"Don't believe in it".

The new people were positive because they did not have the experience of having to go through previous changes and perhaps the sometimes pain and frustration of trying to implement the changes. How can we get commitment? Paul Strebel (1996) believes that for many managers and employees, change is neither sought after nor welcomed. It is disruptive and intrusive and it upsets the balance.

Overall there was a common theme "if you don't care about me, I won't care about you", (depressed.). It is suggested that this in turn is likely to affect peoples' attitude to their jobs and their degree of commitment to the changes being made. Berry (1994) believed that people in organizations do not resist change per se, but rather they resist the manner in which they are treated in the change process.

An interesting point to note is that the new managers thought it was a good idea but felt they did not need to be involved. Overall, there seemed to be a lack of commitment because people saw it as just another change being suggested following a series of other changes over the last decade. These changes, it was reported, had not worked, so staff did not believe that Operation Change would work.

5.4. Theme Three – Lack of employee involvement

Another major issue identified from the stories was the feeling that the wrong people were doing the job (referring to the Operation Change team). Staff seemed to feel that the people who did not know and did not understand the issues, were doing the job. The cry of "why didn't you ask me", and "if you'd asked me I could have said" came through. Consequently, people felt undervalued, just plain indifferent, or in some cases, alienated. Thornhill et al. (2000) recognise that one of the benefits of using an employee involvement strategy is the generation of employee commitment to an organization.

Again a quote from Berry (1994) would seem appropriate here: "What they (employees) resist is the manner in which they are treated in the change process and the roles they play in the effort." (p. 1).

Berry goes on to describe this by stating that so often management takes on the role of thinking and deciding what to change and how to make it happen. He states that generally by their action managers appear to be communicating to workers that their role is to carry out management's change strategies. The consequence is that the workers are left out of the decision making processes. It is suggested lack of involvement in decision making creates resistance to the decisions made and a lack of commitment. Arguably, if people were involved in the decision making, they would feel more valued. This in turn would increase commitment and reduce resistance.

It would appear from what the stories portrayed there was little opportunity for employees to exert influence, or to utilise their knowledge, skills and potential helping bring about the change and helping making it succeed.

So again, the issue of the importance of involving people in the changes, with good communication to ensure commitment to at least some degree and to minimise resistance is paramount. This is borne out by Berry (1994) who says that the change efforts that are most successful, involve people at all levels of the organization who are given responsibility for making the changes happen. In this way it can be stressed that they are given the same information available to senior management. They should be allowed and encouraged to be involved in the decisions relating to the changes required and the best way to make the changes. Consequently as Berry (1994) puts it: "They are

involved in a process which addresses their need for personal growth and development"
(p. 1).

5.5. Theme Four – Isolation of Operation Change team

A further major issue that came through was the isolation of the Operation Change team. The members were, as described earlier, taken out of their units to identify and work on change projects. The belief or rationale seemed to be that, given their track record, they would be able to do the job required. They were given the task of identifying projects within the organization right across the board to support the objectives of Operation Change. However, this group was physically isolated from the rest of the organization. Whether or not this was a conscious or unconscious act on the part of the consultants and senior management, is not clear.

Initially they were given the brief that Operation Change was about improving processes, with possibly a spin off of cutting costs, which may or may not have resulted in job loss. The Operation Change team believed that these were the goals. However, as time went on it became clear to members that "it was about cutting costs and likely jobs".

Members of the Operation Change team became more and more alienated from both management and staff operators as a whole. They were physically isolated in an office over the road. They said they felt more and more isolated and tended to stick together and support each other - "Solidarity under fire". The physical location symbolised physical distance and psychological separation.

It would seem that they became the target or symbol of the general staff's feelings of exclusion and lack of understanding of what was going on. The staff felt or believed they were being excluded from any decisions related to the change. They vented their feelings of frustration, rejection, and in some cases fear of job loss, on the Operation Change team members.

Figure 10 shows the stages of feelings of the Operation Change Team towards Operation Change and the whole of The City staff over time.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Initial commitment to organization                               │
│  ───────────▶        ───────────▶        ───────────▶            │
│      Disbelief at events                                          │
│          Loneliness – feelings of unfairness                      │
│              Defensiveness – feelings of anger                     │
│                  Solidarity (team) – feelings against organization │
│                      and staff                                     │
│                              Finally resistance to organization    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
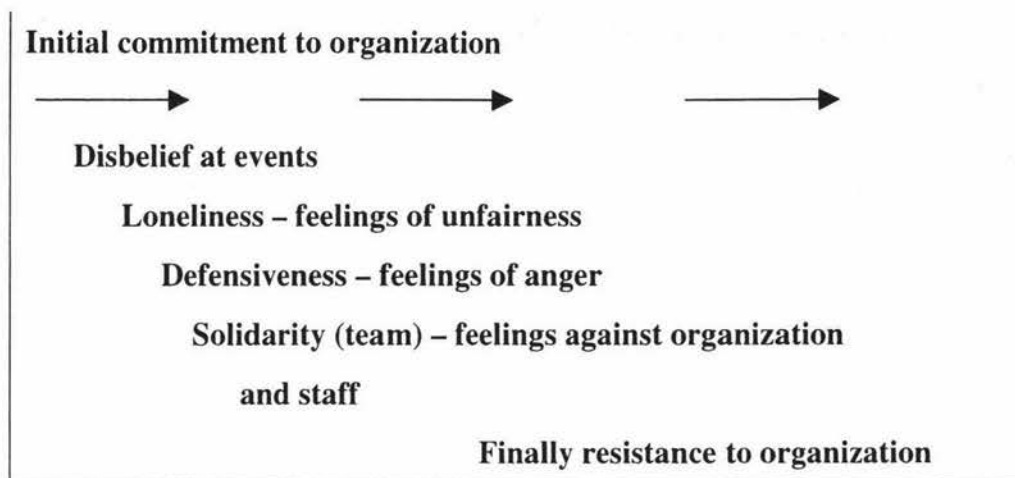
Figure 10:   Typology of Operation Change team members feelings about Operation Change

Questions to be asked here come to mind:

a)   "Was the senior management team aware that the Operation Change team felt rejected and isolated?"

b)   "and if so, what did they do about it?"

The answers are probably

a)   "yes"

b)   "nothing".

So it would seem this group, which was isolated from the main organization, symbolised negative aspects of the change process. Consequently as reported by members, individuals in the team suffered enormously. They suffered strong feelings of isolation, rejection and a sense of unfairness. These feelings were expressed as a lack of commitment to the change. It is suggested again, that this is an example of management not including all in the change process. The small group was included in the decisions and the larger group was excluded. As a result all became alienated.

5.6.   Themes and their link to resistance and commitment

At this point we return to the following issues directly related to the original questions:

a)   employee resistance to the proposed organizational changes

b)   employee commitment to the proposed organization changes.

The two issues as apparent in the employees' stories will be discussed concurrently. As mentioned earlier the two are closely related in this situation. It was argued that commitment, or a lack of commitment can be manifested in many different ways, and can be demonstrated on a continuum.

> **Total commitment demonstrates a lack of resistance.**
>
> **Lack of commitment demonstrates resistance.**

Figure 11: The relationship between degrees of resistance/commitment

Figure 11 illustrates the relationship between resistance and commitment. The main themes to have emerged from the initial stories were the frequency of change in the organization over time, the perception by interviewees that they had not worked so well and the general feeling of not being involved – being left out. These main factors affected peoples' degree of commitment. People expressed feelings of tiredness, indifference, "no one asked me", and rejection, which had the result that people were not committed to the change. Perceptions about the nature of the change, it is suggested, produced resistance. It is generally recognised in the literature that one of the claimed benefits of using an employee involvement strategy for change is the generating of employee commitment, see for example Thornhill et al. (2000), who state that this in turn, is seen as a means to bring about beneficial change in an organization. They argue the organizational strategies which are emergent or incremental are "bottom up"," that is, involving people at the lower end rather than top down or sideways will bring about a greater level of understanding and involvement. This greater level of understanding can also be associated with generation of increased levels of commitment to the organization. Thornhill et al. (2000) go on to say that it is vital to foster commitment to the process of change through involvement and ownership.

In this study it has been shown that employees' stories expressed resistance, and bearing in mind the importance of managers involving employees and listening to what they are saying, it is interesting to note that the stage-one interviews identified the fact that managers also indicated resistance. This resistance was demonstrated in various comments that said the project wasn't working.

Finally, Guest (1987) argues that if organizational commitment is evident or achieved, it will result in high employee satisfaction, high performance, longer tenure and a willingness to accept change.

5.7. Further factors related to Operation Change

Finally in this section it is appropriate to return to the organization where Operation Change was carried out. The project, Operation Change, was initiated in mid-1999 and was, as discussed in Chapter One, to cover a 3 year period. The focus was to make changes in the organization that would result in financial savings that would contribute to The City's 10 year financial strategy.

A review of Operation Change was conducted towards the end of 2000. The senior managers interviewed said that the review concluded that although annual savings were close to target, the overall target of savings was unlikely to be achieved unless there were significant changes made to the project. Operation Change continued, but in light of the above conclusions a substantive review was conducted early in 2001. It was reported that a main finding from this review was that a total cost savings approach would not result in improving processes and service to the community.

It was acknowledged that a more balanced approach, which also focused on community and customer results, was more appropriate. Operation Change as such ceased mid 2001, 2 years from inception.

Figure 12 presents a list of metaphors or descriptive phrases attributed by the interviewees to Operation Change. In a sense they show the life of Operation Change in three parts, with a conception and a birth, a rather short middle life, and a longish and seemingly painful dying off with a burial!
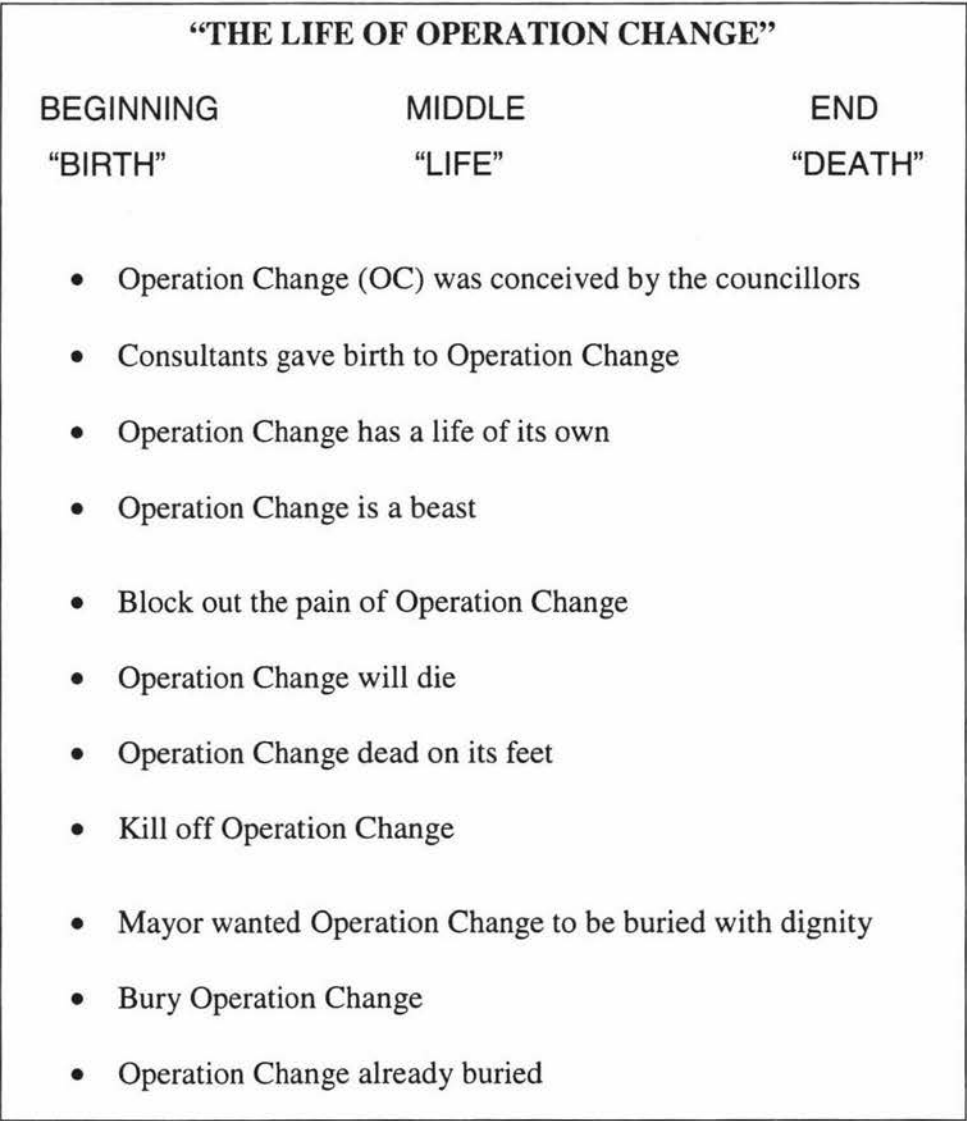
```
+--------------------------------------------------------------+
|              "THE LIFE OF OPERATION CHANGE"                  |
|                                                              |
|   BEGINNING            MIDDLE                END             |
|   "BIRTH"              "LIFE"               "DEATH"          |
|                                                              |
|    •  Operation Change (OC) was conceived by the councillors |
|                                                              |
|    •  Consultants gave birth to Operation Change            |
|                                                              |
|    •  Operation Change has a life of its own                |
|                                                              |
|    •  Operation Change is a beast                           |
|                                                              |
|    •  Block out the pain of Operation Change                |
|                                                              |
|    •  Operation Change will die                             |
|                                                              |
|    •  Operation Change dead on its feet                     |
|                                                              |
|    •  Kill off Operation Change                             |
|                                                              |
|    •  Mayor wanted Operation Change to be buried with dignity|
|                                                              |
|    •  Bury Operation Change                                 |
|                                                              |
|    •  Operation Change already buried                       |
+--------------------------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 12:   The life story of Operation Change

Finishing quote

In the words of one interviewee and a member of the operation Change team:

Change Management – I've read a lot of books on change management –

but the problem again, I think, is the gap between the management level and

the common man down here, who's at the coal-face. There's a gap that I

don't know how you could bridge that, I'd love to read a book that could

interchange those two positions so the people at the coal-face could

understand the difficulties management face – and the management could

understand the person at the coal face, his world, you know, and that's where real change management, I think, occurs – in the interchange between those …

People just distrust management when you've had the organization go through three to four restructures and people lose their jobs, with a nasty display often, how we ever can get that trust back where the people on the factory floor think that the guy upstairs is doing the best for him – they are miles apart.

CHAPTER SIX:
CONCLUSIONS Stage-one

The purpose of this research was to focus on the role of storytelling by individual employees during times of organizational change. The research questions asked whether stories told by employees in an organization undergoing change indicate resistance and/or commitment to the changes.

The original questions dealt with the issues of resistance and commitment separately. But once the findings were collected and analysis commenced it became clear that it was difficult to separate the two. In fact, they are so closely related, it is suggested it would be unproductive and at times impossible to discuss the two separately. So, for the purpose of this study's analysis, the approach taken is that more resistance can indicate a lesser degree of commitment and that more commitment can indicate less resistance.

The definition of resistance was taken to be an expression or behaviour that expresses or implies a desire or action that could or would impede the implementation of change in the organization. The expression in this study embodied both the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of commitment. Attitudinal commitment was taken to mean an employee's demonstrated belief and acceptance of the organization, and behavioural commitment the individual's personal longer term commitment to the organization and the perceived benefits of this.

Overall, the results of the study in the organization, The City, about Operation Change, provided confirmation that employees' stories do indicate resistance to organizational changes, but to varying degrees. Overall the stories were generally more negative than positive. Parallel to this, the varied responses indicated the degrees of commitment. Stories or themes ranged from a very simple, "good idea," to "here we go again," to "it'll go away," " apathetic," to "don't care any more". Figure 9 showed a continuum of degrees of resistance and commitment to Operation Change.

People's stories revealed perceptions of the changes that made them feel undervalued, of not being consulted, suffering fears of job losses, with an overall view of "here we go

again." There were significant feelings of resentment through to "... just ignore it and it will go away."

Signs of resistance also came through in subtle ways, such as the story about the manager who pleasantly acknowledged Operation Change, but refused to sign approval giving a proposed Operation Change project permission to proceed in his unit. This, it was told, went on for months, until finally he signed approval 3 weeks before he left to work in another organization.

Furthermore, other conclusions can be drawn from the data, which in turn highlight some implications to be considered. Firstly, there is an issue of the communication of the change within the organization. From the stories told, it seemed that the concept of the project was not sold to employees. There were conflicting stories of what people believed were the real goals and objectives of Operation Change. Another and related finding, was the perception that they, the interviewees, who had the knowledge were left out of the loop. Some interviewees felt the wrong people were being asked for advice. "I could have told them ... it wouldn't work". Thornhill et al. (2000) argues that by involving employees in decision about change, they are more likely to feel commitment. In addition, Walton (1985) argued that employee involvement in change strategy will give employees a greater sense of ownership, and they are more likely to assist the change. The interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with these aspects of Operation Change, which indicated their resistance to it.

A point to note here is that managers' stories also indicated feelings of being left out and not being consulted. In terms of Martin's (1992) three perspectives, this particular finding demonstrates integration of the views across the organization.

Another issue relates to the small group of selected employees who became the Operation Change team. This small group was given the task of identifying and developing projects that would meet the objectives of Operation Change right across the organization. As time went on, stories indicated that this small group became isolated and alienated from the rest of the organization and were rejected and ignored by staff members who were not involved in the team. The perception toward the team seemed to be a feeling of them and us, " them", being those few involved, and "us," those who were not consulted.

Overall, therefore, stories expressed more resistance than commitment. This finding was not confined to those at the operator level. Managers also indicated resistance. However, the new managers who had not experienced earlier changes were more positive.

A further conclusion to be made is related to the frequency of change in this organization and its impact on the interviewees. Changes had been on going for several years and interviewees' stories indicated feelings of "here we go again," "more change," and "they never work." People seemed to be either allergic, (hostile), or immune to the changes, and experienced what was earlier coined "organizational change fatigue syndrome." Stories seemed to indicate that people fell into three categories: one where they were suffering from change, two where they were allergic to change and three where they were immune: "just ignore it and it will go away." Organizational change was continuous and seemed to be ingrained in The City.

A further significant point, previously mentioned but not elaborated on to any great extent, is the fact that this organization is a local government body. There is, of course, a community elected body of councillors, from all walks of life with very varied degrees of background experience and knowledge. This group of councillors meet, albeit briefly, and make policy decisions which can impact significantly on the organizational employees. In this case, the elected council was required, by central government law since 1989, to develop a long-term 10 year strategy for the city. This they did, but if they were to put the plan into operation it would mean a 45% increase in citizens' rates and such a rise would be unpopular with the ratepayers. So rather than modify the plan, it was decided to find the cost savings within The City organization. It was reported that the perception of the elected councillors seemed to be that there was "fat in the system". Therefore the policy behind the changes, or the reason for making the changes, was not coming from within the organization. The decision was made by the councillors who did not have real knowledge of the inside workings of The City. Furthermore, they did not have to experience the upheaval and pain associated with the changes. The result was as told in employee stories that, "this was the conception of Operation Change". It was reported, " it cost money to do it, savings did not meet the required targets, there were disruptions in the organization and unhappy employees."

Here we have a "quasi public sector organization," that fits somewhere between the public government organization sector and private industry, with the multiple

stakeholders consisting of the community, the ratepayers, the ratepayer elected mayor and councillors, central government and the organization itself, each with their own particular demands and in some cases their own agendas. All of this would add to the difficulties associated with organizational change.

Figure 12 shows the stakeholders of a local government and their positioning.

This is summed up to some extent in the following extract from an interviewee's story: "Councillors and management did not understand the ramifications and consequences of what we were going into".

CHAPTER SEVEN:
IMPLICATIONS Stage-one

At this point the question must be asked, "what can be learnt from this research?" Analysis of the findings taken from the stories gathered during the stage-one interviews, shows there are implications for people involved or interested in the area of organizational change management.

Analysis clearly shows that stories told by employees during organizational change are a powerful gauge or barometer of the organizational climate. In this case the research question which asked if stories told by employees during times of organizational change indicated resistance was answered in the affirmative. It is suggested that change management agents should take notice of what employees are saying in their stories to assist them with their decision making. Boje (1991b) states that the stories told by people in organizations, is their sensemaking (perception) of what is going on in the organization.

Other significant findings are:

- there are implications or points of interest for managers or consultants involved in organizational change management;

- it is suggested there is perhaps a need to look further at change management theory;

- there are indications that further research in this area (that is, local body change management) may be useful.

Firstly, the implications for managers and others involved in organizational change management will be covered. Areas where change management theory could be further explored are examined as part of this discussion as well. It is suggested there are some positive lessons to be learned. One is the significance of employees and their importance to managers to gauge and assess the mood of the organization toward changes. This study has shown that individual's narratives or stories are a powerful vehicle and source of knowledge of how employees view happenings within the organization. The stories told, clearly expressed their perceptions.

The literature review, Chapter Two, covered some writers' and researchers' theories on the power and value of organizational story telling. Those involved in change management should take note of the employees' stories/narratives. It is suggested they are central to the organization and are an important barometer of feeling about what is going on in the organization – stories can be used as a gauge of employees' level of commitment. It is suggested that taking notice of stories can assist with individual change and then subsequently organizational change. McConkie and Boss (1996) argues that just as stories help facilitate organizational change, they can also play a useful role in individual change. He goes on to say that stories can be models that guide individual behaviour. Such personal stories can become part of the organization and are likely to influence the rest of the organization.

Galpin (1996) states that often during a change effort the communication is one way. But to be effective during change communication must be two-way. "People need to know what they say is heard and valued" (p. 72).

It is suggested by Snowden (2001) that story telling is an old communication tool, but is a powerful and effective technique to be used both in the listening to and telling of stories in an organizational setting. Associated with stories is the necessity to listen. Listening communicates to others that their opinions or what they are saying and the message they are telling is valued, and, there is often an important message there for managers to learn.
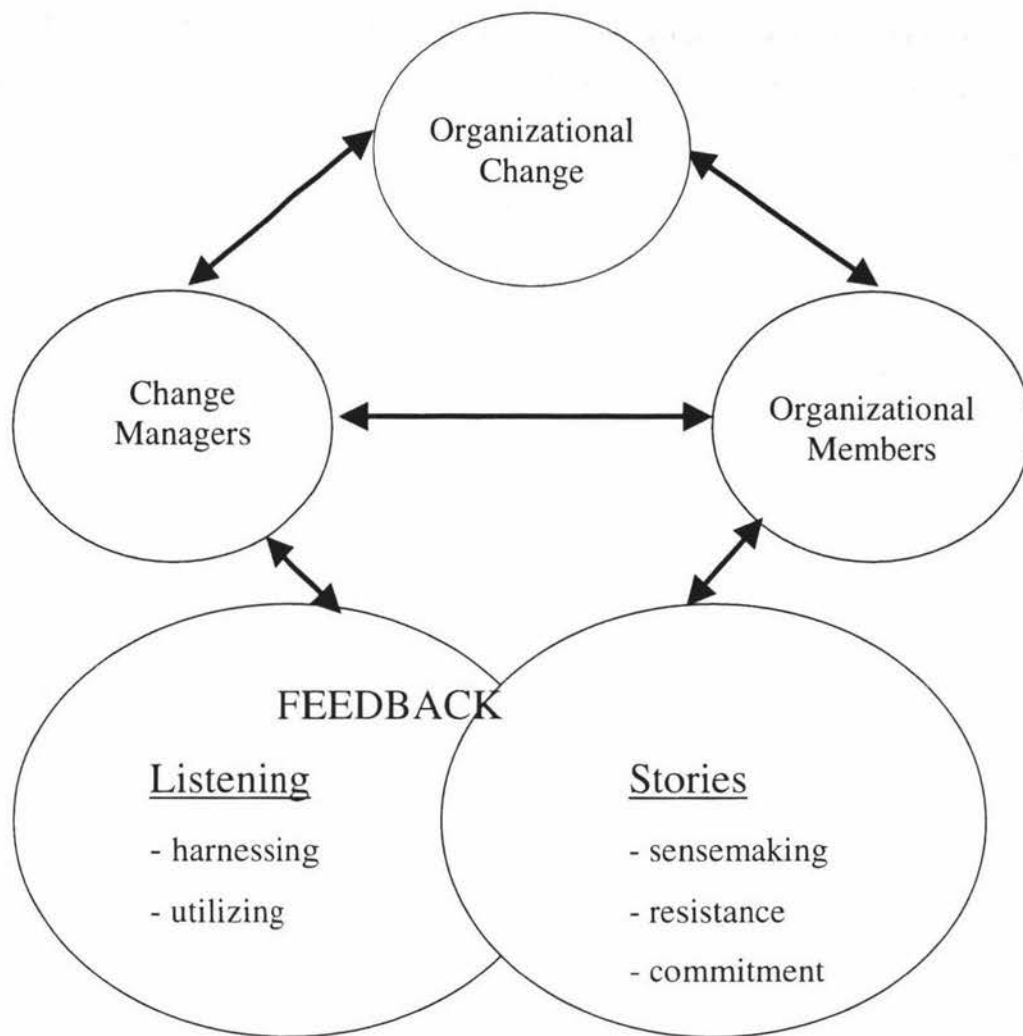
Figure 13: Employees Sensemaking and Feedback – Managers Listening.

Figure 13 shows the relationship between the sensemaking (stories) of organizational members and the need for managers to listen and take note of how employees are attempting to make sense of organizational change and learn to take action.

So a very important message and implication for management here is the link between the telling of employee stories and the need for managers to listen to what the people are saying. Kreitner and Kinicki (1998) contend that listening is the keystone communication skill for managers. Watson (1994) stresses the importance of managers listening to their people, asking them their ideas,and acting on them. He says what distinguishes between a good and bad manager, is that a good manager treats people as people and listens to them. This in turn develops a relationship of reciprocity and trust (p. 177). So this study has shown that employees' stories during times of organizational

change can both provide evidence of peoples' sensemaking of the events and show their feelings. A good manager should be listening very carefully to employee narratives to gain an indication of the levels of resistance or commitment. Galpin (1996) supports this when, in the context of change management, he says that people should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions. He believes that managers need to listen to concerns, suggestions and comments. By opening the channels of two-way communication, such as emails, focus groups, question forums, employees have the opportunity for constructive input. Although they are not always positive, opening channels of two-way communication, can make have the effect of making people feel valued, and possibly make the change effort operate more smoothly. In this context, organizational stories should be viewed as vehicles for organizational communication and learning, (Boje, 1991a; Martin, 1992).

A further implication of story telling for organizational change managers is the suggestion that although employees may be expressing resistance, it can be a constructive and useful tool for change management. Waddell et al. (1998) suggest that organizational theory over time has viewed resistance as a cause of conflict that is undesirable and detrimental to the organization. But it is suggested that resistance can play a role in drawing attention to aspects of change that may be inappropriate and not well thought through or perhaps just plain wrong. In the case of the present study, The City organization, this possibly was the case and to give credit to managers, they did ultimately take notice and took action .

A concept change managers should consider is the effect of the strategy in this case where a small group of employees were pulled into a team from across the organization, then separated from the rest of the organization to work on Operation Change. This group, the drivers, was given the brief to "make it happen", and to "drive the change". Instead of being able to do this, this group became isolated and were seen by their colleagues (as evidenced in the stories), as the symbol of all the negative aspects of the latest "change movement." They became the "sacrificial lamb," and targets of abuse, and suffered because of this. Sligo, Fountaine, O'Neill and Sayers (2000) say for a group within an organization to function successfully it must have strong organizational support. In the case of The City this support was clearly not there for the Operation Change team members, from both management and from the rest of the organization.

The next issue to raise, is the suggestion that organizational change seemed to have become inherent, continuous and ingrained in The City, "just part of" the workings of The City. As a result, as stated earlier, some people seemed to be suffering from "organizational change fatigue syndrome". Although some (workers) seemed to be immune and ignored it, others were tired and weary. It is suggested that change is very much part of organizational life in the 21st century. It is no longer a one off event or something that happens now and then, when a need for change is apparent. It is inherent, continuous, there all the time, and is all pervasive. It may be that there is a need to rethink existing theories and strategies associated with the management of change. There is a need to take into account the now inherent, continuous, ingrained and permanent nature of change in organizations and to consider the way implementation and employee involvement should be managed in the face of continuous change. The related human resource management should be looked at and considered from the point of view of what is necessary for developing the capabilities for survival in the face of continuous change, (Thornhill et al.2000). There is the implication of too much exposure.

The final issue, and its implication in the change management area, is that of local body reform in New Zealand in the last 10-14 years. As previously indicated central government in 1988 set out to reform local government. The effects of the reforms were that the citizen ratepayers support assumed a more governmental role, and the system was truly more local government, as stated by McKinlay (1990). With this came the need for greater efficiency and accountability with financial resources. McKinlay (1990) predicted that the process of achieving truly local government would not be easy, and would be likely to be marked by debate over the adequacy of resources. This proved so in this study. The elected body of councillors, in developing its long term financial strategy, realised the ratepayers would not take kindly to "footing the bill". They then turned to The City and decided there were savings to be made in the organization. As the stories have shown, the organization and in turn, the employees, suffered as a result.

The implications suggested here are that members of the city council are elected representatives of the community. They come from both wide and sometimes limited backgrounds of experience and knowledge. But once elected, they are in a position to

make significant decisions, which impact on the local body organization and more importantly on its employees.

It would seem important that more research be carried out into local body organizations in New Zealand using the collection of organizational stories approach, in order to gain more knowledge about what has been happening over the last decade or so following the obligatory implementation of central government reforms. No doubt councils are continuing to investigate the most appropriate local government structures to meet their community's needs and the delivery of services, and it would be helpful to find out more of what is actually happening, i.e. successes and/or failures. There appears be much to learn from this.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
HINDSIGHT – REFLECTIONS

"Looking Back – Hindsight Reflective Retrospective Views"
Findings with Discussion

About 12 months after Operation Change ended, further interviews were carried out among the original sample of people. Some of the original interviewees had left the organization. Five of the original subjects who were still available, were asked to be interviewed because of their degree of articulation, the relevance of the information they provided in the first round of interviews, and their availability. All agreed to a second interview.

Of the five interviewed, two were senior managers, one a middle manger, and the remaining two were working at the operator level. Three of the five had also been members of the Operation Change team for varying periods, including one who was the team leader. Figure 14 illustrates this.
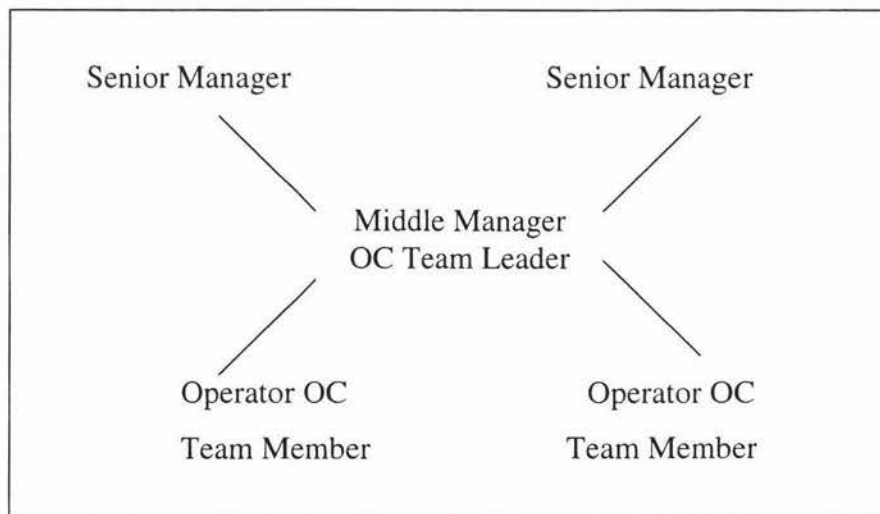

Figure 14: Position of Second Interviewees

The purpose of the second interview was to discover one year on just what employees' views of the Operation Change project were. So the general aim was to discover if hindsight sensemaking or retrospective, reflective thinking alters perception, and what, if any, lessons can be learnt.

Hurst (1995), p. 5 states that a reflective manager takes part in day-to-day, month-to-month activities in the organization and then reflects upon his or her role in those events in order to understand it better and improve upon his or her performance. He goes on to say that from this perspective, experience is something that one gets only after one needed it! Managers often do not know exactly what they are doing at the time. But afterwards they can try to find out exactly what they did, and learn from it. This is all part of sensemaking and learning in organization life. The role of organizational storytelling in this sensemaking is a useful point of inquiry.

Kolb (1992) in Gabriel et al. (2000), proposed that learning in organizations happens as a four-stage cycle:
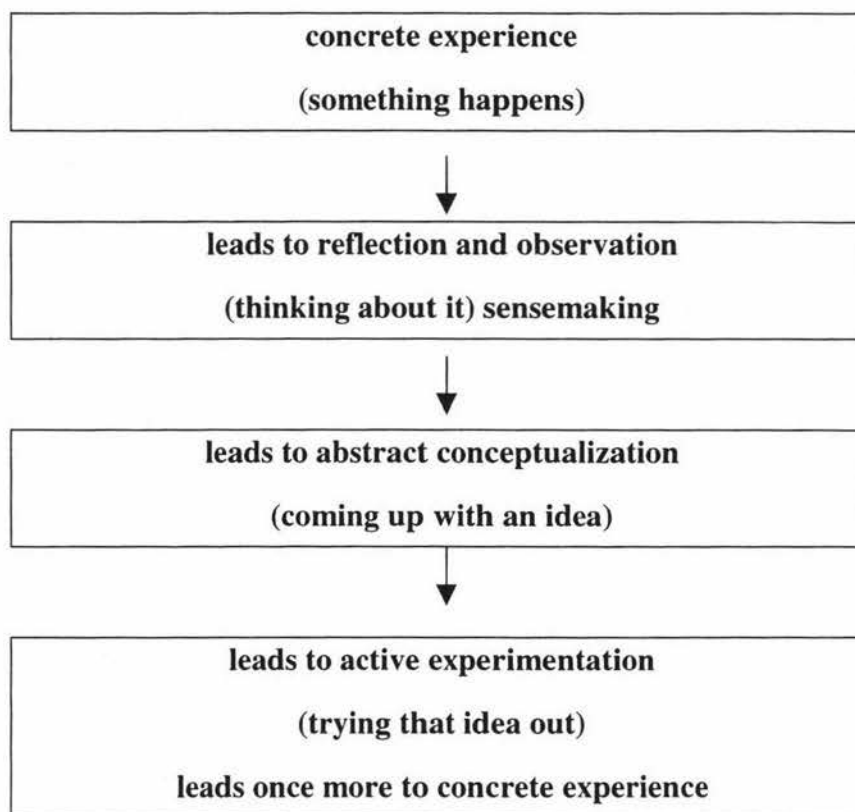
```
+-------------------------------------------+
|          concrete experience              |
|          (something happens)              |
+-------------------------------------------+
                    |
                    v
+-------------------------------------------+
|     leads to reflection and observation   |
|     (thinking about it) sensemaking       |
+-------------------------------------------+
                    |
                    v
+-------------------------------------------+
|     leads to abstract conceptualization   |
|        (coming up with an idea)           |
+-------------------------------------------+
                    |
                    v
+-------------------------------------------+
|      leads to active experimentation      |
|          (trying that idea out)           |
|   leads once more to concrete experience  |
+-------------------------------------------+
```

Figure 15:   Four Stage Organizational Learning Cycle
(Adapted from Kolb (1992) in Gabriel et al., 2000b, p. 321).

Alvesson (2002) highlights the importance of a reflective mode of research that refers to thinking through objectives, arrangements and acts as to how they contributed to, or worked against, the common good. He stresses the importance of reflection, and encourages managers to practice reflection in order to understand organizational happenings and learn from them (p. 3). So in this case the hindsight, reflective or

retrospective approach seemed a worthwhile exercise to assess or gauge what participants understand and have learned 12 months on.

The methodology approach on this occasion varied slightly from the first round of interviews. The five subjects were approached individually to ask if they would agree to a further interview. Previously, lists of employees were supplied by management, and approaches were made to each one asking if they would be prepared to participate in an interview. The result was a list of the willing employees who had participated in the first round of interviews

A week before the second interviews, interviewees were provided with a summary of the main findings and implications that arose from the data and stories collected in the original interviews.

Interviews lasted 30 minutes, rather than an hour. The interviews were more structured in that each participant was asked to answer and provide narratives around the two sets of questions, the questions were:

Straight recall-sensemaking

1. How did Operation Change end? – Was it significant? – What was its significance?

2. What has happened since Operation Change ended?

Hindsight reflection-sensemaking

3. Looking back, have you any ideas about how the organization could/should have done things differently?

4. Looking back, are there any things that you personally might have done differently?

5. How better/differently could the project have been communicated organizational members.

The main objectives were two-fold: first, to gauge if people's views had changed over time, and second: to gauge with the benefit of reflection whether they thought things could have been done differently and, if so, how. From this they can consider, what do they understand and what they have learnt, if anything.

Each interview was recorded, and the tapes were transcribed. The contents of each transcript were analysed for themes not necessarily common to each interviewee but of significance to the questions for this study. Rather than analyse the contents first by identifying the natural meaning units, then identifying themes (Merriam, 1994), the themes from each were pulled out at the initial stage.

Although the findings and implications from stage-one weren't addressed directly during the interview, interviewees did refer to them in the context of other comments. The general impression was that they concurred with the points made in the summary that had been given to them previously

So what was to be learned? The responses to each question will be dealt with generally. The first question asked how Operation Change ended, and if the ending was of significance. All five respondents reported that it ended very quietly:

"Practically whimpered and faded away"

"The energy wasn't there any longer"

One manager respondent who had also been a member of the Operation Change Team expressed disappointment. He reported that the review of the large operational section of The City, City Operations, which had been commissioned by the councillors, but was not part of Operation Change, took attention away, and the consultant who carried out that review, recommended that the Operation Change project be terminated.

Another respondent said the team did initiate some change but was given no credit for it. However, team members were reported to be: "signed off in a little ceremony attended by few and they were given certificates – and that the prevailing tone/mood was almost, 'let's not talk about it anymore'".

Responses to the second question, which asked what has happened since Operation Change ended, were varied. In that period, because the Chief Executive left to take up another position, a new Chief Executive had been appointed. In addition, following the three yearly local body elections ratepayers voted in a new mayor and several new councillors were elected to the council.

It was reported that since Operation Change ended, "ironically", a new change initiative in the organization, which has been introduced by the new Chief Executive and

endorsed by the newly elected Council, is an output reporting system that is basically a reporting activity-based costing and is essentially one of the key things that came out of Operation Change.

Questions 3 and 4 asked respondents to reflect on what might have been learnt from the experience and how things could have been done differently.

The questions were intended as starters or probes to assist with reflection. Respondents tended to reflect on why Operation Change did not succeed, rather than talk along the lines of how things could/should have been done differently.

Common themes emerged from the answers, with a principal theme being the lack of a clear focus in the whole Operation Change project. Although the original intention was to save money, as requested by the councillors, this was not spelled out to the organization. The purpose was couched in terms of the push for process improvements, which, it was assumed, but not generally talked about publicly, would save money. So the purpose was ambiguous and the focus was not clear:

> "Comes back to were we really committed to making major changes and initiatives?"

> "What I would have changed right from the start, is, be very clear about the purpose"

> "Should have been blunt – save money".

This led, it was reported by all, to some senior management not supporting the project:

> "Wanted to protect their own patch"

> "Everytime we looked to change something, found 101 reasons against – weren't prepared to take that bold step".

Overlying these points of blurred purpose and lack of focus and commitment was the criticism that there was never any real ownership from any part of the organization. The choice of consultants and their focus were criticised. Three different consultants, with different focuses and styles came in short succession. It was believed the choice of the initial consultants, whose contract was terminated, was purely a financial decision, and that there were other consultants who, although more costly, would have done a better job. Generally, the belief was that the use of consultants as change managers was

important, but opinions on the length of time of their involvement varied. Two interviewees (both managers) believed they should have played a bigger part in the change process:

> "Useful for looking through different lenses, and bringing new techniques and processes".

> "Not sure we could have done it, big organizations are resistant to change, on our own – need someone to drive and push hard.

One interviewee described it such:

> "whether [a] big bang approach, would have been better – you would have got some savings, but you would have battered and bruised the organization, whether some of the valued members of staff may not have tolerated [that] and walked".

Others believed consultants were necessary to provide advice and assistance in the initial stage only, then handing over to the organization to carry out the change process from within. A further point made by all, on reflection, referred to the strategy of pulling a generic team of people together from across the organization, and expecting them to work on the change management by identifying projects in departments or areas that they were not necessarily familiar with. The result was alienation from the organization by the team, and hostility toward the team by the organization's members. A team member reported: "We got desperate [we] had to search around for something to improve ....staff could have done better than us-outsiders looking for things and selling them to the staff .... that [was] not a good idea".

This was said with humour: "funny now, but wasn't at the time at all".

One of the probes (question 5) was related to the subject of the communication of the project within the organization. Very little was said about the communication of Operation Change, apart from one very important piece of information that came from one of the managers who was also part of the initial Operation Change team. He said that initially the use of consultants was two-fold. It had been agreed at the outset that there was to be a: "people-change management process running along side or ahead of the technical change".

This was based as reported on the premise that: "management textbooks will tell you that if you want sustainable change you've got to buy into it and accept it and be willingly part of it, … if change is dumped on someone you get a negative reaction".

Thornhill et al. (2000), bear this out by stating that one of the claimed benefits of using an employee involvement strategy is the generation of employee commitment. Whilst this may not be true every time, a 'bottom-up' rather than a 'top-down' approach is likely to generate more employee commitment.

The consultant who was supposed to provide the people change management left and was not replaced, leaving only the technical change process in place. The interviewee believed the project never recovered from this point, because there was not the backing up of the people management process through communication. He believed there are still people in the organization who feel very resistant and resentful to change as a result of the process and lack of communication.

A final point should be made in relation to the strategy of taking a group of employees from across the organization to make them into an Operation Change team, to identify and implement changes as an isolated group. In the narrative provided by one of the team members, he was able to, on reflection, make sense of what he felt, but did not understand at the time whilst he was a member of the team.

> One thing that's not reported by you (referring to the finding and implications report I had supplied to him), is that our expectations in the team were just radically different from everyone else's. We were able to create an environment which internally was very stimulating (probably the most enjoyable work experience I've had). But as soon as we moved outside the environment and started to actually talk to people about it, I suppose it was just then showed how removed we had become. I suppose at the time I wasn't aware of that. It's only now when I look back on it I suppose that's why it's not in there (report) because at the time I was probably more frustrated that things weren't happening and didn't know the reason for it.

In conclusion, this bears out Hurst (1995), who says that managers often don't know what they are doing at the time, but afterwards on reflection they can think about what they did and what happened, and learn from it. The use of hindsight reflection is all part of sensemaking and learning in organizational life. Related to this, Isabella (1990) questioned the approach to change as being a matter of overcoming resistance. She says that interpretations (sensemaking) change through stages of learning about events.

The hindsight interviews show that stories in times of organizational change may differ at different points in the process. But, most importantly, reflection can allow for greater synthesis, less emotion and greater individual understanding.

CHAPTER NINE:
FINALE – OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND
IMPLICATIONS
STAGES ONE AND TWO

9.1. Overview

This final chapter reflects on the two stages of interviews or storytelling episodes that formed the basis of this research project. For the purpose of these final comments the two rounds of interviews are referred to as stage-one and stage-two. The implications for organizational change and participants' stories and sensemaking that arose from the stage-one interviews, which were discussed in Chapter Seven, are briefly reiterated. The implications arising from stage-one identified three main areas. In summary, firstly they revealed significant points of interest for managers and consultants (change agents), involved in organizational change management; secondly, it was suggested there is a need to look further at change management theory; and thirdly, it was indicated that further research in local body organizations undergoing change would be useful. When analysing and considering the findings and results of the stage-two interviews, it was found that they supported and confirmed the implications that arose from stage-one.

So for the purpose of discussion in this chapter, the implications arising from the stage-two interviews and covered in Chapter Eight are summarised and combined with those arising from stage-one under three main headings. Because stage-one implications have been discussed in some detail already, more emphasis is placed on the stage-two results in this chapter.

The three main headings are:

- **Implications for researchers;**

- **Implications for organizational change agents and managers;**

- **Implications for future research in local body organizations undergoing change.**

The objective of stage-one was to find out what stories told by employees indicated about the change project taking place in their organization, and to see if their stories or sensemaking of events expressed resistance or commitment. The second stage was carried out 1year later. The objective of stage-two was to find out what a small sample of the original interviewees had understood from their experience 1 year on, how they made sense of those experiences, and how they expressed this in narrative. Participants in stage-two were also asked to comment on the main findings and implications for organizational change managers that had arisen from the stage-one data stories.

The over-riding objectives were to find out what participants' sensemaking of events was while involved in the process of change, and whether they expressed resistance and/or commitment (stage-one), then to find out what participant's sensemaking was when they had time to reflect (stage-two), and to see if their stories or sensemaking changed or differed in hindsight after reflection.

The stories gathered from participants who took part in stage-one did indicate resistance to the organizational change. Although there was some little evidence of commitment, overall the stories were less positive. For example, some of the main themes that came through, were:

"Too much change"

"Don't believe in it"

"Managers don't listen"

"The right people aren't being asked"

The stories or sensemaking gathered from participants during stage-two generally were similar to those gathered in stage-one, but participants were able to see events more clearly, or in some cases, on reflection, find or see an explanation for what they could not understand at the time, and be able to provide other reasons or explanations on particular events. For example, as described in Chapter Eight, a former Operation Change team member reflected on his frustration at the time when the team did not seem to be able to get anything done. In hindsight however he was able to see that the expectations of his team, "were just radically different from everyone else's". Another former team member, reported in Chapter Eight, also spoke about how the team searched "desperately around for something to improve", in the various units, as was

their brief. But in hindsight, it was quite clear to him that the staff already in the units "could have done better than us outsiders".

9.2. Implications for researchers

It has been shown in this study that employee's stories or sensemaking of events in an organization are a significant source of knowledge of how employees view happenings within the organization. This would also be true of retrospective sensemaking. Weick's (1995) idea of retrospective sensemaking describes what he calls, "meaningful lived experience" (p. 24). He believes that people in reality can only know what they are doing, after they have done it. This is borne about by Hurst (1995) when he talks about managers reflecting and learning from experience.

The important point to make for researchers is that retrospective sensemaking is an activity from which many possible meanings may need to be synthesised. There are many things happening and there can be many meanings. But we can learn from this, and use it as a basis to help us plan and make decisions for the future.

Reflection, according to Weick (1995), is perhaps the best stance for both researchers and practioners, if the topic of sensemaking is to advance. He highlights how the sensemaking process, "the creation of reality as an ongoing accomplishment" (p. 192), when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves, shapes organizational structure and behaviour.

It can be concluded that during times of organizational change, participants' views, perceptions and sensemaking of happenings are undoubtedly an important indicator and source of information to gauge the mood of the organization. A further conclusion to be made is that there is value to be gained from going back and talking with participants for the second time. The reasons for a second stage are two-fold. Firstly, it can serve as a check or confirmation of the findings and implications arising from the first round of interviews. It gives the participants an opportunity to discuss, reflect, agree or disagree with the results of the first round. In this respect it can provide valuable feedback in terms of clarifying and either verifying or negating the first analysis of the research. In this case, the participants did agree with the results.

The second reason for a second stage is that participants in the second round of interviews indicated that while generally their views or sensemaking of the happenings

at the time of the first interviews had not changed, but they were able to view events or situations more clearly, and find reasons or sensemake. So there was value in having the opportunity to look back and reflect. It served the purpose of clarifying and in some cases making sense of what participants did not know or were not sure of earlier. It is suggested that these findings support the value of future researchers to examine stories at two points in time. The two-stage approach, it is suggested, would give researchers and change agents a greater understanding of employee's perceptions of and attitudes towards organizational change.

9.3.   Implications for change agents and managers

Lewis (2000b) says that implementing planned change is almost always difficult and communication problems are commonplace. Human and organizational factors have been commonly identified as causes and contributors to failures and difficulties in implementation efforts. She states that in one survey of 89 implementers of planned change, the most noted problems encountered were "communicating vision" and "negative attitudes". In this survey, Doyle, Claydon and Buchanan (2000) interviewed 92 managers from 14 public and private-sector organizations. They concluded that understanding how change programmes are implemented and how communication affects this process are central to predicting the outcome.

One of the main factors for managers involved with change, "is how to communicate the changes and get commitment from staff" (Zorn Page & Cheney, 2000, p. 156). This is borne out by Berry (1994) who says the role that managers play in the implementation of organizational change is vital. But an equally important aspect of change is the employees' commitment to such change. He maintains people do not resist change per se, rather, what they resist is the manner in which they are treated in the change process. People "need to be empowered to exert influence or utilize their knowledge in bringing about organizational change" (p. 1).

Once a decision to make and implement organizational changes has been made, communication as a two-way process is vital. Not only should managers ensure a good communication plan is in place and ensure staff know what is going on, they should also listen to what employees are saying, that is their sensemaking.

Bearing in mind what has already been discussed, and considering the question of what can be learned from this research project and what is of significance for organizational managers and change agents, it is clear that a knowledge and understanding of employees' sensemaking of events is important. It is crucial that managers listen to what organizational members are saying as they attempt to make sense of the changes. This was shown quite clearly in this study where the initial plan to implement a communication change strategy with all staff did not proceed.

So a theory of organizational change should take note not only of the process and context, but also the perceptions, tensions and contradictions (Doyle, Claydon and Buchanan 2000). There is a need to listen to what people who are living the experience are saying and what they believe. Doyle et al.'s research found that communication, involvement, planning, anticipating, reviewing, evaluating and reflection are all ingredients felt by managers to be missing from the change process.

So, it is suggested, rather than a two way process as already stated, communication could be regarded as a three way process, with sensemaking on the one hand, and feedback on the other, with listening as a vital component to both. Figure16 shows the importance of the relationship and interdependence of sensemaking, listening and feedback in the communication process.
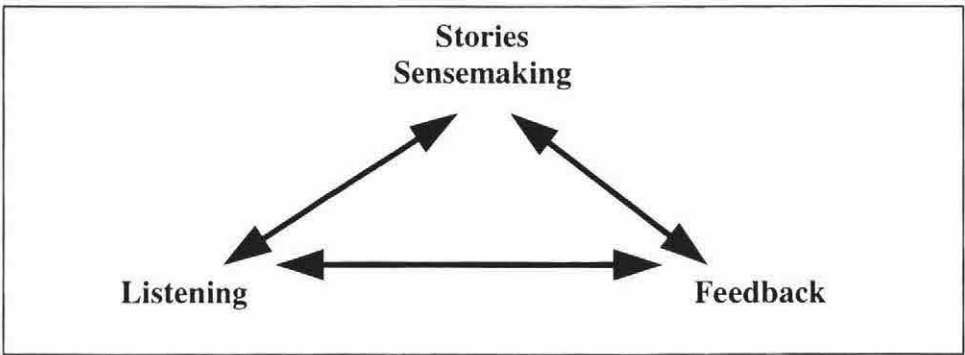

Figure 16:   The sensemaking, listening, feedback cycle model

Then, as in this case, where it could be said that the Operation Change project was not as successful as it could have been, the organizational participant's stories and sensemaking of events both in the present and in hindsight, could provide a useful learning tool for the organization as to why it did not succeed, This approach could be regarded as a platform for discussion; arguing, debating, learning and generally addressing the fresh issues uncovered. If we regard stories as vehicles for

organizational communication and learning, then they can help to use the past to explain the present and to anticipate and plan the future. The implication for change agents, and managers and employees alike, is that the establishment of specific organizational learning mechanisms, such as this, could contribute positively to the success of the organizational change process (Perkins and Blyler, 1999).

9.4. Implications for research with local body organizations in New Zealand undergoing change

The particular characteristics of local bodies in New Zealand and their recent history were discussed earlier. The point was made that local bodies are unique in that there is a multiple number of stakeholders – ratepayers, elected mayor and councillors, community bodies, central government and employees. Further research relating to the nature of local bodies and the impact of change would be helpful.

The fact that local body organizations in New Zealand have been the subjects of change over the last 10 years as a result of change in central government has also been discussed.

So, The City, the subject of this study, would not be unique in its attempts at organizational change. Undoubtedly other councils are experiencing similar pressures and continuing to investigate the most appropriate local structures to meet their stakeholders' requirements and needs, and the best way to deliver services.

It would be useful to use the results of this study as a benchmark for research into other local bodies undergoing change. By using the same two-stage methodology approach and analysis, it would be useful to compare how other local bodies are performing in the light of the uniqueness of local body pressures, that is, multiple stakeholders and in particular those from the elected council arm, and learn from this to assist with the planning and implementation of organizational change.

Finally the ongoing, continuous and inherent nature of change taking place in The City and the effect on the employees and their sensemaking have been central to this study. But clearly change is very much part of all organizational life in the twenty-first century. Stability and continuity are not common contemporary management expectations (Doyle et al.,2000). Organizational change is no longer a one off event. Zorn et al. (2000) put it this way, "the work experience of most people is inundated with

communication about and promoting change" (p. 515). There is a need to continue to explore and develop strategies necessary both for successful organizational change implementation, and also for those who participate/take part in it, to help them develop the capabilities for coping and surviving in the face of continuous change.

REFERENCES

Allaire, Y., & Firsirotu, M. E. (1984). Theories of organizational culture. *Organizational Studies. 5* (3), 193-226.

Alvesson, M. (2002). *Understanding organizational change culture.* London: Sage Publications.

Argyris, C. (1992). Teaching smart people how to learn. In C.A. Carnall (Ed.). *Strategic change.* (pp. 201-215). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective reading.* M.A: Addison Wesley.

Bailey, R. (1974). The big chill: yuppies left out in the cold? *Business and Society Review, 90,* 74.

Beech, N. (2000). Narrative styles of managers and workers: a tale of star-crossed lovers. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science. 36* (2), 210-228.

Becker, H. S. (1960). Notes on the concept of commitment. *American Journal of Psychology, 66,* 289-296.

Beer, M. (2001). How to develop an organization capable of sustained high performance: embrace the drive for results-capability development paradox. *Organizational Dynamics, 29* (4), 233-248.

Beer, M., & Nohria, N. (2000). Cracking the code of change. *Harvard Business Review, 78* (3), 133-142.

Berelson, B. (1952). Content analysis in communication research. Glencoe, IL: Free Press – G. W. Ryan, & H. R. Bernard, (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd Ed. 2000). Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Bernmels, B., & Reschef, Y. (1991). Manufacturing employees and technological change. *Journal of Labour Research.* *12* (3), 231-246 in D. Waddell, D. & Sohal A. (1998). Resistance: a constructive tool for change management. *Management Decision, 36* (8), 46-55.

Berry, J. (1994). Executive commentary (comment on R. K. Reger, et al.), *Academy of Management Executive.* *8* (4), (1994), pp 31-43 (special issue: Restructuring, re-engineering, and rightsizing: do the metaphors make sense?). *The Academy of Management Executive, 8, 4,* 43-45.

Blasingame, J. W. & Weeks, J. W. (1981). Behavioural dimensions of MPR change: Assessing your organization's strengths and weaknesses. *Production and Inventory Management, 22* (3), 81-85.

Block, P. (1989). Flawless consulting. In Mclennan, R. (1989). *Managing Organizational Change.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall.

Boddy, D, Macbeth, D. & Wagner, B. (2000). Implementing collaboration between organizations: An empirical study of supply chain partnering. *Journal of Management Studies, 37* (7), 1003-1019.

Boje, D. M. (1991). [a] The storytelling organization - A study of story performance in an office – supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 36,* 106-126.

Boje, D. M. (1991). [b] Consulting and change in the storytelling organization. *Journal of Change Management 9* (5), 4–6.

Boje, D. M., Alvarez, R. C., & Schooling, B. (2001). In R. Westwood & S. Linstead (Eds.). *The language of organization.* London: Sage Publications.

Boyce, M. E. (1995). Collective centering and collective sense-making in the stories of an organization. *Organization Studies, 16* (11), 107-128.

Boyce, M. E. (1996). Organizational story and storytelling: A critical review. *Journal of Change Management, 9* (5), 7-10.

Breur, N. L. (1998). The power of storytelling. *Workforce, 2* (12), 36-41.

Brown, A. D. (1998). Narrative, politics and legitimacy in an IT implementation. *Journal of Management Studies, 35* (1), 20-28.

Brown, L. (ed.). (1993). *The new shorter oxford english dictionary.* A-M Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Browning, L. D. (1991). Organizational narratives and organizational structures. *Journal of Change Management, 9* (6), 59-67.

Bush, G. (1995). *Local government and politics in New Zealand.* (2nd ed.). Auckland: Auckland University Press.

Campbell, D. T. (1974). *Quantitative knowing in action research.* Kert Lewin Award Address, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans.

Campbell, J. (1997). *Organizations and the business environment.* N.Y: Prentice Hall.

Carnall, C. A. (1995). *Managing change in organizations* (2nd ed.). Europe: Prentice Hall.

Carnall, C. A. (1997). (Ed.). *Strategic change.* Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Clarke, B. R. (1970). *The distinctive college: Antioch, Reed and Swarthmore.* Chicago: Aldine.

Clarke, B. R. (1972). The organizational saga in higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 17,* 172-184.

Coopey, J., & Hartley, J. (1991). Reconsidering the ease for organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Journal, 1* (3), 18-32.

Cronin, B. (1996, December 10-17). How company culture can affect your future. *Rural Telecommunications,* p. 24-28.

Cross, W. (1995). *Encyclopedic dictionary of business terms.* London: Prentice Hall.

Deal, E. D., & Kennedy, A. A. (1996). *Corporate cultures the Rites and rituals of corporate life.* Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research.* London: Sage Publications Inc.

Doyle, M., Claydon, T., & Buchanan, D. (2000). Mixed results, lousy process: The management experience of organizational change. *British Journal of Management, 11* (3). S59.

Drage, J. (1999). Introduction. *Political Science, 50* (2), 147.

Economo, H. D., & Zorn, T. E. (1996). *The need to know: Perceptions of communication during downsizing.* Memphis, TN: Applied Communication Division of the Southern States Communication Association Convention,

Egan, G. (1994). Cultivate your culture. *Management Today.* April. London.

Eisen, H., Mulraney, B. J., & Sohal, A. S. (1992). Impediments to the adoption of modern quality management practices. *International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management, 9* (5), 17-41.

Feldman, S. P. (1990). Stories as cultural creativity: on the relation between symbolism and politics in organizational change. *Human Relations, 43,* 809-829.

Fisher, W. R. (1989). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value and action.* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Fletcher, C. (1996). "The 250 lb man in an alley" Police Storytelling. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 9,* 5.

Frost, P. J., Moore, L.F., Louis, M.R., Lunberg, C.C., & Martin, J. (Eds.), (1985). *Organizational culture* Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Gabriel, Y. (1991). On organizational stories and myths: Why it is easier to slay a dragon than to kill a myth. *International Sociology, 6,* 426-441.

Gabriel, Y. (1995). The unmanaged organization: Stories, fantasies, subjectivity. *Organizational Studies, 16* (3), 477-501.

Gabriel, Y. (1998). Same old story or changing story? Folklore, modern and post modern mutations. In D. Grant, T. Keenoy & C. Oswich (Eds.), *Discourse and organizatons.* (pp. 84-103). London: Sage Publications.

Gabriel, Y. (2000) [a]. *Storytelling in organizations, facts, fictions and fantasies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gabriel, Y., & Fineman, S. S. D. (2000) [b]. *Organizing and organizations* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Gagliardi, P. (1986). The Creation of organizational cultures: A conceptual framework. *Organization Studies*, 72 (4), 117-134.

Gagliardi, P. (1990). *Symbols and artefacts: View of the corporate landscape*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Galpin, T. J. (1996). *The human side of change*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Geertz, C. (1975). *The interpretation of cultures*. London: Hutchinson.

Gephart, R. P. (1991). Succession sensemaking and organizational change: A story of a deviant college president. *Journal of Change Management*, 3 (2), 35-44.

Glaser, B. G., & Straus, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Grant, D., Keenoy, T., & Oswich, C. (Eds.) (1998). *Discourse and organization*. London: Sage Publications.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researches: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Goffee, R., & Jones, G. (1996). What holds the modern company together? *Harvard Business Review*. Nov-Dec, 133-148.

Guest, D. (1987). Human resource management and industrial relations. *Journal of Management Studies, 24* (5), 503-521.

Habermas, J. (1977). *A review of gadamer's truth and method in understanding and social inquiry.* Dallmay, F. D., &. McCarthy, T. A. (Eds.), (pp. 335-363). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press

Hamada, T. (1995). Organizational cognition and strategic decision making. Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association. Washington, DC.

Hamel J., with Dufour S., & Fortin D. (1993). *Case study methods.* A Sage University Paper. London: Sage Publications.

Handy, C. B. (1989). *The age of unreason.* Boston, M.A.: Harvard Business School Press.

Hansen, C. D., & Kahnweiler, W. M. (1997). Cultural expectations through stories about work. *Journal of Applied Management, 6* (2), 117-138.

Hansen, K. H., Hansen, C. D., & Kahnweiler, W. M. (1993). Storytelling: An instrument for understanding the Dynamics of Corporate Relationships. *Human Relations, 46* (12), 1391-1412.

Hart, R. P. (1997). *Modern rhetorical criticism* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Hatch, M. (1992). The dynamics of organizational culture, *Academy of Management Review. 18* (4), 657-693.

Hawes, L. C. (1991). Organizing narratives / codes / poetics. *Journal of Change Managemen, 3* (2), 45-51.

Hurst, D. K. (1995). *Crisis and renewal: Meeting the challenge of organizational change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Hutchison S. (1997). Perceived organizational support: Further evidence.... *Educational & Psychological Measurement, 57* (6), 1025-1035.

Isabella, L. A. (1990). Evolving interpretations as change unfolds how members construct key organizational events. *Academy of Management Journal, 33* (1), 7-41. In T. J. Watson, (1994). *In search of management.* London: Routledge

Jones, M. (1991). What if the stories don't tally with the culture*? Journal of Change Management, 3* (2), 27-34.

Jordan, A. (1996). Critical incident story creation and culture formation in a self-directed work team. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 9* (5), 19-27.

Kaid, L. L., & Wadsworth, A. J. (1989). Content analysis. In P. Emmert & L. L. Barker (Eds.). *Measurement of communication behaviour* (pp. 197-217). White Plains, N.Y.: Longman.

Kanter, R.M. (1983). The change master and the intricate architecture of corporate culture change. *Management Review, 72*, October, 18-28.

Kaye, B., & Jacobs, B. (1999). True tales - The power of organizational storytelling. *Training and Development, 53* (3), 45-50.

Kegan, R., & Lahey L. L. (2001). The real reason people won't change. *Harvard Business Review, 79* (10), 84-92.

Kinnear, L., & Sutherland, M. (2000). Determinants of organizational commitment amongst knowledge workers. *South African Journal of Business Management, 31* (3), 106-113.

Kolb, D. A., & Putman, L. (1992a). The multiple faces of conflict in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour, 13:311-324.* In Y. Gabriel & S. S. D. Fineman (2000) [b]. *Organizing and organizations* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. (1992). *Organizational behaviour* (4th ed.). U.S.A: McGraw-Hill.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying.* New York: Macmillan: Toronto: Collier-Macmillan.

Kvale, S. (Ed.) (1989). Issues of validity in qualitative research. Lund. Sweden: Student litteratur. In M. B. Miles, & A. M. Huberman, (1994). [a] *Qualitative data analysis, an expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Kyle, N. (1993). Staying with the flow of change. *Journal for Quality and Participation.* July/August, 34-39.

Larsson, R., & Lowendahl, B. (1996 August). *The qualitative side of management research.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management. Cincinnati, OH.

Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind mathematics and culture in everyday life.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, T. W. (1999). *Using qualitative methods in organization research.* ORM. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Leonard, J., Barton, D., & Kraus, W. A. (1985). Implementing new technology. *Harvard Business Review, 63* (6), 102-110.

Lewis, D. (1994). Organizational change: Relationship between reactions, behaviour and organizational performance. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 7* (5), 17-26.

Lewis, L. K. (2000). [a] Communicating change: four classes of quality programmes. *The Journal of Business Communication, 37* (2), 128-155.

Lewis, L. K. (2000).[b] "Blindsided by that one" and "I saw that coming": the relative anticipation and occurrence of communication problems and other problems in implementers' hindsight. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 28* (1), 44-67.

Local Government. (2001) *Consultation. Legislative Reviews / submissions.* Retrieved October 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http//www.lgnz.co.nz/localgovt/consultation.html

Local Government. (2001) *Local government / roles of local government / councils / facts.* Retrieved October 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http//www.lgnz.co.nz/localgovt/lgroles.html

Lundeberg, M. A., Levin, B. B., & Harrington, H. L. (Eds.). (1999). *Who learns what from cases and how? The research base for teaching and learning with cases.* Jersey, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Markus, G. (1986). *Language and production: A critique of the paradigms.* Boston: Dordrecht.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research.* London: Sage Publications Inc.

Martin, J. (1982). Stories and scripts in organizational settings. In A. Hastorf, & A. Isen (Eds.). *Cognitive social psychology.* 255-305. London: Routledge.

Martin, J., Sitkin, S. B., & Boehm, M. (1985). Founders and elusiveness of a cultural legacy. In P. J. Frost, L. F. Moore, M. R. Louis, C. C. Lundrerg, & J. Martin (Eds.), *Organizational culture* (pp. 99-124). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications Inc.

Martin, J., & Meyerson, D. (1986). *Organizational culture at the OZ company* (OZCO). Unpublished manuscript. USA: Stanford University.

Martin, J., & Meyerson, D. (1988). Organizational cultures and the denial, channeling and acknowledgment of ambiguity. In L. R. Pondy, R. J. Boland, Jr, & H. Thomas (Eds.). *Managing ambiguity and change.* (pp. 93-125). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Martin, J. (1992). *Cultures in organizations: Three perspectives.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Maurer, R. (1996). Using resistance to build support for change. *Journal for Quality and Participation.* June, 56-63.

Mayer, J. P. (1956). Max Weber and German politics. In Y. Gabriel (2000*). Storytelling in organizations, facts, fictions and fantasies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McConkie, M. L., & Boss, R. W. (1996). Personal stories and the process of change: The case of Anwar Sadat. *Public Administration Quarterly, Randallstown, 19* (4), 493-503.

McDermott P., & Forgie, V. (1999). Trends in local government: Efficiency, functions and democracy. *Political Science, 50* (2), 247-265.

McGregor, J. H. (1995). The manufacture of news in the 1993 New Zealand general election. Thesis prepared in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Human Resource Management at Massey University.

McKinlay, P. (1990). Local government, In P. McKinley, (Eds.), *Redistribution of power? Devolution in New Zealand.* (pp. 47-63). Victoria University Press for the Institute of Policy Studies.

Meek, V. (1988). Organizational culture: Origins and weaknesses. *Organization Studies, 9* (4), 453-473.

Merrian, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* Revised and expanded from case study research in education. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman A. M. (1999). *Qualitative data analysis. An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). [a] Transcending the qualitative - quantitative debate: The analytic and systematic approaches to educational research. *Education Researcher, 20* (6), 10-18.

Miller, K. D., & Lewchanin S. (2001). Getting ready to get ready for change. *Consulting to Management, C2M, 12* (3), 42-49.

Miller S. I. (1995). Qualitative research methods: A philosophical and practical inquiry (prospectus for a monograph). Chicago: Loyola University, School of Education.

Mitroff, I., & Kilmann, R. H. (1975). Stories managers tell: A new tool for organizational problem-solving. *Management Review*, July, 12-28.

Morgan, C. (1986). Images of organization. London: Sage. In Y. Gabriel, & S. S. D. Fineman (2000) [b]. *Organizing and organizations* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Neubert, M. J., & Cady, S. H. (2001). Program commitment: A multi-study longitudinal field investigation of its impact and antecedents. *Personnel Psychology, 54* (2), 421-449.

Neuman W. L. (2000). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Neuman, W. L. (1994). *Social research methods – Qualitative and quantitative methods.* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

O'Connor, E. S. (1998) Plotting the organization: The embedded narrative as a construct for studying change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science, Arlington 36* (2), 174-192.

O'Reilly, C. (1989). Corporations, culture and commitment: Motivation and social control in organizations. In M. Tushman, C. O'Reilly, & D. Nadler, (Eds.), *Management of Organizations: Strategies, Tactics and Analyses.* (pp. 285-303). Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Oakland, J, & Sohal, A. S. (1987). Production management techniques in UK manufacturing industry: Usage and barriers. *International Journal of Operations and Production of Management, 7* (1), 8-37.

Page, D. (2000). Fit for change: Analysis of change related communication in a local government organization. *Communication Journal of New Zealand, 1,*1.

Peters, T., & Austin, N. (1985). *A Passion for excellence: The leadership difference.* New York: Warner Books.

Peters, T.S., & Waterman, R. H. (1982). In search of excellence. New York: Harper & Row. In Gabriel Y. (2000) [a]. *Storytelling in organizations facts, fictions and fantasies* (p. 74). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Perkins, J. M., & Blyler, N. (Eds.) (1999). *Narrative and professional communication.* Stanford CT: Ablex.

Pierce, J. B. (1979). *The nature of natural languages.* Portland, OR: The Hapi Press.

Rhodes, C. (1997). Playing with words: Multiple representations of organizational learning stories. *Electronic Journal of Radical Organisation Theory, 3* (1). http://www.mhgt.waikato.ac.nz/Research/ejrot/vol3_1Rhodes.asp

Robinson, J. A. (1981). Personal narratives reconsidered. *Journal of American Folklore, 93* (371), 58-85.

Rosen, M. (1985). Breakfast at spiro's: Dramaturgy and dominance. *Journal of Management Studies, 11* (3), 31-48.

Ryan, G. W. & Bernard, H. R. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Salomon, G. (1991). Transcending the qualitative – quantitative debate: The analytic and systematic approaches to educational research. Educational evaluation and policy analysis, 3, 25-31. In M. B. Miles & A. M. Huberman., *Qualitative data analysis, An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London, Sage Publications Inc.

Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (1992). [a] *Organizational culture and leadership.* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (1992). [b] What is culture? In P. Frost, L. Moore, M Louis, C. Lundberg, & J Martin (Eds.) *Reframing organizational culture* (pp. 243-253). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Schein, E. (1996). *Career anchors revisited: Implications for career development in the 21st century.* Hall Career Paper, The Society of Organizational Learning.

Schein, E. (1998). *Organizational psychology* (3rd Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Sekeran, U. (1992). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach,* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Shaffir, W. B., & Stebbins, R. A. (Eds.). (1991*). Experiencing fieldwork. An inside view of qualitative research.* London: Sage Publication Inc.

Sherman, R. R., & Webb, R. R. (1998). "Qualitative research in education: A focus". In R. R. Sherman & R. B. Webb (Eds.). *Qualitative research in education: focus and methods.* Bristol, Pa: Falmer Press.

Siehl, C. (1985). "After the founder: An opportunity to manage culture". In L. R. Pondy P. Frost, G. Morgan, & T. Dandridge (Eds.), *Organizational symbolism* (pp. 99-124). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Siehl, C., & Martin, J. (1988). Measuring organizational culture: mixing qualitative and quantitative methods. In M. O. Jones, M. D. Moore & R. C. Snyder, (Eds.), *Inside organizations: understanding the human dimensions* (pp. 79-103). Newbury Park: Sage Publications Inc.

Sievers, B. (1986). Beyond the surrogate of motivation. *Organization Studies*, *7* (4), 196-200.

Sinclair, J. (1994). Reacting to what? *Journal of Organizational Change Management 7* (5), 31-34.

Sligo, F., Fountain, S., O'Neill, D. & Sayers, J. (2000). *Effective communication in business.* Palmerston North: Software Technology (NZ) Ltd.

Smircich, L. (1983). Organizations as shared meanings. In R. Pondy, P. J. Frost, G. Morgan & T.C. Dandridge (Eds.), *Organizational symbolism: Monographs in organizational and industrial relations* (pp. 55-66). Greenwich, C: Tjai Press.

Smircich, L. (1985). *Is the concept of culture a paradigm for understanding organizations and ourselves?* In P. J. Frost, L. F. Moore, M. R. Louis, C. C. Lunberg, & J. Martin (Eds.), (1985)*Organizational culture* (p. 55-72). Beverley Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Snowden, D. (2001). Storytelling as a strategic communication tool. *Strategic Communication Management,* 5 (3), 28-32.

Spiker, B. K., & Lesser, E. (1995). Change management: We have met the enemy. *Journal of Business Strategy, 16* (4), 17-21.

Sprodley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation.* (pp. 428-463). London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich College Publishers.

Statistics New Zealand (1998). *Guide to the collection of community information – Getting started.* New Zealand: Statistics New Zealand.

Storey, J. (Ed.) (1996). *Blackwell cases in human resource and change management.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Strauss, A.L. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Strebel, P. (1996). Why do employees resists change? *Harvard Business Review*. May-June, 86-92.

Sumser, J. (2001). *A guide to empirical research in communication*. London: Sage Publication Inc.

Terziovski, M., Sohal, A. S., & Moss, S. (1997). *A longitudinal study of quality management practices in Australian organizations*. Melbourne: Department of Management, Monash University.

Thornhill, A., Lewis, P. , & Millmore, M. (2000). *Managing change – A human resource strategy approach*. Essex, England: Pearson Education.

Trice, H. M., & Beyer, J. M. (1984). Studying organizational cultures through rites and ceremonies. *Academy of Management Review, 9*, 653-669.

Van Maanen, J., & Barley, S. R. (1985). Cultural organization: Fragments of a theory. In J.P. Frost, L.F. Moore, M.R. Louis, C.C. Lundberg, & J. Martin (Eds.), *Organizational culture* (pp. 31-53). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc.

Van. Maanen, J., & Barley, S. R. (1984). Occupational communities: Culture and control in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behaviour, 6*, 287-365.

Vance, C. M. (1991). Formalising storytelling in organizations: A key agenda for the design of training. *Journal of Change Management, 9* (5), 52-58.

Waddell, D., & Sohal, A. (1998). Resistance: A constructive tool for change management. *Management Decision, 36* (8), 46-55.

Walton, R. (1985). From control to commitment in the workplace. *Harvard Business Review*. March-April, 77-84. In A. Thornhill, P. Lewis & M. Millmore. (2000). *Managing change – A human resource strategy approach.* Essex, England: Pearson Education.

Watson, T. J. (1994). *In search of management.* London: Routledge.

Weick, K. E. (1991). The vulnerable system: An analysis of the Tenerife air disaster. In P. Frost, M. Louis, C. Lundberg, & J. Martin, (Eds.), *Reframing organizational culture* (pp. 117-130). Newbury Park: Sage Publications Inc.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations.* California: Sage Publications Inc.

Westwood, R., & Linstead, S. (Eds.). (2001). *The language of organization.* London: Sage Publications.

Wilhelm, W. (1992). Changing corporate culture - or corporate behaviour? How to change your company. *Academy of Management Executive, 6* (4), 14-20.

Wilkins, A., & Thompson, M. (1991). On getting the story crooked (and straight). *Journal of Change Management, 9* (2), 18-26.

Willmott, H. (1990). *Subjectivity and the dialects of praxis: Opening up the core of labour process analysis.* In D. Knights and H. Willmott (Eds.), *Labour Process Theory.* (pp. 336-378). Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Willmott, H. (1993). Strength is ignorance; slavery is freedom. Managing culture in modern organizations. *Journal of Management Studies, 30,* 515-552.

Yin, R. K. (1993). *Applications of case study research.* London: Sage Publications Inc.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research - Design and methods* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications Inc.

Zaltman, G., & Duncan, R. (1977). *Strategies for planned change*. Toronto: Wiley.

Zikmund, W. (1997). *Business research methods* (5th ed.). New York: The Dryden Press, Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Zorn, T. E., Page, D. J., & Cheney, G. (2000). Nuts about change. Multiple perspectives on change oriented communication in a public sector organization. *Management Communication Quarterly, 13* (4), 515-600.

INTRODUCTION TO APPENDICES

The appendices that follow include copies of those documents used in the research, the letter and information sheet provided for stage-one participants (interviewees), and the consent forms used for stages one and two.

Copies of conversation starters and questions for both stages are included, as well as a list of themes or phrases that emerged from the interviews.

Appendix 1:   Letters to participants – for stage-one interviews

Massey University

Dear Participant

I am a lecturer of Communication and Journalism at Massey University Wellington. As part of my work and study, I am researching the area of organizational change management at work during times of change.

The purpose of this letter to you is to ask if you would be willing to assist with the research by agreeing to participate in an interview.

As you know your organization is undergoing change and the management has kindly agreed for me to have access to employees.

Rather than use a questionnaire based survey, I am hoping to discuss events/issues with individual staff. I am hoping people will provide thoughts and experiences of recent changes.

The purpose of the discussion is to study aspects of life at work during times of organizational change. The information you provide will help to better understand the organizational change management process. Because you are the one who can give us a correct picture of how you are experiencing change, you will be asked to respond to the questions frankly and honestly.

Your response will be strictly confidential. Only members of the research team will have access to the information you give. In order to ensure the utmost privacy, we will provide an identification number for each participant. This number will be used by us only for follow up procedures. The numbers, names and questionnaires will not be made available to anyone other than the research team.

A summary of results will be mailed to you after the data is analysed, if you request it.

I hope that you will be willing to participate in the study. If possible I would like to arrange an interview with yourself. In the meantime please feel free to phone me on (04) 801 2794 ext 6433 if you have any further questions. I look forward to perhaps meeting you in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Day

Academic Group Leader and Lecturer

Department of Communication and Journalism

Massey University

INFORMATION SHEET

CONFIDENTIAL

Title of Research Project: Stories and Organizational Change

School/Department   Communication and Journalism, Wellington

Name of Researcher: Mary Day

Contact Phone Number: (04) 801 2794 ext 6433

Purpose and Outline of Research Project:

The purpose of the project is to explore the role of storytelling by individuals in times of organizational change. As you know your organization is undergoing change and the Management has kindly agreed for me to have access to employees.

Rather than use a questionnaire based survey, the approach will be a way of story gathering and discussion, whereby individual staff members provide their thoughts and experiences of recent changes.

The purpose of the discussion is to study aspects of life at work during times of organizational change. The information you provide will help to better understand the organizational change management process. Because you are the one who can give us a correct picture of how you are experiencing change, you will be asked to respond to the questions frankly and honestly.

Your response will be strictly confidential. Only members of the research team will have access to the information you give. In order to ensure the utmost privacy, we will provide an identification number for each participant. This number will be used by us

only for follow up procedures. The numbers, names and questionnaires will not be made available to anyone other than the research team.

A summary of results will be mailed to you after the data in analysed, if you request it.

Participant's Involvement in the Research Project

The approach will be a way of collecting change stories from participants. You will be asked in an informal conversational type interview to provide your perception/stories of recent change. The stories will be taped, then transcribed and coded. Your name will not be used in any part of this study.

You have the right:

- To decline participation

- To refuse to answer any question

- To withdraw at any time

- To ask any questions about the study at any time during the session

- To provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher

- To be given access to a summary of findings of the study when it is concluded

Use and Publication of the Results of the Research Project - Expected Outcomes

- To feedback to the organizations (site) management to assist in the change process

- To contribute to the developing body of research on the relationship between stories and change management

- To deliver a paper at conferences and seminars including the Australia and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA) conference.

- To publish a paper in a refereed journal

- To develop research presenting and/or publishing skills

Appendix 3:   Participant Consent Form

◑ Massey University

Privacy Act 1993:

Under the Privacy Act 1993 the Researcher undertakes that the information supplied by the participant will be held securely and that participants can arrange to see and check details held about them.

Information about individuals will be confined to staff involved in the research project.

Individuals with concerns about privacy should address these in the first instance to the Researcher conducting the research, or contact the Secretary, Academic Ethics Committee, Tel (04) 801 2794 ext6723.

STORIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used, and any data I may provide towards this project will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being audio taped

I agree / do not agree to the interview being video taped

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio / video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this research project having received a brief explanation of the research that my participation will involve, and an explanation of how the results will be published.

Signed: ……………..…………….

Name: ……………..…………….

Date: ……………..…………….

Researcher:

The participant has received a brief explanation of the research, what their participation will involve, and an explanation of how the published results will be used. I have provided a contact telephone number should the participant require further information.

Signed: ……………..…………….

Name of

Researcher: ……………..…………….

(please print clearly)

To be completed by Researcher:

RESEARCH PROPOSAL approved by Research Committee

Date: ……………..…………….

☐   **Copy given to Participant**

☐   **Copy retained by Researcher**

Appendix 4: Conversation starters, story starters and probes for stage-one

STARTING STORYTELLING CONVERSATIONS

Questions   **Starters**   **Probes**

Tell me a story

- What's been happening around here lately?
- How do you see it?
- What are others saying?
- What's your sense of it?
- What do others think / feel about it?
- What has been achieved?
- How has it been told to you?
- What would be the ideal?
- What is the actual?
- Can you give an example?
- Where are the changes coming from?
- Do you think they (changes) are necessary?
- What is the result?
- Is it just the way we do things around here?
- Is it not the way any more?
- Why the changes?
- Who tells you?
- What's in it for you?
- Tell me something about your department and perhaps even the organizations as a whole in terms of work, employees and whatever else.
- What's it like working here?
- Tell me a bit about your job.
- Could you tell me about the structure of your organization?
- What is the most important part to you of your job?
- What is most important to you in getting your job done?

- What would you like to change?
- What's been happening around here lately?
- What's been changed?
- Why the changes?
- Who tells you?
- What's in it for you?
- Tell me something about your department and perhaps even the organization as a whole in terms of work, employees and whatever else you think is important.

Starting Storytelling

- If you were to tell me what aspects of your job you like and what aspects of it you don't like, what would they be?
- Tell me about the reward system in this place, can you give examples?
- If you were offered a similar job elsewhere, how willing would you be to take it?
- If I were to seek employment here and request you to describe your department to me as a newcomer, what would you say?

Appendix 5: Themes arising from analysis of stories

THEMES / phrases / metaphors

Metaphors

Operation Change (OC) - beast   animal personified

OC   will die

OC   is dead

OC   dead in its grave

OC   killed off

Told you so

Dabbling in fields they didn't know

OC philosophy good but changed

Credibility gap- so not supported by staff

Grapevine

Different perspectives/perceptions of OC objectives

M.W. OK-hero?

Here we go again

New staff positive-little understanding

Old staff mostly negative

Anti-rather than resistant

Little sign of resistance only

Cynicism

Told you so

Dabbling in fields they didn't know

Here we go again

OC philosophy good but changed

Different perceptions of events

        or is it different stories but some deliberately evasive conflicting stories

Management not honest

Won't work

Weight of disbelief within organization

Unwillingness to participate

Dragging of feet providing data and informative

Like going to war

Waste of time

Generally people on edge

Grapevine

Credibility gap- so not supported by staff

OC isolation of OC team-abused

OC team members hated it (OC) hated by staff

Changed the rules meant- just a guise for slashing cutting costs

People see through

Upper, middle and lower perception different

Chief Executive hero

Councillors villains

Initially process improvement became OC-Staff Adding Value

Most don't appear to know real meaning ?

Lower down freer they were with comment ?

Two views of OC

> view 1: it is purely process impr

> view 2: it is purely to save money under guise of lies

Not enough staff involvement from own (perception)

OC people-caused a lot of resistance by approach

OC team tended to say-this is your problem-this is your solution

Conflicting perspectives of OC

Staff think OC waste of time

A lot of errors were made because systems owners were not involved/consulted by OC members

Initially bad-got better, ie people's attitudes towards OC

Mostly people hoped (OC) would go away like all other changes

Ant- council-no respecting

Lack of loyalty to overall improvement-but seen to like and respect CM

Told you so

Lower down more anti-disillusioned

Appendix 6: Letter and summary of stage-one implications given to stage-two participants

Wednesday 31st July 2002

Name
address
address
address
address

SUBJECT: RESEARCH STORIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
MANAGEMENT
LOCAL BODY ORGANIZATION OPERATION CHANGE

Dear name

You will recall that in the middle of last year (2001) I interviewed you along with 20 other employees at the Palmerston North City Council. The objective of the interview was to collect stories from interviewees which gave their perception of what was happening in the organization during a time of change. I last wrote to you in September 2001 to provide a progress report.

It is my pleasure to tell you that this research has been completed. The conclusions and implications arising from the research, provide interesting, informative and useful data for the area of organizational change management. A brief summary of the conclusions and implications are included for your information.

Your interview was of particular significance and value to this research and I thank you for this. For this reason I would like very much to return to meet you for a second interview.

This would be stage 2 of the research project.

The objectives are:

a) To obtain feedback and views / responses to the Stage 1 research conclusions and implications

b) To obtain views and perceptions from interviewees of what, with hindsight, they believe should/could have been done in the implementation of Operation Change, taking a:

"what if"; and "if only" – approach. Again the interview would follow the story telling approach as used in Stage 1.

I look forward to talking to you. I will contact you in the next few days to gauge your interest.

Yours sincerely

Mary Day

Lecturer

Dept of Communication and Journalism

Stories and Organizational Change –
Participants and Sensemaking

Outline of research carried out

The research project explored the role of storytelling by individuals in times of organizational change. The study was carried out in a local body organization which, like other local bodies, had been undergoing a series of changes over a period of several years as the result of central government reform.

There is a wide body of literature supporting the theory that the performance of stories is a key part of an organization's members' sensemaking. It has been shown that people reconstruct and interpret different experiences of organizational change and learning.

For this study, a total of 21 employees from the local body were interviewed by way of storytelling. The interviews were unstructured. The stories were analysed primarily using the meaning condensation approach, which extracts common themes from the interviewees' texts.

The main research question was whether stories told by employees about change taking place in their organization indicated resistance. A sub-question and one closely related asked if stories indicated commitment to the changes, or degrees of commitment. Resistance to change is recognised as a critically important factor which can influence success or otherwise of an organizational change. Resistance to change can be an impediment to progress.

On the other hand, resistance exhibited in stories can in some cases be a constructive and useful tool for change management, in that it may draw attention to aspects of the change programme that may not be appropriate.

Overall it seemed clear that the stories provided confirmed the original question. Stories indicated resistance, but in varying degrees. The research indicated that stories told by employees were an important source of knowledge of how they viewed happenings within the organization.

The major findings from the employees' stories revealed some important key themes. One was that the participants had conflicting views of the purpose of the changes. In addition, there was a general sense of "here we go again," a perception that they had difficulty in viewing the changes seriously. There was also a general perception that the

right people were not being included in the change-making decision process. People felt left out and therefore expressed resistance in their stories. Further, a group of people was selected to carry out the change process and they indicated feelings of isolation from, and rejection by, the organization's employees, and in particular by their peers.

A positive lesson to be learned from this research, which could be utilised by change managers in the future is the significance of employees' stories and their usefulness to managers to gauge and assess the mood of the organization toward change. The notion of harnessing what employees say about change offers a number of possibilities for organizations such as local bodies.

Finally, it is suggested that it would be useful to conduct similar research within other local bodies who have also been undergoing series of changes over recent years following central government reform. Local bodies are unique in that an elected group of individuals, sometimes with limited knowledge of the workings of a local body, make policy decisions and determine long-term strategy for the local body. This background creates special difficulties for change programmes in local bodies.

Appendix 7:   Questions used as starters for stage-two interviewees

Questions for Stage 2 Organizational Stories Change

1.   How did Operation Change (Operation Change) end – was it significant? – what was its significance?

2.   What happened since Operation Change (Operation Change) ended?

In hindsight

3.   Looking back, have you any ideas about how the organization could / should have done things differently?

4.   Looking back, are there any things you personally would have done differently?

5.   How could the project have been communicated better?

Other?