VALUE DISSONANCE: A CASE OF THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY

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BACKGROUND

Value congruence:

The need for value congruence between employees and their employing organisation received considerable attention during the final decade of the last century. With claims of greater employee motivation and commitment (Howard, 1990; Posner and Schmidt, 1994; Adkins, Ravlin and Meglino, 1996), increased organisational effectiveness (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Schein, 1992) and lower executive turnover (Weil and Kimball, 1995), it is little wonder value congruence has been of interest to practitioners and academics alike.

Values provide powerful standards which guide social behaviour and social action in a number of ways (Rokeach, 1973). Personal values are thought to be determinants of attitudes, ideology, of self-justification, of presentation of self to others, of comparison between self and others, of moral judgements and evaluations of competence (Rokeach, 1973; Agle and Caldwell, 1999). In their study of values in business Agle and Caldwell (1999) suggest six major levels of analysis - individual, organisational, a combination of individual/ organisational, institutional, societal and global levels. It is Agle and Caldwell's view (1999, p. 337) it is the intersection between personal values and organisational values that is the most popular of all levels of study. It is also at this level of analysis the benefits of value congruence have been explicated from a number of different perspectives and in many different contexts.

The recent focus on the need to create a 'positive' organisational culture in which organisational members internalise organisational goals and values has been perhaps the most common articulation of the belief in value congruence (see Katz and Kahn, 1978; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1985; Balazs, 1990; Bate, 1994).

Developing the idea of a 'positive' organisational culture some writers have prescribed the need for shared values and shared ideals, not just between employees and the organisation but between organisational members to support some 'fit' between an organisation's strategy and culture (eg. Peters and Waterman, 1982; Schein, 1992; Posner and Schmidt, 1992, 1993 and 1994; Pant and Lachman, 1998). It is very clear within this range of literature, shared values of organisational culture are seen as agents that bond (and bind) organisational members into the desired state of commonality.

In addition to this literature on organisational culture yet other studies of organisations and management re-inforce the need for or existence of value congruence. For instance, value congruency has been examined by writers such as Jung and Avolio (1998) who established a positive relationship between transformational leadership, followers' performance and value congruence. Value congruence has also been identified as a significant factor in establishing both person-organisation (P-O) and person-environment (P-E) fit (Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Ryan and Schmit, 1996). The fit in these instances have significance in such matters as employee selection, satisfaction, intention to leave employment as well as successful implementation of change programs (see Ryan and Schmit, 1996).

From this brief discussion it is apparent value congruence is considered a significant factor in organisational effectiveness and success. What is intriguing however is with the emphasis in these approaches on the achievement of value congruence little explicit attention is given to individuals or groups whose values are not congruent or who experience value dissonance. [1]

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[1] The discrepancy in interest is reflected in the numbers of references to issues of value congruence and value dissonance on the electronic data-bases - over 100 citations for value congruence; less than a dozen references to value dissonance and/ or value incongruity

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Value dissonance:

Despite the proselytising and normative tone adopted in much of the values literature any consideration of employees who do not, for whatever reason, share their personal values with the organisational values are rarely considered. This absence of attention is in marked contrast to a range of other organisational commentators who are very explicit in their treatment of individuals whose values are not congruent with the organisation. Despite the recent success of the organisational culture approach, there have been some critics who have questioned the efficacy or even the possibility of pursuing a goal of cultural homogeneity (see Kopelman, Brief and Guzzo, 1990). For some writers the lack of value congruence between individuals and organisations is without question and receives extensive examination in the context of organisational ethics (eg. Wahn, 1993; Berman, West and Cava, 1994; Fritzsche, 1995; Menzel, 1995).

And there are others who again accepting value dissonance, challenge the relatively benign notion that shared assumptions and values or stories and rites are tools, not to ensure value congruence but of control and domination (eg. Hummel, 1977; Hofstede, 1986; Willmott, 1993). Yet another approach emerged from the identification of the psychological discomfort that is present when value differences cannot be rationalised. Describing this discomfort as cognitive dissonance, Festinger (1957) was interested in the efforts to effect change as a means of reducing the dissonance; he thus identified dissonance as a 'powerful' motivation for change.

This role of dissonance as a driving force for change was also explicit in the work of Meyerson and Scully (1995), who as academics with personal experience of value dissonance, studied other individuals whose personal ideological and value systems were in conflict (or different to) the dominant organisational culture. The focus of this study was on the contribution these individuals, described by the authors as 'tempered radicals', could play in stimulating positive organisational change.

Another approach to value dissonance emerges from problems with 'socialisation' (Schein, 1992; Dose, 1997; Kraimer, 1997). Although Schein (1968) has suggested that an individual who does not fully conform to organisational values may meet one of the criteria of a creative person, resistance to the socialisation process in which organisational values are internalised has been seen as problematic.

Glaring examples of individual employees who do not share their organisation's values can be found in the literature on whistle-blowers (Near and Miceli, 1985; Jubb, 1999). Reported in Brewer (1998) to be high performers and generally committed to their organisation, whistleblowers respond from their personal value systems, in contrast to the organisational values when confronted with moral or ethical dilemmas.

Each of these approaches irrespective of the judgment of value dissonants, contribute some understanding to the ways in which organisational members seek to make sense of and work with the value dissonance they experience. It is from these positions that processes of individual and group compromise, compliance, rationalisation, resignation, withdrawal, avoidance, denial and so on (Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl, 1996; Carr, 1998) are identified as responses to felt dissonance or incongruence. For some commentators the dissonance is a feature of organisational relationships that needs to be eliminated, for others dissonance is a stimulant for change.

Where the literature is inadequate however is in failing to provide any analysis of how employees with a commitment and loyalty to their organisation struggle with the changes they experience in the internal and external organisational environment. For instance, how do employees who have chosen to work for an organisation because of the felt value congruence respond to the implementation of programs that challenge those previously shared values? How do employees respond to emerging value dissonance?

It is these questions that form the focus of this paper. My interest is in employees who have shared the values of the organisation but because of the change in ideological and strategic direction of the organisation, find they no longer share those organisational values. That is, there appears to be a lack of congruence between the individual and organisational values. Drawing on material derived from research on

organisational change, I shall use the experience of one small local government organisation in Victoria, Australia to examine these issues.

Local Government - The Third Tier of Government:

Local government in Australia is the site of the local and community level of participation and representation (Purdie, 1976; Thornton, 1995), and is admired for "its small scale and intimacy, for being 'close to the people'". (Dunstan, 1998) Although responsible for such property-related services as 'public works, drainage, town planning and regulation, sanitary services, open space recreation, fire protection etc' (Pullen, 1978), local government responsibilities had been trivialised as the three R's - roads, rates and rubbish (Purdon and Graham, 1992; Goldberg, 1994). Reflecting changes in government policy in Australia and broad movements in local government overseas this emphasis on property issues shifted from the early 1970's (Purdie, 1976; Jones 1981 and 1989; Purdon, 1992). Local government began to encourage community pride and participation (Hunt, 1998) and became more active providers of such people-related services as health, welfare, community development and recreation (Jones, 1981; Morris, 1985; Jones, 1989; Thornton, 1995).

And yet despite its active role in the democratic and political life, local government had been perceived in Victoria as 'structurally flawed and overdue for reform.' (Dunstan, 1998). A report commissioned by the Local Government Commission in 1985 noted that of the 210 Victorian municipalities, close to a half spent over 40% of their rate revenue on administration costs. This situation did not seem to improve and in 1993 it was revealed well over 30% of rate revenue was still being spent on general administration costs (*The Age* editorial, 1993). Changing demographics and unchanging internal and external boundaries had led to wide disparities in the number of voters in the ridings or wards of most Victorian municipalities (Purdie, 1976; Jones, 1981; Morris, 1986; 1998) which clearly undermined the basic democratic principle of each person's vote having equal value. Widespread concern about poor management practise, perceived lack of accountability and irregular auditing procedures contributed to the poor reputation of local government in the community (Jones, 1981; Hallam, 1998).

In Australia during the 1980s, all tiers of government, including local government adopted an ideology of public sector reform known as new public management or the new managerialism (Gardner and Palmer, 1992; Gerritsen, 1998). Subsequently popularised as economic rationalism, this ideology represented ideas drawn from market economics and corporate management (Carroll and Manne, 1992). The espoused objective of the reform was to create more flexible organisations able to respond with greater efficiency and effectiveness (Paterson, 1983; Dunphy and Stace, 1990). Despite the pervasiveness of these reform programs, there were other currents of social reform that prevailed within the public sector simultaneously and at times in contradiction with the economic rationalist ideology (Gardner and Palmer, 1992). These included such matters as equity and social justice programs - both within the public service as well as an ideology that underpinned the rhetoric of the public provision of services (Wilenski, 1986; Hawke and Howe, 1992; Purdon and Graham, 1992). The extent to which the new models of efficiency and flexibility accommodated public sector requirements for accountability and equity remains contentious. It has been argued that in the drive for efficiency as exemplified by economic rationalism, equity became a less important goal (Wilenski, 1986; Sawer, 1989).

In 1992 with the defeat of a long-term Labor government and the election of a conservative State government the ideology of economic rationalism prevailed over justice and equity (Galligan, 1998; Gerritsen, 1998). Co-opting the language of radicalism, recent commentary describes 'the most extensive public sector re-organisation ever undertaken in Australia' (Hallam, 1995 cited in Digby and Kennedy, 1998) as a 'revolution', a 'massive re-engineering', 'radical restructuring' and the more temperate 'reform' (Blacher, 1998; Burke and Walsh, 1998; Galligan, 1998; Gerritsen, 1998; Hallam, 1998). The number of local government councils[2] in Victoria was slashed from 210 to seventy-eight in a period of less than two years through a government-controlled process of amalgamations. Characterised as a brutal suspension of local democracy (Galligan, 1998) councils were sacked and replaced by government appointed

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[2] The terms local government organisation, council and municipality are used interchangeably to describe the agency of local government.

commissioners. Simultaneously, councils were instructed by State government to embark on a staged program of compulsory competitive tendering in which 50% all council activities were to be subject to public tender. Local government rates (taxes) were reduced by 20% and then frozen for five years. The new mantra for local government became efficiency, effectiveness and accountability (Neales, 1994; Gerritsen, 1998).

Judged to be unique not just in Australia but internationally (Gerritsen, 1998), the local government reforms in Victoria created a new paradigm of local government. Based on a program that reduced the size of the public sector by the sale of public assets and the contracting out of services; that saw the redirection of government towards its core functions of policy making of service specifications BUT not service delivery; opened service delivery to competition and the establishment of organisational relationships based on the 'purchaser-provider' split (see Alford and O'Neill, 1994) Victorian local government became "a social laboratory for radical institutional and public policy change" (Galligan, 1998).

Employees who remained in local government were responsible for the implementation of these radical changes that represented the ideology of economic rationalism. This, as I shall now discuss, was not always an easy task. It was apparent that for many employees the reforms created value dissonance that challenged both their individual identity as 'a Council worker' and their sense of meaning of local government.

The Tasman Shire[3] - the Case Study:

The Tasman Shire was created in December 1994 by the amalgamation of three municipal councils. The three former municipalities included a small regional centre, a farming district and a coastal tourist area. Of the employees interviewed for the research, all had worked for one of the three former municipalities and all were current employees of the amalgamated organisation. All had worked for local government within that region alone[4] for anywhere between five and over twenty years.

The interviewees had mixed feelings about working for local government. On the one hand they were fully aware of the community perceptions of local government. On the other they continued to work for their Council because they felt they could 'make a difference' to their community's [most lived within the municipality within which they worked] well-being. For most, the decision to work in and for local government reflected their desire to engage in meaningful public service (Rainey, 1982; Perry and Wise, 1990; Brewer, 1998).

Since the introduction of the reforms this had changed for the employees. The restructuring of service provision and greater emphasis on efficiency were felt to limit their effectiveness and restrict their capacity to respond to their community's needs.

For most of those who were interviewed the council no longer had the small community focus of its past and the staff had lost confidence they could make a difference. It was apparent for many of the employees that there was considerable disquiet about what they perceived to be a shift in organisational values. Many in interview, having told a story of the recent retrenchment of an intellectually disabled employee, or the non-renewal of contract of a 'really nice bloke', or the provision of electronic services to replace customer service staff, wondered out loud if the Tasman Shire was still the kind of organisation for which they wanted to work. It would be easy but too simplistic to suggest these doubts were indications of the employees' 'resistance to change' (Schapper, 1998). What was being expressed was not necessarily resistance, but disquiet with the realisation of the emerging lack of congruence between personal and organisational values.

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[3] The name of the organisation has been changed for reasons of anonymity

[4] Many of those interviewed had spent their entire careers working in local government; many had worked for other councils and shires before moving to that region. Some had been born in the area, moved away and worked for other councils and then returned to their place of birth.

Meeting the needs of the community:

The espoused values of the organisation at the time in which many of the employees joined local government were clearly articulated within the catch-phrase 'social justice and equity' (Hawke and Howe, 1992). For local government such an ideology was enacted as the requirement to identify and meet the needs of the local community through local and community provision of service (Purdon and Graham, 1992). It was this ideological imperative that shifted local government activities from being mere 'pot-hole fillers' to significant involvement in human services and welfare at the local level. The attention of local government in the 1980's and early 1990's was primarily on the provision of services, the distribution of resources to community groups and the maintenance of the local physical environment. The council employees envisaged the task of council was to 'care for the community' (Jones, 1989; Purdon and Graham, 1992).

For the vast majority of employees interviewed, the council for which they worked was also within the municipality where they lived, shopped, played sport, socialised, raised families, attended school and so on. This circumstance meant council employees occupied dual representative roles - as employees, they informally represented the community on Council matters and when in the community, they represented the Council. The Council was portrayed by the local press as a very potent and present force within the community. Yet for many employees, the Council was not just part of the community but was indeed the community. This is apparently not an unusual occurrence in local government, with one commentator suggesting that the local government body and the community are so inseparably linked that the two are one (Purdie, 1976). Not surprisingly in this context, boundaries between public and private life became very fluid and indistinct as the ideology of 'caring for the community' became internalised, creating confusion of boundaries between community, the organisation and self.

DISCUSSION

Institution-in-the-mind:

It is understood that organisations address many conscious and unconscious needs of employees; whether it be for reasons of finance, security, power, affiliation, self-esteem and so on (eg. Herzberg, 1966; Alderfer, 1972). Organisations are also responsible for invoking considerable anxiety and stress for people who work within them (see Menzies Lyth, 1960/1990; Hirschhorn, 1988; Bain, 1998). It is in the dynamic play between the organisation meeting people's conscious and unconscious needs, and at the same time engendering conscious and unconscious anxiety that the organisational identity is shaped and experienced by organisational members (Diamond, 1993). From this perspective it is clear that the organisation's identity is, in part, the unconscious creation of the people who work within it. It also is apparent that the organisational identity is not a static concept - just as organisations can be understood as systems that both influence and are influenced by their environment, so too, is an organisational identity a dynamic force. To explore this phenomenon in greater detail I shall begin with reference to the concept described as the institution or organisation-in-the-mind.

Institution-in-the-mind refers to the image, the belief, the idea that individual members have of their institution, that is, the organisational identity (Armstrong, 1998). For members from different parts of the organisation there may be different images of the organisation; nonetheless a coherent organisational identity will influence and inform the behaviour and feelings of its members (Stokes, 1995). Often partly unconscious, the images of the institution in the mind will influence the ways in which organisational members identify and meet its primary mission or task.

Primary task is not a concept without problem. Dartington (1998, 1477) argues A. K. Rice first defined primary task of a system as "the task which it is created to perform". Some years later this definition was modified by Rice (cited in Dartington, 1998) who then suggested the primary task was "the task [a system] must perform if it is to survive." If primary task is to take the latter meaning, that is, it is about survival then it is possible to suggest the primary task may shift as the environment requires it. Dartington suggests the primary task is the task the system was created to perform - and that cannot shift. He argues for instance that irrespective of all the competing demands of a hospital such as the need to provide employment, conduct

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research and so on, that if the essence of the system is not to provide services to patients, it is no longer a hospital (Dartington, 1998). How the task is performed can change; what the primary task is, cannot.

It is apparent the understanding of primary task is not a given. Just as organisational members carry their own image of the institution-in-the-mind, so too will they ascribe different meanings and understanding of the organisation's primary task and their role in fulfilling that task. One writer (Lawrence, 1985) suggests different kinds of primary task are pursued within organisations individually and collectively. He suggests while there may be a *normative* primary task that is, the task that people in the organisation ought to pursue there may also exist the *existential* primary task which describes what is thought to be done, and then the *phenomenal* primary task which is the task people are actually, often without conscious awareness, doing.

The durability of the value system at the Tasman council implicit in the idea of meeting the community's needs can perhaps be understood as representing the unconscious institution-in-the-mind for organisational members. It was generally understood and articulated by organisational members that in the typology of Lawrence (1985) the normative primary task of local government was to maintain and protect the local physical environment and the health and well-being of the local population. This task was however not without some ambivalence as employees believed they were 'doing good' despite their awareness of the contempt in which they were held by those for whom they sought to do good.

This anxiety had now been exacerbated by the employees' concern that the reforms to local government restricted their ability to continue to 'do good'. The phenomenal or unconscious primary task was therefore experienced to be that of protector of, and provider for the community lived through the shared fantasy of the organisation as protector of and provider for its organisational members. The paradox of this organisational identity was that while it reflected on one level an assumption of protector and provider of the community, those employees who provided protection and services also expected the organisation to defend them from the attacks of that same community.

Basic assumptions:

There is a vast body of work emerging from consulting, action research and the more conventional organisational research that identifies the emergence of social systems and other organisational processes to defend against persecutory or depressive anxiety invoked by the demands of work (Jaques, 1953/1990; Menzies Lyth, 1959/1990; Menzies Lyth, 1990; Miller, 1993; Bain, 1998). These authors have drawn upon psychoanalytic theory to offer interpretations of organisational process with particular attention to the manifest conscious and latent unconscious activities and responses (Sutherland, 1985) of organisational members. It is a major concept developed by Bion considered the most significant original contribution to the understanding of group processes (Miller, 1998) that shall be discussed in this paper.

Wilfred Bion (1961/1989) an English group psychotherapist suggested that groups always operate on two levels. The first level is the work group that meets for a specific purpose or to perform a task. Representing the manifest and conscious, the workgroup designed to address the organisation's primary task, ideally operates with an appropriate structure and attends to the task with rationality and maturity (Brown, 1992; Miller, 1998). The second unconscious level of group activity appears to be based on meeting the emotional needs of members and is usually in conflict with the demands of the task (Sutherland, 1985). Bion (1989) referred to this second level group as the basic assumption group - the group for which shared assumptions emerged from fear of the primary task and held the group together.

Although others have subsequently suggested further basic assumptions (Turquet 1967/ 1985), and (Lawrence, Bain and Gould, 1996), Bion identified just three basic assumptions: fight/flight, dependency and pairing. Operating from the first assumption the group behaves as if its purpose is to identify a threat or enemy that must be fought or run from. The pairing assumption usually involves a focus on two members of a group (not necessarily heterosexual) with the desire or hope for the birth of a new idea, a new leader or new product to provide salvation for the group. If operating from the dependency assumption the group behaves as if its primary task is solely to provide for the satisfaction of the needs and wishes of its members. The role of the omniscient and omnipotent leader from this basic assumption is to look after, protect and sustain the group (Stokes, 1994; Miller, 1998).

Employees at Tasman Shire, confronted with the conflict and anxiety generated by the demands of fulfilling the primary task of local government worked from the level of basic assumption dependency. For it was from this basic assumption group that protection was also sought from the persecutory attacks that were felt from the community they sought to serve.

Prior to amalgamation, two men had lead each of the member councils. In interview it was notable how often employees irrespective of their original council spoke with warmth and affection about one of the senior managers. In each of the councils these idealised managers were caring, always had 'open doors', were available and were felt to be ever-present to staff. When recounting the distress and pain of the time of amalgamation, each of these senior managers were reported to have 'looked after the staff.' Employees at each of the councils reported the ways in which these managers sought to protect their staff from the changes that were increasingly inevitable in local government.

Not surprisingly, a common theme of interviewees was the ascription to their previous council the quality of ' being like family'. One young woman commented that it was like 'having your uncle and your mother there'. Other staff commented on the [loving] father-like role of the senior managers. Just as employees had not differentiated between individual and community needs, they had also blurred the boundaries between work and family life. Again, while the family metaphor may provide a sense of belonging, family relationships also assume at an unconscious level a dependency and belief in hierarchy and authority relations.

The unconscious dynamics that operate within this basic assumption tend to mitigate against the ready embrace of change and innovation; this intolerance and fear of change may then contribute to the dependency assumption being held with greater tenacity. And when changes are imposed that shatter the dependency such as when staff are physically shifted and separated, or the 'good' leader dies or loses his job and if the phenomenal task cannot be maintained, organisational members experience considerable distress. This was the experience at Tasman, and many, unable to tolerate the changes, voluntarily resigned. Those that remain are in conflict about whether to stay or go (Dunbar, Dutton and Torbert, 1982; Schwepker 1999).

Emerging Identities:

In this paper I have offered some ways of understanding the dynamic of the relationship between the Tasman Shire and its employees that lead to the development of an organisational identity-in-the-mind of care and protection. I have suggested working for local government in an ideological environment of meeting community needs, created anxieties and fears for employees that lead to unconscious expectations as if the organisation was meet their own dependency needs. And because employees were also community members, the organisation in meeting these needs provided a sense of belonging and the reassurance of being protected.

With this understanding, how then to understand how employees can accommodate the shift in values of the organisation? It is my hypothesis that organisational members have been challenged to create a substantially new individual and organisational identity. The organisational value system that promotes efficiency, effectiveness and accountability is in marked contrast to the nurturing, protective role implicit in the values of social justice and equity. Organisational values of economic rationalism do not readily lend themselves to be internalised as dependency needs. Yet it is one, at an explicit level that has real attractions - the mantra of efficiency et al is a direct challenge to the previous poor reputation of local government.

With the introduction of competitive tendering and the necessity for services to be benchmarked against the private sector, interviewees from those parts of the organisation who were successful internal bidders subsequently indicated enormous pride in their ability to succeed in competition with the private sector.

Interviewees also commented favourably on the outward manifestations of the growing professionalisation of their services - the newly renovated Council buildings, their new uniforms, their upgraded technology, the new modern design of the logo on their stationery and in the signage in the shire, their improved filing systems and I would suggest, even in their complaints of the way their lives are now dominated by work.

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Grudging pleasure was expressed at the growing professionalism because this afforded them the opportunity to deny the community's contempt at the charges of inefficiency and so on.

I would suggest with the enactment of the ideology of economic rationalism that the institution in the mind for employees, that is, the organisational identity, has changed dramatically. Drawing once more on Gordon Lawrence's conception of the fulfilment of an organisation's primary task, the normative task that ought to be pursued now is the provision of services to the community in the most efficient and timely manner as possible. The phenomenal or unconscious task, has within this shift in normative task now been experienced at an unconscious level as the need to operate as if the council is indeed a commercial enterprise.[5]

At a conscious and ideological level many of the employees still espouse concern for social justice and equity. The continued expression of these values, unconsciously resonant with feelings of care and protection, highlight the fracturing of the unconscious binds between employees and the organisation. The internalised organisation is no longer one of community, but of business in all its manifestations. Contracted now to perform the primary task of efficient and cost-effective delivery of service, relationships within the organisation have become increasingly instrumental.

The ideology that re-defined 'caring for the community' to a meaning of 'providing customer service' is now paralleled within the employee's experience. Organisational and financial restructuring have shattered any fantasies of colleagues as family members. The primary relationship for any employee is now to a business unit within the Shire. And it is the role and function of the business unit that determines the employee's relationship to the organisation as either client or provider. Although formally an employee, the relationship with the organisation and other employees is now one predicated on commercial and transactional considerations.

Contrary to the position that argues that employees engage in a cognitive shift to rationalise actions (Feistenger, 1957), I am arguing that in this instance, the continued articulation of an old set of values is from a cognitive and conscious position and the shift in identity that has enacted the new set of values has occurred at an unconscious level. The organisational imperatives of the new ideology has created a new dynamic relationship between employee and organisation.

It is apparent that much of the distress and anxiety at the time of amalgamation was experienced as both individual and organisational disintegration, physically and psychically. The organisational bonds were torn apart by the death of the old organisations and the departure by large numbers of employees taking voluntary redundancies. The creation of a new organisation filled with a workplace of strangers created its own anxieties for those employees who remained. Not only did the arrival of the new ideology dismantle the common ties of dependency, but in the newly created and structured organisation, the old defenses were no longer effective nor necessary.

Tasman Shire is now involved with major regional projects and the council is far more engaged in addressing the issues of what employees describe as 'the big picture'. Although the organisation, its technologies and systems are considered vastly more efficient, the Council nonetheless continues to receive complaints from the community. The organisational response appears to be different. Employees, as community members continue to represent their concerns within the council but experience a separation from the community. The complaints about the town's unmown lawns or the tardy removal of dead animals, although acknowledged to be the responsibility of the council, are now considered representative of the small picture thinking local government was accused of pre-reform. And although employees may express disappointment at what they perceive to be a loss of community focus, they are also aware those days represent the era when local government was so poorly regarded.

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[5] Although this is beyond the realms of this paper I would argue the shift in the normative task has lead to the emergence of a dominant assumption group of fight/flight.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have sought to show how organisational members have in response to their changing circumstances redrafted their own and their organisation's identity. What is clear in reaching this understanding is the necessity to move beyond explanations of cognitive and rational decision-making processes to an examination of the role of the unconscious in the dynamic that is created between employees and their organisation. For, in the instance of Tasman, it was in this dynamic that individual and organisational identities were formed, shifted and refined in response to a range of environmental factors. And it was in the formation of the mutually interdependent identities that individuals have struggled with the dilemmas of dissonance in organisational values.

At an organisational level there is perhaps a need to have within its ranks individual employees who are successful and committed to their work and yet continue to espouse a dissonant ideology. Despite the prevalence of economic rationalism, local government is NOT a commercial enterprise and their mandate is not to replicate business (Hunt, 1998). The presence of differing ideologies may perhaps be necessary as a counter measure against the possibility of an organisational oversight in its conduct of its formal, social requirement to collect and spend taxes in the service of the local community. In this way, the voices of dissonance may, in the lexicon of Australian political life, 'keep the bastards honest.'

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