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**How individual differences influence employees' experiences of major
organisational change in a large UK insurance company**

VOLUME 1

Supervisor: Professor Shaun Tyson

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Georgina Seery, May 2002

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines employees' experiences of major organisational change, with an emphasis upon examining how the personality traits Neuroticism and Extraversion, and the personality disposition Work Locus of Control, influence these experiences. The perspective of employees, who are the main recipients of major change initiatives, is not well represented in the literature. Also, despite calls for research that addresses process and context, existing literature on the role of individual differences in relation to organisational change tends to be aprocessual and acontextual. The present research seeks to overcome these shortcomings by adopting a longitudinal, real-time, qualitative approach. The research elicited employees' perceptions of change as a major change programme unfolded, and examined emerging patterns of employees' experiences in relation to contextual and individual difference factors.

The research presents a picture of organisational change as unpredictable and emergent. The research findings demonstrate that employees' experiences of change are varied and suggest that these experiences are influenced by many factors at the personal, group and organisational levels. The research shows that a change 'event' will elicit different types of feelings and responses from the same individual over time, as the event unfolds. Patterns of experience were found which suggested that personality factors, and combinations of these factors, influenced the way aspects of change were perceived by employees, and these perceptions appeared to influence employees' responses to change.

The present research contributes towards the change management literature by confirming the view that change is 'messy', emergent and unpredictable, and by presenting evidence to show how employees contribute towards the emergent nature of this process. The research contributes towards the work psychology literature by adopting an approach that contextualises research participants' responses, and presents an account of change as an unfolding process. By focusing upon perceptions, the research is able to offer explanations of how individual differences might influence employees' experiences of major organisational change.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the experience of major organisational change, from the perspective of employees¹ in a large UK insurance company. The focus upon employees is a response to literature calling for 'bottom-up views' (Collins 1998) and 'the inside story' (Mabey et al 1998) of organisational change, and to literature calling for research to investigate the 'impact of the changing workplace for employees' (Sparks et al 2001). The financial services industry experienced continuous major change during the late 80's and 90's (Johns & Davies 1999). Despite this, there is little published research that examines the impact of such change upon employees in this sector (for an exception, see Sparrow 1996).

In particular, this thesis explores the influence of individual differences upon employees' experiences of major change. Organisational research tends to emphasise the role of structural and organisational factors in determining individual behaviour at work (Spector 1982, Furnham 1995). However, within the context of major organisational change, where organisational structures and processes are dismantled, so that the environmental context is more ambiguous, we might expect individual difference factors to play a greater role in determining behaviour at work.

1.2 Choice of research topic

This PhD research project has been part funded by the ESRC and part funded by Guardian Insurance (UK)² under the ESRC Innovation/Management Collaborative Studentship initiative. The researcher's academic supervisor, Professor Tyson, had

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'employees' refers to non-managers.

already produced an outline of the intended research by the time the studentship was awarded. The broad aim of the research, set out at this stage, was to “discover the consequences of major organisational change for the employees who survive in a traditional white collar environment.”

The researcher was drawn towards the topic for a number of reasons. Firstly the research appealed because the phenomenon of change is such a basic feature of human existence and is present in every aspect of our lives. As such, 'change' is an important area of study. Next, the research provided an opportunity to examine the fascinating topic of change within a real work environment. This enabled the researcher to develop her increasing interest in management studies and the psychology of the workplace and explore a new research approach. The increasing pace of change in the workplace presents new challenges for those involved in the area of human resources. A further appeal of the research was that it provided the researcher with the chance of achieving not only academic, but also practical insights into the experience of change at work. Lastly, the researcher was attracted to the research focus upon employees, rather than upon managers. As stated earlier, the voice of the employee has been absent from both the management literature (Collins 1998, Mabey et al 1998) and the psychology literature (Sparks et al 2001). The present research offered a unique opportunity to provide a voice for employees experiencing major change at work.

Early site visits to Guardian Insurance along with a parallel reading of the relevant literature enabled the researcher to refine the research aims. These aims now included an emphasis upon individual differences. This emphasis reflects the researcher's own interests, early observations in the field and gaps in the literature.

²AXA and Sun Life and Provincial Holdings bought Guardian Royal Exchange (GRE) in February 1999. Guardian Insurance (UK) was a division of GRE.

1.3 Observations in the field

Guardian Insurance had a long history in insurance, dating back over 250 years. Along with other firms in the UK financial services industry, during the 80's and 90's, Guardian Insurance implemented major changes to their structure, processes and business focus. Accompanying these more 'tangible' changes was an effort to implement a change in 'culture'. These changes were triggered by external factors, such as, major losses following the 1987 hurricane; changes to the marketplace and the resulting increase in competition; major advances in IT; an increasingly discriminating customer base, and, expanding markets.

The programme of major change implemented by Guardian Insurance prior to and during the research period was aimed at producing transformational change. Transformational change has been described by Heckscher & Donnellon (1994) (developing Burns & Stalker's (1961) 'mechanistic/organic' continuum) as a movement from a 'bureaucratic' to an 'interactive' structure. Bureaucratic structures are characterised by a 'top heavy' hierarchy of control, with vertical communication channels, where organisational members are only responsible for their own individual specialism and where obedience and conformity are required. In contrast, interactive, or 'post-bureaucratic' organisations, have a structure where control, authority and communication operate within a network, where teams take responsibility, make decisions and process information. These teams are expected to be highly adaptable, changing form and function in response to environmental changes. Guardian Insurance thought that moving away from a 'bureaucratic' structure towards an 'interactive' structure was necessary in order to adapt to the quickly changing insurance market.

During the data collection period of the research (April 1996 – December 1997), in-depth interviews were conducted, and 'diary' data collected from selected participants. The researcher also conducted a participant observation study during this time. This involved conducting formal interviews and informal conversations with representatives from different departments, different work groups and from different levels in the company hierarchy. Observations were made at key change-related events, along with more

general observations during site visits. Documents relating to the research were also collected.

Major changes of relevance to research participants during the research period included, office closures, redundancies, restructuring business units, selection and reallocation of jobs, removal of a 'clocking in' system, changes to 'core benefits', introduction of a performance management system and several 'continuous improvement' initiatives. Early site visits and subsequent analysis revealed a wealth of different responses to changes already effected and to anticipated changes. This early data led the researcher to focus upon the question of exploring what factors lead individual employees to perceive and respond to change in such different ways.

1.4 Gaps in the literature

Management literature on change tends to view change from the perspective of managers. The perspective of employees, who are the very subject of many change initiatives, is not well represented (Mabey et al 1998, Collins 1998).

Much of the popular management literature on organisational change suggests that change can be successfully implemented if managers use a prescribed set of management tools. Abstractions such as 'empowerment', 'mission statements', 'shared values' and 'open communication' have been heralded as keys to effective change management (Peters & Waterman 1982, Moss-Kanter 1984, Thorne 1991, Carnall 1991). However, this literature tends to ignore an alternative view of organisational change as "a kind of chaos" (Burke & Litwin 1992, p.523) and "invariably a messy business" (Guest 1984, p.217).

The psychological literature on work and stress in relation to organisational change also tends to treat change in a rather 'prescriptive' fashion. Organisational change is assumed to be 'stressful' and is seen in terms of single stressful events, the effects of which are mediated by internal (eg, personality, coping styles) and external (eg, social support)

resources. This ignores the complexity of organisational change which, by its very nature, is not a 'discrete' event, but a phenomenon that unfolds over time, and may elicit differing perceptions and responses along the way (Lazarus 1991).

Although the psychological literature on transition acknowledges the processual nature of change, this literature also has limitations. Here, little attention is given to the individual difference factors that feature in the work and stress literature on organisational change. Also, the onus is placed upon the individual worker to adapt to change, rather than allowing for a justified questioning of the content of the change, or the manner of change implementation (Piderit 2000). There is also an assumption that transition models, which are based upon research that explored responses to qualitatively different life events, are relevant within an organisational setting.

This thesis aims to address the limitations of the literature on change management and the psychology of change by examining employees' responses to change processually, as a programme of major organisational change unfolds. The thesis also addresses the limitations of the change and transition literature by examining the role of individual differences in employees' experiences of change. The research acknowledges the emergent nature of change, thus the change events of interest are not necessarily those highlighted by the HR & Change Director from Guardian Insurance at the start of the project, but are those change events which employee participants deemed salient.

1.5 Relevant individual differences

Questionnaires were administered to employees (ie, non-managers) at two area office networks of Guardian Intermediaries Division (GID), a division of Guardian Insurance (GI), with offices throughout the UK. The questionnaire responses provided the basis for selecting 40 employees for invitation to participate in a year-long, in-depth, qualitative, 'diary interview' study.

The study examines a range of individual difference factors, such as age, gender, job type and location, but focuses upon examining the role of the personality disposition, work locus of control, and the personality traits, extraversion and neuroticism, upon employees' experiences of major organisational change. Employees were invited for inclusion in the 'diary interview' study primarily on the basis of their responses to the work locus of control (WLOC) questionnaire (Spector 1982) and the extraversion and neuroticism dimensions of the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) (Eysenck & Eysenck 1964). These three scales were deemed to be particularly relevant to an organisational change context. The behavioural characteristics of employees who would 'fit' within a bureaucratic vs interactive organisation correspond with the behavioural characteristics of individuals at the external vs internal dimension of the WLOC continuum. The researcher has made the assumption, backed up by literature on the psychology of organisational change, that major organisational change creates demanding circumstances which can trigger coping behaviour. WLOC, extraversion and neuroticism have all been shown to affect the 'stress and coping' process and are therefore of interest in the present study. There is continuing debate about how these factors affect the coping process, and the present study hopes to contribute to this debate through adopting a processual, qualitative research approach.

1.6 Research question

The broad question addressed in this thesis is:

'How do individual differences, in particular the personality disposition work locus of control and the personality traits extraversion and introversion, influence employees' experiences of an unfolding programme of major organisational change?'

1.7 Choice of single company for research

A condition of the ESRC Collaborative studentship was that the researcher should spend a considerable portion of her time at the company sponsoring the research. During the researcher's early visits to Guardian Insurance it became clear that this was a unique opportunity to do an in-depth study of the process of change. Support for the PhD research came from a very high level at Guardian Insurance and the researcher was given open access to people at all levels of the company. This rare opportunity to do research in a company without the usual restrictions was part of the reason why an in-depth study in one company seemed most appropriate. Broadening the research to include several different types of companies would have enabled the researcher to explore the impact of different organisational settings upon employees' experiences of change. However, within the parameters of a PhD project, a sole researcher would not have been able to achieve the depth of analysis reached in the present study, had the research been conducted in several organisations.

1.8 Outline of the chapters

The thesis contains the following:

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on change management, change and personal transition and the psychology of work, stress and coping. Gaps in the literature are identified and the research question is developed and presented.

Chapter 3 discusses methodological issues relating to the research and justifies the methodological approach selected for this study. The survey, 'diary interview' and participant observation research methods, adopted in the present study, are described. There is an explanation of how these methods were applied to answer the research question. The thesis then explains how the qualitative data analysis was carried out. The chapter ends with a discussion about researcher bias and the credibility of the study.

Chapter 4 describes the organisational context at GID. The chapter is, for the most part, based upon data collected in the participant observation study. The reader is provided with relevant background information on change within the insurance industry. The organisational structure of GRE (UK) and GID's place within that structure is described. A detailed background about the GID offices who participated in the research is then given. The chapter then goes on to describe the change programme underway during the research period. The reader is then given an account of change implementation at GID, structured according to Gratton et al's (1999) model. The 'Demeter project', the focal change in the study, is then introduced and described.

Chapter 5 introduces the employees who participated in the in-depth 'diary interview' study. A table showing base data for each participant is presented. Then there is a description of the types of jobs held by the research participants. The chapter concludes with a description of the various office locations where research participants worked.

Chapter 6 presents findings, in depth, concerning individuals' experiences of major organisational change in relation to individual difference factors, in particular, WLOC, extraversion and neuroticism. The main organisational change of interest here is the 'Demeter project', although other changes are mentioned where appropriate. The chapter is divided into five sections, each representing a category of consequences of the Demeter change, derived from the data,. Each section has an interim summary, where findings are discussed in relation to the literature. The chapter ends with an overall summary of the findings.

Chapter 7 extends the interim summaries presented in the previous chapter and further discusses the findings in relation to the literature, pulling together the macro (organisational context) and micro (individual experiences) levels. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the researcher's emergent explanatory framework that developed through the research.

Chapter 8, the final chapter, draws conclusions and explains how the research contributes to the organisational literature, the change management literature, the change and transition literature, and the work, stress and coping literature. Suggestions about how the research findings might be relevant to organisational change practitioners are presented. Next, there is a discussion concerning the limitations of the present research. This final chapter concludes with a section about the researcher's personal reflections upon the PhD process.

Overall, this research, through the researcher's in-depth involvement with Guardian Insurance over an 18 month period, has revealed the complexity of change, the diversity of employees' experiences of major change and resultant gaps between the intentions of management and the way change is enacted by employees. Whilst the current research presents evidence to support an 'emergent' (Pettigrew 1987), 'chaotic' (Burke & Litwin 1992) view of change, the research has attempted to reveal some of the 'order' within the 'chaos'. In particular, the research identifies a number of organisational, social and personal factors and psychological processes that might contribute towards directing the way organisational change unfolds.

To conclude, the following examples give the reader a flavour of the variety of experiences of major change reported by employees working at Guardian Insurance during the research period:

"I am vulnerable. We are all vulnerable here. Numbers [of staff] have been reducing for some time now. Each office wants to survive and present itself in the best light. Each person wants to survive and present themselves in the best light. For me, it's like we are in a constant recruitment and selection process." (Steve, post clerk)

"My workload has tripled with the restructure. We've doubled our output, but we are holding back the fire, not getting rid of it at the moment. I like being under pressure though. I like to be busy. Normally as soon as I leave the office I switch off. There are odd times when work is on my mind, but that's unusual for me." (Paul, LAN admin)

"You're just never in one place very long here. It's just a really unsettling place to work. You don't want to be in an atmosphere like this where you've really got going working with a team, and then they just go and start talking about changing it all around again. It doesn't give you the chance to get things going and work together properly." (Lisabeth, underwriter)

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature on organisational change and change management, personal transition, work stress and coping. The original PhD studentship research proposal informed the choice of organisational change, change management and personal transition as being appropriate areas of literature to investigate. Early site visits to Guardian Insurance, coupled with a reading of the change management and personal transition literature, led to an interest in the role of individual differences in relation to the experience of major change at work. This led to a review of the psychology literature on work, stress and coping and the inclusion of individual difference measures in the research design.

2.2 Organisational change and change management

2.2.1 Organisational transformation

The trend for undergoing the type of transformational change which Guardian Insurance, along with other companies in the UK financial services industry, undertook during the 1990's has two-fold objectives: in the short-term, changes must be made in order for companies to adapt to their present market conditions, and at the same time, the companies and workforces must increase their "repertoire" of behaviours or "zone of manoeuvre" (Clark 1996) in order to attain the flexibility and adaptability necessary for survival in a rapidly changing market place. Lewin's (1958) much used 'unfreezing, changing, refreezing' metaphor for describing organisational change has been replaced by the "white-water rapids" metaphor (Robbins 1994) where change is constant, and there is no 'refreezing' stage. An emerging focus in the current change literature now seems to be "how to create continuously adaptive organizations" (Dunphy 1996). The concept of the 'learning organisation' (Senge 1990) applied to organisational change (Beard 1993) further confirms the view that the goal of organisational transformation is one in which the organisation is able, not only to adapt to current environmental

demands, but is also able to fulfill the longer-term objective of developing workforce skills, abilities and alertness, so that the organisation is able to adapt easily and effectively to rapid changes in the environment. There is a recognition that operating effectively within an uncertain environment demands flexibility and adaptability, not only from organisational structure and processes, but also from the individuals who work in the organisation.

The type of transformation which Guardian Insurance attempted could be described as a move away from a “mechanistic” structure, compatible with a relatively stable environment and a “scientific” (Taylor 1911) approach to management, towards an “organic” structure (Burns & Stalker 1961), deemed to be compatible with an uncertain environment and a ‘hands off’ approach to management (Semler 1993). Such attempts at transformation are widespread, not only in the financial services industry (John & Davies 1999), but throughout organisations in “the UK, Continental Europe and the USA” (Wille & Hodgson 1991).

2.2.2 Change implementation

Popular management literature both reflects and encourages these changes, presenting a range of change ‘prescriptions’ based upon empirical and anecdotal evidence. Firms in the 1980's were being urged to follow ‘best practice’ examples (Peters & Waterman 1982), to become ‘customer’ rather than ‘function’ oriented (Deming 1986), to become ‘masters’ of change and innovation (Moss-Kanter 1984, Handy 1989), and to become ‘lean and fit’, (ie, having fewer people, but with greater expertise), (Handy 1989). Later, in the 1990's, firms were urged to reengineer (Hammer & Champy 1993), to become ‘learning organisations’ (Senge 1990, Pugh 1993), and to ‘empower’ their workforce (Mullins 1996)

However, the proliferation of literature on ‘change management’ has not been accompanied by significant debate about the best way to implement change (Wilson 1992). There is strong agreement in the popular management literature that successful

change is managed through abstractions such as 'empowerment', 'mission statements', 'shared values' and 'open communication' (Peters and Waterman 1982, Moss-Kanter 1984, Thorne 1991, Carnall 1991). Change is 'planned' (Burns 1996) and predictions are made about the best recipes for change (Kotter & Schlesinger 1979, Casse 1991). However, such agreement is not present in some of the academic literature on change (Wilson 1992). There are disagreements here about the very nature of change, eg, whether change is processual, and to be examined only within the context of longitudinal research (Pettigrew 1990), or whether change is an 'either/or' phenomenon occurring as 'an all-or-none leap' (Wilson 1992). There are opposing views about whether change can be implemented and planned (Novelli et al 1995), or whether change is 'emergent', arising out of a particular historical, social, political and economic context (Pettigrew 1987). These divides lead to very different ways of defining, examining and explaining organisational change. Popular change management books such as 'In Search of Excellence' by Peters and Waterman (1982), are seductive in that they tend to bypass these difficult issues and supply a set of rules which can be applied by managers, who can then feel in control of change. However, by its very nature, organisational change is "a kind of chaos" (Burke & Litwin 1992, p.523), and is "invariably a messy business" (Guest 1984, p.217). Wilson (1992, p.4) points to the lack of research available to empirically support the 'popular' approach, and guards against the "re-emergence of certainty, and the process of management as a science, reminiscent of Taylor's (1911) 'one best way of organizing.'"

2.2.3 Failure of organisational change programmes

Reports suggest that major organisational change programmes have a low success rate. Leading practitioners of radical corporate change in *Fortune* 1,000 companies report success rates of between 20%-50% (Strebel 1996). Numerous explanations for the failure of change programmes have been offered, including individual and/or organisational 'resistance to change' (Robbins 1994), incompatibility between organisational culture and the intended change (O'Reilly 1989), employees' lack of participation in the process of change (Beer et al 1990), inadequate training (Larson &

Preskill, 1991), poor communication (Goodstein & Burke 1991), employees' 'indifference' to change (Brooks & Bate 1994), inappropriate leadership style (Pettigrew 1987), a lack of attention to fairness (Novelli et al 1995), and lack of trust (Sahdev 2000).

Many of these explanations relate to the way in which change is implemented by management, the suggestion being that if solutions offered by prescriptive change 'manuals' (eg, Plant 1987, Beer et al 1990, Carnall 1991, Wille & Hodgson 1991) are followed, then change will be successful. However, such prescriptive approaches may be inappropriate for use in extremely complex situations such as major organisational change. For example, 'resistance to change' when examined from the perspective of an employee may have nothing to do with a blind rejection of an initiative, reflecting employees' supposed fear of change, but may be an attempt to highlight failings of aspects of the change initiative. Not only does the emphasis in the change management literature upon 'acceptance' of change ignore such potentially positive effects of employee 'resistance' to change (Piderit 2000), but it also provides a means of blaming workers for the failures of change programmes (Krantz 1999).

Further, prescriptive approaches, or 'n-step guides' as Collins (1998) calls them, assume that worker's personalities are 'plastic' and easily moulded to suit the needs of 'the organisation'. Clearly, this presents a very limited view of human personality, at odds with psychological research that demonstrates that, whilst the emphasis may shift, behaviour is an outcome of both internal and external factors (Pervin 1993). It is perhaps not surprising that attempts at transformational change, with the goal of creating an adaptable, flexible workforce, have been relatively unsuccessful when the advice offered to managers does not take into account individual differences and the potential influence of such differences upon employee behaviour. Following his critique of popular texts on change management, Collins (1998 p.193) calls for a shift from "the top-down, management-oriented views of organization and change common among the gurus of managing change", to "bottom-up views; a shift from focus upon consensus and stability to the study of contradiction and complexity".

2.2.4 The inside story

Mabey et al (1998) echo Collins' (1998) call for "bottom-up views" of organisational change. In Mabey et al's (1998) introduction to an edited book entitled 'Experiencing Human Resource Management', (1998 p.7) they describe employees as "consumers of change" and ask that amongst the "cacophony" of voices of senior managers, consultants and change agents, a place be made for those people who experience HR initiatives. Mabey et al (1998) argue that HR has a 'managerialist orientation' that is reflected in the paucity of studies that focus upon those individuals at the 'receiving end' of HR initiatives. A number of reasons for the 'managerialist orientation' of research into change initiatives has been suggested. For example, popular management theory is grounded in the perspectives and values of managers, so that academic research tends to present a manager's view of HR initiatives; academic funding can restrict the research focus by making funding conditional upon the researcher collaborating with manager groups (Clark et al 1998), and researchers are usually able to access managers more easily than the rest of the workforce, so this can bias the research focus (Legge 1998). This call for a focus upon the impact of major change at work upon non-management staff has also been echoed recently in the occupational and organisational psychology literature (Sparks et al 2001).

In a 'sensemaking' perspective (Weick 1995), major organisational change is only realised via the interpretations and experiences of those individuals involved in enacting change initiatives. Thus the success or failure of change initiatives hinges upon the sensemaking of members of the organisation. Gratton et al's (1999) research identifies 'sensemaking' as one of many factors that enable or constrain the implementation of organisational initiatives. However, Gratton et al's (1999) focus is upon the perceptions of line managers. In order to properly understand the process of major organisational change, we also need an appreciation of employees', experiences of major change.

It should perhaps be noted that not all of the organisational literature presents a managerialist picture. For example, the industrial relations literature presents a pluralistic view of organisational reality where organisational players have different needs and

interests. In this tradition, organisational life has been described as "a struggle between workers and employers for control" (Edwards & Scullion 1982, p. 257). However, although the perspective of employees is present in this literature, such research tends to investigate employee collectivities (eg, trade unions), and employee roles, rather than individual employees. This thesis does not therefore draw substantially upon the industrial relations literature, as the emphasis of the present research is upon the perspective of individual employees, rather than upon employees as a group.

2.2.5 Broad research question

The previous sections have shown that much existing research into major organisational change has been conducted from the viewpoint of managers. Much of the research on change has also been criticised for being 'ahistorical, aprocessual and acontextual' and therefore of little practical use to managers (Pettigrew 1985, Pettigrew, et al 2001). Popular management texts that advise upon change strategy and implementation tend to simplify the process, offering 'prescriptions' for change, assuming that recipients of change will passively accept change if it is presented according to suggested 'recipes' (Pettigrew & Whipp 1993). Such texts have not been open to sufficient academic scrutiny, presenting managers with a unified message on how to plan and implement change (Wilson 1992), thus further entrenching a managerialist perspective on organisational change. However, there have been calls for an understanding of the experience of those individuals who are on the 'receiving end' of change (Collins 1998, Mabey et al 1998), but such research tends to be "the exception rather than the rule" (Mabey et al 1998, p.2).

At this stage in the literature review, a broad agenda for the current research is suggested, namely, to examine how employees experience organisational change as a major change programme unfolds.

2.3 Employees in the organisation context

Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 argue for a 'bottom-up' view of the experience of organisational change. The present research will focus upon individual employees and will examine the individual psychology of change. However, individuals function as part of a group and within a 'context', so that an individual's experience will be a function of their psychological 'type', the organisational context and their social environment. The following sections discuss 'collective' beliefs and behaviours which may influence the way individuals experience major change at work

2.3.1 Work orientation

Within an organisational change setting, we might expect employees beliefs about the meaning of work, and, in particular, the nature of their attachment to work, to affect the way in which they experience major change. Goldthorpe et al's (1968) classic study of 'affluent manual workers' critiqued the 'human relations' approach and revealed that workers in their study had a 'variety of meanings' which they attributed to work. For the manual workers in their study, "expressive and affective satisfactions" (p.149) tended to be sought from family life, rather than from work. Employees' expectations about their work environment were such that they did not seek to satisfy 'intrinsic' needs at work, but satisfied their 'extrinsic' needs, such as pay and benefits, through work. This relationship to work is defined as 'instrumental attachment'.

Research suggests that 'instrumental attachment' to work is not confined to manual workers. In a review of the literature on 'the meaning of work', Locke & Taylor (1990) classified the types of fulfillment people wanted out of work. They produced five categories, namely, 'material, achievement, sense of purpose, social relationships and maintenance of personal identity, or self-concept' and claim that a large proportion of the population rate 'material fulfillment' as their primary work value. However, generally, people in lower-class occupations tend to work to fulfill material desires, whilst middle-class people tend to work to fulfill intrinsic desires (Locke & Taylor 1990). According to this view, within a change setting, we might expect individuals with an instrumental

attachment to work to be less concerned about major organisational change, excepting those changes that might affect the individual's remuneration and life chances.

However, 'clerks', or 'white-collar' workers, (the focus of the present study), have been distinguished from employees engaged in manual labour, such as those participating in Goldthorpe's study, so that white-collar workers' 'attachment' to work might have a different quality from manual workers' attachments. White-collar workers have been presented in the past as having the advantages of job security and career advancement over manual workers, (Lockwood 1958, reprinted 1989) and they have been willing to forgo the superior remuneration offered to manual workers in order to gain job security and career opportunities (Coomber 1989). These perceived gains for clerical employees also give employers advantages, as employees respond to having a secure job and career opportunities by developing a 'moral' or 'emotional' attachment to work, and are therefore prepared to do more for their employers than is required of their job role, because of this emotional attachment (McLean Parks & Kidder 1994). However, white-collar workers are now experiencing job insecurity and ambiguous career paths, which researchers have suggested will lead to more 'instrumental' attitudes (Banks & Henry 1993, Sparrow 1996), so that any differences between manual and white-collar employees' work orientation may now be eroding. The nature of employees' attachment to work will therefore be an important consideration in the present research as part of the context, when examining individuals' reported experiences of major change at work.

2.3.2 Alienation

A further, related concept which may also provide important contextual data when examining individual experiences of change, is that of alienation. Alienation within a work context refers to the degree to which an individual experiences themselves as divorced from their work and work context (Bailey 1993).

Alienation is related to work orientation in that the type of attachment that an individual has to their work may be reinforced by alienating conditions at the workplace that would

prevent a shift in values away from, for example, material values, towards the non-material values, such as, for example, 'achievement' and 'sense of purpose' (Locke & Taylor 1990), that were identified in the previous section. Alienation refers not only to employees' alienation from management, but also to employees' alienation from the job itself (Blauner 1964), through mechanisation and technology (Bailey 1993), and, further, alienation from employees' own sense of self through feelings of powerlessness and helplessness (Maier & Seligman 1976). For example, if employees continually fail to achieve a sense of control over their work environment, then this may lead to an unwillingness to attempt to exert control in new situations where control might ordinarily be possible (Taylor 1991).

The change programme being 'rolled out' throughout the GRE group during the period of study was an attempt at 'transformational change', ie, change that aimed to transform the company from a 'bureaucratic', or 'mechanistic', into an 'interactive', or 'organic' organisation (Heckscher & Donnellon 1994). The official management message accompanying the changes was that the changes were designed to 'break down the barriers' between management and employees, encourage employees to take more responsibility for their work, their skill development and their career paths, to innovate and be involved. These are all goals designed to reduce employee alienation. However, GRE in its pre-transformation state, had a bureaucratic structure, complex hierarchy of command, and a patriarchal, rule-bound culture, all of which would provide a fertile foundation for employee alienation.

Locus of control, an individual difference variable of special interest in this research, and described in some detail later on in this chapter, refers to beliefs about the extent to which a person feels in control of life events (Rotter 1966). A major feature of the experience of alienation is an inability to control one's environment (Mirowsky & Ross 1990). These two concepts are therefore strongly linked, with locus of control emphasising dispositional beliefs and alienation emphasising the influence of a set of environmental circumstances upon an individual's psychological state. A perceived lack of control at work has been associated with 'counterproductive behaviour' such as aggression and

hostility towards coworkers and employer, theft and sabotage (Spector 1997). When examining individual's experiences of change, particularly in relation to locus of control beliefs, it will therefore be important to consider the individual's environmental context in terms of alienation.

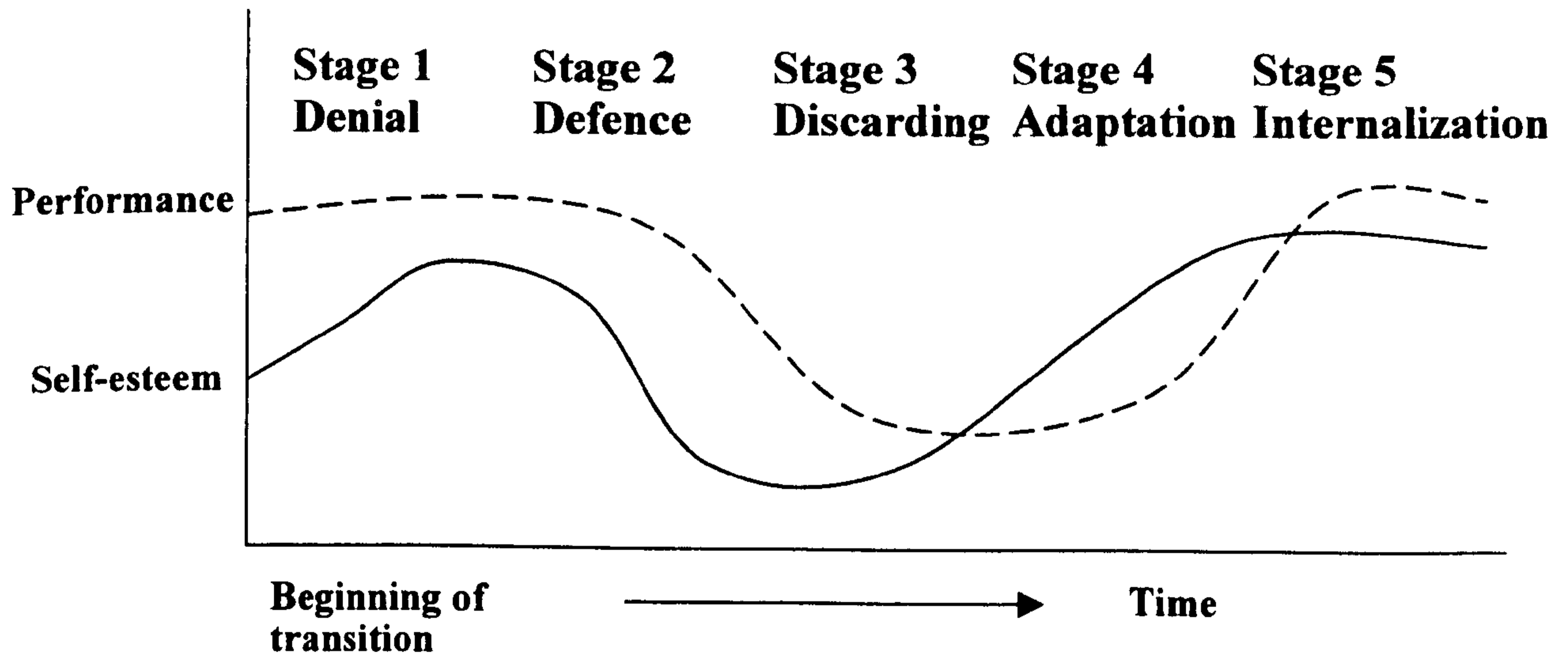
Having considered major change at work at the macro, organisational level and, in the present section, at the group level, the following section, and remainder of the chapter, will discuss major change in relation to the individual, psychological level.

2.4 Personal change and transition

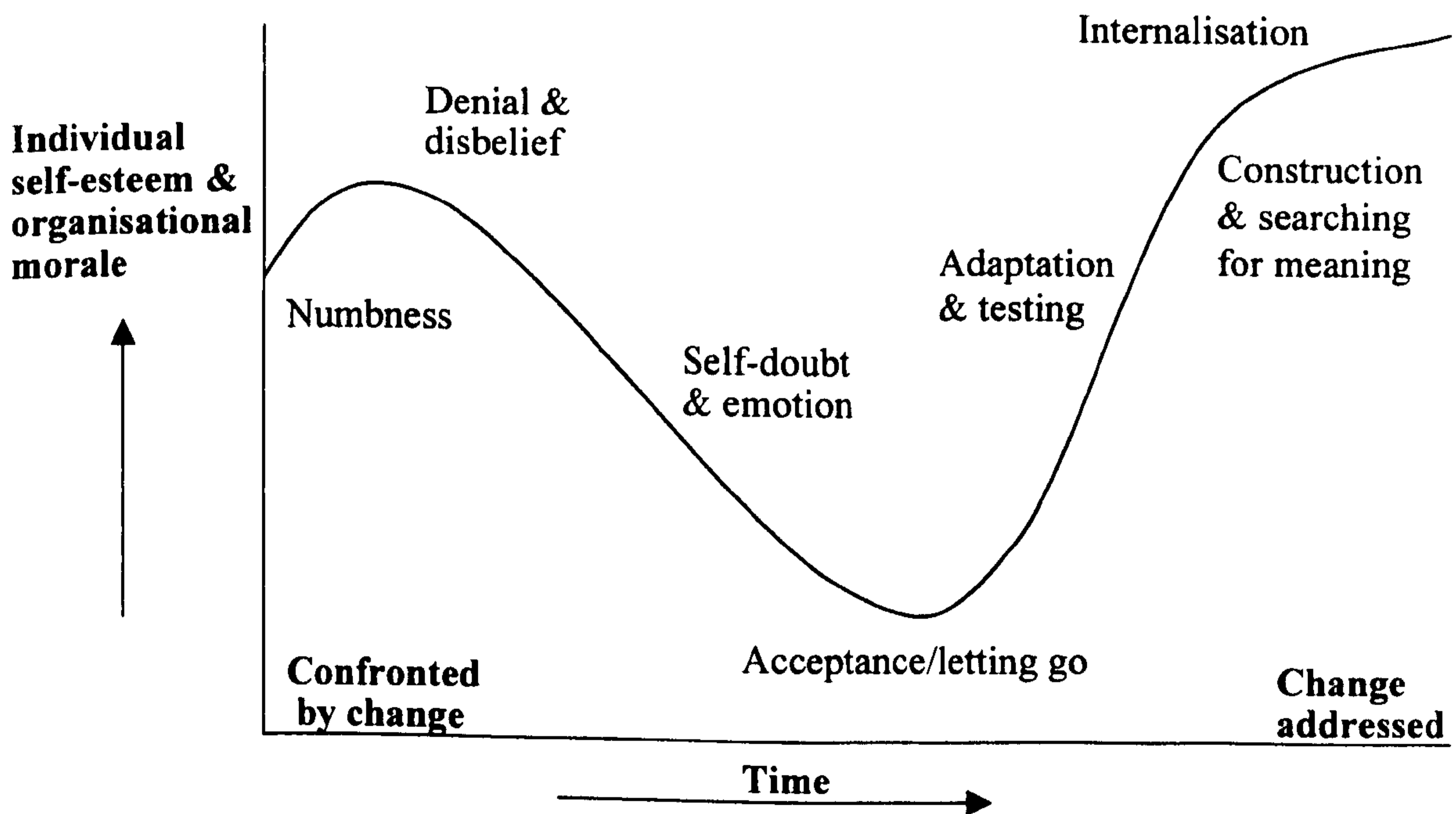
The process of change at work has been explored from the perspective of the individual in both the management and personal development literature, within the framework of the 'transition curve'. There are numerous examples of these frameworks (see Figure 2.1), said to describe stages in the transition process following major life events, or major change at work (Adams, Hayes & Hopson 1976, Parker & Lewis 1981, Spencer & Adams 1990, Carnall 1991, Wille & Hodgson 1991, Wilson 1993). Although the stages in these frameworks differ in number, and may have different labels, they share certain features. The process of transition is seen as a temporal journey from one state of equilibrium through transitional phases to a new state of equilibrium. The frameworks describe a process which takes time, where it is not simply a question of a person switching from, for example, one computer system to another computer system. Within these frameworks, an individual must first let go of the existing system, test the new system, and finally adopt the new system as a familiar and integral part of their work life. The idea that change involves loss has been explored in detail by Marris (1993) who argues that in order to change, new meanings have to be constructed and old meanings have to be abandoned. According to Marris, abandoning old meanings involves a grieving process, and that a period of "bereavement" is thus necessary, whether the loss is of "a personal relationship, a predictable social context or of an interpretable world." (Marris 1993, p.vii).

Figure 2.1 Examples of transition curves

From Carnall (1991)



From Wilson (1993)



The transition frameworks depicted in Figure 2.1 derive from the work of Adams et al (1976) which, in turn, is based upon a vast range of research which has looked at personal transition in areas such as dying (Kubler-Ross 1970), bereavement (Parkes, 1986), training, interpersonal relationships, the transition from school to work (Maizels, 1970), marriage, divorce, and mid-life career transitions (Sofer 1970). The stages described are seen as composite parts of the larger process of "holding on, letting go, and moving on" (Parker & Lewis 1981). Adams et al (1976) describe transition as 'a discontinuity in a person's life space'. They believe that a predictable cycle of responses and emotions are triggered by such discontinuities, whether these discontinuities are intentional, unintentional, sudden or slowly evolving and whether the event which triggers the discontinuity is perceived as positive or negative. Indeed, Spencer & Adams (1990) maintain that the framework covers many life changes from marriage, divorce, leaving home, illness, job change and career change. Apart from identifying seven stages, Adams et al's framework also describes a cycle where self-esteem drops a little at the 'immobilisation' stage, rises during the 'minimisation' stage, drops again during the 'depression' stage, continues to fall until there is a clear 'letting go' of the past, then increases through the 'testing', 'search for meaning' and 'internalisation' stages. Parker & Lewis (1981) describe the same seven stages, but plot the stages on a competence curve, rather than a self-esteem curve.

Although the literature on managing change contains numerous examples of these frameworks, adapted for use in the workplace (Parker & Lewis 1981, Carnall 1991, Wille & Hodgson 1990, Wilson 1993), there have been few studies which have examined the usefulness of 'importing' these frameworks into organisational settings. Exceptions are Stuart (1995) and Parker & Lewis (1981) who both used Adams et al's framework as a guide for their research. Adams et al's (1976) much quoted framework was developed through content analysis of the reports of people who attended 'transition workshops' which were designed to help people cope more effectively with transitions. However, their sample was self-selected, comprising people who felt that they needed help. This may well have influenced the patterns of transition which emerged. Stuart's (1995)

research involved analysing managers' retrospective accounts of their experience of change at work. Although Stuart (1995) found some support for aspects of Adams et al's (1976) framework from managers' change narratives, the framework Stuart produced was far more complex and did not appear adequately to account for the experiences described in his paper. Similarly, Parker & Lewis (1981) used Adams et al's (1976) framework as a guide for their research on promotion. Unfortunately, Parker & Lewis (1981) do not make their research methods explicit, so it is difficult to interpret their findings.

There is a potential problem in using transition frameworks in organisational settings. Development of these frameworks has relied heavily upon the work of Kubler-Ross (1970) who created a model, based upon the phenomenological experience of people who had a terminal illness, as they approached death. Clearly, the major transition from life to death is qualitatively different from the experience of change and transition at work. Research on 'coping' in different domains (ie, work, family, friends, finance, leisure) shows that demands in different domains tend to elicit different kinds of coping responses (Schwartz & Stone 1993). It is therefore possible that importing a framework based upon the experience of transition from life to death, into a workplace setting, is inappropriate.

The acceptance of such frameworks by companies undergoing change programmes may lead to false expectations about people's reactions to major change. Numerous Guardian Insurance documents, written jointly with firms of management consultants, relating to various aspects of change, contain references to the "change curve" and talk about employees going through the stages of "denial, resistance, adoption, acceptance and commitment". This framework corresponds closely with Carnall's (1991) framework, and is based upon Adams et al's (1976) framework. In one particular document, which describes the implementation of a new Performance Management system, managers are given a detailed map describing which stage of the 'change curve' relates to which aspect of implementation. Informal conversations with managers at Guardian Insurance revealed a shared acceptance of the 'change curve' and an expectation that employees (but not necessarily managers) would be resistant to change, but would eventually adapt by either accepting the changes, or leaving the company.

The popularity of these frameworks is understandable, as they bring some order and comprehension to transition processes which involve a move from an area of certainty, to an area of uncertainty, and are therefore fraught with ambiguity. However, the existing frameworks are perhaps too simplistic and may not account adequately for the experience of people undergoing transition at work. Indeed these frameworks may encourage managers to adopt an inappropriate stance during periods of major organisational change by assuming that change is either for the better, or is inevitable. As Nevis (1987) observed “Resistance is a label applied by managers and consultants to the perceived behaviours of others who seem unwilling to accept influence or help ... it is not necessarily the phenomenological experience of the targets.” Isabella (1990 p.34) too, in her study of managers’ experiences during the unfolding of change events, questions the received wisdom of overcoming “resistance to change” and notes that it is “not so much that people want to hold on to what they have as that they are simply questioning what the change will mean to them”.

2.4.1 Summary of transition curve critique

To summarise, a fundamental problem with these frameworks is that they are generic, assuming that the experience of change and the accompanying fall and rise in self-esteem or competence is the same for everyone experiencing change. It should be noted that Adams et al (1976) emphasised that individuals have their own personal change cycles which may involve experiencing a ‘to-ing and fro-ing’ between stages, or a failure to move beyond certain stages, such as denial or depression. However, a ‘successful’ transition is said to be characterised by an individual moving through all of the stages through to stage seven. In Adams et al’s (1976) formulation, the degree of difficulty a person experiences in making the transition through the stages will depend upon the internal and external resources available to them. But, although there is an acknowledgement that some experiences of transition will be less painful than others, within the personal transition literature we are still left with a generic, linear framework

of change, which may be an inadequate representation of the dynamics of transition in the workplace.

In addressing the broad research agenda, ie, to discover the experiences of employees during the process of major organisational change, the present research will assess the usefulness of the 'transition curve' as a framework to describe these experiences. The critique of the literature on transition points to a potential major failing of the frameworks when used in an organisational setting to explain the experience of change. These frameworks do not take account of the potential influence of individual differences upon individuals' experiences of change. However, individual differences have been addressed in relation to major organisational change within the psychology literature on work, stress and coping.

2.5 The role of individual differences in an organisational setting

2.5.1 Organisations - 'strong' or 'weak' settings?

The role of individual differences in determining behaviour at work is frequently underplayed by organisational theories (Furnham 1997), which tend to emphasise structural and organisational factors, making the assumption that situational factors lead to the same behaviour across individuals (Spector 1982). 'Situationists' describe organisations as 'strong' settings, where structures, processes and roles are clearly defined, and individual differences have a limited effect upon behaviour (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer 1989). Research has shown that individual differences have strong effects in 'weak', ie, ambiguous, settings and weak effects in 'strong', ie, unambiguous, settings (Bem & Allen 1974). Traditionally, organisations are looked upon as representing 'strong' settings. However, during a climate of major organisational change, such as that experienced by firms like Guardian Insurance, where existing structures are dismantled, processes are altered, trust is compromised and ambiguity reigns, organisations could be viewed as representing 'weak' situations and individual differences might be expected to achieve greater prominence as determinants of behaviour.

The debate between 'dispositionalists' and 'situationalists' in the work psychology literature has been conducted within the realm of situational vs dispositional effects upon job attitudes (Nelson & Sutton 1990) and has not, to the researcher's knowledge, been applied to organisational change. A third perspective, that arose from the situation vs disposition debate, is called the 'interactionist' perspective, and was elucidated by Schneider (1983). The interactionist position argues that individuals and situations interact continuously and therefore research must take account of both the individual and the situation and the interactions between these two. The present thesis argues that the ambiguous nature of an organisational change environment points to dispositions as being potentially important factors in framing an individual's experience of change. However, the thesis also argues that in order to have a full understanding of people's experience, it is vital to have an understanding of context, in this case the organisational setting. The present research will therefore examine individuals' experiences of major change from an 'interactionist' perspective, taking account of both dispositions and situations and the interactions between them.

2.5.2 Individual differences and organisational change

The following have been identified as harmful features of large-scale organisational change: feelings of uncertainty (Ackerman 1982; Nadler 1982), disruption to individuals' work lives (Carnall 1991), reduction in individuals' perceptions of control over their working lives (Ashford 1988), challenge to personal identity, loss of familiar workgroups (Callan 1993), reduced status and family conflict (Schweiger & Ivancevitch 1985, Nadler 1982). All of these consequences could be viewed as potentially 'stressful' and as triggers for coping. Research on the psychology of work, stress and coping has implicated a range of individual difference variables in the stress/coping process. In a review, Payne 1988 lists genetic, acquired and dispositional individual difference variables which have been shown to affect the stress/coping process. These include physique, sex, intelligence, social class, education, age, Type A, trait anxiety/neuroticism, self-esteem, locus of control, flexibility, hardiness and extraversion-introversion. If we assume that major organisational change produces potentially 'stressful' consequences, such as those listed

above, then we would expect individual differences to be implicated in any explanation of employees' experiences of major organisational change.

A number of studies have examined the role of individual differences in a major organisational change context in relation to individual adjustment, job stress, employee attitudes, coping strategies, job satisfaction and well-being. Individual differences of interest in these studies include, self-efficacy, tolerance for ambiguity (Ashford 1988), personal control (Shaw et al 1993), hardiness (Callan 1993), locus of control, self-esteem (Callan et al 1994), Type A behaviour (Nelson et al 1995), anxiety (Terry et al 1996) and neuroticism (Moyle 1996). We can surmise from these studies that such individual difference factors have an impact upon the way individuals experience major organisational change. However, the results of these studies are based upon retrospective surveys of employees, or upon comparisons of survey data before and after a change event, so that we have little information about *how* these individual differences are implicated in employees' experiences of change. The present research attempts to contribute to this literature by examining employees' reported experiences of change in 'real time' as a major change programme unfolds and relating these experiences to individual difference characteristics.

2.6 Work, stress and coping

2.6.1 Stress definition

Before continuing with this discussion of the literature on work, stress and coping, and its relationship to major organisational change, it is important to acknowledge the conceptual difficulties encountered by researchers working in this area. The word "stress" is used frequently by the popular press and a consensus upon the meaning of the word is assumed. However, in the academic literature there is no such consensus. As McCrae (1990 p.237) notes, stress can mean "an external event, an internal perception, or a complex physiological reaction". Briner (1993) has described the problems surrounding the use of the term "stress" as 'a definitional and conceptual problem that refuses to go away'. In developing his argument, Briner (1993, p.10) suggests that stress

be defined as a "rubric ... a heading for a range of diverse phenomena which may or may not be causally related". However, most researchers in the area agree that the term "stress" suggests a negative experience of work demands, and terms such as "challenge" or "pressure" are used to describe either neutral or positive experiences of work demands (Marshall & Cooper 1979).

This usage of the term "stress" implies that a situation cannot be objectively described as 'stressful', rather, it is an individual's perception of their situation that denotes whether the situation is 'stressful' or not. As Dewe (1989, p.1008) notes, it is an oversimplification to suggest that "reporting the presence of a demanding situation necessarily results in those situations being experienced as demanding". Demanding events may be positively stimulating for some people, and either negatively stimulating, or experienced in a neutral fashion, by others (Levi 1990, Thoits 1995). Where the term 'stress' is used in the present research, this refers to individuals' subjective experience of a situation. Events are not viewed as 'stressful' per se, but only termed as 'stressful', or as 'stressors' when perceived as such by individuals.

2.6.2 'Stress process' - models

Cox (1978) classified theoretical approaches to 'stress' research into three distinct groups, ie, 'engineering', 'medical' and 'psychological'. Within the 'psychological' group, 'structural' (Katz & Kahn 1966, Karasek 1979, Edwards & Van Harrison 1993) and 'transactional' (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, Edwards 1992) approaches have dominated research in the psychology field for many years.

2.6.2.1 Structural models

Structural models of stress include the Michigan Model, originally proposed by Katz & Kahn (1966), but developed and refined by House (1981). This is a general model accounting for many different situations in which stress may arise. Other structural models deal with more specific aspects of the work-stress process, eg, Role Stress Theory, the Person-Environment Fit Model and Karasek's Demand-Control Model. The

Michigan Model describes a process whereby people perceive stress in response to environmental conditions when the demands on people outweigh their abilities to respond. The model suggests that individual differences in people's perceptions of 'objective social conditions' depends upon individual factors (eg, personality traits, locus of control, self-efficacy, hardiness, ability to exert control, Type A behaviour pattern), situational factors (eg, job control, social support, person-environment fit) and demographic factors (eg, age, gender, marital status, socio-economic status). These factors are labelled "conditioning variables" (House 1981).

Kahn's (1976) 'Role Stress Theory' which treats role overload, role conflict and role ambiguity as the major job stressors has been superseded by multivariate models because it is now recognised that these three potential job stressors are part of a much wider set of psychosocial factors which can contribute towards the experience of stress. The 'Person-Environment Model' (Edwards and Van Harrison 1993) where a job becomes stressful when "the abilities of the individual fall below demands of the job" and when the job "does not provide supplies to meet the individual's motives" (Van Harrison 1978, p.178) looks at the stress process in similar terms to Jaques (1989) who suggests that stress arises from a mismatch between 'work capacity' (ie, an individual's ability) and 'level of work' (ie, the 'amount' of ability an individual utilizes).

Karasek developed a Demand-Control Model of work stress (Karasek 1979, Karasek & Theorell 1990) where stress arises when job demands outweigh personal control. In situations where work is highly demanding, as long as these demands are matched by control opportunities, stress will not result. Although 'work demands' has tended to be quite narrowly defined by Karasek as 'workload', other researchers using this model have expanded the definition of 'work demands' to include other potential stressors such as job insecurity, hazard exposure (Landsbergis 1988), role conflict, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflict (Spector 1987), and social support (Parkes et al 1994).

2.6.2.2 *Transactional models*

Lazarus (1966), a strong proponent of the transactional approach, describes stress as the product of a problematic transaction between a person and the environment. An important aspect of this approach is the emphasis upon cognition and perception. Stress only arises when an individual perceives, or 'appraises', that the demands of the situation outweigh his or her ability to cope with those demands (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Lazarus (1991) does not see stress as being a property of either the individual or the environment, but, rather, stress arises when environmental circumstances trigger a threat appraisal in an individual. There are two stages to appraisal. During primary appraisal, an individual assesses whether the environmental circumstances pose a threat to his/her well-being. During secondary appraisal, an individual evaluates coping options. Coping is seen as an interactional process whereby one coping strategy will lead to an environmental response which will in turn lead to a re-evaluation of coping options and possibly the use of another coping response, and so on (Folkman et al 1986). Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) approach is situational in that coping results from a response to the demands of a particular situation. This is in contrast to other models which emphasise traits and usual modes of behaviour. Whilst Lazarus (1991 p.2) acknowledges that personal factors play a role in the stress process, he is critical of the "static or structural approach ... indigenous to the field of industrial stress", so has instead focused upon individual appraisals and context, rather than the underlying dispositions which may influence those appraisals of context.

Edwards (1992), in a theoretical paper, synthesised a number of influential organisational stress models, all of which incorporated principles of cybernetics, or 'self-regulating systems'. Structural theories such as role stress theory and person-environment fit theory were integrated with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional model to create what Edwards (1992 p.248) calls "a cybernetic model of stress, coping and well-being in organisations". Edwards' model is transactional. 'Stress' and resultant coping behaviours arise out of individuals' perceptions of their work environment and this 'transaction' continues until there is no longer a 'discrepancy between a person's perceptions and desires', so that 'well-being' is restored. In contrast to Lazarus & Folkman's (1984)

model, Edward's (1992) gives more weight to the importance of personal factors in the stress and coping process. However, in acknowledging the role of personal factors Edwards (1992) does not diminish the importance of the environmental context. See Figures 2.2 and 2.3 for graphical representations of the Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and Edwards (1992) models.

2.6.2.3 Comparisons and criticisms of stress process models

Stress process models share certain features. Individual perceptions of the situation are of major importance in Lazarus & Folkman's model, Edwards' model, the Michigan Model and the Person-Environment fit model. In order to experience stress, an individual must perceive that the environment, or an aspect of the environment, is stressful. The demand vs ability balance in the Person-Environment fit model resembles Karasek's (1979) 'work demands' vs 'control' balance.

Despite the similarities, Lazarus (1991) has strongly criticised the structural models for being too 'static', thus ignoring the processual nature of person-environment interaction. For both Edwards and Lazarus, coping is context-specific and changes as a situation unfolds, whereas in the structural models, coping is seen as a function of personality types and traits. Researchers using structural models have begun to acknowledge the interactional nature of the stress-coping process, and have included feed-back loops to demonstrate reciprocal causal relationships between factors in the models (Israel et al 1992). However, with rare exceptions (Aldwin & Revenson 1987, Nelson & Sutton 1990), research based on structural models tends to look at cross-sectional relations between stressors, outcomes and mediating variables. Even where longitudinal designs have been used, research reveals causal relationships, but fails to address questions relating to process (Heaney et al 1995).

Figure 2.2 Lazarus & Folkman (1984) transactional model of the coping process, adapted from Edwards (1992)

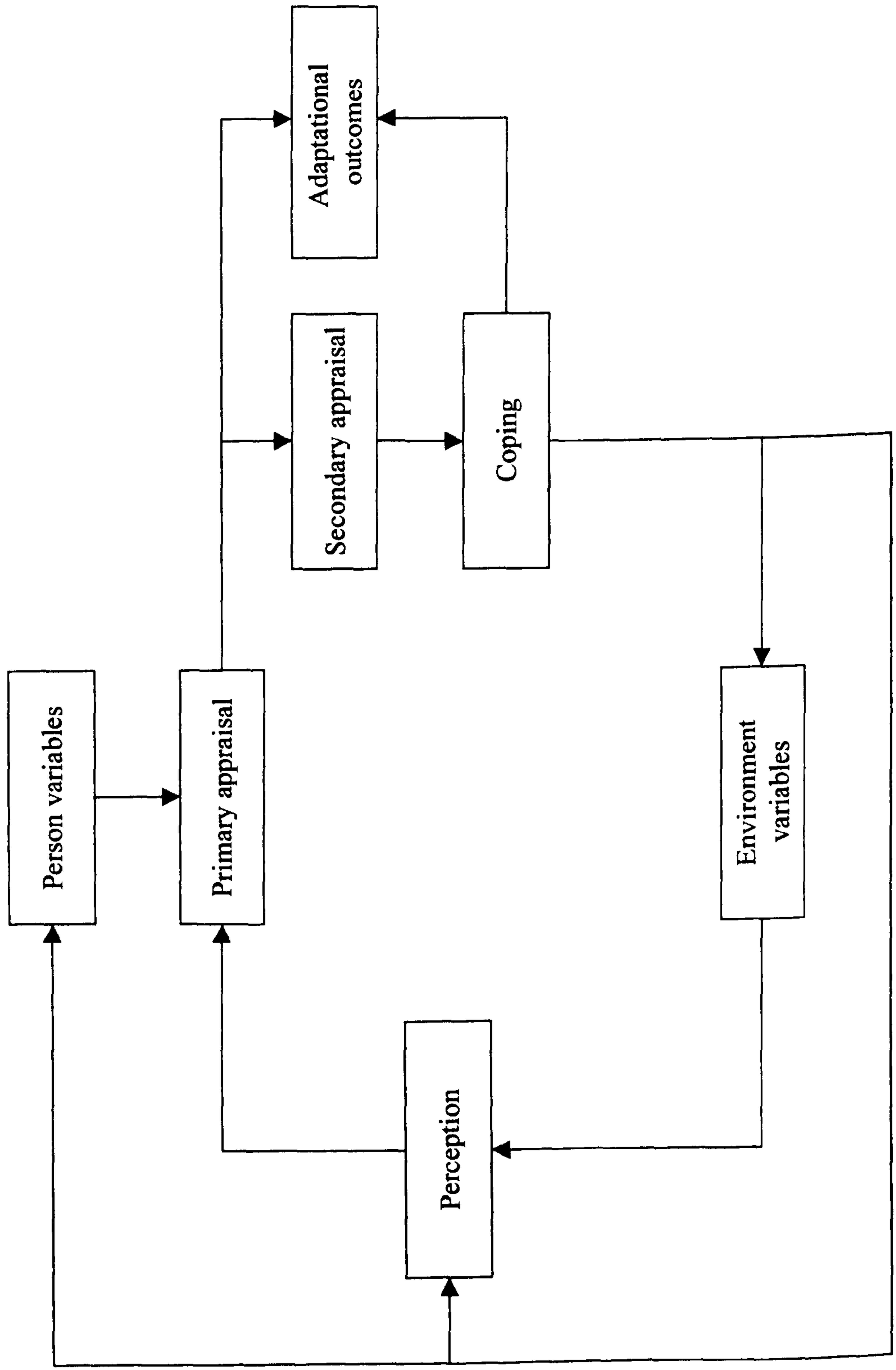
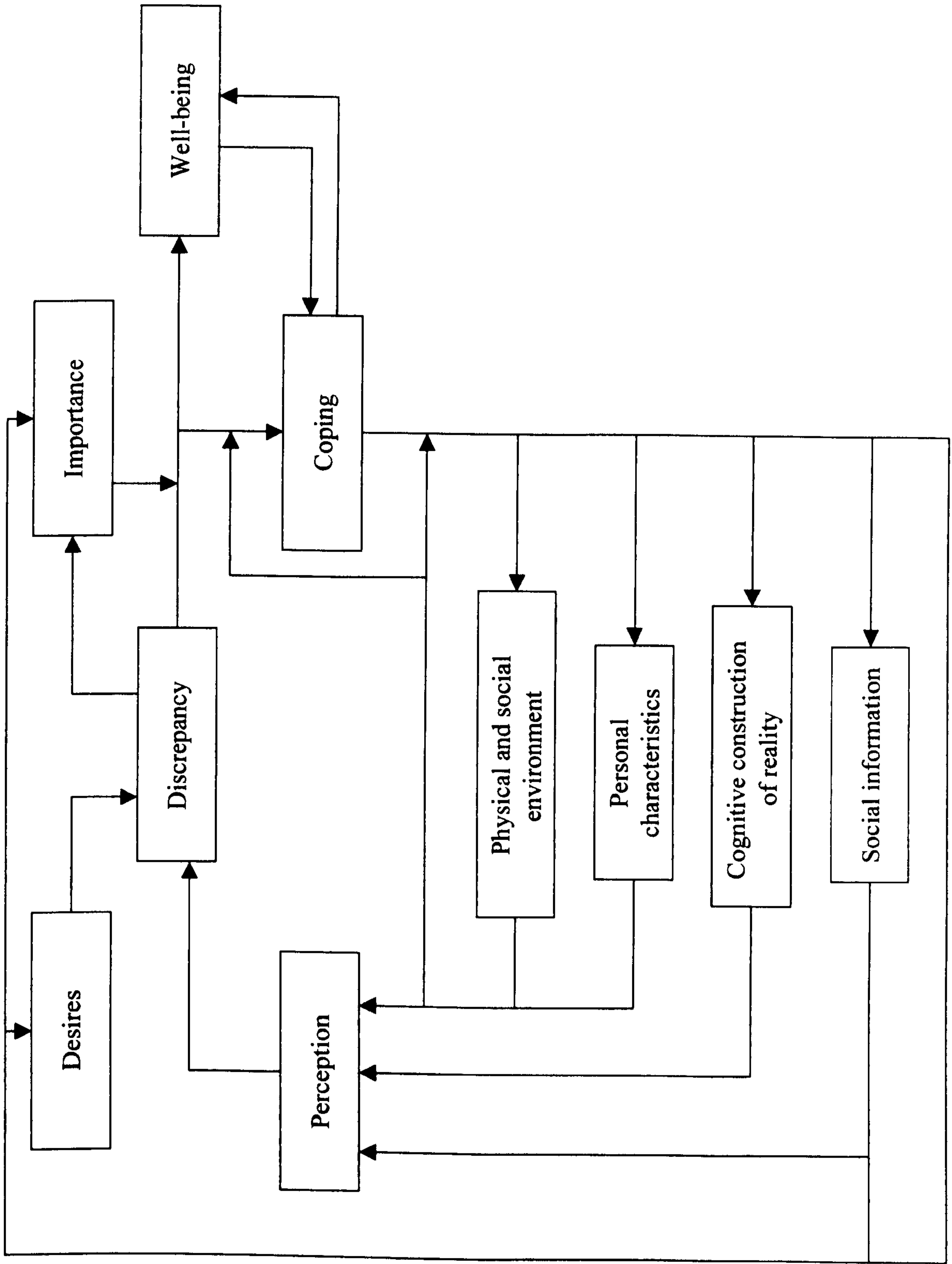


Figure 2.3 Edwards (1992) model of stress, coping and well-being in organisations



As noted earlier, the present research agenda concerns process. The research sets out to discover employees' experiences of major change over time. The transactional models developed by Folkman & Lazarus (1984) and Edwards (1992) emphasise process and will therefore be more relevant than 'structural' models for use in the present research. However, neither Folkman & Lazarus' nor Edwards' models give weight to individual differences as predictors of behaviour. Whilst adopting an approach to the study of employees' experiences of major change, which is informed by 'transactional' models, the researcher's interest in the role of individual differences in employees' experiences of change necessitates an examination of 'work and stress' research in the 'structural' tradition, where individual differences are the focus.

2.6.3 Coping

The aim of the present research is to elucidate employees' experiences of major change at work. If we assume that major organisational change produces a 'demanding', or 'challenging', environment for some individuals, then we would expect 'coping' to be part of that experience. Like the term 'stress', the term 'coping' is also problematic, as 'coping' has been defined in a variety of ways in the literature (Latack & Havlovic 1990, Steptoe 1991). The lay use of the term 'coping' could refer to encountering and dealing with difficult situations generally, or could mean dealing with situations in an effective manner. Further, coping behaviour has been described as a mere 'epiphenomenon' of personality (McCrae & Costa 1986). Other researchers take a more 'situation oriented' approach. For example, Dewe (1991) suggests that appraisal of the situation is the key to predicting how a person will cope. Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) work in this area views coping in the general sense as a range of responses which may or may not be adaptive in a given situation. Payne (1988) points out that whilst coping refers to behaviours in response to a situation that presents an individual with a problem, we need to define which situations are problematic. Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional model operationalises a 'problematic' situation as one in which an individual perceives that the demands of the situation are 'taxing', or that the environmental demands outweigh his or

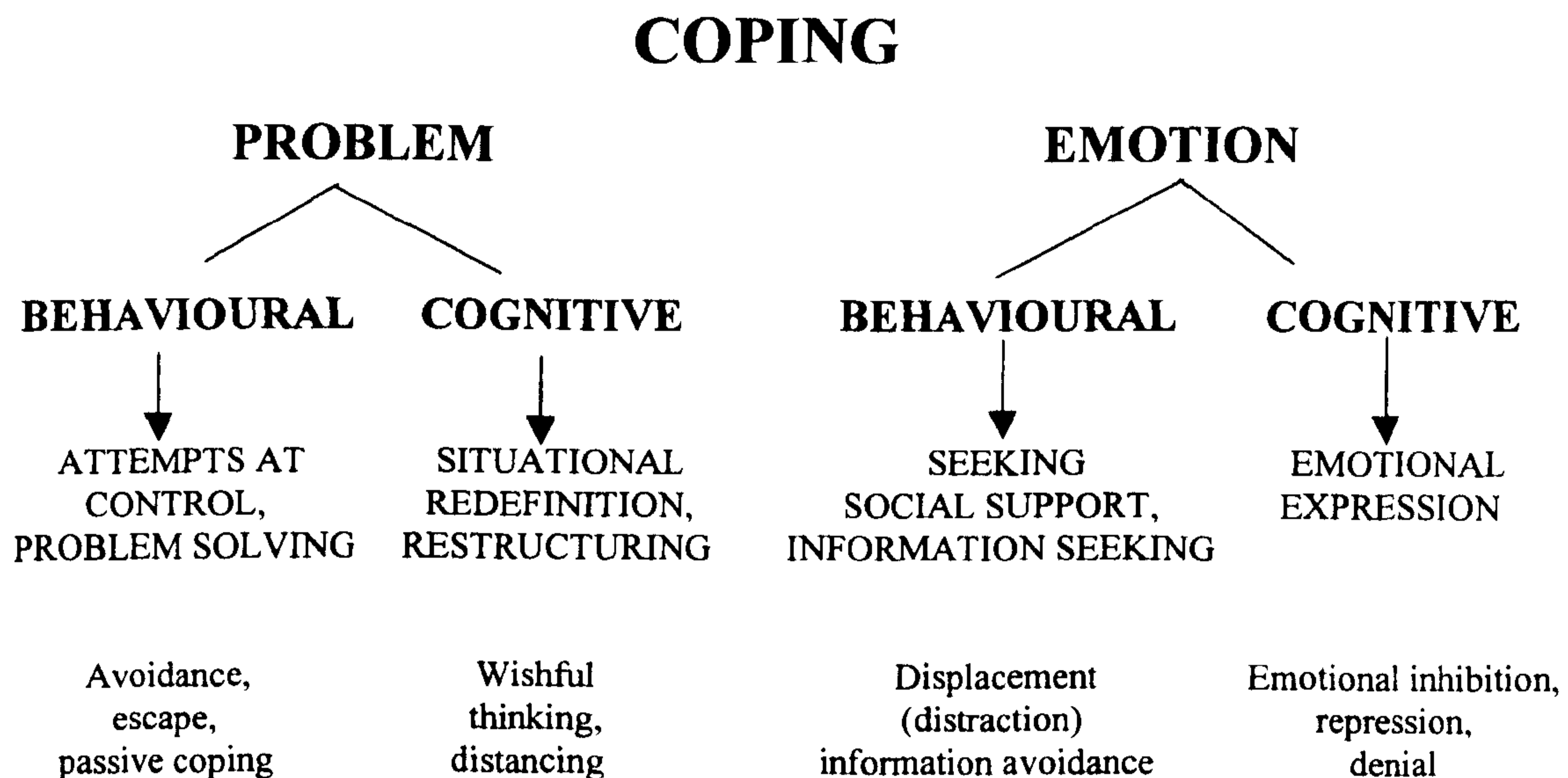
her ability to deal with those demands. The present research follows Lazarus & Folkman's definitions of both coping and problematic situations.

By examining the relationship between stressors, conditioning variables and outcomes, researchers have generated a great deal of evidence on the 'sources' of stress at work (Kahn et al 1964, Van Sell et al 1981). However, placing the emphasis of research upon the relationship between work demands and outcomes means that 'coping' "... becomes the by-product of any relationship that cannot be easily explained" (Dewe 1991, p.334). Such research has not revealed much detailed information about effective ways of coping with work-related stress, or about how particular 'sources' of stress at work and person factors might influence the coping process (Mayes et al 2000).

Further, recent reviews of stress-coping instruments, such as the 'Ways of Coping' checklist (Lazarus & Folkman 1984), the COPE scale (Carver et al 1989) and the 'Coping Strategy Indicator' (Amirkhan 1990), have highlighted inconsistencies in the way 'coping' is conceptualised by researchers (Latack & Havlovic 1992), along with problems of internal validity, construct validity and predictive validity of current coping measures (O'Driscoll & Cooper 1994). Also, these standard coping measures have been shown to be inappropriate for use within a work context (Nelson & Sutton 1990). Work-specific measures have been developed (Latack 1986, Dewe & Guest 1990). However, Latack's measure has limited use as it assesses coping in relation to just three specific work 'stressors'. Also, as the measure was devised with the sole participation of managers and health-care professionals, it may be inappropriate for use with other types of worker. Dewe & Guest's (1990) coping checklist is more broad-based, however, a basic problem with the use of both work-specific and standard measures is that respondents are unable to offer examples of coping behaviours which are not included in the measure (Nelson & Sutton 1990). Also, research employing these measures tends to examine coping responses *generally* employed by an individual, but does not examine interactive coping processes, as described in Folkman & Lazarus's model (Lazarus 1991).

Different research traditions have created different ways of organising the many coping responses that have been recognised as being mobilised in demanding situations (Latack & Havlovic 1992). These distinctions between types of coping behaviour include, engagement vs disengagement responses (Tobin et al 1989), problem-focused vs emotion focused responses (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, Carver et al 1989), and active-cognitive, active-behavioural and avoidant responses (Billings & Moos 1981). Within these broad distinctions, researchers include more subtle distinctions between responses, such as, wishful thinking, positive appraisal, self-blame, denial and so on. Steptoe (1991, p.211), defines coping as a "range of responses brought into play" in an attempt to manage 'demanding' encounters. Having presented an overview of different "schemes" for categorising coping, Steptoe developed a useful 'taxonomy' of types of coping responses. In Steptoe's taxonomy overleaf, (see Figure 2.4), coping responses are categorised according to whether they are cognitive or behavioural, emotion-focused or problem-focused and, lastly, whether the responses lead to engagement or disengagement. Latack & Havlovic's (1992) 2 x 2 matrix framework for evaluating coping measures, based upon an extensive review of the coping literature, also has cognitive vs behavioural and emotion-focused vs problem-focused as the main coping dimensions.

Figure 2.4 - Steptoe (1991) Taxonomy of coping



A classification of psychological coping, from Steptoe (1991, p. 213). Behaviours leading to *engagement* with the situation are shown in upper case. Behaviours associated with *disengagement* from the situation are in lower case.

In Steptoe's (1991) classification above, coping is classified broadly into two types: problem-focused coping, where attempts are made to alter the relationship between person and environment, and emotion-focused coping where the aim is to contain undesirable emotional responses. Coping is further classified according to whether the response is at the behavioural or cognitive levels, although Steptoe acknowledges that these categories are not independent as, for example, behavioural coping may have a cognitive dimension and such a response may address the problem, but may also ameliorate emotions. A further distinction in Steptoe's taxonomy is between those responses leading to engagement with the problem and those that result in a disengagement from the problem.

As stated earlier, the aim of the present research is to elicit employees' experiences of major change at work. The researcher is assuming that coping behaviour will form part

of that experience. The researcher's intention is to use Steptoe's (1991) taxonomy as a 'loose' system for organising data relating to coping responses. Prior research suggests a number of coping response categories which are deemed to be either effective or ineffective in a work setting. Problem-focused coping, ie, responding in a manner that deals with the problematic situation, has been judged as effective in a work setting, whereas emotion-focused coping, ie, responding in a manner that helps ameliorate negative emotions, but doesn't address the problem, has been judged to be ineffective in a work setting (Billings & Moos 1984, Nelson & Sutton 1990). Cognitive reappraisal has also been cited as a successful coping strategy in response to stressful work events (Latack 1986). Social-support seeking, particularly managerial support, is judged to be a useful coping strategy at work (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998) and beneficial in ameliorating the negative consequences of workplace change (Dignam & West 1988, Callan 1993). However, a small number of researchers have argued that problem-focused coping (Carver et al 1989) and social-support seeking (Buunck et al 1989) may be ineffective and even detrimental strategies under certain conditions, because focusing on a particular problem may increase negativity. The present research intends to add to this discussion by investigating the coping processes inherent in employees' reports of their experiences of major organisational change.

2.6.4 Organisational change as a 'stressor'

Research in the field of work and stress has investigated individual reactions to organisational change by operationalising organisational change as a 'stressor' comprising features such as 'uncertainty', 'disruption', 'ambiguity' (Ashford 1988), 'role conflict', 'role ambiguity' and 'role overload' (Shaw et al 1993), 'job change', 'organization structure change' and 'work environment change' (Callan et al 1994). However, as Dewe et al (1993) point out, the researcher's assumption that a potential stressor is present, does not necessarily equate with an individual experiencing stress. Categorisations, such as those attributed to Ashford (1988), Shaw (1993) and Callan (1994), listed above, are based upon assumptions about the consequences of organisational change for individuals. Such consequences may not be experienced by individuals working within the organisations in

question. Further, if such consequences are experienced by employees, employees may not necessarily experience these consequences as 'stressful'. As Levi (1990, p.1143) discusses, events at work that trigger a biological stress response might be perceived as "either the 'spice of life' or the 'kiss of death'". Indeed, without investigating individuals' perceptions of events, "research may unwittingly be asking individuals to respond to events which are neither important nor relevant" (Dewe et al 1993, p.13).

In addressing the broad research question, ie, 'how do employees experience major organisational change?', the present research will specifically ask employees how they perceive major change as the change programme unfolds during the research period. This should fill a gap in the literature by providing an empirical, rather than an a priori, account of the consequences of the change programme for employees at Guardian Insurance.

2.6.5 The role of personality in the coping process

Much of the literature based upon experimental studies of the relationship between individual differences and coping supports the idea that individual differences are related to particular ways of coping (Parkes 1994). It has already been argued in section 2.3.1 that we might expect individual differences to be important determinants of employees' behaviour within a context of major organisational change, because a climate of major change will 'weaken' the organisational setting. However, Lazarus (1991) rejects the notion that individual differences, particularly personality dispositions, should be emphasised in the coping process. Lazarus focuses upon the importance of context and cites field studies that have investigated coping, to support his argument that, despite personality differences, most people use similar coping strategies in response to similar events (Folkman & Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990). Both Folkman & Lazarus and Bolger examined coping within the context of the process of leading up to and following an examination. It is possible that similar coping behaviour was observed because these examination settings were 'strong' settings, with "well defined, anticipated, and time-

limited events" (Bolger 1990, p.536) and thus elicited more 'situational', rather than 'dispositional' behaviours.

After reviewing 'stress process models', (section 2.3.3), the present review concluded that Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) model, and Edwards' (1992) model - both transactional models - would be the most appropriate 'stress-coping' process frameworks to guide the present research. Neither Lazarus & Folkman, nor Edwards, emphasise the role of personality in their models. Indeed, Lazarus (1991) argues vociferously against studies that focus upon the role of personality traits in the stress-coping process. A note should therefore be made to justify the proposed examination of personality dispositions in the current research.

In their article 'A place for traits in stress research', Ben-Porath & Tellegen (1990) state that although in his early research on stress and coping Lazarus emphasised the role of personality traits, Lazarus then "repudiates the relevance of personality traits to this area of research in psychology" (p.14). In 1986 Folkman, Lazarus and colleagues (p.992) state "in the trait-oriented approach, it is assumed that coping is primarily a property of the person and variations in the stressful situation are of little importance". This rejection of the relevance of traits is based upon a simplistic 'straw man' view of traits as 'situation blind' tendencies. Ben-Porath & Tellegen argue that an 'enlightened trait conception' where an individual's behaviour is viewed as "a joint function of personal disposition *and* situation" (p.15) is highly compatible with the 'relational perspective' (ie, behaviour is an outcome of a 'transaction' between person and environment) that Lazarus and colleagues bring to their research on stress and coping. As Cox & Ferguson (1991, p.11) point out, 'primary appraisal' in the stress and coping process is "by its very nature subject to mediation by individual differences", so that individual differences become an implicit part of transactional models.

2.6.6 Relevant individual differences

As mentioned earlier, in section 2.5.2, a range of individual difference factors have been implicated in the stress process at work, including physique, gender, intelligence, social class, education, age, Type A, trait anxiety/neuroticism, self-esteem, locus of control, flexibility, hardiness and extraversion-introversion (Payne 1988). A number of individual difference factors have featured in the 'stress and coping' research conducted specifically within the context of major organisational change, namely, self-efficacy, tolerance for ambiguity, personal control, hardiness, locus of control, self-esteem, Type A, anxiety and neuroticism (Ashford 1988, Shaw et al 1993, Callan 1993, Callan et al 1994, Nelson et al 1995, Terry et al 1996, Moyle 1996).

The present research will examine how the personality trait dimensions neuroticism-stability and extraversion-introversion (Eysenck & Eysenck 1964), and the personality disposition, work locus of control (Spector 1988), influence employees' experiences of major change. Whilst the analysis focus will be upon these three individual difference factors, other relevant personal factors, such as age, gender, length of employment and prior experience, and work characteristics such as location and job type, will also be examined.

The following sections explain the researcher's decision to include these particular personal factors, work characteristics and personality factors in the present research.

2.6.7 Personal factors

Age: Younger people tend to be more willing to embrace change than older people (Furnham 1997), so we might expect older employees to report more negative experiences of major organisational change than their younger colleagues. However, in work settings generally, the literature suggests that older workers experience less job stress (Remondet & Hansson 1991) and higher job satisfaction (Parkes 1993) than younger workers. Age is being included in the present research to see whether the

assumption that younger workers are more accepting of change is warranted in a major organisational change setting.

Gender: Prior research has found gender differences in coping behaviour at work. Folkman & Lazarus (1980) found that men used more problem-focused coping strategies than women in work contexts. Studies consistently show that women tend to seek social support more readily than men, and that women have an 'emotional, expressive' style of responding to stressors, whilst men have an 'unemotional, inexpressive' style of responding to stressors (Thoits 1995). Women routinely report higher levels of physical and psychological stress symptoms than men (Parkes 1990). We might therefore expect men and women to both perceive and respond to major organisational change differently.

Length of employment: Furnham (1997) suggests that employees who are new to an organisation will be less averse to change, as they have little to lose. In contrast, long-serving employees will have a greater stake in preserving the status quo, so will be unwilling to accept change. However, within the context of the present research, where the major organisational change programme resulted in redundancies across the company, long-serving employees might feel more secure about their positions, because of their superior experience, and may therefore accept the structural changes that resulted in redundancies more readily than their short-serving colleagues.

Prior experience: Thoits (1995) recounts research with recently divorced individuals which shows that many people are able to learn from their negative experiences. She concluded that if individuals were "able to derive positive meaning for themselves and/or their future" (Thoits 1995 p.58), then they did not experience negative psychological effects. Dolan & Tziner (1988) found that previous experience of redundancy ameliorated negative reactions to job insecurity. We might therefore expect prior experience of major organisational change to mitigate individuals' negative experiences of major change at work.

Work orientation: As discussed in section 2.3.1, an employees' 'work orientation' might affect their experiences of major organisational change at work. We might expect employees with an instrumental attachment at work to be most concerned about those changes that threaten the financial components of their employment contract. On the other hand, we might expect those employees with a 'moral' or 'emotional' attachment at work to be more concerned about those changes that threaten job security and career opportunities.

2.6.8 Work characteristics

Location: Geographical location might be expected to influence individuals' experiences of change at work in that the individuals who participated in the current research were from different locations in the north and south of England. The job market in one particular area in the south was especially 'buoyant', whilst the job market was 'flat' in one of the northern areas. We could therefore anticipate that individuals from the area with a buoyant job market would be less concerned about changes involving a threat of job loss than those in the area with the flat job market.

Job type: Individuals with different job types might be influenced differently by major change programmes at work. In the present research, major structural changes were due to affect claims and underwriting staff predominantly, whilst secretarial and typing job roles were not expected to be affected by the structural changes to any great extent.

Alienation: If the work environment at GID is perceived by employees to be 'alienating', or an employee's job is perceived to be 'alienating', then major change aimed at reducing employee alienation may be perceived positively by staff. However, the reverse might be the case. Employee alienation may lead to staff not embracing change, as employees may feel a lack of involvement with the company or their job and will therefore feel a lack of involvement with any changes associated with the company or their job.

2.6.9 Relevant personality factors NOT included in present research

As mentioned earlier, there are many individual difference measures that have been implicated in the stress process, and have been investigated within the context of major change at work. The present study focuses upon two personality dimensions, namely neuroticism-stability and extraversion-introversion, along with the personality disposition work locus of control. As other influential individual differences, such as other "big five" factors, type A behaviour and 'hardiness', (all of which might be expected to influence behaviour within a context of major organisational change), have not been included for study in the present research, a note of explanation is warranted.

"Big Five" factor model: Neuroticism and Extraversion are part of the "Big Five" factor theory of the structure of personality (McCrae & Costa 1990). These five factors are thought to represent the basic dimensions of personality (Digman 1990, McCrae 1992). Any of these factors, which also include Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, might influence the stress and coping process. Indeed, researchers have begun to examine the role of all of these factors in studies relating to stress and coping (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996). However, Extraversion and Neuroticism have been highlighted by research as being particularly important dimensions in terms of coping behaviour (McCrae & Costa 1986) and have therefore been selected for use in the present study.

Type A behaviour: Type A's are characterised as "extremely competitive, high achieving, aggressive, hasty, impatient and restless" (Furnham 1992). A large body of work has implicated type A behaviour in the stress process (Payne 1988). As type A's have been shown to experience stress in ambiguous situations, this suggests that the type A/B measure would be a particularly relevant individual difference measure for the present research. However, researchers have highlighted conceptual difficulties with the type A/B behaviour pattern. Type A has been shown to be multidimensional and comprising 'good' and 'bad' type A's and 'good' and 'bad' type B's (Furnham 1992). Eysenck (1990) argues that existing 'valid' measures of type A behaviour pattern do not

correlate highly, and, further, Eysenck (1991) asserts that type A behaviour represents a combination of high neuroticism with high extraversion.

Hardiness: The personality construct 'hardiness' has three characteristics: 'control', ie, a belief that one can influence events; 'commitment', ie, to be highly involved and purposeful in life encounters; and 'challenge', ie, a belief that change rather than stability is normal (Kobasa 1979). The literature suggests that hardiness plays a role in both the stress-outcome relationship and the coping process (Payne 1988). Hamilton (1996) found that 'low hardy' managers differed from 'high hardy' managers in the way in which they appraised and coped with stressful events. Within an organisational change context, 'hardiness' would be expected to play a role in influencing both perceptions of and responses to change. However, numerous researchers have highlighted problems with the construct and its measurement. There are suggestions that the construct is multi-dimensional so that the subcomponents of control, commitment and challenge are poorly related (Taylor 1991). There are also concerns that the construct correlates with neuroticism and that, in terms of its role in ameliorating physical illness, it may only be relevant to the male population (Cox & Ferguson 1991).

2.6.10 Personality factors chosen for inclusion in present research

The personality traits neuroticism-stability and extraversion-introversion (Eysenck & Eysenck 1964), and the personality disposition, work locus of control (Spector 1988), have been singled out by the researcher as particularly relevant to the present research context. The following sections justify the choice of these particular individual difference factors for inclusion in the current research.

2.6.10.1 Work locus of control

The 'bureaucratic' (Heckscher & Donnellon 1994) structure which Guardian Insurance attempted to move away from via their change programme, would be compatible with employees who are compliant, obedient and seek direction. The 'interactive' structure which Guardian Insurance attempted to move towards would favour employees who are

adaptable, show initiative and seek autonomy. These two behavioural extremes correspond with the characteristics associated with individuals at opposite ends of the individual difference construct, locus of control (Spector 1982, Blau 1993). The present study proposes the use of the work locus of control measure (Spector 1988). However, this 'context specific' measure developed out of a large body of work based upon the locus of control scale, developed by Rotter (1966).

The locus of control construct developed out of Social Learning Theory (Rotter 1954). Locus of control was developed as an explanatory concept to account for the tendency of some individuals to disregard reward and punishment contingencies. This kind of response was seen to represent a "generalised expectancy" that rewards and punishments in life are not controlled by the person's own actions, but by forces beyond their control. People who attribute the control of events to their own actions are said to be positioned at the internal end of the locus of control continuum, whereas those people who attribute the control of events to outside forces are said to have an 'external' locus of control (Phares 1976). In an organisational context, 'internals' have been shown to differ from externals in that they tend to be more satisfied with jobs, enjoy longer job tenure, perceive that they have more autonomy and control at work, they are more sensitive to reward contingencies, prefer a participative approach to supervision, and perceive more alternatives in choice situations (O'Brien 1984). Also, irrespective of IQ score, internals seem to be better at collecting and processing information (Phares 1976), which suggests that internals may be more motivated in this respect than externals.

Prior research points to the importance of locus of control as a moderator of the relationship between the experience of stress and outcomes (Payne 1988). Specifically, studies conducted in an organisational context suggest that externals' perceptions of, and responses to, major organisational change, would be less adaptive than their internal counterparts (Storms & Spector 1987, Ashford 1988). Although, it should be noted that under demanding conditions where opportunities for control (Marino & White 1985) or social support (Fusilier et al 1987) are lacking, internals have been shown to react more negatively than externals. Externals tend to use more emotion-focused and less problem-

focused coping in the face of environmental pressure (Anderson 1977, Parkes 1984, Hurrell & Murphey 1991). The goal of emotion-focused coping is to control and/or discharge emotion (Lazarus & Folkman 1984) and may include responses such as, angry outbursts, demonstrations of sadness, withdrawal, excessive drinking, or drug abuse (Callan 1993). Under circumstances where environmental stressors are uncontrollable, emotion-focused coping may prove to be more adaptive than problem-focused coping (Evans et al 1993). However, within the context of major organisational change, where actions such as information gathering, making plans, solving problems and negotiating are called for (Callan et al 1994), the literature suggests that the use of problem-focused coping would be more adaptive than the use of emotion-focused coping.

Criticisms of locus of control

Although a vast amount of research has been conducted using locus of control, and, theoretically, this construct would appear to be important within a major organisational change context, the construct is not without its problems and the use of locus of control measures continues to be criticised. Kline (1993) dismisses the locus of control construct, saying that, "it is not a variable, as I have shown, despite the plethora of research, of great psychological interest". However, this criticism is based upon an examination of research which has treated locus of control as a trait, rather than as a "relatively stable variable" (Rotter 1975). Rotter's original formulation (1966) did perhaps overemphasise the stability of the construct in adulthood, however, his 1975 criticism of research which has used locus of control, emphasises that locus of control cannot be treated as a predictive variable without taking into account the context within which behaviour occurs and the value an individual places upon attaining a particular outcome. Longitudinal research has shown that locus of control orientation affects behaviour towards the environment, but is also affected by the environment, and can change over time (Andrisani & Nestel 1976, Anderson 1977). Also, locus of control arose out of social learning theory, which asserts that we develop and change over time through the process of being exposed to different environmental conditions, and learning through this experience. Within this theoretical framework, we would expect changes in

locus of control over time, and, therefore, should not treat this construct as a personality trait, but as a relatively stable personality disposition (Parkes 1991).

A further criticism comes from Rotter (1975, p.56) who comments that researchers must guard against assuming that “internals are always “good guys” and externals are always “bad guys””. A good understanding of the implications of locus of control beliefs can only be achieved if contextual factors are considered when interpreting findings. In the present research, individuals' reports of their experiences will be examined within the organisational context and this should guard against such bias. A related problem with the construct is social desirability. Research has shown that internality is socially desirable (Jellison & Green 1981), therefore ‘faking’ must also be guarded against.

Some studies suggest that the internal/external split does not capture the complexity of the relationship between locus of control and environmental outcomes. O'Brien (1986) and Krause & Stryker (1984) suggest that there is a curvilinear relationship between locus of control and outcomes, so that 'moderate' appraisals are necessary for positive outcomes. These results confirm Rotter's hypothesis that locus of control would have a curvilinear relationship to adjustment (Rotter 1975), with both perceptions of too much and too little control being maladaptive.

Developments in the measurement of locus of control

Rotter's original formulation of the construct presented locus of control as unidimensional (Furnham & Steele 1993). However, subsequent research has provided theoretical and empirical support for the multidimensionality of Rotter's IES measure. Levenson (1981) showed that in Rotter's measure, external locus of control consisted of two separate factors, namely, 'chance' and 'powerful others' and developed the IPC scale from this finding.

The introduction of domain-specific measures has helped to improve the predictive validity of locus of control scales. This development is a response to the evidence from attitudinal research that attitudes are only good predictors of behaviour when both the

attitude and the behaviour are tightly defined (Eiser 1980). Paulhus & Christie (1981) have developed a 'spheres of control' measure to account for generalised perceived control in different areas of life, namely, personal, interpersonal and socio-political. Another approach has been to produce domain-specific measures for use in, for example, health-related (Wallston et al 1978) and work-related (Spector 1988) domains. Orpen (1991) demonstrated that Spector's work locus of control scale (WLOC) has greater construct validity in a work context than Rotter's Internal-External Scale (IES).

Locus of control - summary

Despite the problems outlined above, within the context of the proposed research, locus of control is identified as a potentially important construct. Using a domain specific measure (Spector 1988) will mitigate against the multidimensionality argument, and acknowledging that locus of control can change over time, removes the 'state/trait' arguments from the decision about whether or not to use this construct. Social desirability is difficult to guard against, however, the proposed research will include measures of Neuroticism and Extraversion (discussed below) using the EPI (Eysenck Personality Inventory 1964), which has a 'lie scale' component, and should therefore highlight cases where social desirability is an issue.

2.6.10.2 Neuroticism and Extraversion personality traits

The literature suggests that, within the present research context, ie, the unfolding of a major organisational change programme, the personality traits neuroticism and extraversion will influence employees' experiences. Both traits have been shown to affect the stress and coping process (McCrae & Costa 1986, Payne 1988, Taylor & Cooper 1989, McCrae 1992). Prior research has shown that both neuroticism and extraversion are associated with stress appraisals (Bolger & Zuckerman 1995, Hemenover 2001) and with coping behaviour (McCrae & Costa 1986, Bolger 1990, Parkes 1994, Wearing & Hart 1996, Mayes et al 2000).

For the purposes of this thesis, those individuals situated at the 'neurotic' end of the neuroticism dimension are labelled 'N', whilst those at the other, 'stable', end of the neuroticism dimension are labelled 'S'. Individuals situated at the 'extravert' end of the extraversion dimension are labelled 'E', whilst those at the other, 'introvert', end of the dimension are labelled 'I'. This convention is used when referring to the present study, as well as referring to the extant literature.

Neuroticism

Those individuals who score high on neuroticism (N) are characterised by a tendency to experience negative emotion (Vollrath & Torgerson 2000), anxiety, worry, moodiness (McCrae 1992, O'Brien & DeLongis 1996), depression (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985) and lack of assertiveness (DeJong et al 1999). N's are more likely to have negative reactions, such as, drug use, panic attacks, somatic illness, hostility and self-blame (Beck 1986, Friedman & Booth-Kewley 1987, McCrae 1992, Gunthert 1999), in response to perceived 'demanding' situations. N has also been reported to predict both an increased exposure to stressful life events and an emotional vulnerability to these events (Bolger 1990, Bolger & Schilling 1991). N's susceptibility to 'negative affect' suggests that this group would have more negative experiences of potentially distressing situations such as major change at work. Not only would we expect N's to perceive major change more negatively, but the literature suggests that N's would also respond to major change in a less adaptive way than S's.

The literature demonstrates that N's tend to adopt coping strategies that lead to disengagement from the situation (Bolger 1990, Terry 1994) and that they are less likely than S's to seek social support (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995), which is considered to be an adaptive coping strategy, especially within a work context (Ganster et al 1986). The use of cognitive reappraisal, an adaptive coping strategy, where a situation is reappraised and the reappraisal results in a different perception of the situation, tends to be associated with S's (Latack 1986). High N's have been shown to use more 'emotion-focused' coping strategies and S's have been shown to use more 'problem-focused' coping strategies (Parkes 1994, Halamandaris & Power 1999). 'Emotion-focused' coping

strategies have been judged to be less effective than problem-focused (McCrae & Costa 1986). For example, O'Brien & DeLongis (1996) concluded from their findings that N's failed to address the problems they were facing, so that N's experience of stress was maintained by adopting strategies that promoted escape from, or avoidance of, their situation. Indeed, as Hahn (2000) notes, it is frequently assumed that the best way to reduce distress is to employ problem-focused coping strategies. As argued earlier, in the section on locus of control, within a context of major organisational change, where actions such as problem-solving, negotiating and information seeking are called for (Callan et al 1994), we would expect a problem-focused approach to be more adaptive. However, Pearlin & Schooler (1978), suggest that under certain conditions, such as the workplace, where opportunities for control might be restricted, problem-focused strategies may not contribute towards individuals' adaptation. The present research provides an arena for exploration of this issue.

Extraversion

Those individuals who score high on extraversion (E) are characterised by a tendency towards being gregarious, assertive and fun-loving (McCrae 1992, O'Brien & DeLongis 1996) and to perceive situations in a more positive light than introverts (I's) (McCrae & Costa 1986, Burke et al 1993). Extraverts are also presented in the literature as a group of individuals who enjoy and seek out novel and stimulating situations (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985, Gallagher 1990, Furnham 1992). We might therefore expect E's to perceive change more positively, and be less affected by the consequences of change than I's.

Research has demonstrated that E's are highly drawn towards social interaction and spend significantly more time socialising than I's (Watson et al 1992). As social support seeking is deemed to be a particularly effective coping strategy within a work context (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998), we might expect E's to be better placed to benefit from social support seeking, in response to change-related difficulties, than I's. Indeed, the literature suggests that E's are more likely than I's to engage in 'adaptive' strategies, such as social support seeking, and problem-focused coping, in response to demanding situations (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995, Kardum & Krapic 2001).

2.6.10.3 Summary of section 2.6.10 as a whole

Within the broad research question, ie, how do individuals experience major organisational change, the present research will explore individual differences, with a particular focus upon work locus of control, neuroticism and extraversion, in relation to individuals' perceptions of and responses to major change. An aim of the present research is to shed some more light upon why externals, N's and I's are shown by the literature to be vulnerable to a demanding work environment. It is also hoped that the present research will add to the debate about the effectiveness of particular coping strategies, within a work context, and, particularly, within the context of major change. The coping literature is divided between those who view coping as personality driven (McCrae & Costa 1986) and those who view coping as an outcome of an individual's perception of their environment (Lazarus 1991). In examining individuals' perceptions of and responses to major organisational change as a change programme unfolds, the current study presents an opportunity to describe the narrative 'thread' between the way individuals perceive and respond to major change. It is hoped that this will contribute to the discussion in the literature about the relationship between personality, perceptions and coping responses. Finally, most 'coping' research which has examined the role of the individual difference dimensions of interest in the present research, have looked at these personality dimensions singly. Although, for example, locus of control is generally found to be negatively correlated with neuroticism (Payne 1988), there is a lack of research into the interactive effects of anxiety and locus of control (Spector 1982). It is only very recently that researchers have begun to look at the combined effects of personality on perceptions of and responses to demanding situations (Vollrath & Torgersen 2000). The present research presents an opportunity to examine combinations of these individual differences and broaden our understanding of how different personality traits and/or dispositions might interact and influence behaviour within a particular work context.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed four strands of literature, namely, the management literature on organisational change, the sociology literature on work orientation and alienation, the psychological literature on personal transition and change at work, and the psychological literature on work, stress and coping. The review has highlighted the 'managerialist' perspective of much of the management research into organisational change and has presented criticisms that much of the management research on change is 'ahistorical, aprocessual and acontextual' (Pettigrew 1985). These inadequacies in the way researchers have tended to address the study of organisational change led to a broad research agenda being proposed early in the literature review, whereby employees' experiences of major change at work would be examined within the context of a major organisational change programme being 'rolled out' at Guardian Insurance. As the literature on personal transition and change and work, stress and coping was reviewed, a more specific research question was proposed, namely:

'How do individual differences, in particular the personality traits extraversion and introversion, and the personality disposition work locus of control, influence employees' experiences of an unfolding programme of major organisational change?'

The present research represents an attempt to address the biases inherent in the 'managerialist' orientation of much of the management literature on change. The research also aims to address the limitations of both the personal transition and stress and coping literature. Personal transition models view change as a process, but they do not take account of individual difference factors. The work and stress and coping literature tends to focus upon individual differences, but in a 'static' manner which does not take account of process. The present study will combine these approaches and look at employees' experiences of organisational change, with reference to relevant individual difference factors, as a major organisational change programme unfolds. Although the stress and coping literature calls for researchers to acknowledge the importance of context in studies of work and stress (Lazarus 1991, Edwards 1992), such research is scant (Folkman &

Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990, Mayes et al 2000). In the current study, the organisational context at Guardian Insurance, and individuals' work context, will be examined and presented, so that individuals' experiences are not reported in isolation, but can be interpreted in relation to the research context. The research approach draws upon early human relations research with the intention to present a "fine-grained micro-organizational study" (Whyte 1991, p.89), with a focus upon the individual level.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to set out the 'world-view' of the researcher and to place the chosen research strategy within the context of a research paradigm. The chapter describes the research design, the data collection and analysis methods and process. A final section discusses issues relating to researcher bias and the criteria for judging qualitative research.

3.2 The research question

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on organisational change and personal change and transition. The following research question developed out of this review, addressing some of the shortcomings of the extant literature:

'How do individual differences, in particular the personality traits Extraversion and Neuroticism, and the personality disposition Work locus of control, influence employees' experiences of an unfolding programme of major organisational change?'

Elements of the research question indicate the manner in which the research will proceed. The research question mentions personality traits and a personality disposition. Traits and dispositions are traditionally researched through the use of personality questionnaires. The research also concerns an examination of individual *'experiences of an unfolding programme of major organisational change'*, which suggests the use of qualitative, longitudinal research.

3.3 The research approach

The present research aims to provide an 'holistic' account of individual's experiences by situating people's reported experiences of change within the organisational context. As

Pettigrew et al (2001, p.698) note: *"If the change process is the stream of analysis, the terrain around the stream that shapes the field of events, and is in turn shaped by them, is a necessary part of the investigation"*. Pettigrew (1985) and colleagues (2001) have critiqued the traditional approach to studying change in the field of management and organisational studies and have pioneered an approach to studying organisational change that acknowledges context, history and time (Pettigrew 1995). Pettigrew's research is at the organisational level. The present research focus has the individual as the main unit of analysis. However, Pettigrew's arguments for studying change as a process, set within a context and having a prior history, are also relevant at the level of the individual.

The present research aims to build upon prior research on the psychology of change at work, and the psychology of coping with work demands, by adopting an approach that acknowledges process and context and seeks to elicit the individual's perceptions of change and responses to change. There have been calls in recent years for psychologists to adopt alternative methodologies in order to accommodate research questions relating to process, cultural context, meaning, subjective experience, discourse, language and understanding (Bruner 1990, Mikel Brown & Gilligan 1992, Smith, Harre & Van Langenhove 1995). Indeed, Bruner (1990, p.xiii) argues strongly that, *"The study of the human mind is so difficult, so caught in the dilemma of being both the object and the agent of its own study, that it cannot limit its inquiries to ways of thinking that grew out of yesterday's physics."* Researchers are now suggesting that *"qualitative approaches, with their emphasis on exploring the research participants' own situated experiences, offset the critique of much psychological research that the richness and significance of individual experience is neglected in favour of overarching reductionist explanations"* (Symon & Cassell 1998, p.2) and that *"... alternative approaches to traditional positivism may augment the explanatory power of research in work and organizational psychology"* (Symon 2000, p.477). Existing theory about individual differences and the psychology of change in the workplace has been developed for the most part by researchers who look objectively at the relationships between sets of variables at a particular moment in time, with little or no reference to context (for example, Ashford 1988, Callan 1993, Callan et al 1994, Terry et al 1996, Moyle 1996). However, in line

with Symon (2000), the present research does not set out to offer an alternative explanation to existing theory. Rather, the research aims to expand our understanding by focusing upon the emerging subjective views of participants as a change programme unfolds, and contextualising those views. Goodman (1978, p.2) described this position using the sun as a metaphor: *"Consider ... the statements "The sun always moves" and "The sun never moves" which, though equally true, are at odds with each other"*. Goodman goes on to explain that if we qualify these statements, eg *"Under reference A, the sun always moves" and "Under reference B, the sun never moves", these statements may both be true of the same world"*. So, the position taken in the present research is that the 'subjective' approach is neither superior nor inferior to the 'objective' approach, but that the two approaches offer different frames of reference and, when considered together, may offer a more 'complete' view of the research problem.

3.4 The research paradigm

Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p.99) describe a paradigm as a *"basic set of beliefs that guide action"*. Within a research context, this 'basic set of beliefs' comprises ontology, epistemology and methodology. It is important to note that the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs and the methodological approach can be presented and argued, but *"there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness"* (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p.107), as philosophical debate about the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge continues. However, a researcher's use of research methods are implicitly linked to this set of beliefs about the nature of reality (ie, ontology), about the methods used to gain knowledge of that reality (ie, epistemology), and about how those methods should be used by the researcher (ie, methodology) (Blaikie 1993). It is therefore important to make these beliefs explicit so that the research can be read and assessed within the context of these beliefs.

As the research focus is upon the individual, psychological level, the main theoretical frameworks guiding the study are also psychological. Much of the existing knowledge within the psychology discipline is based upon the 'scientific method', with the implicit

assumption that *"science is the prime locale for the most reliable use and operation of methods"* (Woolgar 1996, p.11). Debates about ontology, epistemology and methodology that have been continuing for some time in anthropology and sociology, have only emerged in psychology in recent years (Richardson 1996), accompanying the growth of the use of qualitative methods in psychological research (Woolgar 1996).

3.4.1 Interpretivism

The approach adopted by the present researcher falls within the interpretative paradigm where *"the primary concern is to understand the subjective experience of individuals"* and *"an attempt is made to get inside and to understand from within"* (Burrell & Morgan 1979, p.253). Interpretative ontology posits that there is no 'fixed' social reality, as *"people are constantly involved in interpreting their world - social situations, other people's behaviour, their own behaviour, and natural and humanly created objects"* (Blaikie 1993). Amongst these multiple perspectives, however, there are 'islands' of consensus where people take each other's point of view and a social order emerges (Burrell & Morgan 1979). This interpretative approach contrasts strongly with the dominant 'experimental' approach in psychology. The 'experimental' approach is underpinned by a positivist ontology, where the social world is viewed as having an objective 'reality' independent of the social actors operating within that world (Woolgar 1996).

3.4.2 Symbolic interactionism

Within interpretivism, there are various research approaches that differ in their theoretical assumptions. The present research, with its emphasis upon the subjective meaning of individuals, fits within the symbolic interactionism stream of interpretivism. Symbolic interactionism is founded on three basic premises, summarised by Blumer (1969, p.2), *"The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them ... The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an*

interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters."

These premises each connect with the present research project in the following way:

Premise 1. The present research question seeks to elucidate individual employees' subjective meanings in relation to a major organisational change programme.

Premise 2. The major change programme was communicated to employees within a social context via circulars, presentations, meetings with management and informally through the company 'grapevine'.

Premise 3. Participants' subjective experiences of change will be reported to the researcher via diaries and semi-structured interviews. The assumption here is that participants are able to reflect upon their thoughts, feelings and actions.

A further, central assumption, underlying research conducted against the background of symbolic interactionism is the so-called 'Thomas theorem', ie, 'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (quoted in Flick 1988, p.18). In other words, when researchers study people, it is essential for researchers to understand how people define their particular situations. Psychology research on individuals and change has tended to make *a priori* assumptions about how people will perceive and be affected by organisational change. The present research makes no such assumptions; rather, it attempts to elicit individuals' subjective accounts of their experiences of organisational change. Further support for the appropriateness of adopting a methodology underpinned by symbolic interactionism in the present study is offered by Stryker (1976, p.259, translated by Flick 1998, p.18) who points out that the 'Thomas theorem' "*leads directly to the fundamental methodological principle of symbolic interactionism: the researcher has to see the world from the angle of the subjects he or she studies*".

Burrell & Morgan (1979) point out that the symbolic interactionist movement has not developed in a unified manner. There is a split between those researchers who interpret symbolic interactionism within a 'realist' framework (eg, Rose 1962 - 'behavioural symbolic interactionism'), and those who take a 'subjectivist' stance (eg, Blumer 1962 - 'phenomenological symbolic interactionism'). The present research is positioned within

Blumer's strand of symbolic interactionism, where *"individual 'selves' interpret their situation as a basis for action. Group or collective action is seen as consisting of an alignment of individual actions"* (cited in Burrell & Morgan 1979, p.80) through individuals interpreting the actions of others. Flick (1998) notes that there is a precedent for underpinning 'subject-oriented' psychological research with Blumer's conception of symbolic interactionism. Blumer's main focus is upon individuals' subjective meanings, rather than upon the interaction (Flick 1998). This further authenticates phenomenological symbolic interactionism as a conceptual foundation for the present research, where the focus is upon individuals' psychological experiences.

3.4.3 Aligning methods with the research paradigm

Thus far, it has been argued that the proposed research agenda fits within an interpretative paradigm, in particular, the research approach is aligned with Blumer's conception of symbolic interactionism, ie 'phenomenological symbolic interactionism'. The research will involve eliciting reports of the subjective experience of major organisational change from individuals through the use of qualitative methods. However, from the symbolic interactionist perspective, individual action does not occur in a vacuum, and it is therefore necessary to situate reports of individual experiences within the organisational context. Contextual data will also be generated using qualitative methods.

There is a third element to the research, namely, an examination of how individual differences in personality might influence individuals' experiences of major change. The individual difference factors of interest in the present research - ie, extraversion, neuroticism and work locus of control - are traditionally researched quantitatively, through the use of personality questionnaires, within a positivist framework. This may raise the question of whether it is appropriate to use such personality questionnaires within an interpretative framework. If we return to section 3.4, paragraph 3, which describes interpretative ontology, the point is made that although there are multiple perspectives and no fixed reality within this 'world-view', such perspectives are not

always competing and there are 'islands of consensus'. In other words, within an interpretative ontology, reality is made up of shared understandings and these can be subject to reinterpretation. As Weick (1995, p. 79) comments, "*Over time, interpretations become objectified, diffused, and widely internalized into what comes to be called a consensus on what is "out there"*". Indeed, social life would not be possible without having shared constructs to represent "*the common-sense thinking of men, living their daily life within their social world*" (Schutz 1963, p.242). Questionnaires, such as those used in the present research, could therefore be viewed as representative of 'islands of consensus', or 'shared constructs' where, through a process of repeat testing and reformulating of questions, an agreement upon the meaning of the questions has been reached within a particular social and cultural milieu.

Although Hughes (1990, p.11) states that particular research methods are "*inextricably embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and knowing that world*", Bryman (1992, p.59) argues that "*... quantitative and qualitative research are not forever rooted to their original epistemological positions*". Bryman goes on to argue that the research agenda should guide the choice of a particular method or methods. Brannen (1992, p.15) points out that "*while this 'bracketing together' [of methods and epistemology] may be advocated in the methodology literature and constitutes good advice to researchers, in practice researchers select their methods on the basis of a variety of technical considerations*". Bryman (1992) sets out a list of approaches for integrating qualitative and quantitative research. The present research approach fits into Bryman's category 'quantitative research facilitates qualitative research', wherein the quantitative research (ie, personality questionnaires) helps with the selection of individuals invited to participate in the qualitative research. It is argued, therefore, that the research problem directs the researcher towards the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods and that these choices can be justified on both 'technical' (Bryman 1992) and philosophical grounds.

3.4.4 Summary

So far, in the discussion of the researcher's philosophical background, the research strategy and methods have been alluded to, but have not been discussed in any detail. The next section presents the research strategy, design and methods in full.

3.5 Research strategy

'Research strategy' refers to the general approach adopted in a research project. The literature describes different ways of classifying research strategies, or 'styles of enquiry' (Marshall & Rossman 1989, Blaikie 1993, Robson 1993, Yin 1994). Each strategy has different philosophical associations and are linked to different research purposes, although Yin (1994) emphasises that each strategy can be used for either exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory purposes. Blaikie (1993) identifies four categories of research strategy used by social scientists: Inductive, deductive, retroductive and abductive approaches. Inductive and deductive strategies are positioned within research paradigms that examine a 'fixed' reality from the outside. The retroductive strategy is aligned with 'realism' and involves the creation of models of a fixed 'reality'. The present research aims to present an 'insider' view and will therefore adopt an abductive research strategy which *"draws on the concepts and meanings used by social actors, and the activities in which they engage"* (Blaikie 1993, p.176). Inductive and deductive strategies are most commonly used within the psychology discipline, however, Harre & Secord (1972, p.9-10) present a solid argument for adopting an abductive strategy in psychological research: *"At the heart of the explanation of social behaviour is the identification of the meanings that underlie it. Part of the approach to discovering them involves the obtaining of accounts - the actor's own statements about why he performed the acts in question .."*³

Robson (1993) classifies research strategies according to three main approaches, namely experiments, surveys and case studies. Robson's classifications allude to the actual method or methods that the researcher will adopt in order to answer the research

³ It should be noted that Harre & Secord are positioned within a 'realist' paradigm, but combine abductive with retroductive strategies (see Blaikie 1993, p.194)

question. Robson acknowledges that these three broad strategies are not mutually exclusive and that, for some forms of research enquiry, a combination of strategies will be needed. The present research falls under the 'combined strategy' heading, comprising an initial survey, which included personality questionnaires, an 'observational' study of the company, and qualitative comparative analysis of 40 employees' experiences of major change. The study is essentially exploratory, as it seeks to describe the experience of major change from the perspective of employees. However, the research is also explanatory, as it seeks to add to existing literature in order to explain how individual differences - in particular, extraversion, neuroticism and work locus of control - influence individuals' experiences of major change.

3.6 Research design

"Design is concerned with turning research questions into projects" (Robson 1993, p.38).

3.6.1 Overall design

As discussed in the literature review, prior research into individual differences, coping, and the psychology of change at work has tended to be acontextual (for example, Ashford 1988, Shaw et al 1993, Callan 1994). An important feature of the present study is that individuals' experiences of change are contextualised. Yin (1993, p.31) states that a 'major rationale' for using the case study method is when the *"investigation must cover both a particular phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon is occurring"*. In the present study, the 'phenomenon' could be employees' experiences of major organisational change and the 'context' could be the organisational context within which these experiences occur. Therefore, a case study design might seem to be appropriate for the present research where individual employees' experiences are analysed against the backdrop of the organisational context. However, the present research does not fit neatly within a case study format. The closest fit is with Yin's categorisation of an 'embedded, single-case design' (Yin 1994, p.4). However, Yin's conception of an embedded, single-case design would suggest that, in the present study, the organisation would be the focal unit of analysis and the individual employees would

be 'subunits' of the case study. In the present study, it is the embedded units (ie, individual employees) which are the focal units of analysis, with the 'larger unit' (ie, the organisation) providing the context.

Layder's (1993) research approach seems to be more appropriate to the present research. Layder's approach is positioned within the sociology field, but contains a psychological dimension. The research approach acknowledges that society is multi-layered, including both macro (eg, 'structural') and micro (eg, 'individual psychobiography') phenomena, and also emphasises that these layers are 'organically linked'. Layder (1993, p.8) describes his approach as producing research that has a "*textured or interwoven quality*" where the 'layers' are interdependent. These layers comprise the 'self', 'situated activity', 'setting' and 'context' (Layder 1993, p. 72). Whilst each layer has distinctive characteristics, the layers are inextricably linked and it is the 'interweaving' of these layers that "*influence behaviour and social activity in general*" (Layder 1993, p.9). In the present research, the focal layers are the 'self' and 'situated activity'. In terms of the present research, 'situated activity' comprises change communication and the "*emergent meanings, understandings and definitions of the situation, as these affect and are affected by contexts and settings and subjective dispositions of individuals (ie, 'self')*" (Layder, p.72). Again, in terms of the present research, 'setting' is represented by the organisation and 'context' is represented by the insurance industry as a whole.

So, whilst the focus of the research is at the 'micro' end of Layder's 'research map', the research will endeavour to show how the macro and micro layers combine to influence individual employees' experiences.

3.6.2 'Tight' vs 'loose' design

Early site visits to Guardian Insurance in April 1996, along with the developing literature review led to employees being selected as the main unit of analysis. The lack of research presenting 'the inside story' of organisational change (Mabey et al 1998) was a strong rationale for choosing this group as a focus. Guardian Insurance was selected as a single

case to study for reasons discussed in detail below. So, the choice of research site and the focal unit of analysis was decided upon early on in the research process. However, overall, the research design could be described as 'emergent' as it developed "*from an interaction with the study*" (Robson 1993, p.61).

Pettigrew (1990, p.281) warns of the dangers of "*death by data asphyxiation - the slow and inexorable sinking into the swimming pool which started so cool, clear and inviting and now has become a clinging mass of maple syrup*", and Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest that 'tight designs provide clarity and focus for researchers worried about diffuseness and overload'. The researcher heeded Pettigrew's warning and followed Miles & Huberman's suggestion and attempted to 'tighten' the research design at an early stage, whilst acknowledging that research within a change context demanded some flexibility in design.

As Pettigrew (1990) remarks, because change is by nature a continuous process, a decision has to be made about when to start and when to end the field research. Discussions with the HR Director at Guardian Insurance at the start of the PhD project led to a decision to focus upon employees' experiences of a particular change, namely, the introduction of a new performance management system (PMS). Implementation of the PMS therefore set the researcher's timetable for entry into and exit from the field. The rationale for choosing the PMS was threefold. Firstly, the PMS was a current major change; secondly, all research participants would be affected by the PMS; thirdly, on a practical level, the implementation timetable provided a good match for the PhD project timetable. The PMS was to have taken about a year to implement in full, with sections of the system implemented in each quarter of the year. However, the system was voted out by the union during the first quarter of the projected implementation timetable.

The decision to focus upon the PMS informed the development of aspects of the survey study, namely the inclusion of a 'job characteristics' measure and the inclusion of a 'performance self-efficacy' measure. These aspects of the survey which related to the implementation of the PMS became redundant. This will be discussed in more detail

below in section 3.5.2 'Survey'. Because of the importance placed upon context and upon having the employees' perspective on change as central to the present research, the design called for an appreciation of how employees were experiencing all aspects of the major change programme, and, in particular, those aspects of change that were salient to them. This provided a 'looseness' to the design which proved invaluable once the PMS was temporarily withdrawn from the change programme.

3.6.3 Choice of site

The decision about the number and type of organisations to include in the research was determined to a large extent by the terms of the ESRC which funded the research under the Collaborative Studentship programme. The ESRC terms demanded that the student spend a considerable amount of time 'on site' at the collaborating company, in this instance, GID, a division of Guardian Insurance. This requirement, along with the ongoing major organisational change programme being implemented at GID during the research period, informed the development of the research question, which in turn informed the decision to conduct an in-depth study of individual employees' experiences of change within a single company.

Although the focus of the study is upon the individual, psychological level, it has been argued that individuals do not exist in a vacuum (Lazarus 1991) and it is therefore imperative to have an understanding of context in order to gain a full understanding of individuals' experiences. The decision was taken to conduct the research in two contrasting area office sites. In this way, the study would provide a richer account of the organisational context, so that the impact of both the local and national organisational context upon experiences of change could be explored, alongside the impact of personality factors, and other individual difference factors, upon experiences of change. The research sites chosen were in the North West and South East of England. The rationale for choosing these particular sites was that whilst both areas had offices with departments covering all areas of GID business, and were subject to the same change programme, the two area managers had very different management styles. The South

East area manager had an 'open', collaborative management style, whilst the North East area manager had a more traditional, patriarchal style. The research sites comprised a head office in Manchester, with two branch offices in Liverpool and Preston, which formed the North East area network, and a head office in Southampton, with a branch office in Reading, which were part of the South East area network. Pilot work was conducted at the Croydon branch of the South East area network.

3.6.4 Longitudinal design

The research question calls for an examination of employees' experiences as a programme of major change unfolds. The processual nature of the question leads to the choice of a longitudinal design. Longitudinal designs have been adopted in previous research into the relationship between individual differences, and the experience of major change at work (eg, Ashford 1988, Callan 1993, Callan et al 1994, Terry et al 1996 and Moyle 1996). However, such research has involved a comparison of cross-sectional data taken at two or more points in the research process, rather than an analysis of 'real-time' data. In writing about research at the organisational level of analysis, Pettigrew (1990) has commented that *"there are remarkably few studies of change that actually allow the change process to reveal itself in any kind of substantially temporal or contextual manner"*. The present study is concerned with examining the experience of change, from the perspective of employees, with varying individual difference 'profiles', as a major change programme unfolds. This necessitates a study conducted over a period of time that is both processual and contextual and that also involves cross-sectional elements.

The Swiss linguist Saussure (1916, cited in Collett 1980, p.154) offers a 'plant stem' analogy as a way of explaining the difference between cross-sectional and 'process' studies. There are two ways in which a plant stem might be examined. One way would be to slice the stem horizontally in order to look at a cross-section of the cells and channels in the stem. An alternative way would be to slice the stem lengthways to look at how the constituent parts of the stem change over the length of the stem. The present design and subsequent data analysis involves integrating these two approaches. The

survey component of the study is cross-sectional in that it produces a 'snapshot' of research participants at a particular point in time. Research participants were asked to report their experiences of change in diaries, producing real-time processual data. Further processual data was elicited through two interviews with research participants that were conducted at a 6-month interval to provide both retrospective and real-time data. Field research provided both real-time and retrospective data. Analysis of the diary and interview data (discussed in detail later in the chapter) was conducted both cross-sectionally and processually.

3.7 Research methods

3.7.1 Introduction

The present research aims to explore the thoughts, feelings and subjective accounts of individual employees in relation to an unfolding programme of major organisational change. The aim is to 'interweave' the macro (contextual) and micro (psychological) levels so that psychological data is not presented in isolation from the organisational context. Qualitative methods are the most appropriate methods for research that emphasises *"the importance of context, setting, and the subjects' frame of reference"* (Marshall & Rossman 1989, p.46). However, participants' thoughts and feelings about change are also explored in relation to individual differences in personality, so it is also appropriate to use a quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire. Arguments for the use of a questionnaire within an interpretative framework, and for the decision to combine qualitative and quantitative methods (Bryman 1992), have already been presented in section 3.4.3.

The research question comprises three broad elements which will be addressed using different methods. Firstly, data on individual differences is provided by questionnaires. Secondly, employees' experiences of major change are elicited through semi-structured diaries and semi-structured interviews. Thirdly, the unfolding programme of major organisational change comprises part of the organisational context. Contextual data is drawn from company documents, ethnographic interviews and participant observation.

The following sections will describe each selected method in detail and present further argument in support of each method's suitability for inclusion in the research design.

3.7.2 Survey

Bryman (1992, p.136) gives examples of research designs where quantitative research precedes qualitative research and where *"the initial quantitative research allows a 'mapping' of the issue to be addressed and also provides the basis for the selection of comparison groups for in-depth qualitative interviewing"*. In the present study, a survey was conducted prior to inviting a selection of employees to participate in a longitudinal diary/interview study. The survey was not used for the purposes of 'mapping' the research issue, but for selection purposes. Individual employees were invited to participate in the diary/interview study on the basis of their survey responses. The survey 'instrument' was piloted at the Croydon office of GID and subsequently refined before use in the main study. (Both the pilot study and the main study survey 'instruments' are presented in Appendix 3.1 along with details of participants, procedures and statistics for each study. The diary format and first interview schedule were also piloted at Croydon. Full details of this aspect of the pilot study are presented in Appendices 3.2 and 3.3.)

The main study survey comprised the following:

- A cover sheet requesting personal and work-related details such as age, gender, type of job, grade and number of years with the company.
- The Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) (Eysenck 1964) which measures Neuroticism and Extraversion and includes a 'lie scale'.
- The Work Locus of Control Scale (Spector 1988).
- Questions relating to job characteristics (job autonomy and skill variety) from Hackman & Oldham's (1975) job diagnostic survey.
- A performance self-efficacy questionnaire, specifically designed for the study.

Individuals were selected for invitation to participate in the diary/interview study primarily on the basis of their scores on the EPI and work locus of control scales, but also on the basis of their answers to questions on the cover sheet. The intention was to select a group of employees for the diary/interview study who were broadly representative of the spread of 'scores' on the various questionnaires and cover sheet questions in the main survey.

Section 3.6.1 mentioned that some elements of the survey were discarded because the focus upon the PMS became untenable. These were the 'job characteristics' measure and the 'job performance self-efficacy' measure. The following describes the rationale for including these measures in the survey and for subsequently excluding these measures from analysis.

The 'job characteristics' component of Hackman & Oldham's (1975) 'job diagnostic survey' was selected for inclusion in the survey for two reasons. Firstly, the new PMS was intended to *"pave the way for staff to widen their skills set and become more independent, more autonomous in their work"* (senior HR manager, Guardian Insurance). The intention was that the 'job characteristics' measure could be administered at the beginning and end of the field research period and provide an 'outcome' measure for the extent to which employees had enacted the PMS change in the way intended by management. This statistical data would then be 'triangulated' with the qualitative data to provide a more 'holistic' picture (Jick 1979). Secondly, the literature on alienation, presented in the literature review, pointed towards the possibility that people doing jobs with low 'autonomy' and 'skill variety' might experience alienation and thus experience change differently from those people with high 'job autonomy' and 'skill variety' (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.2).

As the PMS was not implemented at GID, the researcher made the decision not to conduct the intended 'time 1' and 'time 2' comparison of 'job characteristics' scores. Also, correlational analysis revealed a significant correlation between job characteristics and work locus of control (.25, $p = <.01$). Because of the strong relationship between work locus of control and 'job characteristics',

the researcher made the decision to drop the 'job characteristics' score as a criterion for inclusion in the diary/interview study. It was decided that selecting people for inclusion in the diary/interview study on the basis of their answers to the Work locus of control questionnaire would be sufficient to ensure that there would be representation of a wide range of perceived 'job characteristics'.

The 'job performance self-efficacy' questionnaire was originally devised as a measure of how well an individual perceived that they were performing. The intention was again to administer this measure at the beginning and end of the research period and triangulate this data with the quantitative data, at the end of participants' diaries, relating to changes in perceived performance in connection with the PMS. However, the job performance self-efficacy measure was not understood in a consistent way by participants. In light of this problem with the design of the questionnaire, and because the PMS was not fully implemented, the researcher decided that the 'job performance self-efficacy' measure would not form part of the analysis.

3.7.3 Selecting employees for invitation to participate in diary/interview study

Questionnaires (n = 330) were sent out to all non-manager employees at 4 Guardian Insurance offices in the North West and South East areas in September 1996. The return rate was 41% (n = 128). Of those who returned questionnaires and agreed to be contacted in relation to a follow-up study (n = 111), 41 people volunteered to participate in the diary/interview study. The researcher wrote to each prospective volunteer (see Appendix 3.5.1) and in follow-up telephone calls arranged to meet groups of 4, 5 or 6 potential volunteers at GID office meeting rooms, in order to explain the nature of the diary/interview study and to encourage people to take part in the study. Some authors have discussed the problem of 'faking' questionnaire responses, or 'response bias' (Furnham 1992). Eysenck's EPI questionnaire includes a 'lie scale' which aims to reveal those respondents who tend to offer socially desirable responses. Thirteen percent of respondents had unacceptable lie scale scores and these individuals were not invited to participate in the diary/interview study.

The intention was to have 40 participants. This figure was arrived at by trying to balance the aims of the research against more practical issues such as the amount of time it would take to collect and analyse two hour long interviews and diary data from each participant. Initially, 41 employees were recruited to take part in the study. Four people dropped out of the study after only a few weeks. Reasons for dropping out of the study varied. Two people left Guardian to join other insurance companies. One person was due to go on maternity leave 4 months into the study. The other person decided not to continue participating after about 5 weeks because they thought that the study was taking up too much time. These 4 volunteers were replaced with 3 other volunteers, which brought the number of volunteers up to 40. Two participants were made redundant and left the company in June 1997, before the second set of interviews. Another individual left the company of her own accord at the end of August 1997, also before the second round of interviews. This left a total of 37 individuals who provided diary and interview data for the entire period of study from October/November 1996 until November/December 1997. Although the data is incomplete, the other 3 participants provided between 8 and 10 months of data, so these individuals were also included in the study.

Participants invited to take part in the diary/interview study were chosen primarily on the basis of the work locus of control and personality measures. In statistical terms, the 'sample' was 'stratified'. The aim was to have a group of 40 people representing a range of scores on Work locus of control (WLOC) and on the personality dimensions Extraversion (E), Neuroticism (N). There was also an endeavour to have a representation of age, gender, job type, years with the company and years in the job, roughly matching the proportions found in the survey. The table below compares proportions of gender, age, age spread and averages of age, E, N and WLOC of participants in the survey and diary/interview studies.

Table 3.1 - Comparison of profile of survey and diary/interview participants

	Female	Male	Age spread	Age av.	Wloc av.	EPI - E av.	EPI - N av.
Survey n = 128	67%	33%	17 - 58	30	47	13	10
Diary/Int n = 40	72%	28%	17 - 58	30	47	13	11

The largest group of respondents in both the questionnaire study and the diary/interview study were underwriters (31.3% and 33.3% respectively) with claims negotiators (11% and 17% respectively) and clerks (11% and 10.3% respectively) being the next largest groups. In the diary/interview study 50% were members of the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union (BIFU) that represented staff at Guardian. According to the GID Division Secretary for BIFU, the national GID union membership stood at around 60% during the research period, but was falling. So, BIFU members were slightly under-represented amongst diary/interview participants.

3.7.3.1 Categorising continuous data

The survey contains both categorical and continuous data. Categorical data includes gender (eg, female or male) and job type (eg, underwriter, claims, accounts, etc). Continuous data includes age and the personality measures. In order to facilitate qualitative analysis of employees' experiences of major change and to relate these reported experiences to individual differences in 'base data' (eg, 'age' and 'number of years with the company') and personality profiles, it was necessary to categorise the continuous data. Decisions therefore had to be made about the 'cut off point' for each category of continuous data.

The age spread for diary/interview participants was from 17-58. A decision was made to divide this group into 4 age bands. This was a decision based upon a rough analysis of age in relation to 'career stage' amongst the employees from GID who participated in the diary/interview study. The first group, 17-24 year olds, tended to be at the lowest grade, although a fast-track graduate employee also came under this band. The next two groups,

25-29 and 30-34 year olds were either on to a second or third career, or had been with Guardian Insurance since their early 20's. The last group, 35 + year olds, tended to be very long serving Guardian Insurance employees with higher grades. Some women in this group had had a career break in order to raise children and had returned to work at Guardian Insurance.

The data for 'grade', 'number of years with the company', and 'number of years in present job' were each divided into categories according to information provided by employees and line managers during the researcher's early site visits. This information was about perceived differences in responsibility levels and level of attachment both to their job and to Guardian Insurance for employees with different grades, tenure and time in their present job.

As mentioned previously in section 3.5.3, selection of employees for invitation to participate in the diary/interview study was based primarily upon WLOC, E and N scores. A decision was made to categorise WLOC into 3 groups. This decision was based upon literature that suggests that individuals with a 'moderate' WLOC score would be better able to adapt to demanding circumstances than individuals with perceptions of too much or too little control (Krause & Stryker 1984, O'Brien 1986). Participants' WLOC scores had a normal distribution. After printing out a frequency table for the scores and identifying the mean WLOC score of 47.4, scores were then divided into those over 1 standard deviation above the mean (59 plus) and those under 1 standard deviation below the mean (less than 36). Those individuals with scores of 59 and above would be the 'external work locus of control group' and those individuals with scores of 36 and below would be the 'internal work locus of control group'. The 'moderate work locus of control group' comprised those individuals with scores within a quarter of a standard deviation either side of the mean (45-50). This procedure is based upon Krause & Stryker's (1984) study which categorised locus of control scores using Rotter's (1966) scale.

Again, E and N scores were normally distributed. Adopting Krause & Stryker's (1984) strategy for categorising extraverts vs introverts and neurotics vs stables by selecting individuals with scores 1 standard deviation above and below the mean was not possible, as, once the categories for WLOC had been established, the 'pool' of participants for selection into the diary/interview study was restricted. A decision was therefore made to use the WLOC groupings as the prime basis for selection and attempt to choose employees with E and N scores towards the higher and lower ends of the E and N scales. It was not always possible to select employees with higher or lower scores, hence some diary/interview participants have scores close to the mean. Chapter 5, section 5.2.2 presents a table showing raw WLOC, E and N scores and category placements for each diary/interview participant. High and low E and N categories were created by dividing the groupings at the mean score (13 for E and 10 for N). Those individuals with scores greater than or equal to 14 were categorised as 'extravert' (E); those individuals with scores less than or equal to 13 were categorised as 'introvert' (I); those individuals with scores greater than or equal to 11 were categorised as 'neurotic' (N) and, finally, those individuals with scores less than or equal to 10 were categorised as 'stable' (S). When compared with Eysenck's mean scores in the EPI manual for various occupational groups, both the mean extraversion and the mean neuroticism scores are similar to comparable occupational groups, ie, 'secretaries', 'salespeople' and 'skilled working class'. During selection, the researcher also tried to ensure that other factors such as age, grade and job type were represented in the proportions found in the survey study.

Those employees categorised as having an 'internal' WLOC total 16, those categorised as having a 'medium' WLOC total 9, and those categorised as having an 'external' WLOC total 15. Those categorised in the 'extravert' group total 25, whilst those categorised in the 'introvert' group total 15. Those categorised in the 'neuroticism' group total 24, whilst those categorised in the 'stable' group total 16. Ideally, the diary/interview group would comprise 52% 'neuroticism', 48% 'stable', 50% 'introvert' and 50% 'extravert', as these were the proportions found in the survey study. However, it proved difficult to find suitable replacements in terms of personality measures for those people who dropped out early on in the diary/interview study. Those who dropped out happened to have

predominantly 'stable' and 'introvert' scores and their replacements all had 'neuroticism' and 'extravert' scores. This helped to skew the proportional balance of the diary/interview group. Again, for WLOC, attempts were made to find equal numbers of 'internals', 'externals' and 'mediums', but this was not possible. However, despite not having achieved an ideal mix of personality types, it is believed that there are still sufficient in each category to make meaningful comparisons between types.

Table 3.2 - Numbers of participants in each personality category

	Extravert	Introvert	Neurotic	Stable	Internal Wloc	Medium Wloc	External Wloc
No. per Category	25	15	24	16	16	9	15

3.7.4 The 'diary interview' method

The present research aims to capture employees' experiences of change as a change programme unfolds. Therefore, data needs to be collected in 'real-time' rather than retrospectively. Moss-Kanter (1984, p.284) comments that whilst retrospective accounts present a plausible, coherent 'story' of the change process, these *"accounts are often distorted"* because *"early events and people disappear into the background as later events and people come forward"*. The time frame for the data collection period for individual employees' experiences of change was set at one year, as explained in section 3.6.2. The 'diary-interview' method (Zimmerman & Wieder 1977, Burgess 1984) was selected as a practical means of collecting 'real-time' data from individuals over a 12 month period. Zimmerman & Wieder (1977) present the 'diary interview' approach as an alternative to participant observation, particularly in research situations where the resources of the researcher will not stretch to covering the number of situations in which observations need to be made. The 'diary interview' method is, in a sense, a 'proxy for observation' (Robson 1993). In the case of the present study, where comparisons of the experiences of 40 individual employees with different personality profiles are made, the

researcher would not be able to collect the amount of data needed through participant observation alone.

As described earlier, after an initial 'settling in' period of 6 weeks, where 4 people dropped out of the study and 3 replacements were recruited, 40 people took part in the 'diary interview' study. Both the diary form and interview schedule were piloted with a small group of 4 employees from the Croydon office. These employees had taken part in the survey pilot study and had volunteered to keep a 'change diary' for 3 weeks and to participate in an hour long interview about their experiences of major change. Details of the qualitative pilot study and diary forms appear in Appendices 3.2 and 3.3.

3.7.4.1 Diaries

The diary method makes the assumption that 'informants' are able to reflect upon their thoughts, feelings and actions. Harre (1974, p.244) comments that "*Everyone is, in a certain sense, a fairly competent social scientist, and we must not treat his (or her) theory about the social world and his place in it with contempt*". This view of research participants as 'social scientists' has a long tradition in psychology. In particular, Kelly (1955), who developed a cognitive theory of personality, made an assumption that we are all 'scientists' who experience and perceive events, create concepts to account for these events, and use these concepts in order to predict future events. In this way, we have the ability to interpret our environment; to 'make and remake ourselves' (Pervin 1993), rather than act as passive recipients of environmental stimuli.

Robson (1993) draws attention to limitations in the use of diaries as a sole method of data collection in situations where the diarist wants to 'please the researcher', or 'present herself or himself in a good light' (Robson 1993). However, when combined with other methods, such as interview, company documents and participant observation, cross-checks can be made so that mis-reporting can be kept to a minimum (Zimmerman & Wieder 1977, Burgess 1984).

Diaries can be used as a precursor to interviews (Burgess 1984). Zimmerman & Wieder (1977, p.484) note that diarists become "*both observer and informant*", so that diarists become 'ethnographers of their own circumstances'. In the present research, diaries were used to generate data about employees' experiences of change, for analysis in their own right, but were also used to generate themes for coverage in subsequent interviews, and to provide data on the content and chronology of the unfolding change programme. When devising and implementing the diary method, the researcher followed Robson's (1993, p.255) advice to 'think of the diary as a questionnaire; make sure that respondents are fully appraised of what they are expected to do with the diaries and why; be clear about how items relate to the research question and how they will be analysed subsequently, and finally, make personal contact frequently with diarists during the research period'.

Burgess (1984) makes a distinction between 'structured' and 'unstructured' diaries. As the present research is concerned with eliciting employees' own subjective perceptions of change, an 'unstructured' approach was adopted. The diary took the form of 3 open ended questions to elicit information about what changes were happening and about the diarist's thoughts, feelings and responses to change. A further open-ended question asked for contextual information about other events which might be influencing the diarist's work-life. Of the two scaled questions included at the end of the diary, data generated from the first of these questions has not been included in the analysis, because respondents did not respond in a consistent manner to this question. Results relating to the second scaled question are presented in Appendix 3.6.

Diarists were requested to complete diaries on a weekly basis. The weekly period was chosen as a compromise between the desire to have 'real-time' data and the need to make the diary completion task manageable for the diarist, and to make the diary collection and analysis manageable for the researcher. Diarists were supplied with pre-paid, addressed envelopes and asked to post diaries back to the researcher each week. Diarists were initially requested to complete the diaries on an 'as and when' basis. However, after follow-up calls to diarists, a month into the research, where the content of diaries and the task of diary-keeping was discussed, the researcher suggested that diarists jot down notes

on an 'as and when' basis and select the same day and time each week to complete the diary. This suggestion came from a number of diarists who claimed that filling the diary in at the same time and day each week meant that the diary became 'less of a chore and more like a habit, like a part of the working week'. At the analysis stage, diaries were 'collapsed' into monthly 'data blocks' because, although the request for weekly recording was justified during periods when there was a lot of change activity, in some weeks there was little to report and in other weeks employees' diary data was a repeat of responses given the previous week. Most respondents recorded weekly diaries when there was a lot of change activity, but tended to complete diaries on a bi-monthly, or even monthly basis during periods where there was little change activity. Diarists were given the options of handwriting, typing, audiotaping or telephoning responses. Most diarists opted for handwriting responses and one diarist typed responses. Seven diarists elected to telephone their responses and the researcher negotiated a particular day and time for these diarists to give their responses to the diary questions.

The researcher made follow-up telephone calls, or 'telephone interviews' to diarists in order to clarify or expand upon diary responses. The researcher also made follow-up calls if an individual had not submitted a diary for 3 consecutive weeks and had not indicated that they were on holiday. These follow-up calls appeared to be very motivational for research participants and also gave the researcher the opportunity to develop a closer relationship with each diarist. Because of the intimate nature of the information being requested from research participants, the researcher was very aware throughout the research period of the need to develop a relationship based upon trust with each diarist-interviewee. Frequent visits to research participants' offices, along with frequent follow-up calls helped to develop this trust and encouraged diarists to share their feelings with the researcher. However, a balance had to be struck so that the researcher did not become a nuisance to the research participants, or to the research participants' team colleagues and managers.

3.7.4.2 Interviews

The diary collection method was complemented by conducting qualitative interviews. These took the form of telephone interviews, informal face-to-face interviews at the workplace and semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the telephone interviews was to encourage research participants to clarify or expand upon diary entries. The informal face-to-face interviews, during site visits, were generally serendipitous, although occasionally these were pre-arranged. The purpose again was to discuss diary entries, but also to elicit more information about the employee's job, work context and their experiences of change at work. The main interview method employed in the present study was the semi-structured interview. Two sets of such semi-structured interviews were conducted with each diarist during the research period. The first interviews took place in March 1997, 4-5 months after the start of the 'diary interview' phase of the research. The second set of interviews took place in November/December 1997, at the end of the research period. Some diarists were prolific in terms of the amount of information supplied in their diaries, whilst other diarists did not offer very much information, even with telephone prompting. The interviews provided an opportunity both to cross-check the researcher's interpretations of diary entries and to elicit more information from those participants who had been reticent in providing information in their diaries. The interviews also provided background information about employees' jobs, career and history with the company. However, their main purpose was to elicit responses to questions based around certain themes that had been developed from the literature review and from analysis of the diary data and observational data. The second interview 'schedule' was based upon the literature and 'analysis in progress' of the diary data, first interview data and observational data.

There are a number of different kinds of research interviews, ranging from highly structured interviews to unstructured interviews (Robson 1993). Structured interviews have a questionnaire format where specific questions are asked in the same way and in the same order to each interviewee. In unstructured interviews, the researcher allows a conversation to develop around a general area of interest. Semi-structured interviews fall between the structured and unstructured approaches and involve developing an interview

'schedule' (Robson 1993), 'guide' (Lofland & Lofland 1995) or 'agenda' (Burgess 1984) which lists the topics the researcher wants to cover in the interview. However, unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews take the form of "*conversations with a purpose*" (Burgess 1984, p.102), as the interviewer uses open questions which allow respondents to talk about the topics of interest in their own terms, using their own language. Topics are not necessarily addressed in a set sequence because, although the interviewer guides the interview, the respondent has the freedom to cover topics of interest as they naturally occur in the 'conversation'.

The semi-structured interview method was selected as most appropriate for the present study. The present research is concerned with eliciting employees' perceptions of change. A structured interview would have forced respondents to answer questions about change which were constructed within the boundaries of the researcher's meanings. The researcher's familiarity with the literature and themes drawn from analysis of diaries and observational data conducted prior to the interviews meant that the researcher already had broad topic areas in mind before the interview. An unstructured approach would therefore also have been inappropriate.

The two interview schedules were developed with reference to Burgess (1984), Robson (1993) and Lofland & Lofland (1995). Both schedules included a 'fact-sheet', with basic data about each interviewee, space for a written interview summary, space for a diagrammatic interview summary, an introduction, a list of topics to be covered along with key questions and prompts, closing comments and a space to pictorially represent the interviewee's work station and immediate work environment. The two interview schedules are presented in Appendices 3.5.4 and 3.5.5, along with a summary of the type of data elicited by each section of the schedules.

Carrying out the interviews

Burgess (1984, p.103) notes that "*it is vital to develop the trust and confidence of those with whom interviews are used*". In the present study, prior to the interviews, the researcher had already had the opportunity to start developing a trusting relationship with

interviewees through the ongoing diary study and also through contact made during the researcher's site visits.

A major aim of the interviews was to build upon data from the diaries about employees' phenomenological experiences of change at work and elicit people's emotional responses. In order for this to be achieved, the researcher recognised that the interviews must be conducted in such a way that interviewees felt comfortable to share their emotional experiences with the researcher. An atmosphere of trust had to be created within the interview environment. Rogers (1966) describes the conditions necessary for a 'therapeutic climate', namely 'congruence' (ie, the therapist is genuine, and not putting on a 'facade'), 'unconditional positive regard' (ie, the therapist is not judgemental) and 'empathic understanding' (ie, the therapist attempts to relate to the client's phenomenological experience on the client's terms). Whilst Robson (1993) notes that the therapeutic setting is quite different to the research setting, the present researcher believes that these three conditions can also be applied successfully to the research interview situation.

A 'person-centred' approach (Rogers 1977) was therefore applied to the interviews, where understanding the phenomenological experience of the interviewee and communicating this understanding were major concerns during the interview. The aim was that through this process, and within the context of congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding, the interviewee would feel trusted, respected and understood, would trust the interviewer and would therefore be able to talk freely, and with insight, about their experience at work. The use of 'mirroring' (Rogers 1977), where the researcher communicates her understanding of what the interviewee has said, also provides a mechanism for checking upon 'researcher bias' by seeing whether the researcher's interpretations conform with the interviewee's own interpretations of what has been said. This 'person-centred' approach to interviewing is similar to an approach described by Burgess (1984, p.103) where the researcher *"is a friend and a confidant who shows interest, understanding and sympathy in the life of the person with whom a conversation occurs"*.

Lofland & Lofland (1995, p.84) provide a thorough step-by-step guide to 'doing the interview' and this has been followed in the present research. The guide includes details of the items that need to be covered in any introduction, such as explaining the purpose and nature of the study and assuring anonymity. The guide also includes advice upon developing the format, devising questions that are not 'loaded' and conducting and documenting the interview. When conducting the interviews, care was taken to follow Robson's (1993) advice that long questions, double-barrelled, or multiple-barrelled questions, questions involving jargon, leading questions and biased questions should all be avoided. Interviews in the present research were tape recorded, but the interviewer took Lofland & Lofland's (1995, p.87) advice and made notes during each interview "*to keep a close account of what had already been talked about and what remains to be talked about*" and to guard against the possibility of tape machine failure. The researcher also ensured that there was a minimum period of three quarters of an hour between interviews so that a summary could be made immediately after each interview, along with a note of any analytical observations that came to mind, comments about how the interview had gone, which type of questions worked well, which did not work, and so on. This 'break' period also provided sufficient time for the researcher to disengage from the previous interview and prepare for the next interview. The researcher found that she could manage a maximum of three interviews per day. Interviews generally lasted between 1 hour and 1 hour 15 minutes.

Most participants expressed how much they had enjoyed being part of the project. Participants seemed to have particularly enjoyed documenting their experiences in their diaries. Some people expressed how therapeutic it had been to have had the opportunity to talk to someone about their experiences at work.

3.7.5 Observation

Although the data collection period for the diary/interview study was set at 12 months (refer to section 3.6.2), the researcher collected archival and observational data during

site visits for 6 months prior to the start of the diary/interview study, so that observational data covers a period of 18 months. The emphasis in the present research is upon eliciting individual employees' subjective experiences of change. In order for the researcher to understand and interpret these experiences, the researcher must be familiar with the organisational context within which the research participants experienced change. The observational method fulfills this requirement. Observational data is also useful as a means of providing a 'cross-check' of data gleaned from other sources, ie, in the present study, diary/interview data. However, in line with Silverman (1993), it must be emphasised that it is not the researcher's intention to 'judge' between different accounts of change, but rather to use these different methods as a way of providing a 'rich picture', revealing the experiences of major change from the employee's perspective and to 'situate' these experiences within the organisational context.

To be more specific: Through the observational method, the researcher aims to describe the company's history and place within the insurance industry, to identify any triggers for change and to describe the change programme. A further goal of the observational component of the study is to describe the way change was implemented at GID and also to describe the company's 'climate'. Balogun & Hope Hailey's (1999, p. 161) definition of 'climate' as *"the way people relate to each other in an organization and the management style"*, has been adopted in the present study.

The observational method used in the present study is more accurately depicted as 'participant observation' which involves *"the interweaving of looking and listening, of watching and asking"* (Lofland & Lofland 1995). For ease of explanation and presentation, this thesis presents the diary, interview and observation methods independently, under different headings. However, there is no strict dividing line between the diary/interview method and participant observation. As Lofland & Lofland (1995) suggest, 'intensive interviewing' may involve the sort of prolonged and repeated contact between researcher and participant(s) that is normally associated with participant observation. Similarly, participant observation will undoubtedly involve some 'intensive interviewing'.

Burgess (1984) defines 4 categories of 'field' roles, namely 'the complete participant', the 'participant-as-observer', the 'observer-as-participant' and the 'complete observer'. The present research approach is best described under the category 'participant-as-observer'. Here, the researcher is explicit about being an observer and about the purpose of observation, develops relationships with 'informants' and is free to 'move around' according to particular research interests (Burgess 1984). In the present research, observational data was drawn from documents, individuals and groups and by observing 'special events' (Burgess 1984).

Documentary data was abundant at GID. Evidence collected included local, national and international GRE and GID newsletters, union (BIFU) newsletters, industry and national newspapers, brochures about products and services, letters, circulars, memos, copy emails, staff survey, 'manpower' analysis, brochures about changes, change presentation 'scripts' and overheads, videos, change-related staff and management training material and organisational charts.

Some of the participant observation data was collected on a formal basis where, for example, the researcher had a pre-arranged appointment and particular time period set aside for a research 'interview'. However, much of the data was collected informally during 'conversations' with people at their desks, in the reception areas, in lifts, at office drinks machines and photo-copying machines, in the staff canteens and rest areas, while socialising outside the office and/or sharing a train ride home. Group data was collected at a number of 'focus' groups conducted immediately after presentations about the proposed PMS and, later on in the project, after presentations about the Demeter restructure. Group data was also collected while socialising with individual employees and groups of staff.

Data was also collected at 'special events' (Burgess 1984). Such events included presentations by management, where employees were given updates on changes in progress, or were given notice that certain changes were coming into effect. The

researcher also attended two day-long training sessions where line managers were being trained in the review aspect of the new PMS. The researcher was generally forewarned of these 'special events' either by GI's HR Director or by one or both of the area manager secretaries.

3.7.5.1 Carrying out participant observation

"Accident and happenstance shapes fieldworkers' studies as much as planning or foresight; numbing routine as much as living theatre; impulse as much as rational choice; mistaken judgments as much as accurate ones" (Van Maanen 1988, p.2).

The uncertainty of conducting fieldwork as described above by Van Maanen, coupled with the uncertainty of conducting fieldwork in a changing environment, made the task of participant observation quite daunting for the researcher. Spradley (1980) makes a useful distinction between three phases of participant observation, namely, 'descriptive observation', 'focused observation' and 'selective observation'. Descriptive observation involves the researcher orienting herself with the field of study and describing the complexity of the field, whilst developing lines of enquiry. Focused observation is where the researcher narrows her perspective and focuses upon those elements most pertinent to the research question. Finally, selective observation occurs at the end of the data collection period and is concerned with selectively seeking further evidence in support of findings from the 'focused observation' phase. Referring to this distinction helped to relieve some of the anxiety experienced by the researcher, particularly during the initial 'descriptive observation' stage, which produced a mass of description, and which the researcher experienced as overwhelming. The researcher realised that in order to identify where to look for focused observations and in order for focused observations to be meaningful, it is essential to have a 'firm footing' in the field and understand the field 'through the eyes of the other' (Flick 1998). Spradley's (1980) breakdown of the phases of participant observation research helped the researcher to trust that her participant observations would become more focused once a 'firm footing' had been established.

Robson (1993) talks about the importance of considering the 'role' that a participant observer is projecting. The researcher presented herself to staff and managers at GID as a research student and made an effort to dress in a manner in keeping with employees in the organisation. The researcher accepted invitations to lunch, and post-work drinks with groups of employees on a number of occasions. In this way, although the researcher also developed relationships with managers during the research period, she attempted to align herself more with employees, who were the main focus of the research.

The initial points of contact at both area office networks were the area managers and the area managers' secretaries. Both area managers' secretaries became very important key informants as they had broad-based information about change, rather than department-focused information, and were often aware of forthcoming change announcements before other informants. During the research period, the researcher spent a total of 63 days at one or other of GID's offices. Visits were also made to GI head office in Ipswich and GI Corporate office in London. Most of the visits to GID were primarily for the purpose of conducting in-depth interviews with diarists/interviewees, however, during these interview days, there was ample time to collect observational data. By the end of the 18 months of observations, the researcher had filled 15 'reporter' style notepads. Lofland & Lofland (1995) urge researchers to write up fieldnotes promptly and no later than the morning after the observation day. The researcher followed Barley's (1990) recommendation and ordered and expanded observations at the end of each observational day. Long train journeys at the end of each site visit provided a good opportunity for structuring and expanding the day's entries whilst the information was still fresh in the researcher's mind. Miles & Huberman (1994) recommend that the previous set of field notes is coded before the next trip to the site. The researcher was not always able to achieve this, but an attempt was made to 'rough code' existing field notes before collecting further participant observation data.

An important aim of the participant observation was to obtain information from a range of people at GI and GID. After an initial 'mapping' of the organisation and of the roles within the organisation, the researcher developed a list of the types of individuals she

wished to interview. This list comprised regional and local union officials, managers from different levels in the company hierarchy, managers from different business departments or teams and employees with job roles that were not represented amongst the diarists/interviewees, such as trainers, inspectors and engineers. Both area managers were very supportive of the research and this made the researcher's task in seeking out and talking to people relatively easy. Alongside these more 'formal' conversations with pre-selected individuals, 'informal' data was collected, as the researcher moved around the offices.

Field notes were mostly taken in shorthand. However, in the initial phase of the research, the researcher relied upon the use of a tape recorder and notes, particularly when conducting pre-arranged interviews. But, transcribing and cross-checking with notes taken at these interviews increased the researcher's confidence in using note-taking as the sole method of participant observation data collection from 6 months into the observational research period. Transcribing tapes was very time consuming and, once the employee diary/interview study started, the researcher recognised that transcribing participant observation interviews would be too great a burden upon researcher resources.

Lofland & Lofland (1995) note the importance of 'jotting inconspicuously' during fieldwork. On many occasions, it would have been inappropriate for the researcher to take notes during periods of observation and during conversations with individuals and groups. On these occasions the researcher withdrew to lifts, bathrooms and empty offices frequently in order to make what Lofland & Lofland (1995) call "*jotted notes*". The researcher followed Lofland & Lofland's (1995) advice and developed a system to denote whether verbal material had been recalled exactly or not. Quotations were used to signify exact recall of conversational extracts, apostrophes to signify paraphrasing or uncertainty as to whether recall was exact, and hyphens to indicate a reasonable recall, but not exact quotation. Fieldnotes also included the researcher's impressions and feelings about the setting. Such notes not only alert the researcher to possible researcher bias, but also sensitise the researcher to the possibility that the researcher's own emotional response to a situation might also be shared by research participants (Kleinman & Copp 1993).

3.8 Qualitative Data Analysis

3.8.1 Introduction

Four categories of data are included in the qualitative analysis:

- 1 *Diary data* for the period November/December 1996 to November/December 1997. This data provides a detailed chronology of change events and a processual account of individuals' thoughts and feelings about the unfolding change programme.
- 2 Two sets of *interview data* (March/April 1997 and October/November 1997). This data clarifies and/or develops issues raised in the diaries and explores themes relevant to the research question in more detail. The second interview explores themes developed from early data analysis and confirms and compares issues raised in the first interview.
- 3 *Observational data*. Observations of 'special events', informal observations, formal interviews with key informants and informal conversations and meetings with staff during site visits. This data provides further information about the chronology of change events. More importantly, this data provides an account of the organisational context within which individual research participants experienced change.
- 4 *Documentary data*. These include, newspapers, insurance industry newsletters, union newsletters, GRE and GID national and local newsletters, brochures about products and services, letters, circulars, memos, copy emails, staff survey, 'manpower' analysis, brochures about changes, change presentation 'scripts' and overheads, videos, change-related staff and management training material, organisational charts and newspaper cuttings. This data provides additional evidence of the chronology of change events and the organisational climate and context.

3.8.2 Approach to qualitative data analysis

In seeking a guide to qualitative analysis, the researcher has referred to numerous books including those by Van Maanen (1988), Fetterman (1989), Strauss & Corbin (1990), Silverman (1993), Miles & Huberman (1994), Yin (1994), Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) and Lofland & Lofland (1995). Flick (1998) distinguishes between a linear approach of first collecting the data and then interpreting the data (for example, conversation analysis) and an 'interwoven procedure' where data is interpreted and coded with the goal of categorizing and/or developing theory. The 'interwoven', or 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss 1967) approach is concerned with interpreting data to develop theory and further inform the nature of additional data to be collected. Grounded theory was introduced by Glaser & Strauss and further developed by Strauss & Corbin (1990). The present research approach is aligned with Strauss & Corbin's conceptualisation of grounded theory. The present research does not adopt a strictly 'grounded theory' stance, as the researcher developed a guiding theoretical framework, based upon existing literature on individual differences and the experience of major organisational change, before entering the field.

Whilst the researcher has referred to analysis techniques described by all of the above-mentioned writers, the approach taken follows most closely techniques set out in the 'Qualitative Data Analysis Sourcebook' by Miles & Huberman (1994). This approach involves creating analytical frameworks to guide the analysis, but 'open-coding' data to allow concepts and categories to grow out of the data. This open-coding leads to revisions in the analytical framework. So, as analysis progresses, there is a constant interplay between concepts arising out of the data and the guiding framework.

Writing analytic summaries (Miles & Huberman 1994) is an important part of the analysis process. Miles & Huberman promote the use of interim summaries as a way of exploring, sense-making and reorienting the researcher's view. Writing a report for GID, based upon the research, provided the researcher with an opportunity to examine the data in different ways. It was through such summarising and writing that the researcher 'funnelled' her analysis and decided to focus upon employees' experiences of one

particular change. The sheer volume of data precluded a detailed write-up of employees' experiences of all of the changes that were implemented during the research period. Rough analysis was performed upon all 'diary interview' data relating to all salient changes, and fine-grained analysis was performed upon two-thirds of the first set of interviews, half of the second set of interviews, and all of the diaries. The selection of the Demeter project as a focal change event occurred intentionally late in the analysis process, to ensure that the researcher did not narrow down the analysis prematurely.

3.8.3 Participant observation data analysis

The researcher followed Lofland & Lofland's (1995) advice and developed different types of file systems prior to, and during, the data collection and analysis periods. Firstly, 'housekeeping' files ordered the raw data in such a way that data was logged and was easily retrievable. Next, 'analytic' files ordered the data according to analytic themes and codes. A chronological record of field notes was also kept so that 'pieces' of data retrieved from the analytic or housekeeping files could be examined in context. The chronological record was also useful to stimulate thinking about larger analytic patterns. Another type of analytic file which was kept by the researcher is a description of the analytic process itself, or "*audit trail*" (Miles & Huberman 1994, p.286). Detailed notes were kept of data collection procedures, analytical thoughts, strategies, reasons behind adopting different strategies, along with data displays and evolving frameworks. Use of NUD.IST version 4 (N4) computer software assisted here, providing records of 'index searches' and a facility for keeping notes during periods of analysis as 'memos', or on a 'notes node', in the N4 'project'. Yin (1994, p.37) also recommends such detailed note-taking for enhancing reliability, suggesting that research be conducted "*as if someone were always looking over your shoulder*".

There are numerous computer software programs available that can be used to manage and facilitate analysis of qualitative data (Weitzman & Miles 1995). The researcher used N4 for managing and analysing the 'diary interview' data. However, despite the advantages of using a computer system when dealing with a large volume of data, the

researcher decided to use a manual management system and paper-based analysis for the field data. Initially, participant observation field notes and interviews were 'imported' into N4. However, the researcher found it difficult to switch from the different units of analysis when all types of data were 'collapsed' into a single N4 project. A decision was therefore made to do the 'diary interview', micro-level analysis, on N4, to take advantage of the sophisticated 'search' functions which cut across the data in ways that would have been overly time-consuming using a manual system. The macro-level, participant observation data, was managed and analysed manually.

In the present study, documentary data was organised chronologically and filed into box files. A sheet at the front of each file contained a list with brief descriptions of each document and the date of each document. If the document had no date, then the date of collection was used as a reference. As the project developed, documents were further divided into topics. Where a single document referred to more than one topic, photocopies were made, or, where this was not practical, a cross-referencing note was made on the sheet at the front of each topic file and the original document was filed in the chronological file.

As field notes were written up, each page was numbered and stored in lever arch folders in chronological order. Copies of these notes were taken and were further divided according to whether the notes referred to a formal interview, an informal interview, observation of a 'special event', general observation, telephone conversations, letters or focus groups. As the project and analysis progressed, the day's 'jottings', or notes of participant observation interviews, were selectively transcribed and filed, firstly, in the chronological file; secondly, according to type of observation; thirdly according to topic.

The researcher's approach to analysis of both participant observation and 'diary interview' data was influenced by various writers mentioned above in section 3.8.2, however, for the most part, the researcher followed techniques described in Miles & Huberman (1994). A loose analytical framework was developed with data 'bins' based upon propositions about the data developed from familiarisation with the area of investigation. In this instance,

the literature review and early site visits provided familiarisation with the field and the development of headings for data 'bins'. For example, the participant observation data 'bins' included, 'company history', 'insurance industry', 'change triggers', 'change events', 'organisational climate' and 'change implementation'. Data in these 'bins' was broken down into categories and sub-categories. These categories often led to revision of the main data groupings and the analytical framework. It should be noted that the analytical framework was inclusive in that it also contained data 'bins' for the 'diary interview' study data. Propositions were developed, based upon the literature, from the researcher's experiences in 'the field' and upon reading and re-reading the data. These propositions were 'tested' against the evidence and adjustments to the developing framework were made where appropriate. Analysis continued in this manner throughout the data collection period and beyond, into the continued analysis period. Most of the participant observation data collection was conducted alongside the 'diary interview' study, so that analysis of the macro level (ie, participant observation) and micro level (ie, diary interview) data proceeded at the same time. The researcher found that this added depth to her understanding, and therefore to her analysis, as each individual data source was analysed against the background of the other data sources.

Quite late in the analysis process, the researcher was introduced to Gratton et al's (1999) model of factors which 'enable or constrain' initiative transfer within organisations. Gratton et al's (1999) model proved a very good fit for themes that emerged from analysis of participant observation data in the present research. The model provided a tool for sharpening the researcher's analytical sensitivity during the final stages of analysis, and also proved to be a sound framework for presenting these 'contextual' findings (see section 4.7.2, Chapter 4).

3.8.4 Diary interview data analysis

3.8.4.1 Analysis overview

Potter (1996) has described data analysis as an 'organic whole', as a process which starts in the data collection stage and does not end until the researcher has finished writing up.

Certainly in the present research, this is the shape that data analysis took. As mentioned previously, the analysis techniques used by the researcher were drawn from a variety of sources, but the approach follows most closely Miles & Huberman's (1994) qualitative analysis sourcebook. The approach is both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. A 'top-down' approach is used at the initial stages to help provide structure to the data. However, the structure is loose in order to facilitate a 'grounded' approach whereby concepts and categories are allowed to develop from the data, rather than being imposed by the researcher.

Coding was conducted with reference to Miles & Huberman (1994), Lofland & Lofland (1995) and Strauss & Corbin (1990) who suggest the use of types of questioning and techniques to "*enhance theoretical sensitivity*" (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 75). Lofland & Lofland (1995, p. 124) itemise 8 'basic questions' used by social researchers, namely, 'Type(s)?, Frequencies?, Magnitude?, Structures?, Processes?, Causes?, Consequences? and Agency?'. The researcher found it useful to perform coding and analysis with reference to these questions. Questions relating to frequencies and magnitude in particular help the researcher to keep "*analytically honest, protecting against bias*" (Miles & Huberman 1994), p. 253). Strauss & Corbin (1990) describe techniques for looking at data in ways that allow the researcher to "*look beneath the obvious*" (p.76). These include 'flip flop', where, for example, analysis can be broadened by comparing phenomena from opposite ends of the dimensions of particular analytic categories. Throughout the analysis period, the researcher tried to keep her analysis both creative and robust by applying such techniques and heeding the advice given in the above mentioned analysis handbooks.

Analysis was both processual and cross-sectional. The researcher looked at the diary and interview data as a whole, over time, for each diarist-interviewee, examining how change unfolded for individuals. The same data was also examined cross-sectionally. For example, the researcher compared individuals' responses to particular consequences of the change, slicing through the data at particular points in time and comparing coding in relation to individual differences.

Data was reduced, and the researcher also 'cut' through the data in different ways, in order to increase the depth of analysis. An example of data reduction from the present study is that diary and interview data were summarised into mini, single page case studies for each diarist/interviewee. These case studies documented diarist/interviewees' overall perceptions of change, perceptions of change management, and responses to change (see Appendix 3.7.2 for examples). This exercise allowed the researcher to acquaint herself more fully with each diarist/interviewee and the summaries allowed the researcher to conduct 'thematic coding' (Flick 1998) and analysis, looking for broad patterns across the summaries which stimulated more fine-coding, in-depth analysis and pattern-seeking in the raw data using N4. With N4, the researcher was able to 'cut' the data in a variety of ways to provide a fuller picture of participants' experiences of change. For example, with N4 it was easy to search for all participants' responses to particular changes, or to search for a certain group's responses to particular consequences of change, or to search for an individuals' use of a particular coping strategy.

3.8.4.2 Data preparation and analysis

Both the diary and interview data were predominantly managed and analysed using N4. During analysis, each participant's diary and interview data were treated, in the main, as a single body of data. Diary data was typed from handwritten entries on the diary forms and from verbatim notes made during diary 'telephone calls'. Interview data was transcribed by the researcher. Transcribing and 'sorting' a single one hour interview took about five hours. Although this process was very time consuming, the researcher did all the transcribing herself, as this enabled her to become very familiar with the data; hence analysis began during transcription, as the researcher made notes, whilst transcribing, on a separate file. These early reflections, questions and analysis notes became part of the 'audit trail' (Miles & Huberman 1994, Yin 1994) in which the researcher wrote about the research process through the analysis and into the writing-up period. As the diary questions, although open, were asked in the same manner and in the same order, the diary data needed little reorganising following transcription, before being 'imported' into N4.

However, the interview data was far less structured, and needed to be ordered following transcription. In order to preserve the authenticity of each interview, the interviews were not rearranged by subject category, to match the 'flow' of the interview schedule; instead headings were inserted before particular 'chunks' of interview. These headings refer to discussion of particular topics from the interview schedule and new lines of enquiry that emerged whilst conducting the interviews. Some text 'chunks' referred to more than one topic and were therefore given more than one heading. This was the first level of 'coarse' coding. An N4 command file was written so that each 'imported' interview was automatically coded at the appropriate node for base data (such as, age, job type, personality groupings), and for the topic headings (such as, 'introduction', 'job background', 'change background', 'salient changes', 'flexitime', 'pms' and so on).

So, before analysis began on N4, the data had already been through its first 'crude' analysis during the data preparation stage. Codes relating to the base data and the topic headings - both 'emergent' topics and those taken from the diary form and the interview schedule - formed the initial skeleton framework for the N4 project. However, analysis then progressed in "*an iterative and sometimes untidy*" (Pettigrew 1995, p.108) manner. For example, two 'diary interview' sets, which provided a contrast in terms of location, job type, age and personality profiles were rough-coded, then fine-coded, and analytic ideas and propositions were developed. Further 'diary interview' sets were then also rough and then fine-coded. Previously coded 'diary interview' data sets were revisited in order to revise codes, or add, or delete codes. Further analytic ideas and propositions were developed. And so the process continued until all of the 'diary interview' data had been analysed. The participant observation data was also subjected to the same iterative process.

The diary interview pilot study data was used by the researcher as a 'testing ground' for trying out different ways of carving up and categorising the data. The diary data posed particular problems, as the continuous nature of the entries did not provide natural cutoff points for dividing the data. Having a separate data point or 'node' for each diary resulted in analysing and coding relatively small extracts of text out of context. Once the main

diary data started to be collected, a decision was made to 'chunk' the diary data so that each month of diary entries was represented by a separate node. However, the researcher worked upon analysing monthly diary 'chunks' whilst referring to diarists' entire collection of diaries, along with interview transcripts, if available, and any supplementary evidence (eg, documents, or notes of informal conversations during field visits), so that extracts of text were always interpreted within the context of the whole document and any relevant additional material. Indeed, a criticism of N4 is that seeking patterns from extracts of text coded at nodes does not allow for the 'immersion' necessary for developing theory grounded in the data (Richards 1997). However, the researcher found that 'bottom up' analysis could be done satisfactorily using N4 by performing coding and analysis tasks while continually referring back to the data as a whole.

Interviews were stored on N4 as whole documents, but again, analysis was done with reference to any other diary or interview data that was available for the particular interviewee in question. In this way, segments of data were coded thoughtfully with reference to the whole body of data. N4 provides an excellent data management tool for qualitative research; this was crucial in the present research, where such a large body of data has been amassed from the participant observation and the diary interview methods. N4 was also chosen for use by the researcher because the 'vector' and 'matrix' index search operators were particularly useful in analysing the role of individual difference factors in employees' experiences of change. 'Matrix' searches produce the qualitative equivalent of a 'cross-tabulation' of data (Gahan & Hannibal 1998). For example, in the present research, a 'cross-tab' was conducted with the 'children' of the 'neuroticism' node (ie, 'neurotic' and 'stable') and the 'children' of the 'adjustment' node (ie, 'new job', 'new role', 'new colleagues', 'new manager', 'new location', 'job loss', 'no change'). Then, the researcher worked from the resulting printouts and compared text coded at 'adjustment' nodes amongst the 'neurotic' group and the 'stable' group. 'Vector' searches are like matrix searches, but produce just one row. So, for example, all of the text coded under 'adjustment' could be printed out and text coded at the 'neurotic' and 'stable' index 'nodes' could be compared.

Once such comparisons were made, and before the researcher decided that particular statements were indeed indicative of the particular individual difference category under scrutiny, she referred to a 'base data' table to ensure that particular quotes were not also attributable to other individual difference categories. Silverman (1985 p.140), in discussing qualitative analysis, advocates "*counting in terms of natural categories consistent with people's own understanding*". In the present study, as a rule of thumb, four was the minimum number of 'same-theme' quotes, from different individuals deemed to be indicative of an individual difference effect. In 'over-subscribed' categories, such as extraversion and neuroticism, this figure was increased to six. This represented approximately a quarter of respondents in a particular individual difference category describing an experience or experiences coded in the same way. This figure was arrived at following discussions with colleagues about what would constitute an acceptable figure. Some 'diary interview' examples have been included in the findings chapter (Chapter 6) which do not meet this criteria, but have been included because of particular statements' strength of 'fit' with the research propositions. In such instances, the researcher has been careful to point out that the examples are illustrative of fewer than four individuals in a particular individual difference category. There are also examples in the findings chapter (Chapter 6) where extracts relate to an overlap of two or more individual difference categories. In these instances, the researcher accepted less than four examples as being indicative of a pattern. However, again, the researcher was explicit about the number of examples that were drawn upon. Although 'counting' has been used as an aid to analysis, the researcher decided that it would be meaningless to itemise the number of quotes in support of every proposition in the findings chapter (Chapter 6), as 'counting' does not take into account the strength of 'fit' of particular data extracts to research propositions.

Much of the later analysis was performed by hand on the paper printouts from N4 index searches, as the researcher often elected to work away from her computer. These 'paper' results of searches, and the analytic summaries that followed a more detailed analysis of the searches, were systematically filed. Details of the searches and cross-references were kept in the 'index search' section of the N4 database for easy retrieval.

The N4 'index system' is the collection of 'nodes' or 'codes' developed in the analysis process. 'Nodes' can be added hierarchically so that a 'tree and branch' structure develops, or, where appropriate, 'nodes' can be left unattached. The index system developed as more data was collected, imported into the system and analysed. When new codes emerged, a note was made of which previously analysed interviews and diaries needed to be revisited and checked in relation to the new codes. N4's 'memo' function was useful here. Both 'text' and 'index' searches can be carried out on data using N4. However, the researcher only conducted 'index' searches on the codes that had been ascribed to text. As the present research is interpretative, descriptive and conceptual codes were assigned to 'pieces' of text whilst referencing the context within which that text appeared. Pure text searches were therefore deemed to be inappropriate. A short extract from the final N4 'index system' for the present research project is presented below in figure 3.1 as an example. The full index system is presented in Appendix 3.7.1.

Figure 3.1 Extract from final N4 index system

Q.S.R. NUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.

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(8) /Responses

(8 1) /Responses/coping method
(8 1 1) /Responses/coping method/active
(8 1 1 8) /Responses/coping method/active/perspective
(8 1 1 8 1) /Responses/coping method/active/perspective/analyses
(8 1 1 8 2) /Responses/coping method/active/perspective/think +ve
(8 1 1 8 2 1) /Responses/coping method/active/perspective/think +ve/humour
(8 1 1 8 3) /Responses/coping method/active/perspective/all same boat
(8 1 1 9) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour
(8 1 1 9 1) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/seek information
(8 1 1 9 2) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/proactive
(8 1 1 9 2 1) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/proactive/imprsn mgmt
(8 1 1 9 2 2) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/proactive/alliances
(8 1 1 9 2 3) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/proactive/imprv skills
(8 1 1 9 2 4) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/proactive/misc other
(8 1 1 9 3) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/job seeks
(8 1 1 9 4) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/seek support
(8 1 1 9 4 1) /Responses/coping method/active/beh/seek support/problemfocus
(8 1 1 9 4 2) /Responses/coping method/active/beh/seek support/emotionfocus
(8 1 1 9 5) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/avoids -ve opinion
(8 1 1 9 6) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/work hard
(8 1 1 9 6 1) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/work hard/innovative
(8 1 1 9 6 2) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/work hard/more hours
(8 1 1 9 7) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/distraction
(8 1 1 9 7 1) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/distraction/exercise
(8 1 1 9 7 2) /Responses/coping method/active/behaviour/distraction/drinking

(8 1 2) /Responses/coping method/passive
(8 1 2 1) /Responses/coping method/passive/wait + see
(8 1 2 1 1) /Responses/coping method/passive/wait + see/problem focus

```

(8 1 2 1 2)	/Responses/coping method/passive/wait + see/emotion focus
(8 1 2 2)	/Responses/coping method/passive/emotional outburst
(8 1 2 3)	/Responses/coping method/passive/just accept-why bother
(8 1 2 4)	/Responses/coping method/passive/switch off
(8 1 2 5)	/Responses/coping method/passive/dwells on problem
(8 1 2 6)	/Responses/coping method/passive/rest
(8 1 2 7)	/Responses/coping method/passive/hope
(8 1 3)	/Responses/coping method/psychophysical reaction
(8 2)	/Responses/Home-Work boundary

3.9 Researcher bias

3.9.1 Introduction

The research proposition at the heart of this thesis is that individuals will perceive and respond to the same event in different ways, depending upon a wide range of factors, but including individual difference factors. Presenting this research proposition highlights a problem for the researcher. If the suggestion is that the research participants are biased and that these biases frame their perceptions of, and responses to, their environment, then the researcher too must acknowledge that she also has biases which will frame her perceptions of, and responses to, the research. This problem is not limited to qualitative research, as quantitative research is also subject to potential bias in, for example, framing questions, selecting samples and interpreting findings. However, the issue is emphasised in qualitative research, as the qualitative analysis process itself involves the researcher's own subjective interpretations. Attempts made to ameliorate researcher bias in the present research are discussed below.

3.9.2 Criteria for judging qualitative research

Flick (1998) describes two alternative approaches to assessing the 'robustness' of qualitative research. The first involves applying the 'classical' criteria of validity and reliability. The second involves developing new 'method-appropriate' criteria which acknowledge the specifics of the qualitative research process. The interpretative stance taken in the present research suggests a view of social reality that is at odds with the view that social reality can be viewed objectively, independent of the meaning structures of social actors. Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that qualitative studies cannot be assessed

through applying 'classical' criteria. Such writers find "*a concern for things like validity and reliability alien*" (Robson 1993, p.373). Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that qualitative studies must demonstrate 'trustworthiness' and that this trustworthiness is achieved through credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. These terms equate to the traditional criteria for assessing research, namely, internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. However, these new terms are drawn from a constructionist perspective (Marshall & Rossman 1989). Miles & Huberman (1994), drawing upon Lincoln & Guba's (1985) work, present a list of issues to be addressed when assessing whether the "*emerging findings are good*" (p.277). The list is accompanied by sets of questions that can be asked when assessing one's own, or another researcher's, piece of qualitative work. The present research will now be discussed in relation to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) assessment criteria, with reference to Miles & Huberman's (1994) suggested line of questioning.

3.9.2.1 Credibility

Credibility is concerned with assessing whether the research presents an authentic picture of the topic under investigation. The present study has a number of features that enhance credibility. The study involved a 'prolonged engagement' in the field with 'persistent observation'. This produced 'context-rich and meaningful' (Miles & Huberman 1994) data which was analysed by a sole researcher who had an ever-increasing understanding of the field of study. Extracts from each participant's diary interview data are included in the evidence presented in Chapter 6. This guards somewhat against the criticism that qualitative research involves a "*selective rendering*" of the data (Fielding & Fielding 1986, p.12).

'Method triangulation' (Silverman 1993, Miles & Huberman 1994) also enhances the study's credibility. The diary, interview and participant observation methods each have their strengths and weaknesses. Diaries provide 'real-time' data, but the quality of the data varies depending upon the individual participant's ability and motivation to produce diary entries. Interviews provide the researcher with a way of guiding questioning so that

participants are encouraged to share their experiences. However, interviews produce retrospective rather than 'real-time' accounts of experiences. Participant observation enables the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of the context and offers an insight into the multiple perspectives of organisational members. However, a single researcher, using participant observation alone, would not be able to provide answers to the research question which is concerned with comparing individual experiences in relation to individual differences. So, the researcher was able to draw upon these strengths and offset weaknesses by combining the three methods, thus enhancing credibility.

Using multiple methods also assisted in 'enhancing interpretability' (Robson 1993), which increases the credibility of the study. For example, in the present study, participant observation led to a greater understanding of context which enhanced the researcher's analysis of the diary and interview data. Conversely, the diary data and interview data provided 'leads' for the researcher to follow up when conducting participant observation and analysing the participant observation data. Fielding & Fielding (1986, p.34), in their critique on triangulation, suggest that it would be unwise to use one method to 'cross-check' another method's validity and instead argue for a 'synthesis' of contextual and interpretative dimensions to provide a "*more rounded*" account. In the present research, each method contributes towards providing a 'more rounded' account of employees' experiences of major organisational change.

It could be argued that the credibility of the study is undermined by having only one person to code the data. However, there are a number of advantages to having a single coder. Firstly, the researcher believes that her detailed knowledge of the field, following 63 visits to the research sites over an 18 month period, means that her coding and analysis will be more insightful than that of multiple coders with less knowledge of the field. Secondly, a single researcher's coding is more likely to be consistent. N4 assists here in providing a facility for defining and describing each node (ie, codes and categories), and these definitions and descriptions are visible whilst coding text on N4.

Marshall & Rossman (1989) also note the importance of 'displaying and accounting for negative instances of the findings' in order to enhance credibility. In the present research, discovering 'negative instances' sharpened the analysis. Sometimes, such further analysis resulted in the development of a further category or categories that had been overlooked in the previous 'round' of coding. On other occasions, it was necessary to conduct more in-depth questioning with participant(s) in order to try to explain negative instances. Where negative instances were found, the researcher has provided speculative explanations, but has been explicit about this (see, for example, sections 6.3.4.4, para 1, 6.4.4.2, para 3 and 6.6.6.3, para 1). Some approaches to qualitative research insist upon 'zero exceptions' (Kidder 1981). However, in quantitative research, even if the final hypothesis is supported, it is accepted that there will probably be exceptions. The present researcher has therefore followed the qualitative analysis convention described by Robson (1993, p.381) in which, where a proposition 'fits a good proportion of the cases' this then 'gives substantial evidence of its acceptability'.

3.9.2.2 Transferability

Transferability relates to the generalizability of research findings to other populations and contexts (Marshall & Rossman 1989). In the present study, it is not appropriate to seek the kind of generalisation to other populations and settings as is the case with studies that apply statistics (Robson 1993). The emphasis upon the importance of context in the present research suggests that transferability will be limited. However, Marshall & Rossman (1989) argue that qualitative studies can be generalizable within explicitly drawn 'theoretical parameters'. For example, the present study has been conducted with reference to theories of change and transition (Adams, Hayes & Hopson 1976), theories of stress and coping (Folkman & Lazarus 1984, Edwards 1992) and, on a broader theoretical level, the theory of 'strong' and 'weak' situations and individual differences (Bem & Allen 1974). The findings and conclusions are therefore tied to these theoretical positions, and readers can decide whether the findings can be applied to other settings within these same theoretical parameters. As Lincoln & Guba (1985) note, it is the researcher's *"responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments*

possible on the part of potential appliers" (p.316). If a study is credible and dependable and the conclusions are convincing, then transferability is possible.

3.9.2.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the study has been conducted with "*reasonable care*" (Miles & Huberman 1994). Dependability follows on from credibility in that dependability is "*necessary, though not sufficient, for credibility*" (Robson 1993), so if a study is shown to be credible, then it is also dependable. Providing an 'audit trail' enhances dependability. The concept of an 'audit trail' (Miles & Huberman 1994) is based upon the financial audit, wherein an auditor assesses the processes used by a business in keeping their accounts. If these processes are deemed acceptable, then the auditor can confirm the dependability of the 'books'. In the course of this research, detailed notes about each stage of the research and particularly about the process of analysis were kept by the researcher. Not only is this 'audit trail' useful as evidence supporting the dependability of the study, but the 'audit trail' is an important *aide memoire* for the researcher during the analytic process itself. The 'audit trail' also encourages the researcher to be reflective and this provides a 'check' against researcher bias.

Regular discussions of findings and propositions with the researcher's supervisor also enhanced dependability and therefore credibility. The researcher also made use of feedback from research participants during the research period, when the researcher's interpretations of diary, interview and participant observation data were discussed. A report summarising initial research findings, focussing upon issues relating to change implementation, was prepared for employee participants and interested managers at GID. This report also provided an opportunity for feedback.

3.9.2.4 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the traditional concept of 'objectivity'. However, confirmability is concerned with assessing whether the reader knows enough about the study to judge whether the findings provide an accurate interpretation of the data. Again, the 'audit trail' provides evidence to assess a study's confirmability. Robson (1993, p.406) extends the concept of 'audit trail' beyond a description of the research processes and includes 'raw data (field notes, documents, tapes etc.); processed data and analysis products (write-ups, summaries, etc.); data reconstruction and synthesis products (codes, patterns, matrices, etc. and final report); process notes (procedures, designs, strategies, etc.); materials relating to intentions and dispositions (original proposal, personal notes, expectations etc.); and instrument development information (pilot forms, schedules etc.)'. The present researcher attempted to keep as complete an account as possible of the steps followed throughout the research process. This task was certainly assisted by the use of N4.

3.9.2.5 Application

Miles & Huberman (1994, p.280) note that *"even if a study's findings are "valid" and transferable, we still need to know what the study does for its participants"* and include 'application' as a further criterion for assessing research. So far, the present study's findings have not been disseminated widely. The research participants and other interested parties at GID, received a copy of a report by the researcher, about change implementation at GID, based upon early analysis and findings. As the researcher had already completed the data collection phase of the study when the report was issued, it is not possible to assess whether any of the researcher's findings and recommendations improved change management practice at GID. The researcher's findings were also presented and discussed at a workshop for HR professionals, providing stimulation for fruitful discussion. Further potential applications are discussed in Chapter 8.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has set out the researcher's 'world-view' and has argued that the chosen research strategy fits within this 'world-view'. In particular, the researcher has argued that the research approach falls within the phenomenological symbolic interactionist strand of interpretivism. The research design was described. The chosen data collection methods were introduced and details were given about how the researcher carried out the survey, 'diary interview' and participant observation data collection. A further section introduced the chosen approach to analysing the qualitative data and described in some detail the process of qualitative data analysis. The chapter concluded with a section discussing issues relating to researcher bias and the criteria for judging qualitative research.

The next chapter describes the organisational context within which employee participants in the present research experienced major organisational change. The information presented is based largely upon participant observation data.

CHAPTER FOUR: ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a description of the organisational context within which the research was conducted. This information will provide a backdrop to Chapters 5 and 6 which introduce the research participants and present data on participants' experiences of major change at Guardian Insurance respectively. During the research period, a total of 63 days was spent at one or other of the offices of the Company that participated in this research. Some of these visits were primarily for the purpose of conducting in-depth interviews, other visits were to observe change-related presentations or training sessions and to talk informally with staff, union representatives and managers in the various departments of the Company. Much of the content of this chapter is based upon field notes taken during these site visits, along with documents collected during the research period. Following Lofland & Lofland (1995), quotations within double quotation marks are from verbatim field notes or from company memos, circulars or other company documents. Quotations within single quotation marks are taken from field notes, but signify paraphrasing, or uncertainty as to whether recall is exact. Sources include, staff and managers from Guardian Insurance, GID area and branch offices, BIFU union officers and union representatives, HR personnel from Ipswich HO and senior managers and Directors from Guardian Insurance (UK) Corporate Centre, London.

The chapter describes change generally within the insurance industry, then looks at the participating company in more detail, giving a brief account of the company's history up to the start of the research project. This is followed by a description of the company and a description of the major changes implemented during the research period. Then, an account of contextual factors, revealed through site visits, and relating to the change process is presented. Finally, there is a detailed account of the 'Demeter project' which is one of the major changes implemented during the research process and provides a focus for the research. 'Demeter' was selected by the researcher as a focal change event

because this change affected all participants, research participants were unanimous in selecting 'Demeter' as a 'salient' change, and implementation of Demeter lasted for a large proportion of the total research period, from November 1996 until November 1997.

4.2 Change within the insurance industry

'We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganised. I was to learn in later life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation.'

Caius Petronius (AD66)

The above 2000 year old quotation was observed, pinned to the wall of a manager's office in the insurance company who participated in this research. This quotation captured the sentiments of many people whom the researcher spoke with during her research period at Guardian Insurance. Whilst clearly the experience of major change is not a new phenomenon, the pace and magnitude of change experienced by employees from the 80's, through the 90's to date has been described as "historically unprecedented" (Moss Kanter 1985). The financial services industry in particular experienced continuous major change during the late 80's and 90's (Johne & Davies 1999). During this period, traditional insurance companies changed in response to external pressures such as, changes to the insurance market and the resulting increase in competition, major advances in IT, an increasingly discriminating customer base, expanding markets, and the "*catastrophic losses*" suffered following the 1987 hurricane.

4.3 Company history

This research was conducted in Guardian Insurance (GI), part of the Guardian Royal Exchange Group (GRE)⁴. GRE was formed by a merger of the Royal Exchange and

⁴ GRE were bought by the AXA Group in February 1999, a little over a year after data collection for this project was completed.

Guardian Insurance in 1969. Both the Royal Exchange and The Guardian had been long-standing, indeed founding players, in the insurance industry, having been founded in 1720 and 1821 respectively. The GRE operated world-wide, although the UK represented its main market where it was one of the top five Insurers. Following the merger, the GRE conducted its UK operations through a network of 49 branches and around 80 local offices handling personal and commercial general insurance, plus life assurance, predominantly through insurance intermediaries. Claims were administered through a separate network of offices.

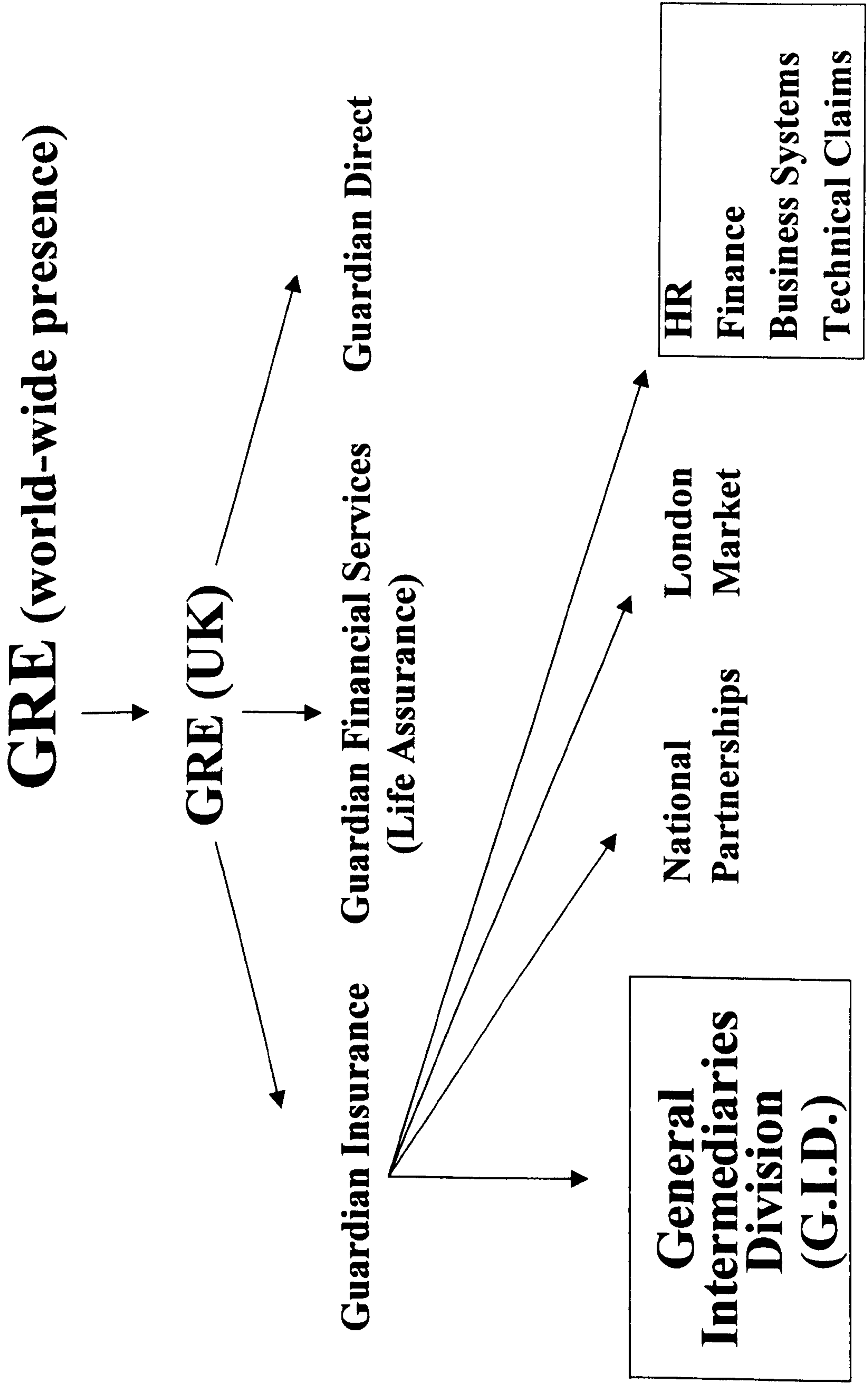
This structure continued unchanged until 1980 when the branch network was reorganised and 18 area offices were established to co-ordinate the branch and local office activity. In 1986 the 18 areas were reduced to 10 and a branch closure programme commenced. Over the next five years, virtually all of the 80 local offices and most of the small branches were closed. The claims network was consolidated into 8 'service centres' responsible for processing all general insurance claims and all personal insurance processing work previously undertaken by the areas. These service centres were referred to as "*paper factories*" and operated independently from the areas, with a different management reporting line. In 1990, all life assurance business was removed from the area and branch offices. This led to a further reduction of the area network to 8 areas.

The area network traded from the mid 1990's as Guardian Insurance which, together with Guardian Financial Services, the life assurance business, and Guardian Direct, (a new business that was built 'from the ground up' to sell personal motor and house insurance direct via the telephone), were the main operating companies of GRE (UK). Each business was autonomous with its own Managing Director and was free to establish its own operating structure, culture and employment terms to meet market needs. However, this was subject to adherence to the 'GRE objectives, values and core benefits' that were being refined at this time, following the appointment in 1994 of a new Group CEO from outside the company.

In late 1994/early 1995, Guardian Insurance was restructured to reflect its focus on the intermediary market by moving from a *"functional structure to a small number of business units, each servicing a particular customer base"*. This resulted in a merger of the area and service centre organisations and then a redivision to create three business divisions, ie, National Partnerships dealing with building societies and banks; London Market dealing with international insurance brokers, and UK Division, dealing with all other insurance intermediaries (ie, professional brokers and smaller brokers and agents) in the UK. UK Division was subsequently renamed General Intermediaries Division (GID) during the research period. GID comprised the bulk of the area and service centre (ie, claims) operations within a unified management reporting line. These three businesses reported to Guardian Insurance (UK) (GI). GI also comprised a number of support divisions, ie, Human Resources, Finance, Business Systems and Technical Claims. (See Figure 4.1)

The initial merger of the service centres in the Area network was completed in 1995. A review began at that time, under the name 'Demeter', to *"establish the future business focus, service proposition and operating structure"* for GID's diverse intermediary and customer base. The 'Demeter project' became a change focus for the present research and is described in detail later in this chapter, in section 4.8.

Figure 4.1 - GRE Organisational structure



4.4 Organisational structure

4.4.1 Participating offices

During the research period, GID's area/branch network was reduced still further from 8 to 5 areas with the loss of 5 branch offices. This research was conducted within offices from 2 areas of GID, namely, the North West (Manchester and Liverpool) and South East (Southampton and Reading). The total number of staff (including managers) in GID in June 1996 was 2210. This figure was reduced to 2037 by the end of 1997. The total number of staff (including managers) from offices that participated in the research was 676 in June 1996 and had reduced to 533 by the end of 1997. A breakdown follows:

Table 4.1 Numbers of staff in participating offices at start/end of research project

Location	Total staff June 1996	Total staff end 1997
Manchester (NW area office)	253	219
Liverpool (NW branch office)	50	0
Southampton (SE area office)	243	230
Reading (SE branch office)	130	84
Total all participating offices	676	533

4.4.2 Reporting lines

When the researcher began visiting participating offices in the summer of 1996, Southampton and Manchester had 'area office' status, whilst Reading and Liverpool had 'branch' status. Branch managers reported to their area office manager. Area managers reported to the GID Director, based at Aldgate, London, who in turn reported to the Managing Director of GI, also based at Aldgate, London. The GI HR function was centralised at the head office in Ipswich. Area offices also referred to Ipswich for claims, underwriting and business systems issues that could not be handled at area level. The Managing Director of GI reported to the Group Executive Director - UK & Ireland, who in turn reported to the GRE Group CEO. Both the Group Executive Director - UK &

Ireland and the GRE Group CEO were based in the Corporate Centre at the Royal Exchange, London. There was no full time HR representative on the UK Executive board or on the Group Executive board. One of the UK Executive Directors looked after HR issues at board level, but "*this is just a small part of what he does*" (Director of HR - GI)

4.4.3 Area and branch office teams

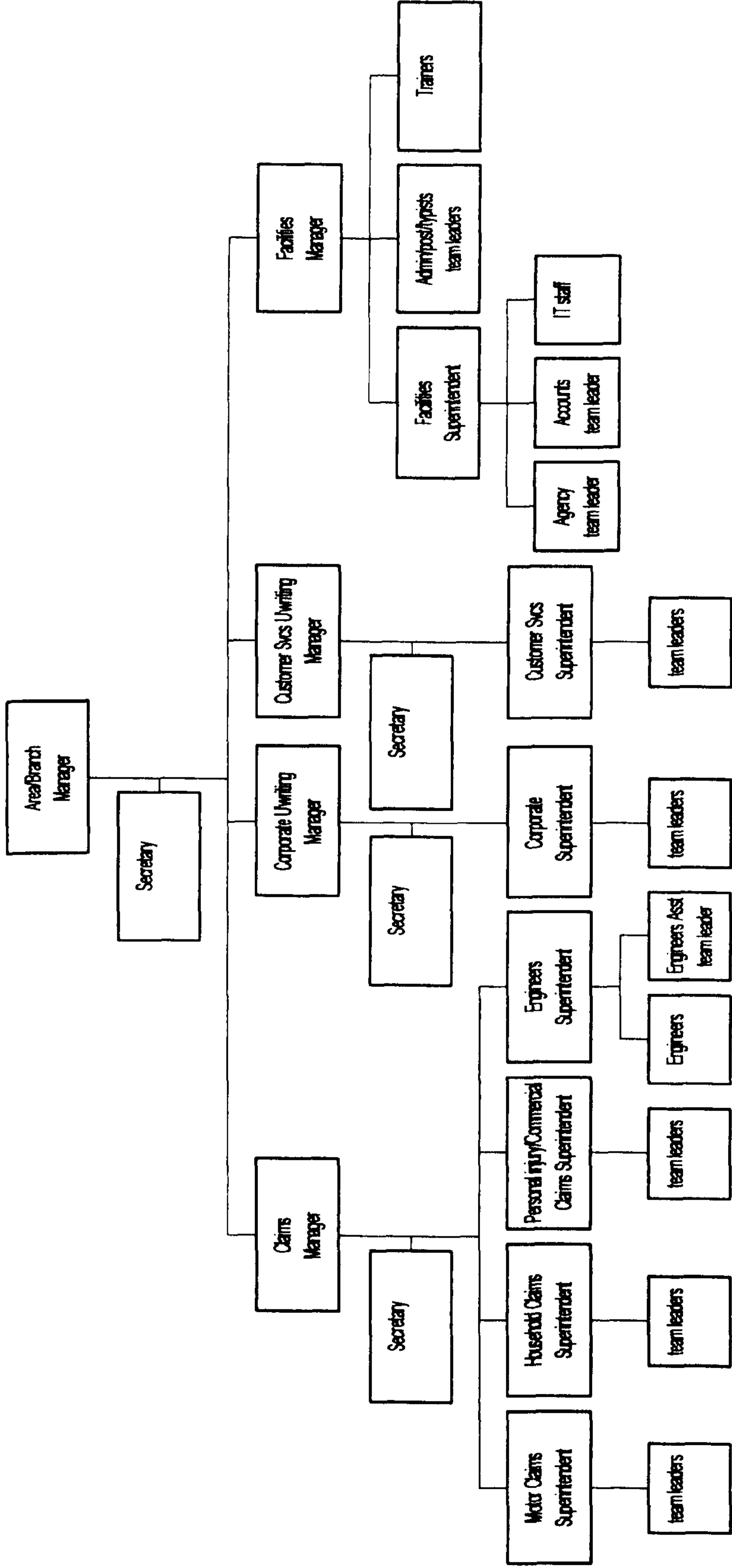
The area and branch offices of GID dealt with intermediaries (ie, professional brokers), agencies (eg, banks, building societies, solicitors) and direct with policy holders, providing insurance cover and claims handling services. The types of insurance handled by these offices included personal lines and commercial insurance, both property and casualty.

Six months before the research commenced, the claims function ceased to be dealt with at the service centres and control was transferred to the area offices. Claims staff were divided into 4 teams covering property, private motor, personal injury and commercial business. Throughout the research period efforts were made to cross-train claims and underwriting staff, so that teams would be multi-skilled. This was in preparation for the major restructure (part of the Demeter project, referred to earlier in section 4.3 and described in full in section 4.8) that took place in October 1997 for underwriting and later during the end of 1997/beginning of 1998 for claims. Underwriting was carried out at both branch and area offices. Before the October 1997 restructure, underwriters were divided into 2 main teams: customer services and corporate. Customer services underwriters dealt mainly with 'personal lines' business, ie, personal motor and household, whilst Corporate underwriters dealt mainly with 'commercial' business. Following the 1997 Demeter restructure, claims and underwriting teams were divided into either 'Response' or 'Partner Support' according to the intermediaries they dealt with, rather than the type of business they handled. This meant that all teams needed to have a range of expertise.

Each office had a 'Facilities' section with teams providing training, secretarial, typing, switchboard services, administration and IT support. Southampton and Reading had accounts teams, whereas the North West's accounts were carried out centrally at the Lytham office. After the 1997 restructure, the accounting function was returned to Manchester. At the start of the research, Manchester and Reading had teams providing a service for Agencies. This work was centralised in Ipswich during the research period. Manchester and Southampton both had teams of motor engineers, under the control of the claims managers. In March 1997, motor engineers ceased reporting to the claims managers, but reported to Claims HO at Ipswich. By the end of the research period, motor engineers services were moved from Southampton to Farnham and 'remote vehicle inspection' technology led to the 'motor engineers assistant' role being redundant at both Manchester and Southampton.

An organisational chart is shown overleaf (Figure 4.2). Organisational charts for all 4 of the participating offices have been simplified and collapsed into one chart. The chart represents the structure in 1996, at the start of the research period. Those individuals who participated in the in-depth 'diary interview' study were all at 'team member' level in the organisation. However, 3 of these research participants were promoted to team leader level towards the end of the research period.

Figure 4.2 - Organisational chart GID - area/branch level



Note: This chart is simplified. Branch offices did not have claims staff and did not necessarily handle all types of underwriting business. Manchester did not have accounts staff until after the 1997 restructure. Neither Southampton nor Reading had any agency staff. Some superintendents held the title 'superintendent', but were team leaders.

Following the October 1997 restructure, underwriting was divided into two separate divisions. 'Response' which reported directly to Ipswich and 'bought in' 'Facilities' services such as post, typing and IT from the area office, and 'Partner Support' which remained under the direct local control of the area manager. Claims was also divided into 'Response' and 'Partner Support', but there were delays in implementing the Claims Action Line, so that the claims division was still operating under the old structure up until the end of the research period. The selection process resulted in some de-layering with the loss of a few posts at superintendent level.

4.5 Change environment and specific triggers for change within GRE

Following the hurricane-related losses at the end of the 1980's, the priority for GRE at the beginning of the 1990's was to re-establish the financial health of the company.

However, there was also the belief at GRE that the company needed to *"dramatically change"*, to transform itself from a 'bureaucratic' into an 'interactive' company in order to compete in the rapidly changing market place. The company deemed that there was a need to be *"reborn with a customer facing structure and culture freed from conservatism and the hierarchical constraints of the past. It needed to be efficient and fast reacting"*. Many of the business systems, structures, the reward system and culture were believed to be outdated and inappropriate for the future.

The establishment of Guardian Direct in 1992 also became a trigger for change throughout the GRE (UK) group. Guardian Direct was held up as an example of modernity to the rest of the group who then sought to create their own distinctive operating environment. The new CEO supported this move for business independence, but emphasised adherence to GRE (UK) group objectives, values and core benefits. Although this requirement did not significantly alter the change programme already underway within the various business divisions of GI, it did create arbitrary deadlines within the overall change programme. The CEO introduced changes such as, the removal of flexitime; alterations to core benefits; a short term staff improvement campaign; 'Make a Difference' (MAD); the development and reinforcement of a set of 'company values'

and a staff 'core briefing' system. The timing of the implementation of each of these changes was perceived by many to be *"very poor"*.

GI's change programme operated at two levels. Firstly, GI introduced company-wide changes aimed at creating a new culture through a flattened management structure, team working, a continuous improvement environment and flexible working and the introduction of a new performance management system with attempts to forge clear links between performance and reward. These changes were led by GI Human Resources. Secondly, at a business level, the three GI business divisions were required to develop customer service propositions with appropriate operating structures and processes to meet market need. Within GID, the Demeter project fulfilled this requirement.

So, during the research period, GID were subject to change from three different sources. Firstly there was the Demeter project and related operational restructures which was developed and implemented by GID. Secondly, GI, through the Human Resources group, applied certain changes across all three divisions, eg, Performance management and a continuous improvement campaign. Thirdly, GRE and GRE(UK) were instrumental in implementing the removal of flexitime and the introduction of flexible working, changes to core benefits, a staff improvement campaign, reinforcing 'company values' and a staff 'core briefing' system.

4.6 Change programme

4.6.1 Introduction

Some divisions within the group were further ahead than others with the changes. GID was perceived as *"lagging behind"* other GRE UK divisions, but was not seen to be *"the biggest dinosaur in the group"*.

The HR-led changes involved both 'hard' initiatives like performance management, core benefit changes, the removal of flexitime and the introduction of extended hours and 'soft' initiatives like the explicit expression of company values, continuous improvement and

the 'core brief' communication system. The intention was that the 'hard' and 'soft' initiatives would be compatible, support each other and also support the other major changes being implemented.

The table overleaf (Table 4.2) presents a chronology of the major change events that took place during the research period.

4.6.2 Chronology of salient changes during the research period

Table 4.2

Chronology of major changes during period of study – April 1996/November 1997

Date	Change Events
Apr/June 1996	'Vanguard' continuous improvement initiative.
May	Guardian purchase Legal & General Commercial business (L&G)
July	Revised absence procedure introduced.
September	Initial staff presentations about new Performance Management System (PMS).
October	Union vote on PMS.
November	'Skills profile review' forms completed by staff.
Nov/Dec	Staff feedback sessions conducted following union rejection of PMS.
December	Changes to core benefits announced.
December	Announcement GRE UK restructure - plans for integrating L&G business outlined; GID restructure, Liverpool closure, loss of 350 jobs during 1997 announced; new service proposition for Intermediaries outlined (relates to underwriting and claims departments).
December	Selection process announced for managers only.
January 1997	Managing Director retires. New Managing Director appointed.
January	'Flexitime' abolished. Introduction of 'flexible working'. Working hours increased to 35 hours (additional 15 minutes per week).
January	Telephone cover extended - 8.30am to 5.30pm (was 9.00am to 5.00pm).
January	Union vote on changes to core benefits (excludes working hours and patterns of work). Union vote against.
January	'Agency' staff told their jobs going to Ipswich by June 1997.
February	First reviews under PMS conducted.
February	Circular announces 'selection process' to be extended to staff.
March	Results of 'selection process' for managers.
March	Performance Management (PM) circular - how revised PM will be reintroduced in 1997.
March	Announcement that Motor Engineers Services will move from Southampton to Farnham.
April	Staff at Liverpool office given formal notice of redundancy.
April	Staff briefings about introduction of revised PM.
April	Staff 'selection process' – details announced.

May 1997	Staff receive 'Guide to Structured Interview'. Staff selection interviews held.
June	Staff video briefings about new structure/new way of working.
June	Amended contracts of employment incorporating revised core benefits package issued to staff.
June	Results of staff selection interviews announced. Appeals being heard.
July	Claims staff visit Birmingham to see Claims Action Line in operation.
August	Underwriters allocated to Response or Partner Support.
August	Introduction of new 'core brief' system of communication.
August	New teams announced. Underwriters begin training for new teams.
September	PM leaflet about progress made in revising PM. List of steering group members and invitation to give feedback.
September	Underwriters start working in new teams.
September	Training for accounts staff, Manchester.
September	Telephone cover further extended - now 8.00am to 6.00pm.
October	Official launch of Response/Partner Support.
October	PM leaflet about job descriptions, market matching and objective setting. List of working party members, announcement of PM bulletin board.
October	M.A.D. (Make A Difference) campaign launched (short-term improvement initiative – duration 4 weeks).
November	Introduction of 'core brief' 2-way communication system. PM leaflet about job descriptions, market matching and appraisal.

4.6.3 Description of salient change events

The change events presented in the above table are described more fully below, again in chronological order.

The so-called 'Vanguard' continuous improvement initiative was under way during the researcher's first site visits to Guardian during April/May 1996. The initiative lasted for several weeks and was devised to encourage the workforce to *"think and behave differently"*. Employees were encouraged to ask questions about their work processes and to think about ways in which they could do things *"differently or better"*. The initiative was seen fundamentally as a challenge to managers, as staff were *"allowed"* to question how the organisation functions.

Staff were informed that Guardian Insurance had purchased Legal & General Commercial (L&G) in May 1996 and that there was to be a recruitment freeze until the two businesses had been integrated. In towns where there were both Guardian and L&G offices, such as Croydon and Manchester, staff were more aware of the purchase. In Reading and Southampton, where there were no L&G offices, staff made no mention of the purchase.

A revision of the absence procedures, implemented in July 1996, was highlighted by employees as a significant change, but was not mentioned by managers. These revisions formalised the procedure staff should follow in the event of illness. Leaflets and cards were issued to all staff detailing the procedures.

The performance management system (PMS) was intended to replace the old pay award system which was seen as *"blunt"* and *"rewarding time served rather than rewarding a job well done"* with *"managers giving unrealistic appraisals of staff so that almost everyone got pay rises automatically each year whether they had contributed or not"*. The yearly appraisal positioned close to a person's birthday would be replaced by reviews four times a year wherein objectives would be set and monitored and pay determined upon performance against objectives. Alongside these changes to the way pay awards were devised, the PMS would *"flatten the hierarchy - moving towards 5/6 role levels to replace the 22 grades we have at present."* Grades 1-7 were non-manager level and were replaced by role levels E and D. Grades 8-22 were managerial level and were replaced by role levels C, B and A. The staff were first presented with details of the PMS in September 1996 and the union voted on the system in October 1996. The allocation of 'job families', roles and subsequent allocation of pay bands appeared to cause more disquiet amongst staff than the review component of the system. The union vote resulted in the system being rejected. Following the union's rejection of the PMS, HR personnel conducted feedback sessions with staff in all of the area offices nationally, during November and December 1996, in order to ascertain the problems and begin revising the system to accommodate staff's input.

The 'skills profile review' form was distributed amongst staff in November 1996 in anticipation of the selection process which would form part of the Demeter restructure project. This was presented to staff as an *"innocuous 'skills audit'"*, looking at training needs and work authorities in the wake of the acquisition of L&G's commercial business. However, the review was picked up as *"having sinister intent"* by some staff members, as the final page referred to *"planning for the new Area and Branch integration"*. Staff in Liverpool and Manchester in particular were put on *"high alert"* by the talk of integration, as they perceived that offices in their area were vulnerable to closure.

Changes to core benefits were announced in December 1996. According to the UK Executive brief to managers, the changes were intended to make the benefits *"motivational and rewarding"* and *"competitive in terms of cost versus our peers"*. These changes involved the removal of flexitime, alignment of holiday entitlement throughout GRE UK, the introduction of private healthcare, adjustments to pensions and redundancy terms, the abolition of a housing loan scheme and replacing the company car scheme with a cash allowance.

Also in December there were announcements about the GI restructure into separate divisions, with those involved in the present research being grouped under General Intermediaries Division (GID). The closure of Liverpool and other branch offices was announced as part of the area/branch integration of GID and L&G offices. This was accompanied by the announcement of 350 job losses nationally during 1997. L&G commercial business had been purchased in the summer of 1996, and staff in Manchester in particular had been feeling a sense of insecurity about having an L&G office *"just down the road"*. Restructuring within GID was announced with a proposal to offer two different types of service to Intermediaries. Firstly, a low-cost telephone based service and secondly, a higher-cost service involving *"relationship building"*. This restructure would later come under the heading 'Demeter project'.

At the end of December 1996, a circular was sent to all UK staff informing them of the first phase of the Demeter selection process. This first phase would commence in

January 1997 and involve the appointment of senior managers within the area/branch network. Existing managers from both Guardian and L&G were invited to apply for these posts, and an invitation to apply was extended to any other staff with relevant skills and experience. These three main change events announced in December 1996, ie, changes to core benefits, restructure and job loss announcements and announcements that senior managers were to reapply for their jobs, confirmed a view in the company that *"there is a history of bad news before Christmas"*.

The managing director of Guardian Insurance retired in January 1997 and a new managing director, previously the managing director of Guardian Direct, was appointed. The new director travelled to each area and branch office during the summer of 1997 to meet informally with a selection of staff to *"exchange views"*. Participating staff at Manchester were *"carefully selected and primed to give a good impression"*, whereas staff at Southampton were *"chosen on the basis of whether you've got a big mouth and will speak up"*.

The most significant change in January 1997 was the abolition of flexitime and extended telephone cover from 9am-5pm to 8.30am-5.30pm. Staff were warned before Christmas 1996 that *"the clocks are coming off the walls"*, but there was no official replacement system and many staff were left feeling *"confusion"*. Managers were required to replace the system with a system that suited their *'business need'*, but this meant that there was a lot of inconsistency with some groups continuing with a paper-based flexitime system, complete with time off in lieu, some working to a rota to accommodate the extended hours and others working to a strict 9am-5pm schedule. Alongside the removal of flexitime, hours were increased by an additional 15 minutes per week, however, this was repaid by an increase in holiday entitlement to cover the extra 15 minutes per week.

The union voted against the changes to core benefits, but the benefits were implemented and staff were asked to sign new employment contracts in June 1997, backdated to January 1997, to accommodate these changes and to include an acceptance of flexible

working hours according to business need. Also in January 1997, Agency staff in Manchester were told that their business was being moved to Ipswich in June 1997.

In February 1997, a circular announced that the selection process would now be extended to staff and that staff would be interviewed for jobs available under the Demeter restructure plan during May 1997. Also in February, the first reviews were conducted under the new PMS. Feedback sessions conducted by HR personnel during the latter part of 1996 concluded that staff did not object to the review part of the PMS, so it was decided to go ahead with staff reviews as planned. However, a number of staff commented upon the 'wordy' nature of the review forms and that it was "*a typical HR doc - full of long words and waffle that's intended to pull you off track*". A circular dated March 1997 outlined how the revised PMS, entitled Performance Management (PM) would be introduced in 1997.

Motor engineers and motor engineers' assistants at Southampton were warned in March 1997 that motor engineers' services would be moved to Farnham where there was a 'remote vehicle inspection' unit. This would have implications for motor engineers, in that their jobs would move location and would become office based. It would also have implications for engineers' assistants, as their role would become redundant. Staff at Liverpool were given formal notice of redundancy in April, having known about the closure of the Liverpool office since December 1996. Also during April, all staff were briefed about the introduction of the revised PM and also briefed about the Demeter selection process.

The HR director, appointed in September 1996, left in April 1997. A replacement HR director was appointed in June 1997. This change did not have significance for staff, so it is not included in the table, but it was mentioned by a number of managers in the area and branch offices and was seen to indicate "*a total lack of direction within HR*".

Leaflets were issued to all staff during May 1996 with information and advice about preparing for the interviews. Staff interviews were all held during May 1996, despite

staff having been given *"no clear details about what the new structure will look like and what jobs are on offer"* so that *"we don't even know what jobs we are being interviewed for"*.

During June 1997, all staff were required to attend a presentation session introducing the new Demeter structure, with the two 'Response' and 'Partner Support' strands, complete with videos demonstrating the *"new way of working"*. The results of the staff selection process were also announced in June and any appeals were heard during June and July. Also in July, a number of claims staff went to see the new telephone-based Claims Action Line (CAL) which was already in place in Birmingham. Staff perceived that allocation to the CAL would mean working under the 'Response' strand of the restructure, with a reporting channel direct to head office Ipswich. However, a senior manager told the researcher that the CAL was due to support both the Response and Partner Support streams. Underwriters were allocated to either 'Response' or 'Partner Support' during August 1997. New teams were announced for both underwriting and claims staff and some underwriters began training in anticipation of the launch of 'Response' and 'Partner Support' in October 1997. As teams would be serving particular customers, rather than specialising in a particular type of insurance, teams needed to be multiskilled, so there was a heavy training demand at this time.

August 1997 also saw the introduction of a 'core brief' system. Communications workshops had been held in June, attended by representatives from area and branch offices nationally. Tellingly, two employees from Manchester were invited to attend workshops, but only received their invitations the day after their workshops had taken place. The outcome of the workshops was a recognition that information was not always getting through to staff and that there was a perception that upward communication channels were blocked to staff. The core brief system was intended to rectify these problems by asking team leaders to have monthly meetings, where core information was presented and feedback was welcomed and passed directly back to the source of the information.

Work on revising the PM continued through September 1997 and a leaflet was sent to staff detailing progress made, listing steering group members and asking for feedback. Underwriters began to work in their new teams in September. Accounts staff in Manchester, who mostly comprised former Agency staff, began training for their new posts in preparation for the accounting function being transferred from the Guardian office at Lytham later in the month. Telephone cover was further extended in September from 8.30-5.30pm to 8am-6pm. A significant number of staff, and some managers, responded negatively to this further increase in opening hours which was seen by many to be unnecessary, for example, *"we asked our brokers when they wanted us in and they said 9-5.30"* and *"we never get any calls before 8.30 and certainly none after 5.30"*. The extended hours were also thought to put further pressure upon those staff members who worked during the main part of the working day, for example, *"We need more staff here when the phones are going from 9-5, not the same number spread in shifts to cover 8 til 6."*

In October, the 'Response' and 'Partner Support' *"new business proposition for intermediaries"* was launched. The 'MAD' ('Make A Difference') staff improvement initiative ran for 4 weeks during October. The Response/Partner Support launch led to a dramatic rise in workload for many, so the 'MAD' continuous improvement campaign received a mixed reception from staff.

In November 1997 a further PM leaflet about job descriptions, market matching and appraisal was sent to staff in preparation for the new system's introduction in the first quarter of 1998.

4.6.4 Section summary

The above chronological account shows that staff at GID experienced many different types of change initiatives during the research period. The changes deemed most salient by the 'diary interview' research participants were, firstly, the Demeter project, which comprised the integration of L&G business and personnel, the restructure of business into

'Response' and 'Partner Support' streams, the selection process, office closures and redundancies and extended hours; secondly, the removal of flexitime, and lastly, the performance management system. The 'diary interview' method generated vast quantities of data, so that detailed analysis and writing up of all of the data within the PhD time frame was unworkable. The Demeter project was therefore singled out for detailed study. This particular change was chosen as a focus because it affected all staff, was deemed most salient by most staff, generated a broad range of consequences for individuals, and implementation of Demeter spanned almost the entire research period. The Demeter project will be presented in full detail later in the chapter.

4.6.5 Introducing the next section

Now that the change events initiated during the research period have been presented and described, the next section will further contextualise research participants' experiences, as described in Chapter 6. The following section provides further detail about the organisational context within which change was being implemented and comments upon the content of the change initiatives and the way that these initiatives were implemented by management. Participant observation data comprising observations made at site visits, company documents and both formal and informal conversations with a range of staff and managers provide the data source for the next section. The section is structured according to headings drawn from a model developed by Gratton et al (1999) to explain factors which may help or hinder 'initiative transfer within organizations'.

4.7 Change implementation

4.7.1 Introduction

Analysis of field notes and company documents revealed a number of factors that appeared to influence implementation of change initiatives within GID. These factors provide further detail to serve as a backdrop for the description and analysis of employees' experiences of change, presented in Chapter 6. The focus of the research is upon employees' experiences of change. However, the research proposition is that these

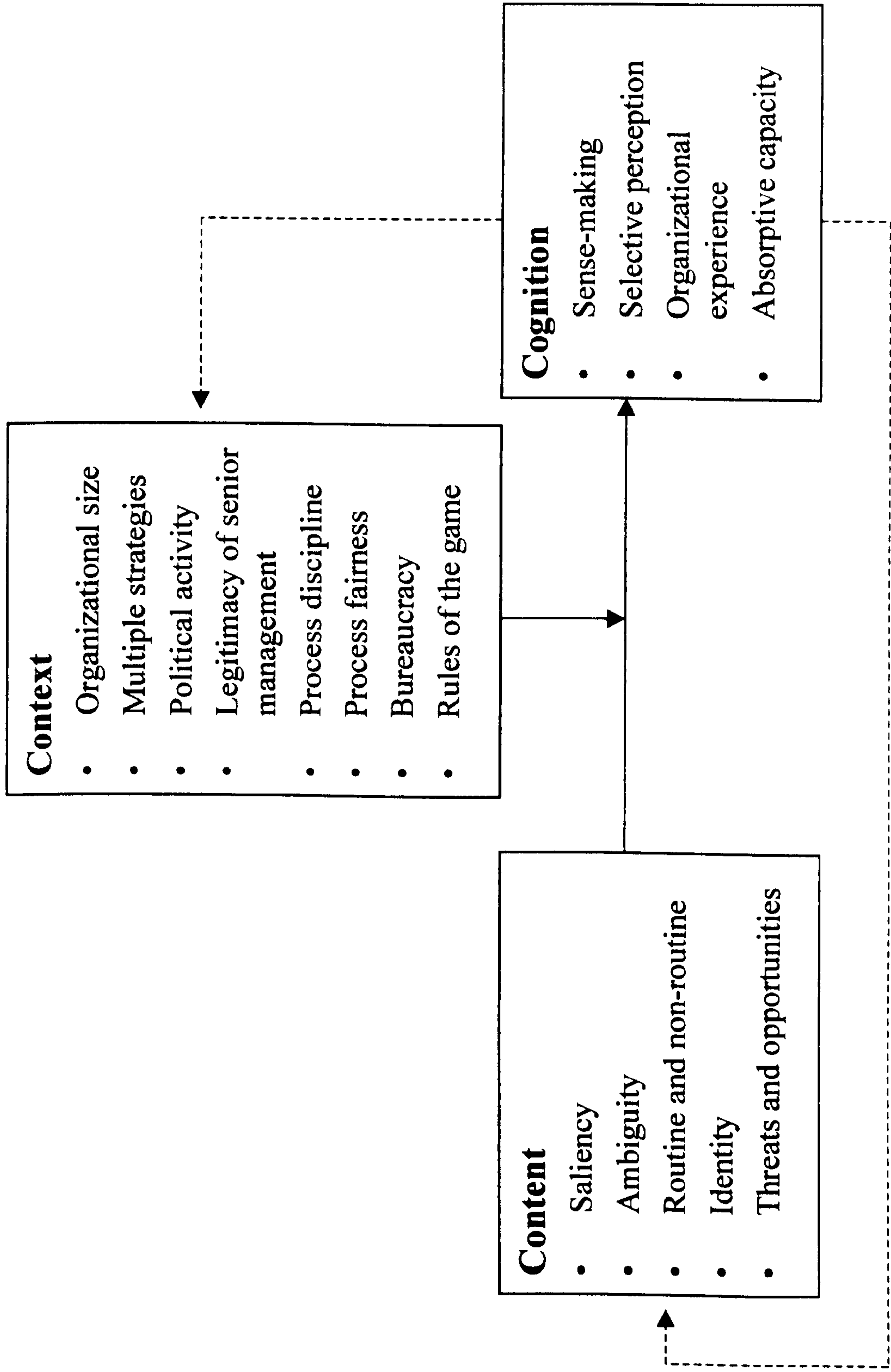
experiences are framed by many factors relating to both the organisation and the person, so that we cannot look at an individual in isolation in order to fully understand their psychological experience of change at work. It is therefore important to present a full account to the reader of the context within which employees experienced major change.

4.7.2 Introducing Gratton et al's (1999) model

Gratton et al's (1999) 'Leading Edge Forum' research involved 8 large UK organisations and examined senior management initiatives and how these initiatives were implemented by line managers. The researchers produced an emergent model to explain factors which "enable or constrain the reception of organizational initiatives" (p.215). The model comprises 3 groups of factors. Firstly, 'context', which relates to the organisational context within which initiatives are implemented, secondly, 'content', which pertains to factors relating to the initiatives themselves, and, lastly, 'cognition', which refers to factors that influence the way managers interpret change initiatives. This model was chosen as a framework for the following section because of the fit between the model and the themes that emerged following analysis of participant observation data from the present research.

Gratton et al's model follows, with a brief description of the component parts. Data from the current research is then presented theme by theme according to Gratton et al's headings.

Figure 4.3 - from Gratton et al 1999. An emergent model of initiative transfer within organizations



4.7.3 Description of the model

Enabling and constraining factors are divided into 3 groups, ie, **context**, **content** and **cognition**. A brief description of each factor within the three groups follows.

Context factors include:

- *The size of the organisation.* The larger the organisation, the more chance there is for diverse interpretation and implementation of initiatives. Larger organisations also tend to be vulnerable to inertia which can prevent the uptake of initiatives.
- *Multiple strategies and values.* Competing goals and values may lead to the acceptance of only certain change initiatives at the expense of others.
- *Political activity.* Groups and individuals seeking to protect their power base may misrepresent change initiatives at the expense of the organisation as a whole, in order to fulfil their own personal aims.
- *Legitimacy of senior management.* Initiatives are accepted more readily if the senior managers producing the initiatives are perceived as being committed, expert, trustworthy and close to line managers.
- *Process discipline.* Systems need to be in place in order to ensure that change is being implemented as planned. Recipients need to be motivated to accept the change. There should be an opportunity to offer feedback and a willingness to revise the initiative if appropriate.
- *Process fairness.* If the decision process involved in devising and implementing a particular initiative is perceived as fair, then the initiative is more likely to be accepted.
- *Bureaucracy.* The greater the level of bureaucracy, the more susceptible an organisation is to inertia and the more difficult it is to effect change. In over bureaucratic organisations, individuals become passive and complex bureaucratic processes hamper innovation and creativity.

- *The rules of the game.* The 'rules of the game' comprise the "assumptions, values and understandings of employees, normally implicit, about how to behave and how to succeed in their organization, and about how to interpret activity within their organization" (Grattan et al 1999, p.220). These assumptions and values influence how change initiatives are perceived. Successful implementation of initiatives will be hampered when change initiatives are not compatible with these assumptions and values.

Content factors include:

- *Saliency.* Initiatives may be ignored if they are not perceived as relevant at the level of a manager's own department.
- *Ambiguity.* If an initiative is overly complex and ambiguous, it will be difficult for managers to interpret and thus implement.
- *Routine and non-routine issues.* Initiatives that are outside existing structures and/or norms will be harder for line managers to understand and accept than those initiatives that fit with current structures and norms.
- *Identity issues.* When change initiatives go against what employees regard as core features of an organisation's identity, then these initiatives will be difficult to implement.
- *Threats and opportunities.* Individuals and groups are less open to changes perceived as threats and more open to changes perceived as opportunities.

Cognition factors include:

- *Sense-making.* Differences in perceptions of organisational initiatives arise out of individuals having unique interpretations of their environment, based upon past experience and cognitive 'framing'.
- *Selective perception.* Managers tend to focus upon information relating specifically to their own department, rather than looking at the 'whole picture'. This can lead to managers ignoring important aspects of organisation-wide initiatives.
- *Organisational experience.* There is a tendency for people who have been employed by an organisation for a long time to reject changes that affect the status quo.

- *Absorptive capacity.* Some organisational initiatives can only be fully understood when an individual has some prior knowledge relevant to the initiative. This prior knowledge is said to affect their 'absorptive capacity'.

The model has feedback loops, represented by dotted lines, to show that change arises out of an interaction between context, content and cognition. So, according to Gratton et al (1999), "managerial interpretations of the change initiatives help shape the elements of those initiatives and alter the context for future initiatives" (p.216). Gratton et al's research focuses upon the interpretations of line managers, however, implicit in their research is the idea that non-manager employees, at the lowest end of the hierarchy, will also have their own interpretations of change initiatives. The present research makes this explicit and attempts to reveal the factors that influence employees', ie, non-managers', interpretations of change initiatives. In particular, the present research emphasises the importance of considering the role played by personality dispositions in framing individuals' experiences of major organisational change.

The following section takes each of the factors from Gratton et al's (1999) model and discusses each factor in terms of the researcher's observations of change implementation and the change context at GID.

4.7.4 Change context and change implementation at GID

This section describes change implementation and the organisational context within which employees experienced major change at GID. Participant observation data have been analysed and subsequently organised according to Gratton et al's model of 'initiative transfer' within organisations.

4.7.4.1 Context

Context factors pertain to the context within which change was initiated and implemented.

- *Organisational size*

GRE was a large international insurance company with offices throughout the world. For the most part, details of change initiatives at GID were developed by the GI Executive. However, decisions about the direction of change to be implemented, and, in the case of the removal of flexitime, changes to staff redundancy terms, and the 'MAD' staff improvement campaign, specific direction about the type of change to be implemented, came from the CEO of the GRE Group. The source of change was therefore far removed along the hierarchy from the recipients of change at GID. This distance appeared to contribute towards the perception held by staff that there was often either a lack of explanation, or an implausible explanation as to why certain changes were necessary. This explanatory gap was filled by people developing their own explanations for the motivation behind certain changes. For example, the motivation behind the decision to remove the flexitime system was described by HR personnel in Ipswich as, *'to get individuals to work as teams to take responsibility for assessing business need and covering the hours accordingly'*. However, both managers and non-managers alike at the area offices gave the following types of explanations for the move away from flexitime, *'He (CEO) doesn't like having the clocks on the wall. Says it makes the office look like a factory'*, and *'Well, they just want something for nothing. We are still going to have to work more than our 37 hours a week but we'll not be paid and I'm losing an extra 13 days holiday'*, and *'The plantime system (the 'clocking on' system) was costing them too much and they want to save money. The contract is up for renewal in January, so they just aren't renewing it. We'll all have to take a note of our times instead.'* This inconsistency in explanations about the move from flexitime, to *'flexible working'* appeared to exacerbate the negative feelings that many employees had about this particular change.

Organisational size was also implicated in the negative impact upon the way the performance management system (PMS) was received by staff. HR personnel had worked with outside consultants on developing the system, although, unusually for GI, the development stage also saw some input from senior union officials. Staff were allocated to newly developed 'job roles'. The PMS was rejected by the union

and during subsequent feedback sessions with staff, a major complaint was that *'the role profiles were too broad ... did not reflect individual responsibilities ... were inaccurate in some cases ... written in a language that was difficult to understand ... did not reflect multi-skilling'*. It became clear that, despite the involvement of union officials and senior managers from GID, there had been no consultation with staff *'on the ground'* before arriving at the role profiles. HR were based in Ipswich and were criticised by staff in the area offices for being *'remote'* and for their *'lack (of) a basic understanding of what the business of insurance actually means'*. Some staff expressed amusement at the perceived behaviour and attitude of HR, for example, *'Oh, they are just up in the clouds that lot. We try to humour them by looking impressed by their big words'*. Others were openly hostile in their attitude to HR, for example, *'HRseholes we call them. They've not got a clue what we do and they come up with all these grand schemes like PMS wasting huge amounts of time that we just don't have.'* The sheer size of GID, along with the geographical divisions between offices, undoubtedly exacerbated the difficulties experienced by HR in devising a set of new role profiles that truly reflected individuals' existing job descriptions. The negative perceptions held by staff about HR and about the Ipswich office generally, appeared to tarnish any initiatives generated by Ipswich.

- *Multiple strategies and values*

A mixture of strategies and values at GID led to choices being made between competing goals, so that some initiatives and some aspects of particular initiatives were implemented at the expense of others. For example, in order to implement the 'review' component of the PMS, individual training needs and objectives were established. The Demeter restructure also required substantial training for some people, so that the new teams would be 'multi-skilled'. However, the massive increase in workload due to the restructure, the freeze on recruitment and the integration of L&G business, along with the call for a reduction of backlogs, created an environment where *'everyone is chasing their tail'* so that there was little time set aside for training and the focus was upon achieving *'nil backlog in time for the restructure'*.

Introducing different initiatives that have different values attached to them led to confusion amongst employees. It was not GID's intention to express different values through the change initiatives being implemented during the research period. Indeed, in October 1996, the Group Executive Director - UK and Ireland acknowledged the importance of sending a *'coherent message'* when implementing change, and initiated a project called 'Focus' which was an attempt at streamlining the change programme and ensuring that the various change initiatives that were either planned, or already being implemented across Guardian, *'reflect our strategic objectives in the following areas, customers, staff, marketing, growth, expenses and profit.'* However, staff's interpretations of the values attached to change initiatives were often different from those expressed by the people who were at the source of the change initiatives. For example, a company wide revision of absence procedures and subsequent introduction of new procedures was presented by senior managers as *'demonstrating the company's concern about the health of the workforce'*. These same procedures were described by staff as demonstrating *'a lack of trust'*. Flexitime was abolished shortly after the introduction of these new absence procedures. Senior managers presented the removal of flexitime as *'a demonstration that staff can be trusted to work their contracted hours without a monitoring device'*. The competing values attached to these two initiatives created confusion and suspicion, *'Well, do they trust us or don't they trust us - they can't have it both ways'* and *'You just don't know what to believe. They tell you they trust you and then they treat you like children'*.

- *Political activity*

There were many instances where individuals and groups hampered the smooth implementation of change through behaviour designed to achieve their own political goals within the organisation. For example, reports from the south east area offices in particular suggested that staff were being asked to withhold certain information from head office *'so that our figures for the (Demeter) restructure don't look too bad compared with other areas'*. Another example relates to the purchase of L&G commercial business and subsequent integration of business and personnel. There

was an L&G office *'just down the road'* from GID, Manchester. This led to speculation amongst employees at GID Manchester that their own office might be closed and staff forced to move to L&G's office. When L&G staff visited the GID office, some GID staff were given explicit instructions from their managers *'not to talk to L&G staff'* and to *'make them (L&G staff) feel unwelcome'*. This animosity had clear negative implications for the integration of L&G business and personnel at Manchester. Once integration was complete and a number of L&G staff had moved across to the GID office, at worst GID staff at Manchester were hostile towards L&G staff and at best they reported feeling *"sorry for them"*.

There was confusion amongst staff and managers alike about how the various change initiatives were supposed to *'fit together'* with comments like *"I have to assume there is a strategy somewhere because I am a good Company man, but I'm not sure where it's all going."* One of the explanations given for such a confusing and seemingly incompatible set of initiatives was that it was down to *'politics at the top'* and *"Personally I think it's people trying to make their name at the top ... bringing things in which helps their own territory without looking at the wider picture. That's what makes the big picture so confused"*.

- *Legitimacy of senior management*

A lack of connection with and trust in senior management had a negative influence upon perceptions of change initiatives generally, but implementation of the PMS initiative was particularly beset by problems relating to a perceived lack of commitment by senior managers, both within the areas and centrally. One major problem, highlighted by managers themselves at area level, was that there was an attempt to implement PMS at staff level only and then decide upon how best to implement PMS at manager level at a later stage. This was interpreted as representing *"a lack of ownership of the system by management"* and led to staff *"feeling lukewarm about the whole proposition"*. A further problem was that the HR Director, appointed in September 1996, made three changes to leadership of the PMS project up until she left GI in April 1997. Union officials were *"often left unsure as to who is*

heading it (PMS) up at the moment which makes any sort of input from our side very difficult". These difficulties were compounded by the general lack of trust in the motivations and competence of HR personnel held by staff at area and branch level.

Senior managers at GID were perceived by many as being *"stuck in their ivory towers"* and *"out of touch with the real world"*. The managing director of GI, appointed in January 1997, appeared to understand the importance of making a personal connection with staff in order to gain their trust. However, his attempts at developing a link between himself and staff at GID backfired. During his visits to area and branch offices during 1997 where he met with select groups of staff to discuss their feelings about the changes that were being implemented and the future direction of the company, staff expressed their fear of speaking out to managers locally. He told staff that they could contact him direct by email and he would address their concerns. Two research participants reported having sent emails in May and June 1997. These emails were followed up with several reminders later in the year. Neither staff member had received an acknowledgement of their emails by December 1997, when the research period came to a close. Staff, who had high hopes that the new managing director represented *"a breath of fresh air among those musty old fogeys in London"* felt very let down complaining that *"he's just like all the rest of them after all"*.

It was not only senior personnel outside the area/branch network who were perceived as being *"remote"*. For example, a senior manager within one of the areas described how the company had developed a *"new-style culture"* over recent years *'by removing status barriers, devolving responsibility to the staff on the floor, allowing staff to feel empowered and able to communicate freely with others at all levels of the company.'* However, this particular manager discussed concepts such as *'devolving responsibility'* and *'empowerment'* within the context of having a huge imposing office on the top floor of the building, having a *'closed door policy'*, with a personal assistant sitting outside the office to form an extra barrier. The manager was described by staff as *"God"*, *"Mr Ivory Tower"* and even as an *"ogre"*.

- *Process discipline*

The PMS initiative in particular was beset by problems of process discipline. A deadline imposed by the GRE Group CEO, demanded that the system be in place by the end of 1996. A senior manager at area/branch level reported *"All the warning signs were there. There were many anomalies quite frankly. We basically got told 'shut up, it's going out'. I agree that you have to cut something off to get something done ... but you have to cut it off at the right point for the right reasons"*. The pressure to deliver on time meant that *"a central committee made decisions without consultation with managers and staff"* and this resulted in a system that was unworkable and therefore unacceptable to staff and managers alike. By the time information on the detail of the PMS was filtered through to managers at area/branch level, those implementing the change perceived that it was too late for anything to be done about adjusting the PMS to accommodate feedback. After rejection by the union, *"lessons were learned"* and the system was revised through consultation with staff and through broader consultation with the union, but many people felt that *"all this extra effort could have been avoided had they just taken the time to get it right in the first place and actually listen to those people who were having to live with the system"*.

Towards the end of the research period, the Demeter initiative was also at risk of being harmed by the lack of a feedback system. The Demeter project involved a *'segmentation exercise'*, whereby intermediaries were divided into those who provided a lot of business and required a more *'personal, specialist service'* and those who provided less business and whose needs were *'less specialised, more routine'*. These two distinct *'service propositions'*, labelled 'Response' and 'Partner Support' were launched in October 1997. It became clear soon after the launch that the workload was spread very unevenly. Managers were complaining that *'I'm sending my statistics off each week, but am getting no reply. It's as if they don't care, or they want to ignore the fact that things have been divided up wrong'* and *"I'm going crazy with my boss. Every time I bring up the subject of the lack of work, I'm just told that*

things will pick up. Well they won't. I know these agents and they don't bring in hardly any business". There was a feeling amongst staff that *'no one wants to be the one to give the bad news'* to senior managers, so that when change was initiated, problems appeared to be ignored.

Change initiatives were not supported by incentives to ensure that the initiatives were implemented as planned. For example, both the performance management review aspect of the PMS and the Demeter restructure demanded that staff were trained to be multiskilled. An explicit commitment by the company to staff, expressed through a newsletter distributed to all staff was *"To develop and train staff through high-quality training and open communications."* and *"To enable them to fulfil their potential."* However, throughout the research period, many staff and managers bemoaned the lack of time and lack of training resources. Furthermore, during the research period the central training team at Ipswich were disbanded and not replaced, and two out of four trainers in the North West area were made redundant and were also not replaced. Not only did this make staff very cynical about *'the Corporate message that staff are valued'*, but initiatives such as the review component of the PMS and the Demeter restructure were not able to be implemented as planned through lack of training.

The selection process component of the Demeter project demanded that many managers were away interviewing staff from other area offices for extended periods at the very time that their own staff needed them to provide reassurance and keep them up to date on the latest change-related news. The rationale put forward for sending managers to conduct interviews in other offices was that the interviews *"must be seen to be fair"* and arranging interviews with *'outside'* managers was deemed to be a *"more objective way of conducting interviews"*. However, the cost of this exercise to staff left without managers during this time was sometimes severe and appeared to exacerbate the anxiety reported by some staff members during the period of the selection process.

- *Process fairness*

Relations between the union representing GID employees, BIFU, and management became increasingly strained during the research period. After rejecting the PMS, there was a further rejection by the union of the revised core benefits. This was interpreted by management as *'a reaction to all the change that's going on at the moment - just a way of making a stand'* and a decision was made to implement the revised core benefits, regardless of the union vote. There didn't appear to be any explanation given to staff as to why the core benefits were being implemented, despite the union rejection. Ignoring the union vote was perceived as being very unjust by many staff and further entrenched the view that *'the company don't care about staff'* and *'they (GI) just railroad these changes through without a thought for those who have to live with them'* and *'the union was one of the few ways we could actually get ourselves heard and noticed, but that's been taken away now'*. These perceptions of the company's attitude towards staff were a long way from company's expressed commitment towards *"open communication"* with staff and appeared to further emphasise the perceived *"them and us"* climate at GID.

The treatment of Agency staff at Manchester was also perceived as being *"unfair"* and appeared to have had a detrimental effect upon Agency staff's willingness to cooperate with management and ensure that Agency work was moved from Manchester to Ipswich in good time for the June deadline. Those staff who were present in the office were told by their team leader, who had received an email late Friday afternoon, that their department would close later in the year. Very few details were available, so that staff had to wait until the following Monday before being given full details by the Facilities manager. A number of staff were away on the Friday and they were informed of the news by colleagues over the weekend. The team leader was very inexperienced and was said to have handled the situation *"dreadfully, but as best he could under the circumstances"*. A number of Agency staff were offered positions in the Claims department, so that when the workload became heavy towards the date of the move to Ipswich, existing Agency staff were asked to work overtime. Most refused saying *"I'm not doing anything more for them"*

than I'm contracted to do. They can't treat us like dirt and then expect us to help them out" and "if they think I'm going to give up my spare time for them after the way we've been treated, they've got another thing coming".

Other staff were made redundant following the selection process, but when they perceived that they had been treated fairly, they were much more generous in their opinions about GID, for example, *"I think I've been treated fairly really. I get time off for interviews ... I can't fault them really"*. Similarly, the selection process itself was generally perceived as being a fair process. Managers thought that this perception *"led to very few appeals once positions had been allocated and redundancies announced"*. However, even when the outcome of an initiative is perceived as beneficial for an individual, if the process is interpreted as being unfair, then the change might be still be rejected. The following example is about the removal of flexitime, *"Well, the new flexi has been introduced awful ... it's worked out OK for me, but I don't agree with it because it's not fair on the others you see."*

- *Bureaucracy*

Discussions with staff who moved over from L&G offices following integration emphasised the high degree of bureaucracy at GID. One manager commented *'I feel like I'm going back in time. The changes going on now at GI are what I saw at L&G over 7 or 8 years ago. As a person who is new to GI, the company is full of red tape. I needed a new battery for my mobile phone, but was told that I couldn't have a battery, I would have to have a new phone instead, so after lots of phoning and waiting for umpteen signatures a huge box arrived with phone, leather pouch, car attachments, the lot. I said I didn't need all the extras, but was told that they come with the phone, so I'd either have to keep them or chuck them. Well, what a waste of money.'* Another ex-L&G employee commented, *'It's so different here. L&G threw the key to the stationary cupboard away and got rid of a lot of the red tape that you see here.'* Although there was talk of encouraging *'employee empowerment'* and *'getting staff to think and act independently'* through the change programme, excess bureaucracy often prevented these aims from being realised. For example, the

stationary cupboard at Manchester was seen as symbolic of GID's *'paternalism towards staff'* and also their *'lack of trust in staff'*, as the cupboard was locked and staff had to not only request a key, but be accompanied and monitored on their visits to the cupboard.

Staff and managers alike expressed concern that the level of bureaucracy was going to carry on increasing, rather than decreasing at GID. As a response to complaints voiced by staff in the 1996 Staff Survey, a 'core brief' communication system was implemented during the last months of the research period. This system was designed to ensure that all staff were told 'core' information and also had an opportunity of feedback to senior managers. However, the system was criticised at the outset, particularly by managers within the areas who complained that *"there were fears about having no formal meetings, but they've just covered it in red tape now with the new communications stuff from the centre. It's difficult to find anything new to say. We have to have these meetings and cover specific topics, but the topics are old news - I've already covered these with people"*.

- *Rules of the game*

During the research period, many employees talked about the lack of 2-way communication and about being afraid of speaking out for fear of the consequences. This attitude was supported by numerous company 'stories' which told of the historical reasons for the lack of upward communication. For example, *"We had one fellow and he was a manager, and he opposed things, and he ended up being seconded to 'x' to work on 'x' and that wouldn't have happened if he had been a yes sir, no sir person."* and *"... a group of people went up to the manager at the time and said that they didn't feel that it could work (1995 underwriting restructure) ... and the attitude was 'if you don't like it then leave'"*. In GID, the perceived way to survive and succeed was to *"keep your head down"* and *"don't ask questions"*. Continuous improvement initiatives such as those that took place during the research period were described as *"having opened a can of worms because of staff being given permission to speak out"* and managers were described as having *"replaced the lid firmly once*

the initiative had been introduced." There was no follow through at the local level of either the 'Vanguard' continuous improvement, or MAD staff improvement campaigns. Managers and employees tended to return to their old habits which meant that staff didn't tend to question management actions.

Not only does the assumption that it is dangerous to speak out go against one of the core values that was explicitly expressed by the CEO of the GRE Group, ie, "*open communication*", but it also has obvious negative implications for successful change implementation. Change initiatives at GID were always in danger of having "*gone too far down the implementing road before the problems are noticed*". However, following the selection process, employees did make many positive comments about the style of the managers who had been 'selected in' at the local level. For example, *'But now with this new manager who is a lot more approachable and listens to what you say - I'm not afraid of speaking with her/him. S/he will talk to anyone and always listens and s/he will act on things - if they make sense you know.'* So, although there were some signs towards the end of the research period that this belief about the danger of voicing an opinion was being weakened through the actions of managers, as Chapter 6 demonstrates, it remained a deeply held belief by many staff. Although local managers were sometimes credited with "*being receptive and listening to staff*", this didn't extend to senior managers above the area/branch level. Indeed, a senior manager from Ipswich confided "*We've got a management who are beating the drum about openness and oneness, but there is no groupness in their own Executive team. There is all this talk about a 'no blame' culture, but everyone runs in dread of cocking up.*"

Assumptions held by staff about the relative importance of various departments was also a hindrance to effective change communication. For example, the underwriting teams at GID were referred to as "*the business*" and assumed a position of prime importance, followed by the claims group. Personnel from other departments often felt '*ignored*' or '*not important*'. Change initiatives at GID tended to be directed at underwriting and claims so that it was sometimes difficult for other groups to see how

they would be affected by initiatives. Facilities personnel, and typists in particular, frequently commented that the changes *'aren't anything to do with us'*, despite changes such as the closure of engineers' departments that would lead to a severe reduction in typists' workload.

4.7.4.2 Content

Content factors relate to features of the change initiatives themselves.

- *Saliency*

There were instances in the present research where employees and managers chose to ignore initiatives because they perceived that the initiatives were not relevant to them. As part of the Demeter project's aim to provide a customised service to their most valued intermediaries, there were two changes to opening hours at GID during the research period. The first extended hours from 9-5 to 8.30-5.30 and the second further extended hours from 8.30-5.30 to 8.00-6.00. The rationale given for extending the hours was that intermediaries had requested longer working hours. However, at one of the offices in the South, underwriters were only covering the telephones from 8.30 to 5.30 because their intermediaries had *"told us that they don't need us beyond these hours"*. The underwriting manager fully supported this decision arguing that it didn't make sense to *"spread staff thinly over an 8-6 period when they'll be sitting twiddling their thumbs from 8-9 and from 5-6"*. However, the branch manager was keen to enforce the extended hours and up to the end of the research project was still *"battling"* with the underwriting manager over this particular issue.

- *Ambiguity*

The PMS initiative was singled out as being particularly difficult to interpret and overly complex. In respect of the PMS one departmental manager commented *"we were given a lot of information with the flawed assumption that volume of information means communication - it was a good hearted attempt to get around telling people nothing."* Some managers complained that the PMS was *'too much to take on board all at once - changing appraisals, taking away grades, introducing role*

families and groups and all this stuff about rewarding the team'. The system was criticised for having been *'rushed through before the problems had been addressed and ironed out'*. The complexity and perceived ambiguous nature of much of the content of the system undoubtedly contributed towards the overwhelming rejection of the system by union members.

During the *'segmentation exercise'* in the development stage of the Demeter restructure, the Response stream was labelled 'Harvest' whilst the Partner Support stream was labelled 'Focus'. These names were dropped without explanation and gradually the names Response and Partner Support were used in reference to segmenting the business. This caused confusion amongst staff, some of whom thought that Response and Partner support were *"yet another new idea they've come up with"* and were not connected with the Harvest and Focus initiative. There was a further confusion in that the term 'Focus' had been adopted by the board of Directors of GI as the title for an initiative designed to streamline the changes taking place across the GI group. This initiative was described in the monthly newsletter distributed to each staff member. The lack of explanation surrounding the re-labelling of initiatives and the adoption of one label to cover two separate change initiatives contributed towards some staff reporting that they *"switch off from it all because it's all too confusing"*.

- *Routine/non-routine*

During the research period, some changes were perceived as being *'too radical'* and this made implementation problematic. The move away from the *'clocking-on'* system towards *"flexible working"* was a dramatic change for staff and the perception amongst both managers and staff was that it had been brought in *'too hastily'*. This change proved to be particularly difficult to manage because of its severe departure from organisational structures and norms. No replacement system had been specified. According to senior managers, this had been deliberately left open so that managers could decide upon the best system for their particular teams according to *'business need'*. The rationale for the change was that *'flexitime is Dickensian, it is*

wrong, we should trust our people and this is a matter of trust'. This approach to change was far removed from people's usual experience at GID where changes were introduced in a very 'regimented way' with 'clear dictates about what should and shouldn't be done'. The behaviour of senior management in relation to the move away from flexitime was perceived by many as "weird" and "strange". Many managers were very suspicious of senior management's motives for removing flexitime.

However, one particular departmental manager recognised that moving from a rigid clocking-in system to a loose team-centred arrangement where times were *'negotiated, rather than set in stone'* was going to be *'too big a leap for anybody'*. This particular manager asked his supervisors and team leaders to consult with their teams and produce shift rotas, with the option to move to more flexible arrangements, as and when staff were ready. This transitional approach to managing the move away from flexitime worked well, for example, *"As far as the clocks go, I just adapted to the new system. We worked out a rota between ourselves so we work some long and some short days."* However, other managers were struggling to manage a situation where staff were either *'doing what they want and coming and going regardless'* or *'just doing the same thing as they were under the old system - just using pen and paper instead of clocking in'*. Some managers said that they were continuing to advise staff to keep a paper record of their hours and take flexi-days as usual in the absence of any *'proper instructions about what to do from higher up'*. Towards the end of the research period, a senior manager from one of the areas, who had taken the initiative to produce guidelines for line managers about *'flexible working'* reported that *'HR have now asked me to send them my guidelines because they've recognised that having everything up in the air and up for grabs has not worked out, so they've now decided at this late stage to issue guidelines to all managers'*.

- *Identity*

Part of the reason why senior managers were keen to abolish flexitime was that it was symbolic of an *'old fashioned, paternalistic, monitoring approach to managing staff'*

and there was a desire to move towards a different identity with a *'more modern style of management, where staff are empowered and trusted to fulfill their contractual duties without constant monitoring'*. However, GID were still perceived by staff as being *'paternalistic'*, so that abolishing flexitime went against the established company identity and was not perceived as offering a symbol of trust in staff, but instead was perceived as a way of *'saving money'* and *'getting us to work more hours for less holiday'*.

The issue of identity also arose during the implementation of the 'Response/Partner Support' split in underwriting teams, as part of the Demeter restructure. As mentioned earlier, Partner Support was managed locally at area level, whilst Response was managed remotely from HO Ipswich. In contrast to the *'traditional'* Partner Support underwriting group, where men wore suits and women wore smart business clothing, Response underwriters were encouraged to wear casual clothes. The two groups' approach to flexible working was also markedly different with Partner Support adopting a strict system with no time off in lieu and Response adopting a more flexible approach with flexible hours and time of in lieu. The creation of these two distinct 'cultures' within underwriting appeared to undermine the effective implementation of the two streams of business. Each side reported being *'jealous'* of the other side and there were various reports of a lack of co-operation between the two groups. For example, a member of 'Response' was forced to take a long, expensive taxi ride on a rare visit to an intermediary, despite there having been several 'Partner Support' pool cars available. 'Response' was seen by some staff as a threat to the company identity, for example, *'They are trying to be like Direct Line. All this giving out prizes and dressing down - it's not what Guardian's about'*.

- *Threats and opportunities*

Many of the changes implemented during the research period were initially perceived to be threatening, despite GI's attempts to present changes as opportunities. Change initiatives such as the Vanguard continuous improvement and MAD staff improvement initiatives were welcomed by many staff as an opportunity to *'get our*

voice heard', albeit with major concerns that this opportunity would be short-lived. On the whole, the Vanguard continuous improvement initiative was embraced by staff, but the MAD initiative had a mixed reception, not because of a perceived threat, but because of the perceived bad timing, as the MAD campaign ran during a particularly busy period just after the Response/Partner Support launch. Other major changes such as the Demeter restructure, the removal of flexitime, changes to core benefits and the PMS were perceived by many staff as threatening their job security, threatening their ability to organise their work time, threatening their reward package, their status and their opportunities for career development. These changes tended to elicit strong negative responses.

4.7.4.3 Cognition

Cognition factors refer to features that influence the way change initiatives are interpreted by managers.

- *Sense-making*

The removal of flexitime provides a good example of how differences in 'sense-making' by managers can harm successful implementation of change initiatives. Some managers expressed *'disbelief'* that staff were being given the freedom to negotiate how they worked their contracted weekly hours. This was seen to be *'so far removed from how the Company operates'*, that some managers continued with the old system, asking team members to fill in time sheets instead of clocking in and out. Other managers reported feeling *'encouraged that the Company are finally loosening the reigns'*. These particular managers were more willing to discuss the change with their teams and develop a new system of time keeping that moved away from the old flexitime system. These two distinct ways of perceiving the organisation appeared to lead to different ways of implementing the flexible working initiative.

However, some managers were active in their attempts to alleviate inconsistency in implementation through liaising with colleagues in other departments and area offices. For example, *'We are learning to do things better. We* (a group of managers

in the same role, but in different area offices) *email one another and talk about what is being proposed and how we are handling things and get some consistency in approach. This is something which is evolving anyway.*' However, such examples of cooperation between areas was rare, as the relationship between area offices was mostly described as being *'strictly competitive'*.

- *Selective perception*

Managers' tendency to focus upon information specifically related to their own department, rather than looking at the 'whole picture', was evident at GID. For example, the review component of the PMS was supposed to be implemented by managers, despite the union's overall rejection of the system. However, the review aspect of the PMS was perceived by a number of managers as being *"too time consuming for our department"* with *'poorly defined job roles'* and *"unrealistic objectives"*. This led a number of managers to ignore requests to implement the PMS reviews believing that *'It's all going to have to be changed again anyway, so there's no point.'*

It was not only line managers' selective perception that was problematic for change implementation. There was also evidence of senior managers seeing things from their own particular perspective, thus causing confusion amongst staff. For example, the term 'Focus' was initially chosen by GID as a name for the 'Partner Support' group of underwriters during the development stage of the restructure. Staff were aware of the 'Focus' label within the context of changes to the structure of the underwriting department. However, as mentioned earlier, the managing director of GI chose 'Focus' as a label for an initiative to integrate and streamline change initiatives across the GI group. The 'Focus initiative' was presented to staff in a monthly newsletter. This caused a lot of confusion with staff speculating upon how the two 'Focus' initiatives might be related.

- *Organisational experience*

As with Gratton et al's (1999) research, some changes, such as the removal of flexitime, appeared to be rejected, particularly by some of the longer serving managers, because of disruptions to the status quo at GID. For example, *'It's just not right letting people come and go willy nilly. How can we possibly manage staff under these circumstances?'* However, long serving managers at GID did not necessarily appear to reject changes because of their wish to "defend the status quo". Mostly, those who rejected changes, or were unwilling to *'fully embrace the changes'*, did so because they perceived that they had *'seen it all before'* and that *'it didn't work last time around, so why should this time be any different'*. Referring to PMS, a senior manager said, *"I've seen PMS at least 5 times before under different guises. It's supposed to be new, but I've seen it all before, only with different names."* In relation to the continuous improvement initiatives, another manager commented, *"We've had so many programs in the past which have lost momentum - Investors in People, Conway and now Vanguard. They arrive and are all hyped up and then they just disappear without a trace. There's just no follow-through. We are thinking what's all this about - we're busy enough as it is"*.

- *Absorptive capacity*

Soon after the PMS had been rejected by the union, managers were instructed to implement the review component of the PMS, despite intentions to revise the rest of the system. However, there was a notable difference between the willingness of line managers in Manchester against those in Southampton and Reading to implement the review component of the PMS. Line managers in Manchester appeared to be more motivated to do the reviews because of their greater awareness of what the company was trying to achieve through the PMS review in terms of giving staff more responsibility for their careers, and making staff accountable for their performance. These managers fully implemented the review part of the PMS. A number of managers from Southampton and Reading did not have a good grasp of the review process and either partially attended to the reviews, or ignored the reviews altogether. It was clear from having attended reviewer training sessions at both Manchester and

Southampton that the 'absorptive capacity' of line managers at Southampton was compromised by a lack of information prior to the sessions along with the poor delivery of the training sessions. In Manchester, line managers had already been primed about the introduction of a system of *'performance related pay'* some months before the attempted introduction of the PMS. Some of these line managers were already using the language of the new PMS review and were setting 'objectives' and 'targets' for their staff. In Manchester, the training session was run by a professional trainer and attended by a senior manager. In Southampton, the session was run by an underwriting line manager and was not attended by a senior manager. In contrast to the Manchester trainer, the manager running the session in Southampton was unable to deliver all of the information effectively. Many of the review concepts were already familiar to the Manchester trainees, whereas in Southampton, the manager delivering the training had to spend a great deal of time explaining and justifying the concept. Also in Southampton, a lot of time was taken up with heated discussions about the PMS system as a whole and about other changes taking place generally within GID.

4.7.5 Summary

It is clear from the above that GID experienced difficulties in each of the factors contained within the three broad areas of context, content and cognition. Overall, the 'organisational climate', (defined here as "the way people relate to each other in an organization and the management style" (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 1999, p.161)), was at odds with the changes that the company was attempting to implement. The organisational climate at GID was characterised by a fear of speaking out, where staff felt distanced from management and there was a lack of consultation. At the same time, the "core values" explicitly said to underpin the change initiatives included "*open communication*". The dramatic difference between what Gratton et al (1999) call the "espoused and enacted reality" appeared to severely hamper the smooth implementation of change initiatives at GID. Some problem areas were identified and acted upon by managers during the research period. For example, revisions to the PMS followed

extensive staff consultation and the development of a working group who were made known to staff and whom staff could access via email. However, there were instances, (for example, the senior manager within an area office who was described as "*God*" and "*Mr Ivory Tower*"), where managers appeared to be unaware that their values and behaviour were at odds with the spirit of the change initiatives that they were trying to implement.

Gratton et al's (1999) model has proved to be a useful tool for organising the participant observation data collected during the research period. We can see how the climate at GID influenced the transfer of change initiatives within the organisation. In Chapter 6, the present research focuses upon the employee level, and shows how the influence of personality upon perceptions of and responses to change by employees can also effect the process of "initiative transfer" within organisations.

An account of change at GID has been presented in sections 4.6.1 through to 4.6.4 using Gratton et al's (1999) model as a device for organising the data. This account of the '*raft of change initiatives*' underway at GID during the research period provides a backdrop to the main focus of the research, ie, employees' experiences of the Demeter project change initiative. The Demeter project is described more fully below.

4.8 'Demeter project'

4.8.1 Introduction

Following a rough analysis of all of the data and a further detailed analysis of two-thirds of the first set of interviews, half of the second set of interviews and all of the diaries, the decision was made to focus upon employees' experiences of one particular major change, whilst taking care not to ignore employees' experiences of the other changes that were being implemented at the same time. The most salient change for employees over the entire research period (ie, that mentioned most frequently in participants' diaries and described most frequently as salient in participants' interviews) was the Demeter restructuring programme and the 'selection process' that formed part of the Demeter project. Also, implementation of the various aspects of the Demeter project spanned the

entire diary/interview research period. This particular change was therefore chosen by the researcher as a focus for investigating employees' experiences of major change during the research period.

4.8.2 Background to Demeter project

As explained earlier in the chapter, this research was conducted in General Intermediaries Division (GID), a division of Guardian Insurance (GI) which, in turn, was a part of the GRE (UK) Group. Although GID's role was geared towards developing and supporting business controlled by professional brokers (ie, intermediaries), a substantial amount of business on GID's books was through smaller agents and direct to the policy holder. Along with other traditional insurance companies in the intermediaries market, GID had acknowledged that they were unable to compete based upon price of premiums alone and therefore needed to compete in other ways. At the same time, GID needed to integrate the recently acquired Legal & General commercial business. The Demeter restructuring programme involved a segmentation exercise whereby GID's intermediary customer base (ie, brokers and agents) were divided into the large number who gave a modest level of premium income, and the relatively few who provided the majority of GID's premium income. In effect, two different services would be offered. A low cost, mostly telephone-based, service for the majority of intermediaries and direct policy holders, and a high cost service, emphasising relationship building, for the few intermediaries who provided the most income. This would mean dividing staff in both the underwriting and claims sections into those people involved in Partner Support (ie, the high cost relationship-building service) and those people involved in Response (ie, the low cost telephone-based service). L&G's business was divided in the same way. L&G's staff also had to be integrated into GID. GID therefore decided to re-interview all members of staff, from area manager level right down to the most junior employee. GID's strategic justification for this selection process was that for the restructure to be a success, they needed to ensure that they had "the best people in the most suitable jobs for the future" (circular Feb 97). Despite the official 'story', there were many rumours amongst staff that the selection process was a "*window-dressing*" exercise designed to protect GID's

reputation by *"getting rid of people Guardian don't like"*, without having to make official redundancies. Indeed, the term 'Company re-structure' was seen by many staff as a pretext for cost-cutting and redundancies, for example, *"... hearing about the Company re-structure, ie, who's staying and who's going redundancy-wise"*.

The HR Director explained to the researcher that the name 'Demeter' was chosen because, in Greek mythology, Demeter heralds the Spring each year and signifies growth and plenty. However, the symbolic significance of this name was not communicated to staff or managers at the area office level. Indeed, there was a good deal of confusion surrounding names associated with the Demeter project, as described earlier in section 4.7.4.2, under the heading 'Ambiguity'.

Table 4.3 - A chronology of how the Demeter change event unfolded:

Skills audit document - early November 96	Staff complete a "Skills Profile Review" to provide information about the "level of skills available" following the acquisition of L&G business and staff, to be used for the "new Area and Branch integration".
Circular dated 10 th December 96	Staff are given an outline of plans for restructuring GID (ie, Demeter project) and are informed of future branch closures (including Liverpool), integrating L&G and Guardian offices and the anticipated loss of 350 jobs nationally.
Circular dated 30 th December 96	Staff are informed that the first phase of selection (for management roles reporting directly to Area manager) will commence in January.
e-mail 24 th Jan 97	Agency staff (Manchester) told that their section is to close at the end of June. Agency work to be centralised at Head Office in Ipswich.
Circular dated 17 th February 97	Staff informed that senior management selection is nearly complete and that the selection process will now move to line managers.
March 97	Results of senior managers' interviews announced. Announcement that motor engineers services will move from Southampton to Farnham.
Meeting 1 st April 97	Liverpool staff given formal notice of redundancy. Invited to discuss possibility of inclusion in selection process at other GID locations with manager. Informed that Liverpool branch will close on 16 th May 97.
Presentations Early April 97	Staff are briefed on the selection process for team member level. Interviews to take place in May, results to be announced by end June.
Leaflet Late April 97	"Guide to the Structured Interview". Staff are given information about the interview format and a guide to the sort of questions that will be asked. Results of line managers' interviews announced.
May 97	All staff re-interviewed for a job.
Leaflet dated 29 th May 97	"What happens after the interviews?" Staff are given information about how the interviews will be assessed and how individuals will be allocated to teams/jobs.
Presentations Early June 97	Staff fully briefed on the Demeter restructure, described as "the most significant change Guardian Insurance has undertaken."
One-to-one Interviews End June 97	All staff told outcome of interviews, ie, whether they have a job and which team they will be in. Those individuals who have not been offered a position are told they will be put on notice from November.
Leaflet dated 14 th July 97	"What happens next?" Leaflet explains that there are still vacancies for some positions following the selection process and that GID will be trying to fill these position during the next few weeks. Permanent and temporary staff are invited to apply for these positions.
Official launch of Demeter project 14 th October 97	Brokers/Agents are informed of the new structure. Underwriters are now working within their new teams (Response/Partner support). Although aware of their new posts and teams, Claims personnel will not be fully settled into these positions until January 98 when the 'Claims process review' aspect of Demeter comes on-line.

4.8.3 Broad consequences of various stages of process for staff.

The chronology of events above shows that the process took almost a year to complete. In November 96, the consequences for individuals were unclear. The expression "Area and branch integration" at the end of the skills audit document led many staff to believe that this was confirmation of rumours that certain branches/area offices would be closed or merged with other offices, with a resulting loss of jobs. It wasn't until just over a month later that staff were given a clear idea about which offices would close, and that nationally, a total of 350 staff would lose their jobs. Staff were then faced with uncertainty about their security of employment, or, in the case of Liverpool employees, were faced with knowing that their office was going to close by June 97, but uncertainty about when they, personally, would be offered redundancy.

At the end of December 96, staff were faced with further uncertainty when senior managers were invited to re-apply for their posts. At the end of January, staff in the Agency section in Manchester (12 staff) were told that their section's work would be transferred to Ipswich by the end of June. This group of people were therefore subject to an even more uncertain future. In the following February, an announcement confirmed that the selection process was being rolled out to line managers. The outcome of senior managers' interviews was announced in March ending staff's uncertainty as to who would manage their particular office and division. Claims and Underwriting staff began to talk about an increased workload around this time, mainly due to integrating L&G's business. The freeze on recruitment, along with difficulties in obtaining authorisation for overtime (particularly in Manchester), and the abolition of 'flexi-time', meant that many people worked extra hours, unpaid, in order to keep their backlog down to a manageable level. A good number of staff felt *"very unhappy"* about the situation, but could not see any other way of *"keeping up with the work flow"*.

Staff at the Liverpool office were formally put on notice on 1st April 97 and told that their branch office would close mid-May. Employees were given the option of applying for positions in other GID offices via the staff selection process. Some individuals were

asked whether they would be prepared to work in the Preston office during the work transfer process. Despite rumours of closure for at least 12 months prior to the announcement, in the main, staff were upset and angry about the news.

In early April all GID staff were informed that they too would be required to re-apply for their jobs. This announcement made job uncertainty seem more immediate for many people and raised concerns about having to undertake an interview. A good number of staff had not had an interview for many years. In late April a detailed guide to the interview process was circulated, in an attempt to allay staff fears. A further leaflet, circulated at the end of May when most, if not all, staff had been interviewed, described how the interviews would be assessed and individuals allocated to teams and jobs. Many staff were negative about the proposed analysis of interview responses by computer and a lot of anger towards the perceived "*ruthlessness*" of 'the Company' was being expressed around this time. Many staff reported a dramatic increase in workload because of the closure of branches, new business from L&G, Agency transfer and preparations for the structural changes due to take place as part of the Demeter project.

In early June, all staff attended presentations giving detailed information about the Demeter project. The presentations reduced uncertainty somewhat because staff were made aware of the new structure and therefore had a more firm idea about the sort of job they would be doing, should they be successful at interview. By the end of June, all staff knew whether they had a job and what team they would be in under the new structure. The consequences of this were mixed and depended upon individual desires and whether these had been met. In the case of underwriters, there was a broadly held view that those individuals selected into Partner Support were more highly thought of by 'the Company' ("*the Premier Division*") than those selected into Response ("*down in the dungeon - second class citizens*"). Whilst claims personnel were also divided into Response and Partner Support, those individuals selected into Response did not tend to view their new roles negatively. For many employees, positive or negative feelings about the outcome of the interview appeared to be ameliorated somewhat by the change-related increase in workload which continued at this time.

During July, August and September, leading up to the official launch of Response/Partner Support, there appeared to be gross imbalances in workload. Underwriters in some teams were complaining about being *"bored and scratching around for work"* whilst other underwriting teams and most of the claims personnel were finding it *"hard to cope"* with the increased workload. These imbalances in workload appeared to continue well after the official launch in October 97 and prompted feelings of job insecurity amongst those with little work. Those with a heavy workload were concerned about insufficient staff numbers and a lack of trained personnel to deal effectively with the work. When the research period ended in October/November 97, this particular change was complete, but the emotional consequences particularly relating to workload, training, role uncertainty and job insecurity, were still being felt by many employees, *"I still feel a bit insecure about what will happen in the future. Taking each day as it comes. I still feel stressed"* and, *"... there is still an air of - this isn't the end. There's all rumours about extra hours and changes."*

4.8.4 Summary of consequences for individuals during implementation period.

During the analysis process, the consequences of Demeter were divided into discrete categories containing 'blocks' of relevant data. These categories are presented below, and were chosen as headings for presenting the narrative account of employees' experiences of change in Chapter 6. Clearly, these discrete consequences are interlinked and there are cases where the same data appears simultaneously in two or more categories. However, dividing the consequences in this way helps to organise the data in a readable form and also highlights the research finding that a single organisational change can elicit a variety of consequences for individuals. It is not only the different facets of the change that may elicit different types of consequences, but also the different stages in the implementation of a particular change may elicit different types of consequences.

- **Job insecurity**

The announcement of potential job losses nationally, followed by the 'selecting-in' process and the aftermath of the restructure resulted in many individuals experiencing **job insecurity**. Reports of job insecurity were prevalent throughout the research period.

- **Uncertainty**

In the period leading up to the outcome of the selection process, most staff expressed **uncertainty** about their future role in GID and about who their future colleagues and manager(s) would be once the process was complete. Those individuals who were made redundant experienced **uncertainty** about the terms and timing of their redundancy. In the case of Liverpool employees, **uncertainty** about the timing of their redundancy lasted a good 5 months.

- **Interview worries**

In the period leading up to the interviews, many individuals reported that they felt anxious about the prospect of having an interview. Some had not had an interview for many years and felt "*out of practice*", whilst others reported that they were "*always anxious*" about interviews.

- **Workload**

During the research period there were marked fluctuations in the workload, owing to the Demeter restructure, particularly for staff in the claims and underwriting departments, but also for Agency staff in the lead up to that section being transferred to Ipswich. Many people had to deal with increases in workload, but decreases in workload was also a concern for some people.

- **Adjustment**

Many people had to adjust to different job roles, different team colleagues and managers, and a different location, in the lead up to, and following, the selection process and restructure. Others had to adjust to losing their job.

Whilst all participants in the research experienced the Demeter change, because participants were selected from a range of job roles, and from different offices, not all of these consequences were relevant to each individual. Some consequences were

experienced by certain individuals throughout the research period (eg, job insecurity, high workload, adjusting to new colleagues), other consequences were experienced at specific points in the implementation process (eg, role insecurity, pre-interview nerves, adjusting to new role).

Whilst certain groups of individuals were subject to the same consequences of the Demeter project, the research revealed that individuals in these groups often reported different personal experiences of Demeter. These individual differences in experiences of change are at the centre of this research.

4.8.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced the reader to GRE, GI and, more particularly, to GID. GI's history and place within the insurance industry has been described. A description of the organisation has provided a framework for the reader to locate the research participants. Triggers for major change and a chronology of change during the research period were presented. A description of the organisation, based upon field notes during periods of observation at Guardian, was presented in order to further contextualise research participants' reported experiences. The description of the organisational change context at Guardian was organised according to headings provided by Gratton et al's (1999) model of "initiative transfer" within organisations. Finally, the 'Demeter' project was introduced and an explanation given as to why this particular change has been singled out as a research focus.

The next chapter introduces the research participants and describes how these particular individuals came to be involved in the 'diary interview' part of the research. A table giving 'base data' information for each of the research participants is presented. Also included are descriptions of the types of jobs held by the research participants and a description of the offices within which the research participants worked.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the reader with information about the context within which the research took place. Guardian Insurance's history and place within the insurance industry was described. The organisational structure was described. Observational data was presented to show the organisational climate within which the research was conducted. The programme of major change implemented by GID during the research period was described. Finally, the 'Demeter project', which is the major change chosen as a focus for the research, was described in detail. This chapter introduces the reader to the individuals who participated in the detailed diary/interview study. After explaining how these particular individuals became involved in the research, background information on each person, a description of the types of jobs held by research participants, and a description of the participating GID offices are presented. This should help the reader to become more familiar with the individuals referred to in Chapter 6, which reports employees' experiences of change.

5.2 Research participants

5.2.1 Selecting research participants

In the methodology chapter 3, section 3.7.2, the survey component of the research was described. Section 3.7.3 described how employees were selectively invited to participate in the 'diary interview' study. Employees were drawn from a 'pool' of survey respondents from the North West and South East area and branch offices of GID. Forty employees participated in the 'diary interview' study. Three employees provided 'diary interview' data for between 8-10 months. The remainder provided 'diary interview' data for the entire duration of the study, ie, from October/November 1996 until November/December 1997.

5.2.2 Description of research participants

As explained in the methodology chapter 3, section 3.7.3.1, continuous base data was converted into categorical data when creating the index system in NUD*IST. This was to enable the use of 'vector' and 'matrix' search operators during data analysis. The following table presents 'base data' and personality data about the 'diary interview' participants. The table lists the research participants alphabetically by name. This should make it easier for the reader to refer back to the table, if required, whilst reading other chapters and sections of the thesis. Participants' names have been altered in order to protect their anonymity. The table includes base data about each person, ie, location, gender, age, number of years with the company, union membership status and job type. Number of years with the company has been rounded up or down to the nearest year or half year. The table also presents individuals' scores on each of the Work Locus of Control, Extraversion and Neuroticism dimensions, followed by the category within which they were placed.

Table 5.1 - Diary/interview study research participants

Name	Location	Gender	Age	Number of years with Co	Union member	WLOC	Extraversion	Neuroticism	Job type
Angela	Reading	Female	38	8	Yes	69 External	14 Extravert	13 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Catherine	Manchester	Female	26	7 and a half	Yes	31 Internal	13 Introvert	8 Stable	Agency, moved to Claims then accounts
Dan	Reading	Male	27	3 and a half	-	51 Medium	8 Introvert	11 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Darren	Manchester	Male	20	4 and a half	Yes	24 Internal	19 Extravert	7 Stable	Personal lines underwriter
David	Manchester	Male	23	3	-	32 Internal	15 Extravert	7 Stable	Agency, then Claims - Motor
Doreen	Southampton	Female	58	11	Yes	50 Medium	1 Introvert	18 Neurotic	Cashier
Dorothy	Southampton	Female	47	7	Yes	47 Medium	14 Extravert	9 Stable	Receptionist/ Administration
Gerry	Liverpool	Male	50	30	Yes	59 External	6 Introvert	13 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Harvey	Manchester	Male	23	7 and a half	-	50 Medium	19 Extravert	9 Stable	LAN administrator
Helen	Manchester	Female	27	10	-	47 Medium	17 Extravert	16 Neurotic	Agency, moved to accounts
Jane	Manchester	Female	33	11 and a half	Yes	22 Internal	11 Introvert	13 Neurotic	Personal lines underwriter
Jean	Manchester	Female	49	14	-	60 External	16 Extravert	6 Stable	Typist
John	Manchester	Male	21	3	Yes	60 External	11 Introvert	16 Neurotic	Personal lines underwriter

Julia	Liverpool	Female	32	15	Yes	36 Internal	14 Extravert	13 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Julie	Southampton	Female	34	18	-	32 Internal	13 Introvert	9 Stable	Motor engineers' assistant
June	Manchester	Female	56	15	-	48 Medium	16 Extravert	6 Stable	Underwriting Admin support
Karen	Reading	Female	20	2	Yes	36 Internal	15 Extravert	11 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Kate	Manchester	Female	24	3	-	59 External	14 Extravert	11 Neurotic	Claims - Personal injury
Lillian	Southampton	Female	27	9	Yes	22 Internal	2 Introvert	9 Stable	Claims - Household
Lisa	Manchester	Female	24	6 months	-	31 Internal	15 Extravert	11 Neurotic	Claims - Household and Personal injury
Lisabeth	Southampton	Female	21	5	Yes	67 External	21 Extravert	17 Neurotic	Personal lines underwriter
Louise	Manchester	Female	20	6 months	-	18 Internal	16 Extravert	16 Neurotic	Secretary
Lucy	Southampton	Female	27	8	Yes	62 External	16 Extravert	6 Stable	Corporate underwriter
Margaret	Manchester	Female	56	13	-	50 Medium	13 Introvert	13 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Martin	Manchester	Male	25	7	Yes	62 External	14 Extravert	17 Neurotic	Corporate, then Pers. Lines underwriter
Mia	Southampton	Female	26	9	-	59 External	15 Extravert	16 Neurotic	Claims - Household
Nicola	Manchester	Female	27	6 months	-	26 Internal	19 Extravert	11 Neurotic	Personal lines underwriter

Name	Location	Gender	Age	Number of years with Co	Union member	WLOC	Extraversion	Neuroticism	Job type
Paul	Southampton	Male	25	6	Yes	32 Internal	16 Extravert	6 Stable	LAN administrator
Peter	Manchester	Male	17	3 months	-	33 Internal	20 Extravert	9 Stable	Post messenger
Rachel	Southampton	Female	25	8 and a half	Yes	34 Internal	20 Extravert	15 Neurotic	Corporate underwriter
Ron	Manchester	Male	21	2 and a half	-	67 External	12 Introvert	8 Stable	Underwriting Admin support
Sarah	Manchester	Female	30	10	Yes	49 Medium	15 Extravert	11 Neurotic	Claims - Motor
Sheila	Reading	Female	47	16 and a half	-	31 Internal	12 Introvert	4 Stable	Typist
Steve	Southampton	Male	31	5 and a half	Yes	34 Internal	14 Extravert	13 Neurotic	Post messenger
Sue	Southampton	Female	34	8	-	65 External	9 Introvert	23 Neurotic	Claims - Household
Susan	Manchester	Female	26	1 and a half	-	59 External	9 Introvert	4 Stable	Claims - Motor
Tom	Reading	Male	25	6	-	59 External	14 Extravert	20 Neurotic	Personal lines underwriter
Tracey	Reading	Female	21	3	-	48 Medium	10 Introvert	3 Stable	Accounts clerk
Trudy	Reading	Female	33	5	Yes	64 External	5 Introvert	14 Neurotic	Personal lines underwriter
Vicky	Reading	Female	24	7	Yes	65 External	20 Extravert	12 Neurotic	Receptionist/ Accounts clerk

5.2.3 Types of job held by research participants

As explained earlier, the research volunteers were selected from a pool of non-managers who had responded to the initial October 1996 survey. Although at the end of the research period, following the restructure, three research participants received a promotion to team leader status, during the main period of research, all respondents were from the non-manager grades 1-7. To give the reader a little more background, this section describes in more detail the nature of the jobs held by research participants.

- Underwriting

Two streams operated within the underwriting department, namely Corporate and Customer Services. Customer Services was often referred to as 'Personal lines', as the majority of business handled by this group was private insurance, in particular motor and household insurance. The Corporate underwriting group were involved in underwriting insurance for commercial concerns, for example, office buildings and company motor fleets. Underwriters dealt with intermediaries such as brokers and agents, but also dealt direct with policy holders. Underwriters within the Customer Services group, described as *"the coal face of the business"* were predominantly office-based, whereas underwriters within the Corporate group were expected to go out of the office to visit brokers. It seemed that the more senior underwriters did most of the visiting and there was also a perception within some teams that *"the manager just picks his favourites to go out on visits"*. Each underwriter had authority levels within which they could *"do deals"* without referring back to management. The more senior and experienced underwriters tended to work in the Corporate group, whilst the more junior and least experienced underwriters tended to work in the Customer Services group. Systems for creating quotations and for creating policy documents were computer-based, so that underwriters tended to spend most of their working day at their computers wearing telephone headsets. Some underwriters dealt solely with either 'existing business', 'policy renewals' or 'new business', whereas other underwriting teams operated according to the restructure principles with all underwriters dealing with all 3 areas of underwriting business. Underwriters had

some administrative back-up, but tended to do their own correspondence using a wordprocessor.

- **Claims**

Claims personnel were again computer-based, and their working day was also spent in front of a computer wearing telephone headsets. Claims personnel were divided into groups according to type of claim, for example, motor or household. There were also teams dealing with 'liability' claims and individuals working on these types of claims were considered to have the most prestigious jobs. The liability claims tended to demand more expertise than other types of claim. Household was the next most prestigious group with motor being the least favoured group of all. However, this separation was to change at the end of the research period following the restructure, where teams were to be multi-functional, rather than being divided according to functional groupings. Again, claims personnel had some administrative backup, but tended to do their own correspondence using a wordprocessor.

- **Receptionist**

Each office had a reception area, but receptionists all had other jobs that were secondary to the reception function, as the offices did not tend to receive many visitors. One receptionist doubled up as an administrator dealing with personnel issues such as holidays, sickness and luncheon vouchers. Another receptionist doubled up as an accounts clerk dealing with underwriting accounts with intermediaries and agents. Both receptionists talked about being seated at the entrance to the offices as an advantage because this positioning allowed them to *"pick up on what's going on"* because *"people like the managers and that stop and talk to us here on reception"*.

- **Secretary**

The area manager and the claims, underwriting and facilities managers, within the area offices, each had a secretary to provide administrative support. Although officially belonging to either claims, underwriting or facilities teams, the secretaries

tended to see themselves as being "*on the outside really*", describing themselves as being "*in a team of two - you know, me and 'x' (manager)*". In the change environment at GID, secretaries perceived that they had a "*position of power*" because they were often apprised of change-related information in advance of other members of their department. Secretaries proved to be valuable 'key informants' for the researcher during the research period because of their close relationships with the area and departmental managers, and their advance knowledge of change.

- Motor engineers' assistant

Motor engineers' assistants provided office support for the motor engineers who tended to be "*out on the road for most of the week*". The assistants made appointments, passed on new information and did administration for the motor engineers.

- Typist

Typists worked in a typing pool, using Word for Windows software, typing from handwritten scripts or audio tapes. The typists worked for "*every department in the building*". A considerable amount of their work involved typing up reports for the motor engineers, but they also did work for underwriters, claims, and agency personnel. If the area manager's or a departmental manager's secretary was particularly busy, typists would deal with any overflow of work.

- Accounts clerk

Accounts clerks were involved with administering accounts for underwriting in terms of premium payments. Accounts clerks also provided an accounting service for departmental budgets.

- Cashier

The cashiers dealt with cheques received for premium payments and cheques sent out for claims settlements and for the payment of area office expenses. The cashiers were part of the Claims department at the start of the research period, but were moved to

the Facilities department following the restructure. Cashiers had to liaise regularly with both claims and underwriting personnel.

- Agency

Agency personnel were not underwriters, but were involved in administrative support for agents who issued policies as intermediaries on behalf of GID, together with the general maintenance of agency records. Agency staff liaised frequently with the underwriting department and again spent most of their working day at their computers and on the telephone.

- LAN administrator

The LAN administrators provided general computer maintenance and upgrading and were also '*troubleshooters*' for any computer or server-related problems. These individuals were rarely at their own desks as their job involved them constantly moving around the building looking after the various computer systems.

- Post messenger

Post messengers sorted, collected and delivered both internal and external post. One of the post messengers had an additional responsibility for the stationery cupboard in terms of ensuring that the cupboard was stocked appropriately and was tidy.

5.2.4 Description of the offices where participants worked

During the 80's the area network comprised two separate types of offices representing different functions, ie, the 'Service Centres' or "*paper factories*" where claims and personal lines insurance were processed, and the 'area offices', where claims and underwriting personnel dealt with intermediaries. These offices were amalgamated in the mid-90's so that the processing and broker contact functions were performed at single sites, within single teams. Historically, the Service Centre offices were considered to be "*the poor relations*" to the area offices. This meant that after the restructure in the mid-90's, there was a great deal of disparity in the quality of the area offices. This was

notable in the present study where the Southampton area office, (previously a Service Centre), offered an extremely poor quality working environment, whilst the Manchester area office, (previously an area office), was of high quality and was considered by staff to be *"very glitzy"*.

- *Liverpool*

In earlier years, Guardian Insurance had occupied all 4 floors of the building in Liverpool, which had previously been a 'Service Centre'. However, the number of staff and the functions handled at Liverpool had been reduced, so that all of the remaining 50 staff now occupied just one floor. The office was open plan and quite crowded. There was one small meeting room and a separate area for telephonists. The building was built in the 70's, was run-down and *"was in need of modernisation"*. Apart from the telephonists, who sat together in a row, each staff member had their own workstation with computer and telephone, separated by screens, in blocks of 6 or eight. Those in the middle of the blocks had screens on three sides and those at the ends of the blocks were contained on 2 sides by the screens. The underwriting manager, unlike his counterparts in the other area and branch offices, did not have his own separate office, but occupied one of the staff workstations.

- *Manchester*

The Manchester offices contrasted sharply with the Liverpool office. The GID building in Manchester was newly built in 1990, was very bright and spacious with a smart marble entrance hall, complete with security guard. Security was very tight at the Manchester office, following the explosion of an IRA bomb in central Manchester in June 1996. At the other offices, the researcher was given a 'pass' card by a receptionist and was able to have access to the entire building. At Manchester, a member of staff had to come down to the ground floor and verify visitors' credentials. A pass was then given based upon the particular floor or floors where access had been granted.

The building had 6 floors. The very top floor housed the stationery, a good quality, subsidised, staff restaurant and a conference room. The area manager's office was on the 5th floor. A conference room adjoined the area manager's office. The rest of the 5th floor was occupied by the area manager's secretary, Agency, Administration, Training and IT staff, there was also a meeting room and the Facilities manager's office. All claims staff were situated on the 4th floor. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors were occupied by underwriters. Corporate underwriters were on floors 1 and 2 and Personal lines underwriters were on floor 3. The claims and 2 underwriting senior managers each had offices created out of partition walling in the corner of their particular floor, although during the research period three of these partition offices were removed to fit in with the Guardian Insurance policy of having "*truly open plan offices*". Typists, Surveyors and Surveyor support staff, Post personnel, Motor engineers, Motor engineers' assistants and Claims inspectors were all located on the Ground floor. The 5th floor was called "*the quiet floor*" and was noticeably quieter than the rest of the building when the area manager was present. The atmosphere was "*lighter*" and the mood on the floor was much "*livelier*" when the area manager was not in the building. Following the restructure at the end of the research period, there was some movement amongst the Facilities sections, but Claims and Underwriting continued to occupy floors 1 to 4.

- *Reading*

The Reading office was located on 3 floors of a modern building which was also occupied by other Companies. Reading had been the South East area office until the end of 1995, so that a lot of business previously dealt with at Reading had moved down to Southampton during 1996. This meant a loss of staff and had left areas of the Reading office unoccupied. The first and second floors housed over 100 staff. The third floor was the same size as the first and second floors, but was occupied by a mere handful of people including the area manager and his secretary, 2 typists, the Facilities superintendent, the underwriting manager, his secretary, and '*floating*' staff such as surveyors and inspectors. There was also a large conference room on the third floor. By the end of the research period, the third floor was emptied with the

intention that the lease was only renewed for two floors. A number of people felt *"bad"* about losing their area office status and described the Reading presence as *"going downhill fast"*.

- *Southampton*

As was the case at Manchester, GID occupied the whole of a building in Southampton. There was a lack of security procedures compared with the Manchester area office. On the second field visit to Southampton the researcher was told *"Oh you don't need a pass, we all know who you are anyway"*. The Southampton office had been a 'Service Centre', but was changed to area office status shortly before the start of the research period. The building had last been refurbished in the early 70's and was badly in need of repair and refurbishment. Many of the window frames were broken and there was visible mould in some parts of the building. Some sections of the offices were quite draughty in the winter months. This was compensated for by having the heating system turned up very high, so that some people thought that the office was too *"hot and stuffy"* whilst others said that they were *"cold from the draughts coming in from through the windows"*. Unlike Manchester, the Southampton office didn't have a staff restaurant, but had a small room on the top floor with a drinks machine where people could sit and have their lunch. There was a feeling that the building's poor quality did not reflect Southampton's area office status. The most pleasant part of the building was up on the 7th floor as there were lots of windows providing natural light and views across the city and down to the sea. The area manager was based at Southampton and had a very large office on this floor. The rest of the floor was occupied by Corporate underwriting teams and there were also 2 smaller separate offices, one for an underwriting manager and one for the Facilities manager. The other floors also had separate offices for managers. However, unlike in the other buildings, these offices were not artificially created partition offices, but were purpose built smaller offices located through double doors from the open plan area, next to the stairwell. Despite this separation, an interesting observation was that a departmental manager at Southampton who occupied one of these separate offices, was heralded by staff as

being *"easy to approach and very close to the staff"*. At Southampton, senior managers, including the area manager, were more visible than at the other offices and were frequently found walking around, talking to staff, or sitting at desks working alongside staff. One senior manager was reported to have worked as a team member for one and a half days so that he could help out and *"fully understand the sort of difficulties we (staff) are faced with."*

As with the other offices, each floor was generally associated with a particular function. Claims was on the 1st and 2nd floors. Some of the accounts personnel and the administrative staff, such as receptionists and typists were also on the 1st floor. Floor 3 was occupied by Customer Services underwriters and was extremely noisy with phones ringing constantly and most people talking on the phones. There were large LED displays above the workstations showing how many callers were presently waiting on line and how long they had been waiting. These LED displays were a legacy of the building's 'Service Centre' past, but were still used within the Customer Services department. Motor engineers and their assistants and some Facilities staff, such as trainers and IT personnel occupied the 4th floor. The 5th, 6th and 7th floors were all occupied by Corporate underwriters. A special group of underwriters called 'Dynamic' who were trying out a new way of working that formed the basis for the Partner support aspect of the Demeter project also worked on the 5th floor.

5.2.5 Further information about research participants

The information presented in Chapter 6 is solely about individuals' experiences of the Demeter project. Other changes are sometimes referred to where appropriate. To further contextualise the experiences presented in Chapter 6 and make these experiences more meaningful, it might be helpful at this stage for the reader to refer to Appendix 5, where 'mini' case studies are presented for each research participant. These case studies are based upon background information gleaned from site visits and 'diary interview' data. Summaries of information reported in participants' diaries and sometimes followed up in interview in response to the diary question "Is there anything else about yourself, or about

your circumstances which may be affecting your worklife at the moment?" are also presented. It is hoped that this information will provide the reader with a more 'rounded' picture of participants by showing something of each individuals' background circumstances, both at work and outside work, during the research period.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has introduced the individuals who participated in the detailed diary/interview study. The basis upon which individuals were invited to participate in the diary/interview study was described.

A table (Table 5.1) with base data about each of the 'diary interview' participants was presented. This was followed by descriptions of the types of jobs held by the research participants and a description of the offices within which the research participants worked. The chapter concludes with referring the reader to Appendix 5 which presents 'mini' case studies which offer a brief description of the work setting and any salient personal background events for each participant. It is hoped that this information will further contextualise the 'diary interview' extracts presented in Chapter 6 which follows.

CHAPTER SIX: EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCES OF 'DEMETER'

6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters presented an account of the organisational context within which individual employees experienced major change, the changes themselves and descriptions of the individuals who participated in the diary/interview study. This chapter focuses upon the experiences of those employees involved in the detailed diary/interview study, explored in relation to individual differences, in particular, the individual difference dimensions, Neuroticism - Stability (N, S), Extraversion - Introversion (E, I) and Work locus of control (WLOC). We have seen in Chapter 4 how the gap between intended changes and the way that changes are implemented can widen through a multitude of factors relating to the organisational context, the content of the initiatives themselves and line manager's cognitions. This chapter shows how the gap between intended changes and enactment of these changes can be further widened at the level of non-manager employees, through individual difference factors that affect perceptions of, and responses to, organisational change.

The Demeter project was deemed to be the most salient change for most participants in the diary/interview study, and spanned most of the research period from November 1996 to November 1997. The analysis focuses upon employees' experience of this particular change. As shown in table 4.2, Chapter 4, this change was running alongside other major changes, so experiences of other changes may also be mentioned within the context of the Demeter project. However, the Demeter change will be the main focus.

The proposition at the heart of this thesis is that both work context and individual differences will be important in framing employees' experiences of major organisational change. In particular, as argued in Chapter 2, the personality groupings, N and E and the behavioural style, WLOC, will be relevant individual differences. This chapter looks at specific consequences of the Demeter project for individuals and relates individuals' experiences of these consequences to personal characteristics, such as age, gender and

prior experience, work characteristics, such as type of job and location and, finally, the social environment. However, the focus is upon uncovering patterns of perceptions and responses to Demeter and examining whether these patterns relate to N, E and WLOC. It should be noted that, in response to prior research (Krause & Stryker 1984), discussed earlier in Chapter 2, the present research looked at high, low and moderate work locus of control groupings. However, the analysis did not reveal any defining patterns of behaviour for moderates, and their responses tended to be categorised as either mainly internal or external. Work locus of control is therefore treated as a dichotomous variable throughout the thesis. However, individuals with moderate Work locus of control scores are identified as such when quoted. In identifying patterns of behaviour, work context is also examined to see which features of an employees' working environment might interact with personality dispositions and affect perceptions of, and responses to, the Demeter project.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that there are indeed patterns of experience and behaviour in response to change. These patterns can be attributed to personal characteristics and work characteristics, and to N, E and WLOC, which, along with features of the working environment, discussed in Chapter 4, appear to have a central role in framing perceptions of, and responses to, major change at work.

As explained in Chapter 4, the Demeter project resulted in a range of consequences for staff. During analysis, these consequences were categorised under the following main headings, which were drawn from the data: Job insecurity, Uncertainty, Interview concerns, Workload fluctuations and Adjustment. It is recognised that these categories form artificial boundaries. Some individuals might have been experiencing job insecurity, concerns about their interview and a heavy workload at the same time. Other major changes were also being implemented alongside Demeter. So, for example, an individual's experience of job insecurity might well be compounded by having to deal with an unusually heavy workload alongside a loss of flexitime. In the main, these categories emerged after a first-level analysis of data relating specifically to Demeter. Data was then fine-coded according to these categories and the category 'definitions' went

through some further changes, during this deeper-level analysis. Some data is coded under 2 or more of these headings. However, all of the extracts used as examples in this chapter have their main focus under the heading within which they appear. The extracts are taken from both diary and interview data. The diary and interview data was treated as a single body of data during most of the analysis.

This chapter presents findings relating to employees' experiences of the Demeter change in 5 main sections. As explained in the previous paragraph, each section relates to a category of 'consequences' of the Demeter change, ie, Job Insecurity, Uncertainty, Interview concerns, Workload fluctuations and Adjustment. These categories emerged from the data during the process of data analysis. (Refer to Appendix 3.7.1 for printout of N4 'nodes', ie, analytic categories.)

6.2 Job Insecurity

From the moment the Demeter restructure was announced in December 1996, with the projected 350 job losses, to the end of the research period in November 1997, when most of the restructuring project was complete, research participants talked about feelings of job insecurity. Most people expressed feelings of job insecurity during the 3 month period from the time it was announced that the selection process would be rolled out to staff (early April 1997) until the outcomes of staff interviews (end June 1997). However, many people, particularly in Liverpool and Manchester, were feeling a sense of job insecurity from the initial announcement in December 1996. A number of employees from both Manchester and Southampton continued to feel insecure following the interview outcome announcements. This continuing insecurity was reportedly due to low levels of workload in some teams following the restructure in underwriting, along with rumours of yet further major structural change, involving more redundancies.

A number of older employees seemed to express greater concern about job security than their younger colleagues. These older employees talked about being "*steeped in financial commitments*" and their worries that "*I've got to pay the mortgage*" and "*If I didn't have a*

job, we'd be on queer street." A number of participants' partners also worked for Guardian. Some of these individuals also reported experiencing a greater sense of insecurity during the selection process. Again, their worries were focused upon the financial ramifications of the potential job losses. Some individuals appeared to be less concerned about losing their jobs because of their geographical location, for example, *"In Reading the employment situation is such that I could walk into another job easily", " ... here in Southampton we've got loads of temps, I don't think us perms have anything to worry about."*

Some individuals talked about having had prior experience of redundancy. This was a source of strength for some individuals, but appeared to create extra worry for others, for example, compare

"At 'x' (ex employer) I was told on the Friday that I'd be out of a job on Monday. I don't get too comfortable anywhere now." (David), and,

"It was a total shock (being made redundant). But I've learnt from that. Don't get your feet stuck too far under the table, don't feel secure. If I go, I go, but there's always other jobs out there." (Nicola) with,

"I've been through all this 6 months ago when 'x' branch closed. It's very worrying. I can't face it again." (Angela)

Whilst job role, geographical location, age and prior experience undoubtedly influenced employees' experiences of job insecurity, the following analysis suggests that the individual difference measures of special interest in the present research, ie, extraversion, neuroticism and work locus of control, also influenced these experiences.

6.2.1 N's and S's experiences of job insecurity during the Demeter change process

There was a marked difference between the way N's and S's described their feelings about job insecurity during the selection process. N's described both a greater range and depth of feelings than S's, particularly during the pre-interview period and the post-interview period leading up to interview outcomes.

Many N's were "*shocked*" upon hearing about the projected 350 job losses and the interview process. Only one S described feeling "*a real shock*" (Lucy). This individual had come back from 6 weeks' convalescence to discover that there had been major changes to hours of working and core benefits along with the announcement of 350 job losses.

N's reported the following feelings about job insecurity,

"I'm worrying myself to death ... trying to do what they want me to do." (Margaret)

"I am quite anxious ... feel vulnerable ... we are all quite concerned." (Julia)

"They want the best people for the jobs, but I'm scared." (Louise)

"It's still worrying and not conducive to concentrating on the job." (Kate)

"I'm still apprehensive ... threatened by redundancy ... I feel very insecure and uncertain." (Lisa)

"I feel that I have let my family down and due to my age feel that it will be difficult to find other work ... I feel that I have not only let my wife and children down, but that I am now useless." (Gerry)

N's also described feeling "*on edge*" and "*distracted*" and lacking "*motivation*" during the period leading up to discovering whether or not they had kept their jobs. A number of N's said that the interview outcome was "*preying on my mind*".

Along with 'fearful' and 'nervous' feelings, N's also expressed anger in relation to feeling insecure about their jobs,

"It is annoying ... I also feel quite bitter" (Julia)

"I was feeling very angry at first ... I felt totally used by the Company" (Helen)

"I had a confrontation with 'x' (team leader) ... I really did jump at her. I was sorry afterwards ... but, it's the underlying threats - if you don't do this, then you're out."
(Margaret)

Some N's reported feeling *"very upset"* about job insecurity. Rumours were rife following the announcement of major job losses, and it appears that N's were more seriously affected by rumours than S's,

"The initial rumours were very upsetting and I found them hard to accept." (Lisa)

"I was quite anxious about rumours about a possible announcement on Monday." (Julia)

"Rumours about migrating to Leeds are always on my mind ... 350 jobs will go." (John)

Although some S's reported feelings of uncertainty and worry, these tended to be fleeting and tended to be followed by an analysis of their situation and statement that their job was safe. As the extracts below demonstrate, S's experiences of job insecurity contrast strongly with the experiences of N's quoted above,

"With the job selection, there was a bit of uncertainty there initially ... but frankly, even then I wasn't worried because it was just a general thing throughout the Company. It wasn't such a big thing." (Susan - S)

"I'm either not affected, or not bothered ... if any changes are made, they will be for the best for me, redundancy or not." (Ron - S)

"I'm not worried about my job ... I don't think my job will be affected." (Peter - S)

"I feel confident about the interview and keeping my job, knowing that 'x' (team leader) has kept her job and is still going to be around." (Lucy - S)

Some managers tried to reassure staff during the pre- and post-interview period and offer them information about the 'broader picture' during this time. However, these reassurances were not always effective at allaying fears and it appears that the N-S

dimension may account, in part, for this. For example, a staff member with a Stable score comments,

"Off the record, we were told that no-one in Claims would be affected. People in the department are of the opinion that we do not have anything to worry about as there is too much work for us to cope with anyway. I feel this way too." (Susan)

Two other employees from the same department with Neurotic scores comment,

"X' (manager) told me quietly I have nothing to worry about. Still quite worrying. Just want it all to be over." (Kate)

"It is not thought that the redundancies announced will affect our team. This does not make it easier to cope with ... I do not feel any sense of job security." (Lisa)

On the whole, S's and N's descriptions of their experiences relating to job insecurity differed in that S's tended to analyse their position in the Company more fully than N's. The following examples are extracts from S's data, one of whom was made redundant after the selection process.

"I should be alright because 'x' (department) is going to be needed whether there is 30 less staff or not ... I can't see 'x' (department) losing anyone because we are all busy and there are only 3 of us here ... I'm pretty certain of keeping my job - they need people in 'x' (department)." (Peter - S)

"... at the end of the day we'd be OK because we've got so much work ... you know, we've got all this work and they'll need us." (Susan - S)

"I feel secure ... Guardian seems to need more staff rather than less, because many are leaving." (Ron - S)

"We are busier than ever and I can't see that changing once the restructure is through, so I don't see how I've anything to worry about in terms of keeping my job." (Harvey - S)

The above extracts contrast with the following extracts from N's diary/interview data,

"I have not been told any more on the situation nor on what is going to happen to me. I will just have to wait and see." (Helen - N)

"I hope that my position is secure. Big downer for morale. Have to wait and see." (Kate - N)

"I'm just going to wait and see what happens. I've taken the attitude that you just sort of come in, get your head down and do your 7 hours and wait til they tell you." (Jane - N)

"Obviously I'm worried, but I'm just plodding on and waiting for answers." (Trudy - N)

"There is not much I can do to deal with the redundancies, except to carry on and hope for the best." (Lisa - N)

Apart from 'wait and see' and 'hope', N's also used the strategy of trying to ignore the problem by pushing thoughts of the selection process to the back of their mind, or escaping from the source of their stress. For example,

"Just trying to put it to the back of my mind. I'm trying to carry on ... but I'm frightened." (Margaret - N)

"The waiting is the worst factor of this as we will not find out the results until the end of June ... I am trying to push things out of my mind for the time being." (Lisa - N)

"Only problem now is we have got to wait until the end of June to hear whether or not we have a job. Trying not to think about it. Plodding along in limbo." (Angela - N)

"I've no holiday left. I took all the holidays I could during the waiting and seeing whether I'd got a job or not come the end of June. The atmosphere and rumours at work were that bad and I just didn't want to think about it." (Nicola - N)

Whereas N's tended to approach the selection process with a view to 'waiting and seeing' what the outcome would be, pushing thoughts of the process *"to the back of my mind"* and often talking about *"hoping I will be retained"*, or even escaping from work through holidays, S's tended to think ahead and ensure that they had contingency plans in place to cover possible outcomes. For example,

"Well, the integration (with L+G) isn't really a major concern because the area is so big, but I'm trying to secure my position - that's what I tend to do. I mean doing evening courses, getting my knowledge about systems in general up ... I'm trying to keep on going and get more experience so that even if I do get the shove, I can get a job somewhere else." (Paul - S)

"I've been preparing for the interview as thoroughly as I can, and will take the opportunity to ask for a chance to move to another post within the Company." (Ron - S)

"I've enrolled at a local college in Business Administration courses. This would eventually lead me to getting another job." (Catherine - S)

Whilst those N's who took a *"wait and see"* approach to the selection process were mostly situated on the external end of the WLOC continuum, all of the proactive S's had an internal or medium WLOC. Those N's who did take a more active stance during the selection process were invariably situated at the internal end of the WLOC continuum.

"I've got my little 'guide book' on what to expect ... I can work out what the questions are going to be. I will swot over the bank holiday - things like what is on the appraisal summary forms." (Louise - N Internal)

"I'm reading up on the pamphlets ('Interview Guide') they gave us about what they want from people." (Margaret - N Medium)

"I'm prepared for the one-to-one interview (interview about selection outcome). I will put my preferences for placement forward." (Jane - N Internal)

Despite addressing their problem by helping to reduce the risk of job loss by interview preparation, these staff members still appeared to be anxious about their job security and described feelings of being *"scared"* and *"worrying myself to death"*.

Six individuals (Dorothy, Darren, Catherine, Paul, Tracey, Rachel) decided to start looking for other jobs in the months leading up to the interviews. This action was described as *"testing the water"*, *"to see what I'm worth"*, *"seeing what's out there just in case"*. These people were all content to continue working for Guardian, but wanted to get

a "head start, just in case" they lost their jobs. Five out of the 6 had S scores, the other had an N score. However, all 6 scored internal/medium on the WLOC continuum. None of the S's had expressed deep concerns about their job security, whereas the individual with an N score reported feeling "worried and uncertain" about keeping her job.

A small number of N's who experienced a keen sense of job insecurity leading up to the selection interviews, did analyse their position more deeply and decided to focus upon their work performance in an effort to get noticed, thus increasing their chances of securing a job seat in the selection process. All of these individuals were also on the extravert end of the E-I continuum.

"We've such a volume of work at the moment. I'm trying to show that I can do the job and do what they want, because otherwise I feel I might lose my job." (Rachel - N/E)

"Half of the worry is about security of my job, and unless I am performing well, then I'm not going to keep my job, so I've got to keep going, I've got to perform well." (Kate - N/E)

"... nor do I feel any sense of job security. I can only put in my best efforts daily and hope for the best." (Lisa - N/E)

A number of SE's also talked about deliberately working in a way that got them noticed, but this was in relation to the new performance management system with their 'impression management' strategy specifically geared towards an increase in pay.

"The pay review is coming up. I want something very significant. I have done an awful lot this year to get noticed and if I don't get a big rise, I may have to look for another job." (Harvey - S/E)

"I'm just hoping that I get a payrise this year, otherwise I'll have to look elsewhere. I have made it more obvious that I'm working hard, so that I get noticed ... " (Paul - S/E)

It appears that the extravert dimension encourages active 'impression management', but the N/S dimension influences the circumstances under which this strategy is used.

A number of N's, but no S's talked about keeping *"a positive outlook"* in response to job insecurity. All of these N's also had either an internal or medium WLOC,

"I'm keeping optimistic. You've got to humour yourself really, otherwise you'd be mega-depressed." (Helen - N Medium WLOC)

"I'm trying to stay quite positive as positive as you can carry on under the pressure of rumours." (Jane - N Internal WLOC)

"I'm trying to maintain a positive state of mind and not worry." (Lisa - N Internal WLOC)

"I've began to look at things in a positive light. I have worked for the company for 15 years and perhaps a change of job will be good." (Julia - N Internal WLOC)

Only one N individual talked about using a displacement activity as a response to their worries about job insecurity.

"If I do get it (redundancy) I won't be able to leave until December. I asked the new manager whether those that applied for redundancy would get it, and she said not necessarily. I've started drinking more. It relieves the stress of not knowing." (Trudy - N)

Whilst many people described feeling *"stressed"* in response to the Demeter project, mostly, people were feeling under pressure from an increase in workload. A number of N's reported feeling *"stressed"* about the potential loss of their jobs. Two of these individuals described suffering from stress-related illness resulting from their sense of job insecurity.

"This has been very stressful. I've got so many commitments now that it would be dreadful if I didn't have a job and money to pay my bills. Yesterday I had a funny turn again (panic attack). It's the stress - my heart was racing. I'm on Prozac now and the doctor's sending me for stress counselling." (Margaret - N)

"Restructuring - very stressful again - no one knows for sure whether they have a job in the future and will not know until the end of April 1997. Having been through all this 6

months ago when they closed 'x' (Guardian branch office), I feel very sorry for the West London staff. Off sick on Wednesday with the stress and worry of it all." (Angela - N)

There were six employees who reported that they wanted redundancy (Trudy, Tom, Vicky, June, Catherine, Julie). These individuals' experiences pre- and post-interview were not focused wholly upon job insecurity, but also upon whether or not they would be offered redundancy and what would be the terms of redundancy. There were differences in the way the S's and N's in this group behaved during the pre- and post-interview period. All three N's (Trudy, Tom, Vicky) described how they wanted redundancy, but they did not develop any plans should they discover that they had been made redundant, or should they be offered a job seat following the selection process.

"Following these announcements (December 96, 350 job losses) I put myself on the voluntary redundancy register ... it's just a question of sitting and waiting for the redundancy money to come and I hope it comes soon." (Tom - N)

"I've put myself on the redundancy list in the hope that I will be made redundant. I'm just happy to come into work, work and go home with redundancy on the horizon." (Trudy - N)

"I asked for redundancy and if I get it I suppose I will be shocked, but I'm not really thinking about it. Once I'm out of the door at 5pm that's it, I don't think about work." (Vicky - N)

In contrast, the three S's (June, Catherine, Julie) explored their options and/or developed contingency plans for possible outcomes.

"We have been told of the changes ... I have worked out 3 possible options, redundancy, relocate, or a position in claims, so have asked for more information about terms in order to make the best decision ... I am pressing the senior engineer and claims manager for more information ... " (Julie - S)

"I may or may not get redundancy. I've been applying for jobs around where I live to increase my options." (Catherine - S)

"I would like redundancy, but if not I'm looking into early retirement next year. There is talk of part-time work on a job share basis, so I'm looking into that as well." (June - S)

It should be noted that all of the above N's also scored external or medium on the WLOC continuum, whilst all 3 S's all scored internal on the WLOC continuum, so that such behaviour can not be attributed solely to N or solely to WLOC and may arise out of a combination of the two dimensions.

6.2.2 E and I's experiences of job insecurity during the Demeter change process

The only themes which seemed to distinguish E's and I's in relation to job insecurity were 'impression management' (above), 'rumours' and the quantity of information available to staff.

Extraverts mentioned rumours far more frequently than introverts. Only 1 E did not mention rumours, whereas only 3 out of 15 introverts mentioned rumours. Rumours tended to be negative in relation to job security, for example,

"Many rumours around regarding the acquisition of L+G regarding redundancies".

(Jane)

"Rumour saying 20 staff are going. Don't know exact numbers." (June)

"Rumours going around today that because there are far too many L+G staff there will be loads of redundancies". (Louise)

If rumours are more salient to E's, then we might expect E's to feel more insecure about their jobs when subjected to such rumours. However, E's did not appear to be more insecure about their jobs than I's. It is possible that there is an interaction here between the E/I dimension and the N/S dimension in that NE's are attentive to rumours, tend to be anxious, so will experience job insecurity more profoundly than the other groups. There are suggestions from the data that this might be the case, for example,

"There are constant 'what ifs' going around the office. Better to wait and see what management announce, rather than thinking about all the bad things that may happen."

(Darren - SE)

"There's loads of rumours about, but I don't listen to rumours. I wait until things happen and then make my mind up. It's best to wait and see and not get paranoid." (Peter - SE)

contrasts with:

"We have heard rumours on Friday about a possible announcement on Monday ... our unit is very vulnerable ... any changes we hear of via rumours I tend to think will affect my job." (Julia - NE)

"I feel total uncertainty with constant rumours that the Manchester area are going to restructure again. This constant talk of changes and uncertainty is creating bad vibes ..." (Martin - NE)

Many E's perceived that there was a lack of information and this perceived lack of information was linked to job insecurity. Few I's, and only those I's with an internal WLOC, talked about not receiving enough information.

"Staff cuts must be made ... we get told nothing until it is too late." (David - E)

"Liverpool is closing ... someone just mentioned it in passing ... they could take the time to give an explanation." (Darren - E)

"It would be easier if we knew how many staff are to be made redundant in each area - this would give a little more idea of the impact." (Lisa - E)

6.2.3 WLOC and experiences of job insecurity during the Demeter change process

It is possible that WLOC score is related to individuals' choice of strategy to deal with job insecurity. As mentioned above, there appears to be a relationship between WLOC and N/S scores in that the stable/internals seemed to be the most proactive group in

dealing with job insecurity. This group of individuals tended to analyse their situation thoroughly and develop, and sometimes act upon, contingency plans.

Independent of N/S score, those individuals with a medium/internal WLOC score actively sought information about the selection process. Some externals, particularly those with an S score, were proactive in their responses to job insecurity, but this action did not specifically involve information seeking. Information seeking seemed to be used as a coping strategy to help mitigate internals' feelings of job insecurity, for example,

"The future seems quite uncertain. If indeed there is a future for us all. I'm trying to get as much advance information as possible to stay ahead." (Dan - N Medium WLOC)

"I am continuing to focus on the big picture, and the fitting of the smaller, more localised pieces into that picture. The more I talk to individuals, the more I learn and understand. The union involvement is the only thing which keeps me positive, because without it, I would have less understanding and less control." (Steve - N Internal WLOC)

"I feel I need to be kept fully informed as people are concerned for their jobs. I've heard that I'm being considered for relocation and if this is the case I need to have as much information as possible. I'm asking questions and waiting. Answers are not forthcoming, but I'm continuing asking for more information." (Julie - S Internal WLOC)

This strategy was not always successful. There were many criticisms about the information flow within Guardian. This problem was acknowledged by management, and towards the end of the research period a 'core brief' system of communication was put in place in an attempt to improve communications between management and staff. Internals' desire for information, when the information was not forthcoming, led to frustration in some cases.

"I am still waiting for answers. I feel frustrated and impatient. I would like to be able to plan my future, either with or without Guardian" (Julie - S Internal)

"I am asking questions, but they make me feel as though I'm a pest." (June - S Medium)

"So, for now we must sit and wait until further information is available ... I've been trying to find out more, but everything's being kept very close to the chest. It's hard for me to be sitting here doing nothing. I'm getting very impatient for news." (Catherine - S Internal)

"I've been making enquiries as to when we can expect to receive our notice ... we have heard nothing more since the announcement that we are closing. Not having any communication is very irritating to say the least." (Julia - N Internal)

6.2.4 Social support seeking

6.2.4.1 Interactions between N, E and WLOC

Many people sought support from colleagues and/or managers when faced with job insecurity. The interactions between N, E and WLOC in relation to seeking social support in response to job insecurity are complex and warrant a separate sub-section. During the coding process, social support was divided into 'emotion-focused', where support was sought in response to emotions triggered by job insecurity, and 'problem-focused', where individuals sought help in dealing with the problem of job insecurity. For example, the following extracts were coded 'emotion-focused, social support seeking',

"I mean, when I've been worried about it (job insecurity), I'll just talk about it like in the first instance with my husband and my colleague 'x', I'm very close to her." (Kate - N/E External)

"I started talking to people about it, on our own floor and talking between ourselves (team) ... and then the tears started to flow when a staff member asked if I was OK." (Helen - N/E Medium)

"I am worried, but I have to force myself not to. If that doesn't work, I blurt it out either to 'x' (partner) or to our section leader - s/he has sat and listened and let me get it off my chest." (Mia N/E External)

"I was really nervous about it ... I think it was the not knowing really ... I asked 'x' (section leader) before I was told officially and s/he said that I'm all right and that I shouldn't worry. But I still worried." (Lisabeth N/E External)

The following extracts were coded 'problem-focused, social support seeking',

"I am also discussing with various colleagues about the advantages and disadvantages of possibly accepting a job in 'x' (Guardian office) if offered to me." (Julia N/E Internal)

"A girl from 'x' (Guardian office) had been made redundant and had a big book of examples of how to do your CV so I have talked to her and looked at that." (Dan N/E Medium)

"When I was told about the job going to London, I talked to 'x' (Admin. manager) and that is where the Claims job has actually come from really." (Catherine S/I Internal)

"I went to see the 'x' (unit) manager, although we are no longer under his control. He said to me that if I didn't want to go (relocate) he would find a job for me here, which is nice to hear." (Julie S/I Internal)

Many more N's than S's sought social support in relation to job insecurity. This is not surprising, as S's tended to be far less susceptible to feelings of job insecurity than N's. Proportionately, many more N's than S's used problem-focused social support seeking in relation to job insecurity. Most of these N's were internal on the WLOC continuum. The S's who used problem-focused social support seeking also had mostly internal WLOC. A large number of N's, but no S's, talked about emotion-focused support seeking in relation to job insecurity. Most of the N's who used emotion-focused social support seeking to deal with feelings of job insecurity were also at the external end of the WLOC continuum. Nine out of these 10 individuals were also E's. All but 2 of the people who talked about problem-focused social support seeking were E's. The two introverts who opted for problem-focused social support seeking talked to their managers, whereas extraverts tended to approach colleagues rather than managers for problem-focused support.

6.2.4.2 Trust and social support seeking

Some individuals reported that managers offered support, unprompted, to help staff deal with their feelings of job insecurity. However, if an individual employee did not trust the

manager who offered support, this support was reported as being ineffectual. Where trust was present, the support was reported as being useful. For example, the following extract is from an employee who trusts the manager who has offered support:

"I didn't mind being reinterviewed really. I was confident and didn't have any worries about job insecurity. You see my own team leader at the time talked me through the reasons why there would be no problem. They are understaffed ... they were hardly going to get rid of experienced staff like me who they've already brought over from another office, paid to relocate. S/he (team leader) is good. I trust his/her (team leader's) judgement" (Sarah - NE)

The next examples are from employees who did not trust their managers:

"My manager said you've nothing to worry about, you'll be fine. But even after s/he said that I was still worried. I was still uncertain. I mean, because managers can just say that and change their minds 10 minutes later. I suppose it's a lack of trust really. (Kate - NE)

"My managers are saying don't worry about it, but management have been very underhand, so of course I'm very concerned ... there's no trust. I really don't trust anyone above me at all." (Mia - NE)

These examples suggest that in circumstances where an individual's personality disposition might lead them to be worried about a situation, managers can make a difference. However, to be effective, managers must be seen to be credible and trustworthy, otherwise their words will not carry weight. As shown in Chapter 4, senior managers in particular were not trusted by staff and fear appeared to diminish close communication between managers and staff. Within this climate, there would have been limited possibilities for managers to effectively offer reassurance to those staff members who were vulnerable to experiencing anxiety.

6.2.5 Summary

6.2.5.1 Personal/situational factors and experience of job insecurity

Employees expressed a range of different feelings and experiences of job insecurity. Older staff tended to express more concern about job insecurity than younger staff. The literature suggests that older workers perceive less job stress than younger workers (Remondet & Hansson 1991). However, within the present context, where jobs were under threat, older staff were more concerned than their younger colleagues about the financial insecurity posed by potential job loss. A number of participants had partners who were also employed by Guardian. This group of individuals tended to express more concern than others about the financial consequences of job loss. Prior research shows that stresses at work lead to increased stresses at home and vice versa (Bolger et al 1989), so we might expect this group to report more negative reactions to job insecurity than others. Although this group talked about the financial aspects of job loss more than others, the data suggested that personality disposition was a better indicator of negative perceptions and reactions to potential job loss. Geographical location also appeared to influence the degree to which people were concerned about their job security. Staff from some locations, eg, Liverpool, perceived that they were more vulnerable than others, eg, Southampton. We might expect previous experience of redundancy to mitigate staff's reactions to job insecurity (Dolan & Tziner 1988). However, the present research shows that prior experience of redundancy was helpful for some, but not for others. Those individuals who found prior experience to be helpful, appraised their attachment to their present job in the light of their past experience, eg, "*...I don't get too comfortable anywhere now.*" and "*Don't get your feet stuck too far under the table ...*". This seemed to protect these individuals from experiencing strong negative feelings in relation to potential job loss. This finding supports a small tranche of literature that suggests that negative experiences that are left unresolved produce negative psychological effects. Resolved events are defined as "experiences from which individuals are able to derive positive meaning for themselves and/or their future" (Thoits 1995 p.58).

6.2.5.2 *N, E, WLOC and the experience of job insecurity*

Previous research on coping responses over time in the lead-up to, and sitting of, a major college entrance examination showed that most people responded in a similar manner despite personality differences (Folkman & Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990). However, research in a work context examining both situation-specific and generalised job stressors and coping behaviour found personality to be a strong predictor of coping behaviours (Mayes et al 2000). Within the situational context of job insecurity, the present research is consistent with Mayes et al (2000). Individual perceptions of and responses to job insecurity appear to be strongly related to the personality traits E and N and the personality disposition WLOC.

6.2.5.3 *Neuroticism and the experience of job insecurity*

A number of responses to job insecurity were extreme and included an increase in drinking behaviour, panic attacks and unspecified sickness amongst N's. Previous research has also demonstrated these kinds of responses to perceived stressful events amongst N's (Beck 1986, Friedman & Booth-Kewley 1987). N's also expressed considerably more anger and, unlike S's, engaged in 'self-blame' in response to job insecurity. Again, N's tendency towards hostility and self-blame is supported by the literature (McCrae 1992). N's also tended to express more worry generally about the prospect of the selection process and felt more insecure about their jobs than S's. This response by N's is supported by the literature, where N's have been shown to have a "disposition to experience the world as a threatening place" (Payne 1988, p.212) and neuroticism has been reported to predict an increased exposure to stressful life events and emotional vulnerability to these events (Bolger 1990, Bolger & Schilling 1991).

N's and S's also differed in their strategies for dealing with job insecurity. S's tended to analyse their situation more fully than N's, and many developed contingency plans to cover possible outcomes of the interview process. N's tended to adopt a "wait and see", "hope" and "put it to the back of my mind" approach to the possibility of job loss. S's approach can be described as 'problem-focused', with an emphasis upon addressing the

problem and finding solutions. N's approach can be described as 'emotion-focused', where the emphasis is upon reducing the emotional effects of negatively perceived events (Steptoe 1991). The distinction between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping in response to perceived stressful events is well established in the literature (Billings & Moos 1981, Lazarus & Folkman 1984, Carver et al 1989). N's have been shown to use more 'emotion-focused' coping strategies than S's and these have been judged to be less effective (McCrae & Costa 1986). For example, O'Brien & DeLongis (1996) concluded from their findings that N's failed to address the problems they were facing, so that N's experience of stress was maintained by adopting strategies that promoted escape from, or avoidance of, their situation. Indeed it is frequently assumed that the best way to reduce distress is to employ problem-focused coping strategies (Hahn 2000). However, in the present research, if N's were experiencing considerably more distress about job insecurity than S's, perhaps "*hope for the best*" and trying to put the situation "*to the back of my mind*" could be judged to be effective strategies for this group of people, given their vulnerable emotional state. The present findings broadly support Pearlin & Schooler (1978) who suggest that, in certain situations, like the workplace, where workers may be unable to control perceived stressors, problem-focused coping would not necessarily help to reduce distress. However, the present research reveals the important role played by individuals' perceptions of stressors. N's perceived the threat to their job security negatively, expressing worry and anger, whereas S's were not emotionally threatened by potential job losses. N's mobilised emotion-focused coping responses to alleviate their distress, whereas S's mobilised problem-focused coping to lessen the risk of job loss.

6.2.5.4 Neuroticism links with E and WLOC and the experience of job insecurity

There were however N's who were more proactive in dealing with their feelings of job insecurity. One group, who tended to have an internal WLOC score, talked about preparing for their interview. Prior research suggests that internals tend to adopt more active, problem-solving coping tactics than externals (Anderson 1977, Hurrell & Murphey 1991). Although this group of internal N's adopted a problem-focused approach to dealing with perceived job insecurity, they still talked about being "*scared*" and

"worrying myself to death" about losing their jobs. Preparing for the interview, ie, problem-focused coping, might well have been helpful in ensuring that this group of individuals performed well in their interview and retained their jobs, but it did not appear to lessen their anxieties about potential job loss. This contrasts with other interpretations of the relationship between N, coping strategies and distress, where it is thought that high N's experience greater stress because of "their failure to engage in coping strategies that might resolve the problems they are facing." (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996, p.804). Internal S's who, as a group, were less worried about job insecurity, did not tend to actively prepare for their interviews. This lends further support to the argument that stress is the product of a transaction between person and environment, and, rather than being an 'objective' external stimulus (Dewe 1991), stress is only evident where a presenting circumstance is appraised as being threatening (Lazarus & Launier 1978).

Some N's adopted 'impression management' as a way of increasing their chances of retaining their jobs. These individuals tended to have an E score on the E/I continuum. Although research shows a lack of correlation between extraversion and impression management scales (Davies et al 1998), E seems to be implicated in the choice of impression management, by N's, as a means of dealing with job insecurity. So, it appears that whilst level of anxiety about job security is related to a person's N score, N's choice of how to deal with the situation is related to other personality/behavioural style characteristics. Much of the literature based upon experimental studies of the relationship between individual differences and coping supports the idea that individual differences in N, E and WLOC are related to particular coping styles (Parkes 1994). However, field studies that have investigated coping, within a particular context, as a process, have demonstrated that despite personality differences, most people use similar coping strategies in response to similar events (Folkman & Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990). The present research, also in the field study tradition, appears to contradict these latter findings, suggesting that people do indeed respond differently to similar events. Furthermore, differences both in the way events are perceived and in response 'style' appear to be related to personality dispositions and combinations of these dispositions.

The literature has found a consistent relationship between extraversion and positive thinking, as a strategy for dealing with problematic events (McCrae & Costa 1986). However, in the present study, within the context of job insecurity, it was N's with an internal WLOC who chose this particular strategy. Indeed, the personality dimension E, on it's own, only accounted for a perceived lack of information in relation to job losses in the present research. All other links between extraversion and responses to job insecurity included other personality dimensions. It is not clear why N's with internal WLOC should choose positive thinking as a coping strategy. Indeed, there does not appear to be any prior research that has demonstrated this relationship. However, it is plausible that N's, who, as a group, were most distressed by threats to their job security, would be motivated to minimise their distress. We have seen that problem-solving approaches did not appear to minimise distress for N's with an internal WLOC, although such problem-solving may well have helped individuals to keep their jobs. So, perhaps positive thinking was adopted as an additional strategy, and an alternative to avoidant strategies favoured by individuals with an external WLOC, to help deal with the emotional distress caused by strong feelings of job insecurity amongst this group. An association between external WLOC and depression/negative thinking has long been established (Payne 1988). This provides a further clue towards establishing why a relationship between internal WLOC and positive thinking has been discovered in the present research.

6.2.5.5 Extraversion links with N and WLOC and the experience of job insecurity

E's appeared to be more aware of rumours about the Demeter project generally, and in particular rumours about potential job losses. This is not surprising, as research has demonstrated that extraverts are highly drawn towards social interaction and spend significantly more time socialising than introverts (Watson et al 1992). Indeed, in the present research, complaints about a lack of information relating to potential job losses were reported mostly by E's. Through social interaction at work, it is plausible that E's would have greater access to rumours. Previous research has shown that E's are more suggestible than I's (Pervin 1993). However, in the present research, NE's were more attentive to the content of rumour than SE's. SE's tended to acknowledge the rumours,

then dismiss them, whereas NE's tended to be negatively affected by rumours and reported experiencing an increase in feelings of job insecurity. Rumours about the selection process tended to be negative. It is plausible that N's, already anxious about their job security, would be further distressed by rumours.

E's had a tendency to perceive that there was a *"lack of information"* about the selection process. Many, but not all, of the E's who commented about the lack of information and *"explanation"* also had an internal score on the WLOC dimension. As expected from previous literature (Parkes 1984), internals actively sought information about the selection process in order to *"stay ahead"* and have more *"control"*. This strategy seemed to mitigate feelings of insecurity, although it led to frustration in some cases when the required information was not forthcoming. These findings for extraverts and internals are broadly consistent with the literature. E's have been shown to favour problem-focused strategies when dealing with perceived stressors (Kardum & Krapic 2001). If information was unavailable, this would thwart E's ability to direct their energy towards addressing the problem and potentially lead to frustration. The literature also demonstrates that, irrespective of intelligence, internals are better at collecting and processing information (Phares 1976). Again, if information was unavailable, it is plausible that internals' inability to address the problem constructively, through analysis of information, would lead to frustration. It should be noted that the few I's who complained about a lack of information, and took steps to actively seek information, all had an internal WLOC. So, whilst E may have influenced individuals' perceptions of a lack of information, it appears that WLOC was the trigger for individuals to seek information actively. As described in Chapter 4, the environment at Guardian was such that an effective flow of information was severely impeded by the sheer size of the organisation, by an ever-increasing amount of bureaucracy, by organisational politics and by the 'rules of the game', in particular, the fear of speaking out. So, this section highlights a recurring theme of the thesis, ie, that the effectiveness of a particular response to change cannot be judged out of context. It is plausible that information seeking might be a highly adaptive response to change under certain circumstances, however, under the present circumstances, where information is not readily available,

information seeking did not appear to be an effective response and often led to feelings of frustration

6.2.5.6 Social support, E, N, WLOC and the experience of job insecurity

Prior research has demonstrated that high scoring extraverts, but not high scoring neurotics, favour social support seeking strategies (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995). The present research found that it was individuals with a combination of N and E that favoured social support seeking strategies to deal with their experiences of job insecurity. This could be because, unlike S's, N's were more likely to perceive a threat to their job security and were therefore the group who were most motivated to deal with this perceived threat. Those N/E's who used problem-focused social support seeking tended to have an internal WLOC whereas those N/E's who used emotion-focused social support seeking tended to have an external WLOC. Prior research demonstrates that S's and internals favour problem-focused coping, whilst N's and externals favour emotion-focused coping (McCrae & Costa 1986, Evans et al 1993). However, there are exceptions. Hahn's (2000) study of responses to interpersonal conflict found that internals adopted more social support strategies than externals and this included both emotion and problem-focused support. It is plausible that the nature of the perceived 'stressor' and/or the intensity of an individual's reaction to that perceived stressor serves as a trigger for the adoption of a particular strategy or strategies. In Hahn's case, the perceived stressor was interpersonal conflict, whereas in this section of the present study, the perceived stressor is job insecurity.

This study has demonstrated that, on the whole, N's experienced a greater sense of job insecurity than S's. N's were therefore motivated to respond to their experience of insecurity by mobilising coping resources. It appears that extraversion influenced N's choice of social support as a coping strategy and WLOC score influenced whether that social support seeking would be emotion or problem focused. There were also 2 stable introverts who sought problem-focused help from their managers. These individuals had both lost their current job role in the restructure, so were perhaps more motivated than

other S's or I's to seek support. So, a complex picture is emerging where perceptions and responses appear to be related to particular circumstances and to particular combinations of personality dispositions, rather than to a single event, or a single personality characteristic.

Where social support in the form of reassurance and explanation of the 'wider picture' was offered by managers, many N's remained anxious about their job security, whereas S's tended to appear to be calmed by such support. O'Brien & DeLongis (1996) reported that research participants higher on N found empathic dialogue more difficult under stressful conditions. It is possible that, in the present study, given N's perceived high level of distress at potential job loss, and given the importance of empathy in human interaction, this group were unable to process the reassuring information offered by their managers effectively. In addition, this type of support was only reported as having been perceived positively when the manager offering support was trusted by the employee receiving such support.

Previous research has demonstrated that some coping strategies are judged to be more effective than others (McCrae & Costa 1986). However, research by Nelson & Sutton (1990), in a work setting, found no linkages between coping strategies and outcomes. Nelson & Sutton interpreted their findings as being due to having used coping measures that were inappropriate in a work setting. However, the present research, which looks at coping strategies defined by the research participants themselves, rather than strategies defined by a standard coping measure, demonstrates that the same coping strategy (eg, managerial support), taken up by different individuals (eg, N's and S's), may indeed result in quite different outcomes. These differing outcomes appear to be related to personality dispositions and also to other factors, such as the relationship an individual has with the person offering support. As noted by Edwards (1992), availability of resources, in this instance social support, is also another factor that is important to consider when examining the effectiveness of a particular response. As explained in Chapter 4, during the interview period, many managers from within the area and branch network were busy interviewing staff from other offices and were therefore unavailable for their staff at the

very time when they were perhaps most needed. It is possible that N's continued anxiety was the result, in part, of some trusted managers being unavailable around that time.

6.2.5.7 Summary tables - explanation

Each of the sections in this chapter will be followed by summary tables and a short commentary on the tables. Although the relationship between reactions to Demeter and personal/situational factors such as age, gender, job type and geographical location have been examined in this chapter, the main research focus is upon the personality traits E and N and the behavioural style WLOC. The summary tables reflect this focus and only present feelings about and responses to Demeter related to the personality dispositions E, N and WLOC and combinations of these dispositions.

The summary tables condense the data on participants' experience of the various aspects comprising the Demeter change. Two summary tables are presented for each section. One table represents expressed 'Feelings' and the other represents expressed 'Responses'. 'Feelings' refers to reports of initial responses to potentially stressful change-related events. In this particular section, 'feelings' would be initial responses to events resulting in potential job insecurity. This data represents what Lazarus & Folkman (1984) term 'primary appraisal', ie, the individual assesses whether the environmental circumstances pose a threat to her/his well-being. 'Responses' refers to reported responses to the potentially stressful events. In this particular section, 'responses' are reported responses to job insecurity. This data represents a follow-on step from what Lazarus & Folkman (1984) term 'secondary appraisal', ie, the individual evaluates and acts upon their coping options.

'Feelings' are classified as either 'positive', 'negative' or 'neutral'. 'Positive' feelings suggest that the potentially stressful situation has stimulated, or challenged the individual. Neutral responses suggest that the potentially stressful situation has had little emotional impact upon the individual. 'Negative' feelings suggest that the potentially stressful situation has been appraised as threatening or harmful. This division of initial responses

to an event is consistent with the literature on coping (Stepptoe 1991). 'Responses' are classified as those which lead to either engagement with, or disengagement from, the situation. 'Engagement' and 'disengagement' are classifications frequently found in the coping literature (Tobin et al 1989) and are used by Steptoe (1991) in his taxonomy of coping.

6.2.5.8 Summary table - feelings

Table 6.1 - Summary table - N, E, WLOC and feelings about job insecurity

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Negative	Shocked, worried, scared, insecure, Useless, vulnerable, On edge, distracted, Annoyed, angry, bitter, upset
S	Neutral	Not bothered, not worried, not affected,
	Positive	Confident
N/E	Negative	Worries triggered by rumours
S/E	Neutral	Rumours noted
E	Negative	Frustrated by perceived lack information
IntWLOC	Negative	Frustrated by perceived lack information

Only individuals at the stable end of the neuroticism dimension expressed feelings classified as either positive or neutral. The table illustrates how differently N's and S's felt about the potential threat to their job security. As previously mentioned in section 5.2.1, S's tended to analyse their position in the Company more fully than N's. Perhaps this analysis offered S's a sense of job security that eluded N's.

Extraverts are frequently presented in the literature as demonstrating more adaptive behaviour than introverts (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996, Vollrath & Torgersen 2000). However, as described in Chapter 4, the organisational climate at GID was characterised by a wealth of rumour, unanswered questions and few facts. NE's, who seemed to be more aware of rumours, were worried about rumours and, E's, along with internals, were frustrated at the perceived lack of information. This clearly demonstrates the importance

of taking account of context when assessing people's perceptions of and responses to major change.

6.2.5.8 Summary table - responses

Table 6.2 - Summary table - N, E, WLOC and responses to job insecurity

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Disengage	Hope, wait + see, switch off, escape, distraction,
	Disengage	Stress related illness
S	Engage	Analyses situation, looks at 'big picture'
S	Engage	Develops contingency plans
N/IntWLOC	Engage	Prepares for interview Positive thinking
N/ExtWLOC	Disengage	Wait + see, hope, ignore
S/IntWLOC	Engage	Job seeks Prepares for interview Develops contingency plans
IntWLOC	Engage	Seeks information
N/E	Engage	Impression management - demonstrates high performance level
S/E	Disengage	Wait + see - in respect of rumours
N/E/IntWLOC S/I/IntWLOC	Engage	Seeks support (problem focused), talks to colleagues/ managers to help form an opinion, make a decision
N/E/Ext WLOC	Engage	Seeks support (emotion focused), talks to colleagues/ managers to obtain reassurance, to lessen worry, to express emotion

Prior research suggests that N's in particular use coping strategies that lead to disengagement (Bolger 1990, Terry 1994) and that these strategies are assumed to be maladaptive (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996). As can be seen in the above 'responses to job insecurity' summary table, both N's and S/E's responses led to 'disengagement' and many of N's responses, when coupled with other personality groupings, led to engagement with their situation. The data presented in the above table highlights the problem of looking at personality characteristics in isolation. In the present research, feelings and responses are

frequently found to be associated with combinations of personality dispositions, rather than single aspects of personality.

6.2.5.9 Linkages between the tables

Associations can be seen between the two tables. N's predominantly negative feelings are associated with passive responses and even illness whereas S's neutrality, or positive feelings are associated with active responses. N's and S's dramatically different initial feelings about the restructure and job loss announcements in November/December 1996 meant that their responses were designed to perform different functions. N's responses were driven by powerful negative emotions and a desire to alleviate these feelings, whereas S's responses were driven by a desire to increase the certainty of retaining their jobs. The situation becomes more complex when combinations of personality characteristics are examined. Combinations of N/E and N/internal WLOC were associated with behaviour designed to increase the certainty of keeping their jobs, or, in the case of some N/internal WLOC individuals, behaviour directed at actively improving their emotional state through *"positive thinking"*.

Condensing the data into table form provides the reader with an immediate insight into the different personality-related reactions to major change. The tables also emphasise the important role played by combinations of personality dispositions in influencing perceptions of major change and influencing choice of response to major change.

6.3 Uncertainty

Apart from feelings of job insecurity generated by the announcement of job losses and the subsequent selection process, employees' experience of insecurity often appeared to be compounded by feelings of uncertainty about their job role, location, new working hours, and who their colleagues and managers would be following the restructure component of the Demeter project. The timing of the various aspects of the restructure was also a source of uncertainty for many people. Those individuals whose branch office was closing all experienced uncertainty about the timing of the closure and details of redundancy packages. Those employees whose work had been transferred to another location experienced uncertainty about their future prospects with the Company. In the case of Agency staff, this role uncertainty lasted for over 5 months, so that, even when individuals felt secure about keeping a job within Guardian, they were uncertain about the nature of that job.

Individuals' experiences of uncertainty about their future job role, working relationships, work location and the timing of changes also depended upon their current role and location within the Company. Some job roles, for example, secretaries, typists and IT, were affected very little by the restructure. Other job roles, for example, claims, underwriting, agency and engineers' assistant, were hugely affected by the restructure. Some locations were also affected more seriously than others. Staff at Liverpool, whose office was closed as a result of the restructure, were clearly more affected by the Demeter changes than staff at Manchester, Southampton and Reading. Two parents of young children reported feeling a strong sense of uncertainty about the rumoured revised working hours that were part of Demeter's 'new proposition' for brokers. Both anticipated difficulties with childcare arrangements, depending upon how they would be personally affected by a longer working day.

6.3.1 Analysis of N and WLOC in relation to uncertainty

Again, patterns of employees' experience of uncertainty relating to personality and behavioural style emerged from the data. Some individuals' experiences of uncertainty

were profound, *"Not knowing what is going to happen to you is very unsettling ... who is going to be left, whether you are going to be with the same people, or have a job even, or what that job is. It's like starting again really, from nothing."* (Lisabeth, underwriter N - External) Others were less affected by the uncertainty, *"We keep hearing about the changes coming around about May/June, but nothing decisive as yet. I'm just taking each day as it comes at the moment, monitoring the situation."* (June, underwriter S - Medium)

As with job insecurity, N's generally expressed stronger feelings about uncertainty than S's. There also appears to be a relationship with WLOC. Those N's in the external WLOC group talked about uncertainty more, and with a greater depth of feeling, mostly anger, than people in the other personality/behavioural style groupings.

"There are so many rumours that it is difficult to think straight and with all the uncertainty I find that I very quickly lose my temper." (Gerry - N External)

"Uncertainty has an effect on my morale - feeling not valued. They don't give a toss about us - why should I bother? I am just a number, moved around without warning. It makes me so angry that they keep us guessing then move us at the last minute." (Martin - N External)

"Morale is extremely low with all the waiting. Half the staff are in yet another meeting at the moment (meetings about Demeter restructure details). I'm not going. I refuse to sit and listen for one and a half hours to their bullshit". (Trudy - N External)

"The only way to become more customer focused is to stop pissing us around changing the Company structure and give staff some stability." (John - N External)

There were examples of employees attempting to deal with their uncertainty by reflecting upon and analysing prior organisational change within the Company. Those individuals who responded to uncertainty in this way tended to have an internal WLOC.

"Having been here a couple of years now you see that down the line changes happen but there have been no sort of real problems for me ... this restructure, it will affect me, but you can't just keep on worrying from now until June." (Jane - N Internal)

"With the worry, you just have to remember that something comes along which actually turns out to be quite a good thing ... with the rumours about flexitime, it's worked out fine, but a lot of people were worried about it at the time." (Paul - S Internal)

"There's always been a lot of change in the Company since I've been here. My past experience of change is that the outcome has always been positive for me, so I'm not that bothered by it (restructure)." (Karen - N Internal)

Independent of N/S score, many participants at the medium/internal end of the WLOC continuum reported attempts to create continuity and stability for themselves amidst uncertainty by talking about *'carrying on as normal'*.

"It's December or even later when it (Claims Action Line) comes into play, so for the time being I'm just working as normal. Just carrying on helps me stop thinking about it" (Sarah - Medium WLOC)

"Nothing's happened. Nothing has come back since my (selection) interview, so I have just been carrying on as normal, doing my work as usual, making my work life as normal as I can and waiting to hear." (Rachel - Internal WLOC)

"We are due to find out who is to be our team leader and what area we are to deal with. Until then, I am just carrying on working as I am, just doing normal stuff really." (Darren - Internal WLOC)

"I keep very busy, and I just carry on doing my job as normal although I may be moved to something else shortly, but that is still in the future." (June - Medium WLOC)

Only one external, Susan, said that she *"carried on as normal really"*, but this individual also reported that *"on our section, everyone just got on with it"*. Perhaps being part of a group of people where work continued 'as normal' encouraged Susan to continue despite the uncertainty. Or perhaps, because Susan was not anxious about the uncertainty, it was easier for her to continue working 'as normal'.

As with job insecurity, independent of N/S score, individuals at the internal end of the WLOC continuum talked about 'information seeking' in response to uncertainty more frequently than those with an external WLOC. As a response to job insecurity, information seeking helped many people attain a sense of control, although a few E/internals were frustrated by a perceived lack of information. As described in Chapter 4, there appeared to be a lack of helpful information about the details of the restructure which left internals feeling dissatisfied with their prolonged sense of uncertainty,

"I would not relish the thought of being constantly on the telephone all day. This may not happen. I will have to wait for now. I cannot do anything. My hands are tied ... I'm very frustrated by the lack of information." (Lisa - N Internal)

"There is a rumour that certain changes are already in place regarding the admin of the direct unit, but the information has not been officially notified to us. I'm pressing daily for more info but it falls on deaf ears. Very annoying." (Jane - N Internal)

"The memo (detailing Demeter changes to 'x' department structure) was left on my manager's desk and no senior managers were around to answer our questions.

Personally, I have been waiting for over a week now for answers to my questions of how this will affect me. It is very upsetting not to say irritating to be ignored in this way."

(Tracey - S Medium)

Unlike their internal counterparts, those individuals with an external WLOC did not tend to talk about being proactive in order to deal with their feelings of uncertainty. In contrast, these participants were "fed up" and "despondent" and couldn't see "why (they) should bother about anything". Again, there seems to be a relationship here with N scores in that many more N's than S's also reported such feelings. However, those S's that did report feelings of despondency, also scored external on the WLOC scale.

"You just end up taking it. You know, you just accept it ... It's just a case of accepting where you are put. You are moved from pillar to post and you have to accept it ... our destiny is in other's hands." (Martin - N External)

"I have given up. I just look at this as a job. I come in, do the work, go home and get paid at the end of the month. I am just despondent now - as despondent as you can get. I'm not happy with all the uncertainty, but I can't do anything about it, just have to get on with things really." (Mia - N External)

"I'd rather just sit and take it. Much as it upsets me. I've certainly got no incentive to work hard. At the end of the day, I have to accept what I'm given." (Sue - N External)

"With the restructure, you just accept it because it is a big Company and you sort of feel it is out of your hands, they don't take any notice of us." (Susan - S External)

When S's talked about the lack of clear information about their future role and location, their focus tended to be upon their concerns for other people, or they offered a factual account of what was known about the restructure and what remained unclear, with little or no emotional expression.

"I'm like the mother hen here keeping everyone else cheerful. I do what I can for people."
(June - S)

"I feel sorry for some people who are wondering what will happen to them. Whilst I don't think it's fair leaving everyone in the dark, as for me, I'm just carrying on as usual, waiting for more information before I look at the situation and decide what's best"
(Peter - S)

"I do not know the full scope of these changes (restructure) at the moment to comment upon them. I believe we have to wait until next week to find out what steps will be taken."
(Jean - S)

"There is a lot of guessing and speculation about what is going to take place. It's best to sit back and see. I will be able to elaborate a lot more on the subject later." (Sheila - S)

As can be seen from the examples above, S's used 'wait and see' as a strategy to deal with uncertainty. Many N's also adopted a 'wait and see' attitude towards the uncertainty. What distinguished the N's from the S's was that N's appeared to be less tolerant of the uncertainty. Whilst S's talked about "wait and see" within the context of trying to "adapt and make the best of it" (Paul), "ride it out" (Julie) and "trying to stay positive and just

see what happens" (Darren), N's talked about *"wait and see"* within the context of *"feeling defeated, morale is low"*(Mia), *"unmotivated"* (Jane) with *"a lot less work being done than normal"* (Julia) and *"all the waiting and hanging around, it's disrupting my work."* (Louise)

Although many staff maintained positive relationships with their team leaders and managers during the selection process, a number of people developed a strong lack of trust in management around this time. Some staff thought that managers knew more than they were *"letting on"* and that they were withholding information about the restructure from staff unnecessarily. As mentioned previously, there was a lot of staff movement between teams during the research period. Staff were analysing these movements and some became suspicious of managers' motives for moving people, *"they are wasting our time with these interviews. People have been measuring up before the interviews are over!"* (Darren) From the time that the broad outline of the proposed Demeter restructure was announced in December 1996, underwriting staff in particular began to talk about there being *"two classes"* of employee with *"so called best agents getting the best staff to look after them while the less supportive agents get what is left"*. Staff from other units such as claims and agency also complained that the interviews were *"just a sham"* and *"just to please the unions"* and that *"managers know who they are getting rid of and this is all for cosmetic purposes to show fair play"*.

Whilst both N's and S's analysed their circumstances in response to uncertainty about which team they would be in post-selection, those N's with an External/Medium WLOC tended to express most suspicion,

"I am convinced the management already know who they are getting rid of and this is all for cosmetic purposes to show fair play." (Kate - N External)

"They are winding our section down and training the staff they want by transferring them now for the "best" unit at the summer change around. We will be put on the "crap" section (watch this space)." (John - N External)

"It does appear that the best staff are being creamed off. This leaves me as the chaff."

(Trudy - N External)

"Where will I be placed? I would like to think I would be in Premier Division in the Focus. But I would not be surprised if I am still down in the dungeon - second class citizens." (Tom - N External)

It is not clear why those individuals with scores towards the medium/external end of the WLOC continuum should be more suspicious of management and make more negative speculations about their futures than others. However, this is discussed in the summary section 6.3.4.

6.3.2 Extraversion and uncertainty about team membership

In the underwriting and claims units in particular, there were movements of staff between teams from the restructure announcement right up until the outcome of the selection process. Indeed, all but 4 of the research participants experienced team personnel changes during the period of study, with 12 individuals actually leaving their team and joining another team. Although 'team working' was relatively new to the Company and was only fully established about 18 months before the start of the present study, the majority of participants seemed to have a strong team identity and according to a staff survey conducted in 1996, team working was very popular amongst staff. Those few individuals who did not have a strong attachment to their team tended to have autonomous roles that set them apart from other team members (Computer support, Administrative support, Secretary). Uncertainty about team membership and location within the office tended to cause greatest concern to extraverts,

"Basically you are just not in one place for very long before they change you around again. God knows how many times I've moved around since I've been here, and I've only been here for 6 years in August. I've been all over the place. This whole restructure thing is very unsettling. It don't take long to settle in, but it's the people, you get used to people, and then you have to move again." (Lisabeth - E)

"We are very much a team, which is what you are supposed to be. Now they are going to change it all again, and we might be working with different people all together ... I'm annoyed about it really, because it's working how it is. I think, why change again. I just don't know why they are doing it." (Nicola - E)

"99 percent sure I'll keep my job. But as what? And who will I be working with. That's the worry really. I like my work mates. I don't want it to change." (Kate - E)

"I've been concerned during the selection, not about losing my job, but about being in a different team. I'm happy where I am." (Karen - E)

The few times introverts mentioned uncertainty surrounding the make-up of their team, their comments were within the context of concerns about workload fluctuations resulting from team movements, rather than concerns about losing valued relationships.

"There's been quite a few new people on our team. Some more experienced one's have left for the 'x' section. This has meant training the new people and sharing the workload of the one's that have left, so there's been more work. It's the knock-on effect of extra work from losing more people that is my big concern." (Susan - I)

"Very pressured at the moment due to losing 2 very hard working team members to another unit ... we were promised cover, but this doesn't seem to be forthcoming. Unclear how our team is going to look in the future and whether we'll be able to cope with all the work." (Jane - I)

"The only definite change is that one of our team is moving, but as long as he's replaced, then there won't be a great deal of change because there will still be the same number of people to deal with the work." (Dan - I)

6.3.3 Social support seeking in relation to N, E, WLOC scores

In keeping with the findings relating to job insecurity, many employees looked to others for support when dealing with uncertainty. Again, these individuals were mostly at the E and N ends of the extraversion and neuroticism dimensions. However, unlike the findings with job insecurity, there appeared to be no relationship between work locus of

control and the decision for individuals to seek emotion- rather than problem-focused support. Indeed, only 2 individuals used problem-focused social support seeking as a way of dealing with uncertainty, specifically role uncertainty.

"I am waiting until I am told definitely what is going to happen. I spoke to the Union and I hear there is an appeals process (appealing against role allocation)" (Mia N E)

"I don't want to do 'x' (job role) and the 'x' (department) manager said he doesn't want to force me to do anything I don't want to. I've spoken with my section leader about it." (Lillian S I)

The lack of problem-focused social support seeking seemed to be due to the perceived lack of information available to enable individuals to problem solve as a way of dealing with uncertainty. Many more individuals engaged in emotion-focused social support seeking as a response to feelings of uncertainty. Most of these individuals were N's and all but one were E's.

"I am unsure about where I could end up. I did get some reassurance from 'x' (manager) ... I said I was worried and s/he said don't worry about it, you've nothing to worry about, you'll be fine. But even after he said that, I was still worried." (Kate - NE)

"I panicked about the possibility of being moved. I used to moan to 'x' (team leader) but s/he gave me reassurances that we wouldn't change teams." (Karen - NE)

"I'm sticking it out to see how it's all going to pan out ... it is difficult to concentrate on the part in between. Talking to others helps I find you know, having a good moan." (Tom - NE)

"It is a case of whether I will still be doing the same job at the end of June, not whether I will have a job. I feel unsettled about it really. There is nothing we can do. I've sat and discussed it amongst the team. To a certain extent it helps." (Rachel - NE)

Mostly, people who engaged in emotion-focused social support seeking did appear to find it useful in terms of helping them feel "reassured" and "calmer". However, some individuals sought support, but still felt "worried" and "concerned". This appeared to be

related to the person whom the individuals approached for support. As with the findings relating to 'job insecurity', those individuals who received support from people who were described as being 'trustworthy' tended to report better outcomes than those who were concerned that they might not be able to trust the person who had given them support.

6.3.4 Summary

6.3.4.1 Personal/situational factors and experience of uncertainty

The Demeter project triggered uncertainty amongst staff about their future job role, working relationships, work location and the timing of such changes. Certain groups were more vulnerable than others to the experience of uncertainty. Those employees with job roles that were directly affected by the restructure, those working at a branch which was subject to closure, those people whose work had been transferred to a different location, and, finally, parents who were concerned about potential childcare problems relating to rumoured extended hours, were all subject to more uncertainty than others.

6.3.4.2 N, WLOC, E and feelings about uncertainty

N's, particularly N's with an external WLOC talked about uncertainty more and with greater depth of emotion than employees in the other groupings. These individuals described feeling '*unsettled*', '*angry*', '*despondent*' and '*suspicious of management*'. Prior research has shown that N's tend to be highly emotionally reactive (Mayes et al 2000). As previously mentioned, anger is a characteristic of N's responses to stressors (McCrae 1992). We could therefore expect N's to feel more unsettled and angry than S's in response to uncertainty. Depression, which can feature despondency, has also been associated with N (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985) and with external LOC (Payne 1988). Prior research investigating internals' and externals' responses to interpersonal conflict also found externals exhibiting significantly more depressive responses than internals (Hahn 2000). So, we could expect N's and externals to experience despondency in response to uncertainty. Whilst high neuroticism is associated with experiencing more negative emotion (Vollrath & Torgersen 2000), there doesn't appear to be any published

research specifically relating neuroticism or LOC with suspicion. The defining characteristic of locus of control is whether an individual believes control of their lives is located within themselves, ie, internal, or outside themselves, ie, external. If externals believe that their lives are controlled by external forces, it is possible that this group would be more suspicious of these external forces. In the work context, external forces would include managers. As described in Chapter 4, the perceived lack of change-related information at Guardian, coupled with the perception that changes were introduced quickly, without adequate warning, could both fuel the suspicions of some staff members. So, it appears that people's experience of change arises out of an interaction between personality-driven dispositions to behave in particular ways and features of the change context.

Extraverts were more upset by the uncertainty generated by the prospect of personnel movements within their teams than were the other personality groups. By analytically breaking the concept of 'major change' down, the present research reveals that organisational change is not, as implied by much of the literature (Callan et al 1994), a unitary phenomenon. Indeed, major change has different components, producing a whole array of consequences, individual concerns and psychological states, with people being affected quite differently depending upon personal and environmental factors and features of the change itself. So, despite most research participants having been subject to personnel movements, relating to the Demeter project, during the course of the research, it was extraverts who appeared to be most sensitive to this particular consequence of the change programme. Extraverts are presented in the literature as a group of individuals who enjoy and seek out novel and stimulating situations (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985, Gallagher 1990, Furnham 1992), so we might expect extraverts to be less affected by the consequences of change than introverts. However, as mentioned previously, extraverts spend significantly more time socialising than introverts (Watson et al 1992). We might therefore expect extraverts to have developed more social connectiveness with their teams and thus be more concerned than introverts about the potential loss of these social groupings.

6.3.4.3 *WLOC and response to uncertainty*

Consistent with the literature, staff with an internal WLOC adopted more problem-focused approaches (Parkes 1984, Evans et al 1993) in dealing with perceived uncertainty. However, the analysis uncovered three distinct ways in which internals dealt with the uncertainty generated by the restructure.

The first involved individuals analysing their prior experience with the Company. This provided a reappraisal of their current experience and seemed to be successful in managing feelings of uncertainty. Such 'cognitive appraisal' strategies have been deemed to be successful in situations where little can be done to lessen a particular problem (Steptoe 1991). Under conditions of uncertainty, within the particular change context described in Chapter 4, where information is lacking, this would indeed appear to be an adaptive strategy.

The second approach to handling uncertainty involved individuals continuing with their work "*as usual*". A characteristic of individuals with an internal locus of control is their belief that they can control their environment, as outcomes are believed to arise out of their own actions (Rotter 1966). This belief seemed to enable internals to protect themselves from uncertainty by creating a sense of stability and continuity for themselves through "*carrying on as normal*".

The third approach to dealing with uncertainty was information seeking. Although information seeking had been an effective strategy for some individuals within the context of job insecurity, within the context of the uncertainty generated by the anticipated restructure, many individuals described feelings of frustration about the perceived lack of information. Previous research has shown that, although internals are typically less reactive to stressors than externals (Storms & Spector 1987), under conditions where the opportunity for control is lacking, internals may react more negatively than externals (Marino & White 1985). Under the present research conditions, where there is high uncertainty and a perception of a lack of information, we would

anticipate that internals, unable to employ their information seeking skills effectively, would express negativity.

So, we can see how a predisposition to behave a certain way, coupled with an environment which is incompatible with this particular way of behaving can lead to a negative outcome. Again, this finding emphasises the importance of considering individuals within their particular organisational context when examining the experience of change.

6.3.4.4 *N and response to uncertainty*

Both S's and N's responded to uncertainty by adopting a *"wait and see"* approach. At first sight this finding seems to be in keeping with prior research that suggests that coping behaviour is situational and, regardless of personality dispositions, individuals tend to adopt the same strategy in response to the same type of stressor (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). However, further scrutiny of this category of responses reveals that N's and S's experiences were quite different. S's talked about 'waiting and seeing' whilst making active attempts to *"stay positive"* and *"adapt and make the best of it"*, whereas N's described feeling *'defeat'* and being *'unmotivated'* during this period. So, although both groups were passive in the behavioural sense, in the cognitive sense, S's were actively using positive thinking, whereas N's were passively accepting 'defeat'. As mentioned earlier, there is an established literature associating N with depression (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985). However, 'positive thinking' is a coping strategy associated in the literature with extraversion, not with low neuroticism (McCrae & Costa 1986). Given the circumstances of the restructure, where there was a perception that there was little information available, S's 'usual' coping choice, ie, problem-solving, would have been unavailable, so perhaps positive thinking was a strategy that was employed because of the particular situation. This would be a possible explanation for this anomalous finding, and also furthers the argument that the relationship between stress, personality dispositions and coping is complex and incorporates many factors, which include contextual factors.

6.3.4.5 Social support as a response to uncertainty

Emotion-focused social support seeking tended to be used by N/E's who talked with colleagues and managers about their uncertainties in order to obtain reassurance and share their feelings. So, again, as with responses to job insecurity, unlike previous findings in the literature (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995), in the present research context, it is not E's alone who tend to seek social support, but E's who are also in the N group. However, again, it was N's who were more reactive to aspects of the Demeter change that generated uncertainty, so it was N's who were the most motivated to mobilize coping responses. All but 2 reported incidents of social support seeking were emotion-focused. Perhaps the perceived lack of information available prevented most people from engaging in problem-focused social support. Again, this reinforces the argument that the use of specific coping responses appears to be contingent upon the particular circumstances surrounding the stressful event alongside personality dispositions. As with the findings for job insecurity, social support only appeared to be helpful where the person offering the support was trusted by the person receiving the support. So, the outcome of social support as a coping mechanism is again dependent upon the relationship between the social support 'giver' and social support 'seeker'.

6.3.4.6 Summary table - feelings

Table 6.3 - Summary table - N, E, WLOC and feelings about uncertainty

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N/ExtWLOC	Negative	Unsettled, angry, despondent Suspicious of management
S	Negative	Feel sorry for others
	Neutral	Not enough information to comment
IntWLOC	Negative	Frustrated by perceived lack information
ExtWLOC	Negative	Despondent
E	Negative	Upset, worried, unsettled by potential team member movements
I	Negative	Concerns about potential increases in workload resulting from possible loss of team members

None of the feelings expressed by people in relation to the uncertainty generated by the Demeter project were classified as 'positive'. All personality types expressed negative feelings. However, once again, S's responses were quite different from other personality groupings. S's negative feelings were about feeling *'sorry for others'* who were finding the uncertainty difficult to handle, rather than about having a negative experience themselves. During the June-October 997 period where many people reported *'feeling unsettled, angry, despondent'* about the uncertainty surrounding the interviews and Demeter restructure, some S's reported in an emotionless manner that there was not enough information for them to comment. The above table highlights that S's appear to be able to tolerate the uncertainty generated by major change more readily than other personality types.

The table illustrates how different personality types appear to focus upon different aspects of the change process. E's are concerned about the potential disruption to their teams for emotional attachment reasons whilst I's are concerned about such disruption because of the potential effect upon workload. For their part, internals express frustration at the perceived lack of information. So, different personality groups appear to focus upon different areas of concern. This further exemplifies the importance of understanding individual perceptions of major change, so that individual responses are properly contextualised.

6.3.4.7 Summary table - responses

Table 6.4 - Summary table - N, E, WLOC and responses to uncertainty

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Responses
S	Disengage	Wait + see (ride it out, try to stay positive, make the best of it)
N	Disengage	Wait + see (defeated, unmotivated, performance suffers)
IntWLOC	Engage	Information seeking Carry on working as normal Reflects upon/analyses prior behaviour of Company/consequences for self
ExtWLOC	Disengage	Why bother, given up, just accept
N/E	Engage	Seeks support (emotion-focused), talks to colleagues/ managers to obtain reassurance, express emotion

Groups of both N's and S's chose to disengage as a response to uncertainty by adopting a 'wait and see' stance. However, markedly different psychological states lay beneath this seemingly similar response by N's and S's. Whilst S's were trying to 'stay positive', N's expressed feeling 'defeated and unmotivated'. This emphasises the importance of having collected "the richest possible data" (Lofland & Lofland 1995, p.19) in the present study. To fully understand individuals' experiences of major change, responses must be placed in the context of the organisation, (in this particular case, as described in Chapter 4), perceptions of the particular aspect of major change under scrutiny and the emotional state accompanying such a response. However, this is not to say that the present study's findings cannot be generalized. The organisational context has been presented in detail, so that generalizing to other similar contexts would be possible. Also, as discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.9.2.2, it is possible to generalize such findings within explicitly drawn 'theoretical parameters' (Marshall & Rossman 1989).

6.3.4.8 Linkages between the tables

Again, there are associations between the 'feeling' and 'responses' tables. Internals reported feelings of frustration at a lack of information during periods of uncertainty and subsequently reported active information seeking. This tended to be unsuccessful, as there was a climate of rumour and speculation, described in Chapter 4, certainly through the first half of the research period, with little in the way of firm information. Another response by internals was to analyse the company's past behaviour in light of the present circumstances. Internals tended to be comforted by such analysis. One individual used both information seeking and analysis tactics. A further strategy used by internals to combat uncertainty was to create a sense of stability through continuing to work 'as normal'. Externals' feelings of despondency translated into passivity, *'why bother, given up, just accept'*.

E's reports of feeling *'worried'* and *'upset'* at potential team member movements led to their seeking reassurance from managers and colleagues. Most of this uncertainty was expressed in the period leading up to the interviews (April 1997), the period after the interviews up until job roles and teams were confirmed (end June 1997), and for some claims personnel, continued until the end, and possibly beyond, the research period. As explained previously in Chapter 4, managers were involved with acting as interviewers for staff from other area offices so that the availability of managerial social support during the interview period was poor for many staff. Line managers were also uncertain about their own job status until May 1997 and found it difficult to reassure their staff under these conditions. Although social support is presented as an adaptive response in the literature (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998, Hooker et al 1994), the particular circumstances at GID suggest that such a response to uncertainty may have done little to ease uncertainty and may, in some instances, have exacerbated feelings of uncertainty.

The summary tables illustrate that individuals' feelings of uncertainty revolved around different aspects of the change process. For internals, the focus was upon a perceived lack of information, whilst E's were worried about potential team personnel changes and I's were concerned about the possibility of increases in workload following on from team

personnel changes. The Demeter project resulted in feelings of uncertainty for most people, but personality appeared to be related to the nature of those feelings and responses to those feelings. Organisational context influenced individuals' experiences in that managerial social support was not always available during times of high uncertainty, and much uncertainty was generated by the perceived lack of information from management and subsequent "*rumour mongering*".

6.4 Interview concerns

The interview process was looked upon by many employees as *"window dressing"*, so that *"the Company are seen to be fair"*. Many staff believed that *"managers have already made up their mind who is in and who is out"* and that the *"interviews are just a formality to please the unions."* Some staff were mildly irritated that they had to deal with the *"disruption"* caused by this perceived *"charade"*. However, many staff were under pressure around this time because of the extra workload created by the imminent restructure and these individuals, in particular, were annoyed by the selection process.

"The interviews are taking over everything at present which is tedious ... it's a done deal anyway, so that's aggravating because I don't feel I can get on with things properly with 'x' (manager) away all the time interviewing." (Louise)

"Personally I think it's ridiculous the amount of pressure that everyone is under with workload and this is added to by the selection process. Morale is at an all time low." (Nicola)

"Although I see that the Company must be seen to be selecting the most suitable people it is annoying that it's very time consuming for everyone at a time when no-one has enough time anyway." (Susan)

Most staff were cynical about the interview process when it was first announced. However, once selection was over, negative comments about the interviews ceased and a number of staff were even very complimentary about the process and the way it had been handled by management.

"To give managers their due, I didn't hear a single complaint from colleagues about the way the interviews were conducted - they did a fair and good job of it and kept to the schedule." (Paul)

"The first thing to say about the selection process for our area is that the managers responsible deserve congratulations for the way they have handled it - the info we were

given to prepare for it, and the actual interviews themselves - can't fault it in terms of being fair." (Steve)

"I was really gutted by it (redundancy), but it was a fair system with the interviews and that ... so I can't complain. They've been fair to me." (Peter)

6.4.1 N's and S's experiences of the selection process

Personality and behavioural style did not discriminate between staff who voiced suspicions about the interview process, nor did the groupings discriminate between employees who voiced positive comments once the process was over. However, there was a marked difference in N's and S's experiences of being interviewed. N's talked about the interview more than S's. S's tended to talk about the interviews in factual terms, explaining the process and the timing of events, whilst N's expressed strong negative emotions about the interview process and particularly about being interviewed. Where S's expressed emotions about the interview, these tended to be positive, although there were exceptions (see quote from Susan, section 6.4, previous page).

Some employees were angry about having to be reinterviewed for their jobs.

"I'm not too happy about having to be selected to remain in employment and less happy about having to be interviewed. It's quite insulting really. I'm performing well at my job, so shouldn't be put through this." (Dan - N)

"It has put my back up. I have worked for the Company for 10 years and think they should know by now whether I can do my job or not. I only got interviewed last year for the job I am doing now ... it is a waste of time and money to reinterview me." (Rachel - N)

"It was just a total waste of time. I felt everyone knew it was a waste of time ... it made me quite angry to be put through it (the interview) unnecessarily." (Mia - N)

Many staff, particularly those with an N score, were anxious about being interviewed. Often, individuals' anxieties about the interview were bound up with feelings about job

insecurity. However, in many instances individuals were nervous about the interview itself, irrespective of the consequences.

"It's really unnerving the thought of being interviewed by my manager with another manager present." (Louise - N)

"We are in the middle of the interviews. Even though I look confident, I feel nervous. I have my interview tomorrow. I'm not feeling too good. I feel nervous at the moment. I'll be glad when it's over (the interview)." (Margaret - N)

"I don't like interviews ... I'm feeling very nervous as I do not relish the thought of being re-interviewed" (Lisa - N)

"Interviews started today ... I am very nervous. I feel nervous about having an interview again after such a long time. Just not knowing the questions they will ask us." (Lisabeth - N)

A number of people talked about feeling *"out of practice"* because they had not had an interview for a long time. These comments tended to come from older staff who had been with the Company for a long time. N's talked about their lack of recent experience of interviews as a source of anxiety. However, S's tended to talk about this lack of experience and their apprehension about being interviewed as a trigger for preparing for the interview. N's reported,

"I did get a bit het up. I was concerned about the interview because it's a long time over the years that I've had an interview. It really made me worried." (Doreen - N, age 58, Guardian employee for 11 years)

"I think the interview stuff was really scary. I found it really scary, really, really awful. I hadn't had an interview for ages and by the time I actually went into the interview I was a nervous wreck. I was shaking all over." (Sue - N, age 44, Guardian employee for 8 years)

whilst S's reported,

"I am sure my job is safe as I cannot see anyone wanting it. Everyone will be interviewed ... I've not had an interview in quite a while, but have been preparing taking advice from the 'Guide to Structured Interview' handed out to us." (Sheila - S, age 47, Guardian employee for 17 years)

"I was apprehensive about the interview, especially as I hadn't had an interview for a very long time. But I read the notes on the interview (leaflets distributed to staff prior to the interview) and they were very helpful, especially for people who hadn't had an interview for a long time. The notes said things like what sort of questions they would ask." (Dorothy - S, age 47, Guardian employee for 7 years)

A lack of information about the nature of the "new jobs" available following the restructure concerned some employees. Staff were not given the presentation, with full details of the restructure and the different streams proposed within underwriting and claims, until after they had been interviewed. This increased some individuals' worries about being interviewed.

"It's the not knowing. We don't even know what we are being interviewed for. At the time of the interview, they are going to lay it out to you apparently, and what it is going to be like, and you can opt where you want to go ... So it's very unsettling it's a real headache job. You won't know until you are actually in the interview" (Lisabeth - N)

Others were angered by the lack of detailed information,

"The management reps have once again failed to sell this process (selection process) and have created yet more anger, mistrust and reduced morale. The Company say they are committed to a "level playing field" but we do not yet know where the goalposts are." (Steve - N)

In contrast to the experiences of individuals with N scores, those individuals with S scores tended to be more "relaxed" about the interview and "take the interview in my stride".

"Some were a bit worried (about the interview). For myself, I felt alright. I would say I was very confident. I mean 'x' our team leader keeps a record of everything and what we do, so I suppose it's what information s/he passes on about you that counts as well." (Jean - S)

"I feel my re-selection is a formality more than anything else. As such I don't feel anxious about the interviews at all." (Paul - S)

"I'm quite relaxed about it (interview), it is seen as routine and something that the Company has to be seen to be doing." (Susan - S)

"As regards the interview, I haven't given it a great deal of thought. To me it is just a case of turning up and answering the questions." (Lillian - S)

The fact that everyone had to be interviewed appeared to be a source of comfort for some N's who were worried about their interview.

"All staff are on an equal footing because everyone has to be interviewed, so we are all in the same position really." (Lisa - N)

"I'm not impressed by the Company, but everyone is in the same situation now with the interviews. No one has the edge over anyone else which is good." (Helen - N)

"We are all in the same boat. That helps I'd say." (Margaret - N)

"I suppose everyone is in with a fair chance by being re-interviewed. At least the questions are the same in the interview for all staff and therefore everyone is in with an equal chance." (Sue - N)

6.4.2 Analysis of WLOC and experiences of the selection process

Employees who expressed anxiety about the interview were mostly N's. However, WLOC seemed to discriminate between the way individuals responded to their anxiety about being interviewed. Those individuals with an external WLOC who were worried about being interviewed, did not tend to deal with their anxiety in an active manner.

"I didn't expect to be in a job and to have to be interviewed again. I was very nervous about the interview. It was like going for a job all over again. There was nothing I could do about it. I just worried until it was over." (Lisabeth - N External WLOC)

"The selecting in wasn't handled well. People were generally worried. I was worried. I didn't deal with it (interview) at all well at the time." (Mia - N External WLOC)

"I shouldn't really blame it on my nerves, but I do suffer from a nervous condition and I think my stress started then (around the time of the interview), thinking Oh God, if I make a mistake I am going to be out of a job, you know ... I wasn't coping well at all ... the sigh of relief came when I was actually told I would have a job and not before then." (Sue - N External WLOC)

"The interview is occupying my thoughts. Not all the time, but it is there in my mind. The interviews are next week. I'm nervous I would say, but there is nothing I can do about it." (Lucy - S External WLOC)

In contrast, those employees with a medium/internal WLOC were more active in their responses to worries about the interview.

"I've got my little guide book on what to expect. I had a sneaky look at a spread sheet sent to us with different headings relating to the questions. I can work out what the questions are going to be. I will swot over the bank holiday - things like what is on the appraisal summary forms." (Louise - N Internal WLOC)

"It's worrying ... but I need to show that I can do the job and do what they want. I'm reading up on the pamphlets they gave us about what they want from people." (Margaret - N Medium WLOC)

"It's been stressful, but the information about the interviews was good - the leaflets were in plain language and were helpful." (Jane - N Internal WLOC)

"I don't think it was necessary to interview everyone again really. It's caused needless worry. I was quite concerned about the interview, being interviewed. But, they did explain it. They sent us little leaflets about selection which were good. What the selection would involve. It sort of set things out really so you could plan your answers." (Karen - N Internal WLOC)

Some employees talked about the interview as an "*opportunity*" for them to impress management, ask for a different position within the company, or express preferences for placement. These individuals all had an internal/medium WLOC.

"The interview gave me a chance to show off, and also to ask about moving to a new position." (Ron - S Internal WLOC)

"Had interviews for job selection - went well I felt ... it was very thorough but quite positive I felt it was an opportunity to put my views forward as to what I want job-wise." (Jane - N Internal WLOC)

"The actual interview didn't bother me as such because it was a chance to lay down to the person interviewing you what you've done and where you've been and where you see yourself in the future." (Darren - S Internal WLOC)

"I was asked to sign a permanent contract, so went to 'x' and 'y' (managers) about it. I realised that I would probably be ending up with a job in 'z' (department), so I gave an alternative in the interview. I had my interview answers prepared." (Catherine - S Internal WLOC)

6.4.3 Social support seeking in response to being interviewed

Few individuals talked about having sought social support as a strategy to deal with the interviews. Some individuals, particularly those with N, did look to others for help and comfort around the interview period, but these examples of social support tended to focus upon issues of job insecurity and/or uncertainty, rather than upon the interview itself. Some individuals received extra guidance from their managers to supplement the '*Guide to Structured Interview*' leaflet that was distributed to all employees. This extra help tended to be unprompted and depended very much upon the individual manager.

Generally, those N's who used social support as a strategy to deal with the interview process did not appear to have been helped by choosing such a strategy. The people who were approached for support, ie, colleagues and immediate line managers, were also

being interviewed for their jobs and were often reported as being '*anxious themselves*'. This appeared to further increase individuals' worries about being interviewed.

"It's quite worrying really. I've talked to other girls and we are all worried. One in particular who I go to lunch with. She used to work for the 'x' (other insurance company) and she's saying 'Oh, I've been through all this before' - exactly the same thing with the interviews and that. Well she lost her job. So that makes me even more frightened of the interview." (Margaret - NI)

"'x' (co-worker) and I talked about it (the interview) and looked through all the info together - they gave us this leaflet on what to do and when we read that we thought you would have been better off not reading it ... it really made you more worried I think than if you'd just went and not thought about it really. It made it seem more serious." (Doreen - NI)

"First it was 'x' (section leader) who half thought s/he would lose her/his job, now it is us ... I feel nervous about having an interview again ... everyone around me is nervous. Even 'x' (team leader) is nervous when I've talked to her about it. When you've got team leaders going around getting all het up it sort of makes you think well I should be really worried then as well." (Lisabeth - NE)

However, there were occasions when managers were helpful in the support offered to staff in relation to the interviews. For example,

"We can have a laugh, but there are serious times as well. Ninety percent of us are on the same wavelength. Even 'x' (team leader) is 30 something and mucks in ... I can go to 'x' with anything. S/he knows what we are going through with the interview stuff and has helped me with getting time off." (Nicola - NE)

A number of staff talked about actively avoiding contact with others around the time of the interviews, to avoid others' negative opinions and anxieties. Those individuals who opted for this strategy were all introverts and mostly at the stable end of the N continuum.

"During the interviewing I didn't really talk to people, but I think it was because people were quite worried and I didn't want to talk to those people. I think a lot of people were so anti the whole thing and I didn't agree with them, so I didn't really want to talk, didn't want to be negative." (Lillian - SI)

"To be honest, I'm just trying to keep my head down and keep myself to myself because I don't want to be involved with all the panic talk about the interviews." (Jane - NI)

"I am not really doing anything apart from being aware of what is going to happen, and I'm steering clear of those people who are getting all worked up about the interviews. That sort of stuff can rub off." (Susan - SI)

6.4.4 Summary

6.4.4.1 General perceptions about the interview

An analysis of the data relating to the interview, did not reveal differences in perceptions and/or responses to being interviewed that were related to personal or environmental factors. Most staff were unhappy about having to be reinterviewed for their jobs. However, it should be noted that once the interviews were over, a number of staff commented upon how fair the process had been and were complimentary about management's handling of the interview process. Prior to the selection process, most research participants suspected that the selection process was a *"sham"*, that managers already knew who they wanted in their teams, and that staff were being interviewed to *"placate the union"* and to disguise the fact that an outcome of the process would be compulsory redundancies. However, many employees' negative feelings were about the Company choosing to conduct interviews during a period where, because of the restructure, workload was already greatly increased. These individuals expressed annoyance that the interviews were so *"disruptive"* to normal working life and contributed to *"an even greater workload"* in some cases. This shows that it is important to remember that stressful events do not necessarily occur in isolation and that an individual's feelings about one event may be compounded by their feelings about a different event. Some researchers have acknowledged that responses to perceived stress in one domain, eg, work, may be compounded by perceived stress in a different domain,

eg, home (Bolger et al 1989). However, the present finding demonstrates the importance of considering the multitude of different stressors that may be present in a single domain when investigating feelings and responses to a particular potential stressor. Again, the importance of an understanding of the context within which an individual operates is emphasized in the current findings. Competing change initiatives, described in Chapter 4 under the heading 'multiple strategies', may result in implementation difficulties with some changes being deemed more important, to the detriment of other changes. However, we can see from the present section, competing change initiatives such as the interview process, and the restructure, with the knock-on effect of dramatic workload increases, may lead to problems at the individual level. Pressure of workload appeared to compound individuals' negative responses towards being interviewed.

6.4.4.2 N and feelings about and responses to being interviewed

Despite the generally held view that the interview process was a "*charade*", many individuals were very anxious about being interviewed. Often, the same individuals who expressed anxiety, also described the interviews as "*meaningless*" and "*a sham*". In view of the literature, these individuals' distress at the prospect of being interviewed is puzzling. For Lazarus (1991), the relationship, or transaction, between a person and their environment only becomes stressful if "relevant to personal goals of importance" (Lazarus 1991, p.3). If an individual perceives the interview as "*meaningless*", then this would suggest that the interview is not important to them. A possible explanation is that these individuals were not expressing what they truly felt about the interviews. Another explanation is that these individuals wanted the interview to be meaningful and were distressed about the prospect that managers had already made up their minds about "*who's in and who's out*". A different interpretation is that the distress these individuals' experience may be quite divorced from their appraisal of whether a potentially stressful encounter is significant to them in respect of important personal goals. This latter interpretation has serious consequences for transactional theories as it suggests that appraisal of events in relation to personal goals is not always a pre-cursor to an individual's choice of response towards such events. Reactions towards events may, in

some instances, stem directly from pre-existing psychological dispositions, rather than from appraisal of events.

Once again, in keeping with the findings for job insecurity and uncertainty, and also in support of prior research (Payne 1988, McCrae 1992, Mayes 2000), N's tended to express the most anger and anxiety about the interviews. In contrast, many S's, although annoyed by the timing of the interviews, described feeling "*relaxed*", even "*confident*" about being interviewed.

Some N's analysed their situation and took comfort from the thought that everyone was being interviewed, so that no one had an advantage. Such cognitive appraisal is not seen in the literature as being typical of N's. Prior research has found cognitive appraisal of stressful events at work to be negatively correlated with work-related anxiety (Latack 1986). It is possible that the type of cognitive appraisal adopted by N's in response to interview worries by the current research participants does not correspond with those found in coping measures used by most researchers in this field. Statements in coping measures, by necessity, tend to be very broad, whereas reports of coping by participants in the present research tend to be very specific. Nelson & Sutton (1990), after finding no links between coping with job-related stress and job-related outcomes, concluded that coping measures may well be inappropriate for a work context. The present findings also suggest that the traditional method of researching coping, through using standard coping measures, does not necessarily capture the complexity and subtlety of individuals' coping behaviour.

6.4.4.3 N and WLOC and response to being interviewed

Those N's with an external WLOC tended to dwell upon their anxiety. However, a number of N's with an internal WLOC took steps to reduce their anxiety by preparing for their interview. As noted in the section on job insecurity, and in contrast to findings in the literature, (Billings & Moos 1984), problem-focused coping did not appear to reduce these individuals' anxieties about potential job loss, or the process of having an interview.

This further emphasises the need to take into account intra-personal interactions between individual differences such as neuroticism and locus of control when investigating coping.

Some individuals, mostly S's, but some N's, with an internal WLOC, talked about using the interview as an opportunity to progress their careers. This approach to the interview involved these people thinking about the interview in advance and making preparations in order to impress the interviewers, or at the very least, put their preferences for job placement across. Whereas N's with an external WLOC seemed to focus upon their anxiety and expressed powerlessness in relation to the interview, N's with an internal WLOC reported that they actively prepared for the interview and one N with an internal WLOC even viewed the interview as an "*opportunity*" for career advancement. This tendency towards passive vs active responding by externals and internals respectively is well supported by the literature (Parkes 1984). Although locus of control is generally found to be negatively correlated with neuroticism (Payne 1988), numerous studies have found these concepts to be distinct, albeit related (Ray & Katahn 1968, Organ 1976, Archer 1979). However, there is a lack of research into the interactive effects of anxiety and locus of control (Spector 1982). The present research makes some progress towards filling this gap by suggesting that under certain circumstances, locus of control may be a contributing factor in the decision for anxious individuals to be active or passive in relation to a presenting problem. However, the suggestion here is that when an anxious individual actively problem-solves in relation to a perceived stressor, their potential for a successful outcome in relation to the specific problem may be enhanced, but their feelings of anxiety will not necessarily be reduced by such activity. If anxiety reduction is the desired outcome, coping, in the form of distraction, or escape, may well be a more successful approach.

6.4.4.4 Social support as a response to being interviewed

Overall, the literature suggests that social support ameliorates the negative consequences of workplace change (Ganster et al 1986, Dignam & West 1988, Callan 1993, Moyle

1998). However, social support, sought mostly by N's in the current research, appeared to be generally unhelpful as a strategy for reducing worries about the interviews. The present findings seem to support Carver et al's (1989, p.269) assertion that whilst emotion-focused social support may prove positive through providing reassurance, it can also have a detrimental effect by focusing upon negative emotions and confirming negative perceptions about a particular stressful event. Other researchers who have investigated the negative effects of social support (Buunck et al 1989), describe a 'boomerang effect' whereby in high stressor groups, social support seemed to increase stress levels, whilst in low stressor groups, social support appeared to reduce stress levels. The present findings appear to support both Carver et al and Buunck et al. The organisational climate at GID during the first half of 1997 in particular was described by both staff and managers as *"tense"* and *"full of anxiety"*. Such a climate may well have produced what Buunck et al (1989) term 'high stressor' circumstances. It is plausible that N's, who were the group most likely to seek social support in relation to the interviews, were not emotionally calmed by such support because talking to others within the 'tense' and 'anxious' climate further increased their own negative feelings about the interviews. However, one individual with an N score did report having had positive support from their team leader in relation to worries during the interview period. This particular team leader is described as being 'understanding' and assisted the individual in 'escaping' from the negative environment at work through *"getting time off"*. This type of support is described conceptually in the literature as "instrumental" (Buunck & Peters 1994 p.181) and contrasts with the social support described by other N's which could be conceptualised as "intimate". So, perhaps the success of social support is contingent upon a 'fit' of type of support and situation. Buunck & Peters (1994 p.178) have suggested that contradictory findings on the benefits of social support may be due to researchers' "lack of agreement on what constitutes social support." Certainly, the present findings suggest that it would be useful to develop categories showing types of social support in order to fully assess it's role in the coping process.

The lack of effective support offered by team leaders generally is possibly because team leaders were also being interviewed for their jobs at the same time as team members and

may well have been experiencing anxiety themselves. Many team leaders were also under significantly more work pressure during the interview period because supervisors and managers were busy interviewing staff, leaving team leaders with an increased workload. Again, these circumstances could contribute to what Buunck et al (1989) term 'high stressor' circumstances, resulting in team leaders' inability to offer effective social support to their team members.

This finding highlights an important issue when looking at people's responses to major change. It is possible that some staff members would ordinarily have sought support from team leaders at this time, but did not because such support was unavailable. So, although an individual's choice of coping strategy might well be determined to some extent by personality dispositions, it will also be determined by the availability of external resources. Again, the importance of researchers taking account of contextual factors in the investigation of dealing with major change is emphasised in the present findings. There is a recognition in the literature that situational factors should be included in research into stress, coping and wellbeing in organisations (Edwards 1992). However, few researchers have investigated those aspects of the work-place and of a person's place within the work-place that may constrain individuals' behaviour. An exception is Mayes et al (2000) who included job level as a situational factor in their study of predictors of coping behaviour. However, the present findings suggest that, besides relatively 'fixed' situational factors, such as job level, there are other, more malleable situational factors, such as manager's mood, that are also important to consider when looking at employees' choice of coping behaviour and the effectiveness of such behaviour in response to major change.

6.4.4.5 N and E and social support

Some introverts, most of whom scored S on the N dimension, expressed concern that their own emotional equilibrium would be de-stabilised by contact with colleagues during the interview period, so they actively avoided colleagues at this time. Again, this finding contradicts the assumption that social support is beneficial for individuals experiencing

difficulties. The literature suggests that extraverts tend to perceive situations in a more positive light than introverts (Burke et al 1993) and that extraverts tend to use more successful coping strategies than introverts, such as social support seeking and problem-solving, when faced with stressful situations (McCrae & Costa 1986, Kardum & Krapic 2001). However, the present findings suggest that extraverts' tendency to seek out social support in response to potentially stressful circumstances may well be detrimental under certain conditions. Within the present research context, where individuals are in a work situation where there are many anxious people, the decision by a number of introverts actively to avoid contact with people may well be a more adaptive strategy than social support seeking. We could further speculate that this avoidance helped these individuals to perceive the interview process more positively than others. Those introverts who talked about actively avoiding contact were mostly S's, whereas there were a number of N's who did engage in social support seeking. It is plausible that one of the reasons why S's generally perceived the interviews more positively than N's was because, unlike N's, S's did not tend to engage in negative discussions with colleagues, and were therefore not as focused as N's upon negative emotions and negative perceptions about the interview process. This interpretation would correspond with Buunck et al's 'boomerang effect', mentioned earlier in this summary section.

6.4.4.6 Summary table - feelings

Table 6.5 - Summary table - N, E and WLOC and feelings about interview process

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Negative	Angry, insulted Worried, nervous
S	Neutral	Interviews just a formality, routine
S	Positive	Confident

Once again, there is a marked difference between the way N's and S's feel about the Demeter project. In the lead up to the interviews, most people, irrespective of personality type, perceived the interviews as mere "window dressing". This was associated with a

lack of emotional expression in many S's, expressions of 'confidence' in some S's, but was associated with expressions of 'anger' and feeling 'insulted' in N's. Despite there being a consensus amongst staff that the interviews were a "*charade*", many N's were extremely worried and nervous about the prospect of having an interview.

6.4.4.7 Summary table - responses

Table 6.6 - Summary table - N, E and WLOC and responses to interview process

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Engage	Analyses, 'all in the same boat' Seeks social support - emotion focused
N/IntWLOC	Engage	Interview preparation
N/ExtWLOC	Engage	Dwells on problem
IntWLOC	Engage	Used interview as opportunity to progress career
S/I	Disengage	Avoided contact with anxious colleagues

N's tended to respond to both job insecurity and uncertainty by disengaging from the situation. However, N's responses to the interview involved engagement with the situation. It was only some I's who disengaged through avoiding contact with others around the time of the interview. N's engaged with the situation through seeking social support.

Despite the literature viewing engagement responses as being more adaptive than disengagement responses (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996), it is plausible that through social support seeking, N's increased their anxiety, whilst those I's who avoided social contact during the interview period, were able to contain their anxiety. The organisational climate was described as "tense" and "full of anxiety" from the announcement of job losses in December 1996, through to re-interviewing senior managers from January to March 1997, middle managers in April 1997 and staff during May/June 1997. During April and May in particular, when team leaders were awaiting the outcome of their interviews, and managers were busy interviewing first team leaders, then staff, opportunities for receiving quality social support from managers and from colleagues was lacking.

Mostly, social support was described in terms of having increased individuals' sense of anxiety about the interviews. Social support was only described positively on very few occasions. Categorising coping into engagement vs disengagement, problem-focused vs

emotion-focused, and itemising types of coping responses might provide useful classification tools for researchers (Stephoe 1991). However, the above finding reiterates the inappropriateness of labelling a particular coping behaviour, or class of coping behaviours, adaptive or maladaptive without taking into account the context within which such responses occur, along with individual perceptions of the particular circumstances that trigger such responses, and perceptions of the outcomes of these responses.

N's also analysed their situation relative to those around them and drew comfort from the knowledge that all staff were "*in the same boat*" in respect of the interviews. Cognitive reappraisal is not associated with N in the literature (Latack 1986). However, it is possible that cognitive measures favoured by researchers in the coping field do not reflect the subtlety of response captured by methods that generate 'rich data'. (Nelson & Sutton 1990).

As a group, individuals with an internal WLOC responded positively to the interviews, viewing the interview as a career advancement opportunity. As might be anticipated, responses by internal N's tended to differ from responses by external N's. Internal N's actively prepared for their interviews, whilst external N's tended to dwell upon their negative feelings about being interviewed. However, both groups continued to report elevated anxiety in relation to the interviews, despite these disparate responses. Again, this demonstrates that a particular class of coping, for example problem-focused, cannot be judged as more effective than another class of coping, for example emotion-focused.

6.4.4.8 Linkages between the tables

S's neutral and positive feelings about the interviews were not associated with any notable responses. N's elevated emotions in relation to being interviewed were associated with a variety of responses. One type of response, which only emerged when the individual also had an internal WLOC, was problem-focused, ie, interview preparation. The other 3 types of responses were emotion-focused, ie, cognitive appraisal, social support seeking, and, in the case of N's with an external WLOC, dwelling upon feelings relating to the

problem. Generally, these responses did not assist N's in reducing their anxiety. Indeed, the only response to interview-related worries that was reported to reduce anxiety at this time was the response of some I's, ie, avoiding colleagues. It is plausible that the organisational climate was so negatively emotionally charged at the time of the interviews, and that emotional support was so poor and poorly available, that any attempts to reduce personal anxiety would fail, unless individuals were able to divorce themselves from the negative aspects of their surroundings. This would suggest that the efficacy of coping responses is very much environment dependent and further reinforces the central argument of this thesis that the experience of major change at work is dependent upon a complex interplay of personal and organisational factors.

6.5 Workload fluctuations

During the research period there were marked fluctuations in the workload of staff, particularly for those individuals working in the underwriting, claims, agency and IT departments. Although some of the extra work pressure was described as 'seasonal', much of the increase in work was a direct result of the Demeter project. In the months leading up to the Demeter restructure, agency business needed to be organised for transfer to Head Office; new business from the L&G purchase had to be integrated into Guardian systems; backlogs needed to be reduced before restructuring; training was required in preparation for dealing with new types of work and offices had extra work because of the "pruning" of the area/branch network. These circumstances were compounded by a freeze on staff recruitment and resulted in a dramatic increase in workload for many employees. Following the Demeter restructure and the reallocation of brokers, a number of individuals also suffered from a serious decrease in their workload. This also caused problems with individuals "fighting over what little work there is", feeling "annoyed", "bored", "like a spare part" and "like I'm just stagnating".

6.5.1 N's and S's experiences of workload increases

There were noticeable differences in the way N's and S's experienced increases in workload. N's frequently reported feeling "stressed" and "upset" by the increases, whilst a number of S's saw workload increases as a "challenge" and said they "like the pressure." For example,

*"I did blow up the other week. People are off sick and 'x' (manager) asked if I would help out. I'm already overloaded and I just blew up and was crying ... I just feel put on and put on - I mean, put a brush up my backside and I'll clean the floor while I'm at it, you know." (Helen - N)**

"Yesterday, I took 81 calls in one day. It is so hectic. Pressure, pressure, pressure. I go home and take it out on my husband. I am moody and moan when I've left. I can't help it, it winds me up so much, I wish I could switch off, but I can't." (Lisabeth - N)

*"I don't cope well with pressure. I don't like the pressure we are under at the moment. I try to say you can only do what you can, but I'm a perfectionist and like to get work done." (Mia - N)***

"I've been shouting and swearing quite a bit because of the extra pressure. 'x' (manager) has given me a verbal warning about it. But, we've been thrown in the deep end. The volume of work is a real problem and I just feel dumped on." (Tom - N)

contrasts with S's comments about increased workload,

*"I want a challenge, me. I like to be busy and work under pressure. Things have been difficult for others with the workload. But as I say, I like the pressure." (David - S)**

"We are just snowed under here. Should be 4 of us, but 2 people off at the moment. Trying to get on and clear everything. I'm just focusing on getting everything done at work. It's good in a way. Keeps me busy. On my toes." (Peter - S)

*"I like pressure. I like the feeling of pressure where there is the chance to get things done and get stuck in." (Lillian - S)***

"We've extra work with the move coming up, but it's just a case of head down and get on with it. It's very satisfying to see the pile on my desk getting smaller and smaller!" (Sheila - S)

The quotes above marked '*' are from individuals who are in the same team. Likewise, the quotes marked '**' are from individuals who are in the same team. These extracts were deliberately chosen to emphasise that although the nature of work and level of workload experienced within the two teams was similar, individual responses to the workload were quite different.

The extracts above already demonstrate that there appear to be differences in the way S's and N's deal with increased pressure at work. N's tended to respond with emotional outbursts whereas S's appeared to address the problem and find ways of tackling the extra workload. It should be noted that some S's were negative about the heavy workload, but

none of the employees in the N group reported feeling positive about the increased workload.

A number of individuals with N scores used displacement activities as a way of dealing with their emotional responses to an increased workload.

"Coping with my work means that I have to do overtime to keep up. There have been times where I've come home from work feeling really upset and stressed, so I've gone to the gym and felt a whole lot better when I've come out. The gym helps me to forget work." (Kate - N)

"For the next two weeks until the changeover it's going to be crazy. It's really hectic ... I still feel stressed. I try to switch off after work and walk for 10 minutes to the car to cool off." (Lisabeth - N)

"I feel awful under pressure. I've been getting grouchy and sometimes I just have to go out for 5 minutes." (Mia - N)

Some N's became ill in response to an increase in workload.

"I was just absolutely bamboozled with work, it was just unbelievable, I didn't know where to start, so I became ill. I had the rest of the week off ill. I had a stomach upset. It was the stress of it probably." (Angela -N)

"I was ill on Monday and Tuesday last week because I just couldn't cope with the work ... I had 'x' to cope with and had no help from 'y' (colleague) ... I was really upset. I was off sick for 2 days." (Vicky - N)

"The problem is, when you are under stress, they want you to do more, and that is what pushed me over the top. Twice, well three times now I've been off with stress and it's always because of the backlog situation, them pushing you to do more, and you can't do it, you just physically can't do it ... The work is piling up now and I admit I have a very low stress tolerance. I am feeling really stressed and panicky ..." (Then, 2 months later)

"As usual, the reason for being off sick was my nerves. I finally had to give in after having several panic attacks." (Sue - N)

"Soul destroying really - there's so much work. I can't keep up and I don't have time to think. Everything just seems too much at the moment - we are all so bogged down here on our section with work. On Thursday I fainted and had to go home for the day. It could be the Prozac side effects, but I just think the work is getting to me." (Margaret - N)

6.5.2 Interaction between WLOC and N in response to workload increases

None of the research participants with S scores responded to an increased workload with emotional outbursts, displacement activities or illness. A large number of both N's and S's talked about working harder in order to deal with an increased workload. There appears to be a relationship here with WLOC. Those N's and S's who talked about dealing with the heavy workload by working harder all scored medium/internal on the WLOC dimension. However, there was a distinct difference in the way that these particular N's and S's tended to talk about increasing their output. N's talked about working longer hours, whereas S's tended to talk about improving their efficiency.

"Still continuing to wade through the workload which hasn't decreased. Feeling very stressed all the time because of this ... Can't do anything about it except put in the extra hours. I'm doing a lot of extra at the moment." (Jane - N Internal)

"The workload I had before the increase was substantial and I am now feeling swamped ... Regarding the increased workload, I am now working an average of an extra one and a half hours a day in an attempt to maintain some level of customer satisfaction." (Lisa - N Internal)

"The phones have been busy and that is hacking me off. Working longer hours to try to clear the backlog." (Rachel - N Internal)

"I'm mad busy. I'm working much harder now. There's no flexitime at all and I'm the only one on my team doing the personal lines business, so I just have to put mega hours in to keep on top of things. It stresses me out if I fall behind." (Nicola - N Internal)

These responses contrast with medium/internal S's responses to an increased workload,

"The workload is greater, but I think we will cope ... I feel alright about this, as I like to keep busy. I am just reorganising my systems to cope with the extra work." (Dorothy - S Medium)

"My job is more pressurised now with the Demeter changes, but I'm doing fine. 'x' (colleague) and me were kept in the dark with Demeter so we've had lots of problems as a result. But, I like the fire fighting aspects to my work. I like to find ways of getting the jobs done efficiently. It keeps me interested." (Harvey - S Medium)

"It is getting quite busy, but I do like working under pressure, otherwise I get bored if there aren't a lot of things to do. With this job, there are an impossible amount of things to do." (Paul - S Internal)

"My colleague is off sick and there's no replacement. We are struggling. I'm able to deal with the pressure though. I almost feel myself stepping up a gear. The harder things become I see pressure as a challenge and say right I'm going to get on top of this and do something about it so that the work gets done. I think of ways to organise my work so that I get through it more quickly and well." (Lillian - S Internal)

Although both N's and S's with medium/internal WLOC are using 'work hard', a problem-focused coping strategy, to deal with the extra workload caused by the structural change aspect of Demeter, N's and S's perceived pressure in different ways. Many S's talked about the extra pressure in positive terms, *"I like to keep busy"*, *"I do like working under pressure"* and *"I see pressure as a challenge"*, whereas N's were more negative about extra pressure and talked about feeling *'hacked off'* and *"very stressed."* Also, whereas internal N's kept up with the extra work by working longer hours, medium/internal S's talked about reorganising aspects of the work environment in order to deal with an increased workload.

6.5.3 Social support seeking - interactions between N and E

Many staff talked about their team leaders' attempts to ease the workload through reallocation, obtaining extra cover and overtime. These efforts by managers were unprompted and welcomed by staff. Whilst staff were positive about managers who *"put*

themselves in our shoes", and who were "on the same wavelength", when managers shared their own anxieties with staff, this was not perceived as being helpful. The following extract is from an individual whose team suffered a severe decrease in workload following the restructure:

"I'm thinking of bringing my knitting or taking a part time job at Marks & Spencer it's so quiet ... Had lunch with 'x' (team leader). She told me in confidence she's demented with worry because it will be her/his job on the line if we don't get the work in. Obviously the insecurity is back again. If s/he's anxious about her future, then we need to be anxious about ours." (Margaret - NI)

This particular team leader did not share her/his anxieties with other members of the team who did not report anxiety in relation to the low levels of work, but instead reported feeling *"fed up and bored"* (John - NI) and *"...it helps that there's not so much pressure. Not so many grey hairs."* (Martin - NE)

Many individuals sought practical support in response to workload fluctuations, however, NE's were the most active group in seeking out this type of support.

"I've only had 3 days training here. The department at 'x' (other office) were too busy. There's so much work, I've been asking for help all the time, but the others have helped me out." (Helen - NE)

"I've asked on several occasions for someone else to ease the workload and finally it has come through. I feel a lot better than I did last week, we all do." (Lisabeth - NE)

"I am just exhausted after two days. I have asked for extra help yesterday ... I have even asked if a friend can come in and help me out for 2 weeks." (Rachel - NE)

"With the amount of work, I didn't know where to start ... I had to ask 'x' and 'y' (colleagues) to help me, they had done that before so they knew more than me, but it was very stressful." (Angela - NE)

In contrast with the other groupings, NE's also asked for emotional support in response to workload fluctuations.

"We are 2 staff down and I was crying because of the workload. I talked to 'x' (colleague) who said to me, you've only got one pair of hands. Do your 35 hours and if you can't finish it, then so be it." (Helen - NE)

"I have been off work sick and have been upset at work. 'x' (manager) comforted me and s/he told me I must not get worked up. If there are too many calls I should just tell her/him and s/he will see what s/he can do." (Lisabeth - NE)

"I'm conscientious and worry about the pile of work. I feel awful under the pressure. I've been getting grouchy ... some of my colleagues are very understanding about it and take time to talk to me." (Mia - NE)

6.5.4 Summary

6.5.4.1 Introduction

Most research participants experienced significant workload fluctuations during the period of study. Most had to deal with increases in workload and a few had to deal with a severe decrease in workload. Job role, personality and WLOC all differentiated between individuals' perceptions of, and responses to, increases in workload. However, the number of people who experienced a decrease in workload was so small that it was not possible to assess whether there were any particular patterns of perceptions and/or responses, driven by dispositions, relating to falls in workload.

6.5.4.2 Neuroticism and experience of increased workload

N's reported feeling stressed and upset by increases in workload, whereas many S's reported that they enjoyed pressure. Increased workload, or 'role overload' is often investigated as a 'stressor' variable in studies of occupational stress (Van Sell et al 1981, Latack 1986). The positive effects reported by S's of a supposedly undesirable event, ie, increased workload, are therefore worthy of note. Stress research tends to overlook the

positive psychological consequences of supposedly negative events. Exceptions are Levi (1990) and Thoits (1995) who both acknowledge that occupational stressors may be experienced by workers as either "the spice of life or the kiss of death" (Levi 1990, p.1143). Again, this finding accentuates the importance of examining individual appraisals of events, and also emphasises that 'stress' is not an objective variable per se, but is an experience arising out of a person's perception of their environment (Briner 1993). Further, this experience can be positive or negative.

Many N's responded to increases in workload through emotional outbursts, using displacement activities such as exercise, or by becoming ill, whereas S's, whilst acknowledging the increased workload, did not necessarily talk about having to 'cope' with this situation. Where S's did talk about coping with extra work, the strategies used were predominantly problem-focused. This finding is incompatible with Parkes' (1986) findings in a study of student nurses. In Parkes' study, analysis of a general coping measure showed that 'direct action coping' (ie, efforts to change the situation) was negatively associated with neuroticism. However, the same study found that in a specific situation where workload increased, both high and low N's used more 'suppression coping' (ie, ignoring the situation) as workload increased. It is possible that the nature of nursing work is so different from the nature of insurance work, that the effects of increased workload upon nurses and insurance workers cannot be compared.

6.5.4.3 N and WLOC and response to increased workload

Individuals with an internal WLOC reported "*working harder*" as a response to increases in workload. However, internal N's and S's had differing approaches to "*working harder*". Those internals with N scores tended to talk about dealing with the extra work by working extra hours, whereas those internals with S scores tended to talk about dealing with the extra work by finding ways to reorganise their systems and improve their efficiency. Both of these responses to increased workload could be described as problem-focused. However, the type of response adopted by S's, where features of the environment are modified in order to deal with a potentially stressful situation, has been

identified by some researchers as 'problem-focused innovative coping' (Bunce & West 1994). Bunce & West's research found that work overload elicited a significant amount of innovative coping. The present study adds to Bunce & West's findings by suggesting that a combination of personality factors may be implicated in individuals' choice of adopting such a strategy in response to an increased workload.

Prior research has shown that, in contrast to externals, internals perceive more alternatives in choice situations (O'Brien 1984), they are better at collecting and processing information (Phares 1976) and they use more problem-focused coping than emotion-focused coping (Parkes 1984, Evans et al 1993). When faced with an increased workload, S's tended to see the extra pressure as a "*challenge*", whereas N's talked about feeling "*very stressed*". We might therefore expect N's to be experiencing elevated levels of anxiety about the extra work. The literature shows that learning, concentrating and processing incoming information are all impaired when a person is anxious (Taylor 1991). It is possible that, unlike internal S's, internal N's were unable to employ creative solutions in response to an increased workload because their elevated anxiety impaired their ability to problem solve in a more sophisticated way. So, whilst problem-focused coping tended to be adopted by internals in response to a significant increase in workload, internals' positioning on the N continuum appeared to determine which type of problem-focused coping they used. Again, the importance of investigating combinations of personality factors is highlighted by the present research.

6.5.4.4 Social support and workload fluctuations

Some managers offered staff, unprompted, practical support in response to workload fluctuations which was welcomed. Where a particular manager shared their anxieties about a lack of work with a team member, this resulted in the team member having a renewed sense of job insecurity. These findings correspond with findings reported in the previous section about the role of social support in dealing with the selection interview. Instrumental support, ie, support of a practical nature, was reported as being helpful, whilst intimate support, ie, support in which emotions were shared, resulted in heightened

anxiety. Again, these findings support Carver et al's (1989) suggestion that emotion-focused social support may be unhelpful in certain circumstances due to the focus upon negative emotions and perceptions.

NE's were the most active group in seeking out both problem-focused and emotion-focused social support in response to increases in workload. We have seen that N's tended to appraise increased workload as a threat. N's would therefore be expected to be more motivated than others to mobilise coping resources. Extraversion is associated with social support seeking (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995), so we would expect NE's to use more social support seeking as a response to increases in workload, than other personality groups.

6.5.4.5 Summary table - feelings

Table 6.7 - Summary - N, E and WLOC and feelings about workload increases

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Negative	Stressed, upset, angry
S	Positive	Like pressure, like to be busy, Satisfying

Again, it is the neuroticism personality dimension that clearly distinguishes between individuals feelings about change: in this instance, feelings about the increases in workload that arose out of implementation of the Demeter project. The differences in perceptions and experiences of increased workload between these groups are quite dramatic with N's feeling '*stressed, upset and angry*' and S's reporting that they '*like pressure, like to be busy*'.

6.5.4.6 Summary table - responses

Table 6.8 - Summary - N, E and WLOC and responses to workload increases

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Disengage	Exercise, walk away from situation Stress-related illness
N/IntWLOC	Engage	Work extra hours
S/IntWLOC	Engage	Reorganise, improve efficiency, 'step up a gear'
S	Engage	Focus, get 'stuck in',
S	Engage	Challenge, interested, like pressure
N/E	Engage	Social support seeking (problem- focused and emotion-focused)

Responses to increases in workload reflect the dramatic differences in feelings about the extra workload. N's disengaged from their situation in order to deal with their '*stress*' and '*anger*' either actively, by deciding to take exercise, or passively, by becoming ill. In contrast, many S's engaged with their circumstances through getting "*stuck in*" and appraising the extra workload as a "*challenge*". Internals reported that they '*worked harder*' in response to the increased workload, however, internal N's talked about working harder by putting in longer hours, whilst internal S's talked about working harder through improving their efficiency.

Generally, team leaders were described as being sensitive to the heavy workloads and did attempt to ease the workload, unprompted, through gaining extra cover, reallocation and overtime. However, the more senior managers were thought to be insensitive to the extra demands being placed upon staff. There was a feeling that local managers were generally doing everything they could in order to mitigate the escalation of work driven by the Demeter restructure, but whatever they did was not fully effective because "*the powers that be don't listen to them (local managers)*". We saw in Chapter 4 that staff felt that senior managers "*just railroad (these) changes through*" and that senior managers were perceived as being "*out of touch*" and "*remote*". Perhaps perceptions of imposed change and the powerlessness of local managers discouraged many staff members from seeking

social support. It was almost exclusively NE's who sought practical and emotional support from managers in relation to the extra workload. Again, this emphasises the importance of organisational context when examining people's choice of responding to major change.

6.5.4.7 Linkages between the tables

N's negative feelings about increased workload triggered disengagement responses such as exercise or illness. However, the story is more complex when personality combinations are considered. Internal N's worked longer hours in order to deal with the increased workload and contain their negative feelings associated with the large backlogs of work. NE's looked to colleagues and particularly to managers for both practical and emotional support.

N's reported feeling both "*angry*" and "*stressed*" about the increased workload. The effects of workload increases were exacerbated by three major factors. Firstly, during the research period, there was a freeze on recruitment. Secondly, there was a ban on overtime so that overtime was only granted in very exceptional circumstances. Thirdly, the workload increases occurred after the removal of flexitime in January 1997. The change from flexitime to 'flexible working' was assessed by many staff as "*taking away a system where we are paid for the hours we work (flexitime) and replacing it with a system where we work extra for nothing (flexible working)*". There were inconsistencies in the way that 'flexible working' was introduced. Some managers continued to operate a flexitime system, with handwritten records of people's time, and time off in lieu of hours worked, whereas other managers ran their teams on a rota system with no time off in lieu of extra hours worked. Some people's anger at the increased workload appeared to be fuelled by the perception that extra hours would have to be worked in order to cope with their workload, and that these hours could not be recouped as holiday at a later stage and would not be paid for through overtime. As N's, albeit predominantly internal N's, tended to cope by working extra hours, they were more susceptible to feelings of anger at having to work longer hours with no financial recompense in the way of overtime payments, and

no time off in lieu. S's tended to appraise their situation positively and find ways of improving efficiency, so that although they perceived that they were working harder, they did not necessarily work longer hours. This innovative coping response may have helped to protect S's from experiencing the negative feelings of anger expressed by N's.

6.6 Adjustment

The Demeter project caused substantial upheaval for staff within Guardian. Most of the research participants had to adjust to at least one of the following consequences of the Demeter project: new job, revised job role, new colleague(s), new manager(s) and new location. Some individuals had to adjust to losing their job. Only 4 out of the 40 research participants reported that they were not affected by any of these consequences.

Some individuals had to adjust to a completely new job role. Three people were promoted to team leader level. Other role changes were less dramatic and involved individuals having to deal with new lines of business and/or new types of brokers in addition to existing job requirements. Some participants had to deal with working in a new way with a focus upon telephone-based, or paper-based work. Some jobs became more desk-bound whilst other jobs now required individuals to visit clients outside the office regularly. Some individuals joined new teams, whilst others talked about adjusting to their team having new team members. There were changes within management following Demeter. This resulted in some staff adjusting to new managers. All research participants who kept their jobs continued to work in the same office building, but many were moved to a different location within that building.

6.6.1 Adjustment to new job/revised job role

Without exception, all of those people who took on a completely new job following the restructure were pleased about this outcome. All but one of these people had talked about dissatisfaction with their previous position. These individuals described feeling "*nervous but excited*", "*very pleased*", "*pleased I'll have less pressure*", "*a lot happier*", "*more confident*" and "*happy my ability is being recognised*". Some were still not working fully

within their new roles by the end of the research period, and these people expressed some uncertainty about the future, but on the whole they were *"happy about getting the new job"*. Three people received a promotion to team leader status. All three described feeling more motivated by their new role. One individual was demoted, but expressed *"relief at not having so much responsibility any more"*. Personality and WLOC did not appear to differentiate between individuals' responses to the move from one job to another. However, most of these people were only just settling into their roles when the research period ended and some had not officially started their new jobs when the research period came to a close. It is therefore not possible to fully assess whether personality and/or WLOC influenced research participants' adjustment to their new jobs.

Again, in respect of revisions to job roles. Although all those with revised job roles had been informed of these revisions, some were not working fully within their new roles when the research period ended. About half of those with revised job roles were happy with the changes and the other half were unhappy. Some of the people who were unhappy about changes to their job role expressed dissatisfaction with having been asked to take on new lines of business. Others were unhappy about the prospect of their role involving purely telephone-based work. Some people were disappointed that they had not had a salary increase to acknowledge the change in job role. Others were unhappy about having been allocated a role which appeared to be defunct because of a lack of work. One person was unhappy that their particular role change was on a temporary basis.

6.6.1.1 Neuroticism and voicing dissatisfaction

The nature of particular dissatisfactions were mostly related to the particulars of the role change. However, there appeared to be differences in the way that N's and S's responded to dissatisfaction with aspects of their new role. N's seemed to be fearful of voicing their dissatisfaction, whereas S's tended to be active in expressing their dissatisfaction, and in many cases achieved a positive outcome. The managers these S's addressed were senior department managers. For example,

"I am not generally outspoken, but I have said that I don't want to do 'y' (new line of business) and 'x' (department manager) has said that s/he won't make me do something I don't want to do ... Overall though my attitude is adapt and make the best of what you've got. If I didn't like it here I would leave." (Lillian - S)

"This new scheme I'm working on is on a temporary basis which I wasn't happy about. If they pulled the plug on the scheme I wanted to be sure I could go back to my old role. I know from experience that you get promised one thing here and they do another, so I asked for a written guarantee from them (department manager provided guarantee)."

(Lucy - S)

"Taking on the L&G work without any prior notice or training on what would be involved has been very pressured. I wasn't enjoying it at all. But I spoke with 'x' (manager) and between us we worked out a system which has taken the pressure off somewhat."

(Dorothy - S)

compares with,

"There's no flex at all now and I'm not being rewarded properly for the amount of time and effort I'm putting in. I am expecting that they'll bring my salary more in line with others on my team, but I haven't heard anything about that ... no I haven't asked anyone about my salary. You don't do yourself any favours here by speaking out. I'll just wait."

(Nicola - N)

"I'm not happy about the situation (new role), but what do you do? If I complain they'll start saying, bloody hell, he's a bit of a trouble maker, you know, and they mark you down. It's a fear of being stuck in a corner, because there's people who have been here for 30 years who've never progressed because they might have opposed something, and they are just left to fester." (Martin - N)

"I'm not happy and don't feel confident in the Company. OK, the changes have given me something extra to put on my CV, but we've had this new business put on us suddenly without being trained. I am under so much pressure that I'm losing sleep and am suffering with eczema - I've got rashes on my hands and headaches. There's no use

saying anything though. Last time there was a restructure people could see it wasn't going to work ... a group of people went and told the manager and her/his attitude was 'if you don't like it then leave'". (Angela - N)

Such fear of 'speaking out' was described in Chapter 4 and appeared to be present at every level of the organisation, right up to the Executive board. More N's than S's mentioned these Company 'stories' about the consequences of voicing negative opinions to management. However, even when S's did mention such 'stories', this did not appear to inhibit their behaviour and prevent them from discussing their concerns with quite senior managers.

6.6.2 Adjusting to new colleagues - extraversion

Overall, E's cited changes involving movement of team members, or moving floor, as the most salient of all changes during the research period. Whilst E's did indeed appear to be the group who were most concerned about the prospect of working in a new team, or having new team members (see 'uncertainty', 5.3.2), once these team movements took place, E's appeared to adjust well to these changes.

"I'm working with different people, but the job hasn't changed. We were just told to work here or there and that's it ... I'm working with people, most of them I already know. It's a relief that we all get on." (Martin - E)

"I felt a little apprehensive at first with having new staff I have never worked with before. However, everybody has settled in nicely and we are working well as a team." (Darren - E)

"The change around has all been put into place now and we all get on except for 'y' (one of the new colleagues) everyone agrees s/he's so obnoxious, nasty and rude ... I had to sit next to 'y' (new colleague) who I can't stand, but I told 'x' (manager) I am not happy. I've now got a new desk and it's boxed in in a way so that I'm blocked out of 'y's' (new colleague's) view, so all is rosy now. I'm happy now I've got my desk sorted." (Louise - E)

"I'm in a completely new team with all ex-L&G people, but it's working out well. It's very hard work as I'm the only one doing 'y' (line of business), but we get on well and support each other." (Nicola - E)

On the other hand, section 5.3.2 reported that I's only expressed worries about potential team personnel movements in relation to changes in the quantity of work handled by their team. However, once the team changes were put in place, I's seemed to be having more trouble adapting to team personnel changes than E's.

"I am worried that the new person we've got working with us isn't accurate ... I feel that I get all tensed up. One day this week I had to walk out because the 'x' (aspect of job) wasn't right and it gets to me. Our manager asked at the beginning how we were getting on, but that was only on the first day and I haven't been asked since. 'y' (new colleague) is a bit volatile and I'm not used to that." (Doreen - I)

"I find it difficult being with new people. There's a girl in my section a lot of people find her annoying and don't want to work with her. I just have to switch off from her ... It takes me quite a long time to get to know a new person. I have been feeling bad having an empty chair next to me where my colleague (ex-colleague) should be sitting." (Lillian - I)

"There's been a lot of bitching in the department since the changes. Some of the new people have been working extra hours and not getting time off for it because there's no flexitime. They don't like me leaving after I've done my 7 hours. In the past I've stayed late, but haven't got anything in return, so I think, why bother. The bitching has got so bad that I've now decided to leave. 'x' my team leader knows about it and has told the team that the reason I'm leaving is because of the bullying so that those who are responsible know." (Tracey - I)

6.6.3 Adjusting to new manager(s)

Both of the area managers who managed offices that participated in the research, kept their jobs following the selection process. However, one new branch manager was appointed to replace a manager who made a lateral move from the branch to an area

office. A total of 32 out of the 40 research participants experienced a change of departmental manager and/or section manager and/or team leader following the Demeter restructure. Indeed 3 research participants were promoted to the position of team leader following the selection process. Many people were happy with their new managers and there seemed to be a feeling that generally the management positions had been given to "competent", "approachable" individuals. A number of people made comparisons with their old managers, "S/he didn't like changes so wouldn't listen to any new ideas", "I didn't respect my old manager, s/he was a nice person, but hopeless at her/his job.", "With 'x' (new manager) there's a sense that s/he will sort things out, not brush things under the carpet like with 'y' (ex-manager)."

There were exceptions however. One newly appointed departmental manager in particular was criticised for "sucking up to management", "ignoring the problems" and "sacrificing quality just to get her/his backlog figures down.". Other newly appointed managers were considered to be "too hard a task master" and "putting undue pressure on us all to deliver without the rewards."

6.6.3.1 Neuroticism and voicing dissatisfaction

N's and S's tended to have different responses to their dissatisfaction with their new managers. S's were inclined to be more active than N's in addressing their reasons for being unhappy with their manager. For example,

"Our team leader is OK, trusting and approachable. But, we've been told that we can't just expect to work a 7 hour day. We've got to show the extra effort, but it's very low pay, so I feel this new manager (department) is milking us for all we've got ... I was happy to be on 'x' (new section) after the restructure, but the salary is so poor. I'm happy working there, the people are nice, the work is good, but there's been no salary increase for 18 months. I expected to get one and didn't, so have queried it with 'y' (section manager) who is now waiting on a response from 'z' (department manager). I think I'm the only one in the team who has queried the pay, but I've got to make a stand. Also with the latest

extended hours from 8-6. I've said I'm not happy with them and that's being taken further up too." (Darren - S)

"x' (department manager) is based in 'y' (area office) so we don't get a chance to see her/him really. I wasn't happy with my job and wanted to explore my prospects but I could see that 'z' (new section manager) was holding back. But I managed to contact 'x' (department manager) myself and s/he intimated that I would not get anywhere and would be better off elsewhere. I didn't want to hear it, but am glad that s/he was honest."

(Tracey - S)

"I'm not the sort of person who holds back if something is wrong. Like with this extended hours. I would find it hard to come in at 8am. It's not in our contract anyway, but I spoke with our manager and have his support. Things are still under discussion about how to arrange things, but at least I've said my piece." (David - S)

compares with,

"I'm not happy with the hours and that, especially as 'x' (new department manager) is such a slave driver. S/he told us that flexitime is out of the window and we are now working on a rota, but what can you do. I'm not going to be the one to rock the boat."

(Nicola - N)

"Some of our job description is supposed to be changing, but we just don't get the information any more with 'x' (new section manager) and 'y' (new department manager). Our old manager always told us loads of stuff. Maybe we only get the things that they (new managers) think we need to see, but it leaves us out on a limb really. I just don't know whether we are getting all the right info, but I can't go and ask them can I. We are at their mercy really." (Doreen - N)

"x' (new manager) has no respect in the whole of the building ... I want to ask for more pay, but am frightened 'x' (new manager) will reject me and say I'm not good enough."

(Rachel - N)

Only one N was actively outspoken about being dissatisfied with their new manager's approach. However, this individual expressed their dissatisfaction in an angry manner and did not achieve a satisfactory outcome.

"x' (new department manager) is just trying to please her/his immediate boss and the criteria is just get the backlog down. Forget about handling the biz well and giving us adequate training. I'm really angry about the whole thing. It's not fair. I've been told to tone my behaviour down, because it reflects badly on the team. Being angry with 'x' (new department manager) has backfired on me, but I really don't think I would have got anywhere if I'd handled things differently." (Tom - N)

6.6.3.2 Extraversion and assessment of managers' qualities

As shown in previous sections, managerial support can play an important role in helping staff to deal with the various consequences of change at work. Part of the process of adjustment seemed to involve staff assessing whether or not their new manager was empathetic and respectful and whether their new manager warranted respect. Those individuals who reported such assessments were predominantly E's. The following extracts demonstrate that staff were positive about those managers who were perceived as having empathy. However, where managers were perceived as lacking in empathy, staff decided that it was better not to ask these managers for support.

"My new manager is totally different. No messing or bickering, leaves you to get on with it and any problems s/he'll sort them out. Things have got better because we've got new managers (post selection). 'x' (new manager) is so refreshing to what we had in the past, s/he's approachable, I can just walk into her/his office and call her/him 'x' (first name), and I know that s/he understands me and the work I do, so I know that whatever the outcome I won't have been misrepresented if things go higher." (Mia - NE)

"I respect my new boss. I am a lot happier. I feel things are being run better ... s/he's a very good boss, on the ball, works hard, communicates, quite open, wants to get things done, you know where you are with her/him" (Kate - NE)

compare with,

"'x' (department manager) ... s/he's abrupt and won't give anyone the time of day. I went to her/him about my skills levels, but s/he virtually laughed at me. It's not fair. S/he's the only one who can make a difference with the skills levels, and it's important for the interview, but s/he doesn't know the first thing about me. Now I've had that bad experience with her/him there's no way I would go and ask about anything else." (Rachel - NE)

"I really don't feel there's understanding there. If 'x' (new branch manager) had really put her/himself in our shoes there's no way we'd have been treated so shoddily. It's like s/he's God up there and we are the minions. Totally unapproachable and not interested in what we think. S/he's the last person I would go to for help of any kind." (Julia - NE)

These extracts are all from NE's. NE's and E's have been shown in previous sections to be the groups most likely to seek social support in response to difficulties. Those individuals who perceive their managers to be empathetic are clearly at an advantage, as they will be willing to ask their managers for help and support during difficult times.

Employees also talked about their need to feel respected by their managers. Being treated with disrespect damaged the way employees viewed their new managers and hampered employees' willingness to then ask for support from these managers. For example,

"The communication isn't good here and I have to say that in the selection process presentation, I was put off asking questions because of the way 'x' (manager doing the presentation) talked to a guy who asked a question ... this guy said something a bit critical, but a valid point and that you know and he (manager) said 'well, what's the rate for a 50 year old underwriter who can't do his job?' S/he doesn't mince her/his words. Well, with that sort of disrespect towards staff, I feel that you can't really ask anything." (Darren - SE)

"I don't like 'x' (new manager). S/he belittles people. I was helping out with a mail shot the other day, stuffing envelopes and said to my friend 'they should give you a mug for this' (staff were given mugs as rewards in the MAD continuous improvement initiative). 'x' (new manager) overheard and said 'She's already got a mug in you'. Well, how can I ever approach her/him for anything now after that sort of put down?" (June - SE)

Again, these extracts are from individuals with an 'E' score. E's were the group who tended to seek out social support most in response to the consequences of major change. These individuals would therefore be disadvantaged by not feeling able to approach their new managers.

6.6.4 Adjusting to new location

A total of 14 out of 40 staff moved location following the Demeter restructure. A number of people expressed reservations before their move. Some were worried about losing their autonomy because their new location was *"more overlooked"*. Others were concerned that their desk space would not be *"up to scratch"*. Some people had already moved desks quite recently and were annoyed about having to move again. However, once the move had taken place most people were *"very pleased"* with their move and the others found the move *"acceptable"*.

"We've all moved desks now on our floor. I'm pleased about the move because it means that all 'x' (line of business) are sitting together and this improves our teamwork." (Kate)

"I've moved to the 'x' floor. I think it's a good move because it's mostly on this floor that people get noticed by management." (Darren)

"I came back from holiday ... I walked into the office and realised my desk had changed. I've organised myself at my new desk now and it's OK. I've put up new shelves and organised my papers. It feels so much less pressurised down here." (Margaret)

"The office move has been good. I'm now in a far more open desk area with some natural light outside and I feel I have more room. This desk seat feels more beneficial and clutter free to me." (Lisa)

Neither personality, nor WLOC, distinguished between people's responses to moving location within the office. As mentioned earlier in section 6.3 on 'uncertainty', E's cited anticipated movements of team personnel and changing location as the most salient changes during the research period. However, although E's expressed more concerns about changing location than the other individual difference groupings prior to the move, following the move, there was no discernible difference between the way E's and other groups adapted to their new location.

6.6.5 Adjusting to job loss

Seven research participants, out of a total of 40 in the diary/interview study, lost their jobs as a result of the Demeter restructure and/or selection process. Three employees lost their jobs and were not offered alternative employment within Guardian, whilst the other 4 were offered alternative suitable employment within Guardian. There was a marked difference between the way N's and S's talked about being faced with losing their jobs. S's tended to focus on their future and look at possible options, whereas N's tended to dwell upon their negative feelings about themselves and about the Company when asked about their responses to losing their jobs. For example,

"My feelings were mixed really. I wasn't upset, just gutted because I wasn't expecting it. I was thankful in a way because it made me realise that I didn't really want to do this all my life ... It has made me realise I must think about what job I really want." (Peter - S)

"I haven't really been happy working in (department) for a while now. I'm looking at this as an opportunity to look for another job." (Catherine - S)

"Personally, I feel I've got three options, 'x' (other Guardian location), a job here, which I know I could get, and redundancy. I'm waiting to find out more information." (Julie - S)

"I feel very angry that they wouldn't let me go (wanted voluntary redundancy), but I'm not the sort of person who would let this affect my work. I have been looking at all the options and have decided to take early retirement in February 1998. I think that this is the best plan for me." (June - S)

These responses to job loss contrast with the following:

"I feel let down by our management. No discussions (with management) have ever taken place as to how we can improve matters ... they don't seem to care about the feelings of the affected persons." (Gerry - N)

"I feel bitter that we were advised before Christmas. It is annoying that management stressed the importance of attending a meeting about core benefits, but not the meeting announcing redundancies." (Julia - N)

"Feel totally used by the Company and do not have much faith left in them ... The whole way that this was done, leaves you thinking if they do care for the staff." (Helen - N)

The above quotations were all taken from data received by individuals up to 2 weeks after discovering that they were losing their jobs. One of the N group, an introvert, continued to dwell upon his negative feelings about job loss right up until the time he left the Company. However, the other N's, who were both extraverts, began to reappraise their situation and look at things *"in a positive light"* 1-2 months after the job loss announcements.

6.6.5.1 Job loss and fairness

There were differences in individuals' perceptions of how they were treated by managers once the job losses had been announced. Individuals who described having been treated fairly and in a supportive manner by management were more positive about their experiences than those who perceived that they had been treated unfairly. For example,

"I thought that the way the interviews were handled and the way 'x' (manager) told me I didn't have a job was fair really. 'x' (manager) couldn't have done it any differently in my eyes really. There was counselling on offer along with seminars on CV writing and interview skills. I think I've been treated very fairly really. I get time off for interviews." (Peter - S/Internal WLOC)

compares with,

"I am very methodical and organised myself, so it has been a very frustrating, not to say upsetting, time for me because of the lack of information from which to base my decisions about my future ... the whole way along we've been treated unfairly. The interviews were done in a fair uniform way, but since the redundancy announcements, and the whole way along really, we've been left out of presentations and not been given really important information. It's been very unprofessional. My manager keeps fobbing me off and hasn't treated any of us fairly I'd say" (Julie - S/Internal WLOC)

6.6.6 Summary

Most research participants had to adjust to one or more of the following during the research period: new job, revised job role, new colleague(s), new manager(s) and new location. Some had to adjust to losing their jobs. Without exception, everyone who was allocated a new job was pleased with the change. People who moved location were *"pleased"* or at the very least found the move *"acceptable"*. However, the research period ended soon after these changes, so it is possible that some adjustment issues may have arisen after the end of the research period. However, in the early stages of the adjustment period, neither personality (E and N), WLOC nor any other individual difference factors (eg, age, department, job type) appeared to differentiate between the way people adjusted to a new job, or a new location. Personality and WLOC did however appear to differentiate between the way people felt about, and/or responded to, dissatisfaction with new job roles, having new colleagues and having new managers.

6.6.6.1 Revised job roles

People's dissatisfaction with revisions to their particular job roles seemed to be related to the details of the role changes. However, those N's and S's who expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of their revised job roles tended to respond differently. N's tended to be reluctant to voice their dissatisfaction, whilst S's tended to be active in expressing their

opinions. An association between N and lack of assertiveness has been shown in the literature (DeJong et al 1999). In relation to revised job roles, N's lack of assertiveness appeared to stem from a fear of the negative consequences of asserting themselves.

However, as described in Chapter 4, the company 'stories' about the negative consequences of speaking out against the organisation were held by non-managers and managers alike at every level of the organisation. We would therefore expect S's to be equally aware of the potentially negative consequences of asserting themselves.

However, after reporting an incident where she was "*outspoken*" about her job role, an S said "*If I didn't like it here I would leave.*" Perhaps this represents a difference between N's and S's in terms of assertiveness. N's would perhaps prefer to accept an unsatisfactory job role rather than risk jeopardising either their job or future career within the Company through being outspoken. In contrast, S's would rather leave the Company than stay in an unsatisfactory job role, so they were perhaps more willing than N's to risk the potentially negative consequences of speaking out against their revised job roles.

This example demonstrates once again that for any given situation there is no right or wrong mode of coping. The adaptive potential of a particular strategy depends upon the meaning individuals give to their circumstances. If, for example, N's had been persuaded to adopt an assertive stance, they would have jeopardised their career and possibly job security, which, as demonstrated earlier, tends to be distressing for this group.

Assertiveness would therefore probably lead to a negative outcome for N's, whereas this appears to have been an adaptive strategy for S's.

6.6.6.2 New colleagues

Whilst E's expressed most concern about changes within their team, or about being moved to a new team, once these changes took place, E's tended to adapt well, whereas I's appeared to have more difficulty in adapting to such changes. We saw earlier in the section on 'uncertainty' that E's were more upset than others by the uncertainty generated by the prospect of personnel movements within their teams. This finding was linked by the researcher to literature which shows that extraverts engage in socialising more than

introverts (Watson et al 1992). The implication within a work context is that extraverts would develop more social connectiveness with their team and would therefore be more concerned about losing a team member. However, extraverts tend to seek out and enjoy novel and stimulating situations (Eysenck & Eysenck 1985, Gallagher 1990, Furnham 1992). Perhaps, once the changes to personnel were implemented, extraverts' ease at adapting to new colleagues reflects their enjoyment of the novelty provided by having new colleagues.

6.6.6.3 *New managers*

Neuroticism and dissatisfaction with new managers

Many people were happy with their new manager(s). However, those S's who were unhappy with their new manager(s) tended to address their concerns, whereas N's tended to complain passively about their new manager(s). Again, this finding corresponds with previous research that shows an association between N and a lack of assertiveness (DeJong et al 1999). The findings on responses to job role dissatisfaction above suggest that N's were unassertive because they were fearful of the potentially negative consequences to their job security and future within the Company. N's lack of assertiveness about expressing perceived difficulties with new managers was again triggered by anticipated negative consequences. However, in this case, N's did not express fear, but powerlessness, eg, "... *what can you do.*" and "*We are at their mercy really.*" and concern about the anticipated negative consequences to their self esteem.

The only N who was outspoken about being dissatisfied with a new manager expressed this dissatisfaction in an angry manner. This particular individual had previously expressed a desire to leave the Company and had placed himself on the voluntary redundancy list prior to the interviews. He was therefore perhaps less worried than other N's about jeopardising his position with the Company through being angry with his new manager. Prior research has demonstrated an association between 'hostile reaction' to perceived stressful events and neuroticism (Gunthert et al 1999). However, the present findings suggest that such associations may or may not occur depending upon the nature

of the particular potential stressor, the way an individual perceives this potential stressor, and the way an individual evaluates the consequences of their reactions. This perhaps goes some way towards explaining the sometimes contradictory findings in the coping literature.

The literature supports both an association between neuroticism and hostility (Gunthert et al 1999) and an association between neuroticism and lack of assertiveness (DeJong et al 1999). In the present research, neuroticism is associated with both hostility, which could be viewed as being an assertive behaviour, and a lack of assertiveness. It is only by examining the contextual factors surrounding individuals, along with individuals' explanations for their behaviour, that these diverse behaviours can be understood in terms of personality grouping. So, overall, the present research shows that there are indeed patterns of behaviour in relation to potentially stressful events that are associated with personality type and disposition. However, an understanding of the individual's context and 'sense-making' (Weick 1995) also need to be considered in order to fully understand these patterns of behaviour in response to potentially stressful circumstances.

Extraversion and assessment of new managers

Adjusting to new managers involved employees (predominantly E's) assessing whether or not these new managers displayed empathy and respect. It is plausible that extraverts' frequent use of social support as a coping strategy (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995) motivated this group to make more detailed assessments than others about managers' personal qualities. When managers were perceived as lacking empathy and as displaying disrespect, staff reported that they would not approach these managers in the future for support. E's could therefore be disadvantaged in circumstances where help-seeking would not be available as a coping option because of having an unsympathetic manager. This finding again underlines the importance of an understanding of context when conducting research in this area (Lazarus 1991, Mayes et al 2000). Perceived availability of social support is clearly an important factor to consider in investigations into the relationships between stress, personality and social support.

6.6.6.4 Job loss

Differences emerged in the way that N's and S's responded to losing their jobs. During the 2 weeks immediately following the announcement of the job losses, S's tended to talk about the future and explored their career options, whereas N's tended to dwell upon their negative feelings about losing their job. Again, this finding supports previous research that shows high N's favouring emotion-focused coping and low-N's favouring problem-focused coping respectively (Parkes 1994, Halamandaris & Power 1999).

As the weeks progressed, the S's retained their future-oriented outlook and 2 of the N's, who were also extraverts, started to look at their situation in a "*positive light*". The remaining N, who was an introvert, continued to dwell upon negative feelings right up until leaving the Company. This difference between the experiences and behaviour of different combinations of the personality traits N and E is supported by a recent study. Vollrath & Torgersen (2000) looked at combinations of the personality traits N, E and 'Conscientiousness' ('C') in relation to exposure to stressors, coping efforts and coping effectiveness. Of the 8 possible personality combinations, the combinations of high N and low E with high/low C were judged to be the most vulnerable to stress and least effective in coping. The 2 high N, low E types (ie, NI's in the present study) were characterised as "brooder" and "insecure" whilst the 2 high N, high E (ie, NE in the present study) types were characterised as "pleasure-oriented" and "dependent on others" (Vollrath & Torgersen 2000, p.2-3). Like Vollrath & Torgersen's research, the present research seeks to understand how personality dispositions may work in combination to influence the way individuals experience and respond to potential stressors, ie, major organisational change, in the case of the present study. However, the present research is able to add to Vollrath & Torgersen's research by suggesting how combinations of personality dispositions might influence experiences and responses to stressors, like major change, over time. Although N's reacted very similarly in the initial stages, as time progressed, there appeared to be a divergence in behaviour with NE's being more positive about their situation and the remaining NI retaining a feeling of negativity.

Irrespective of personality differences, perceptions of fairness also played a part in how staff responded to job loss. Staff who perceived that they had been treated unfairly by managers expressed more negative feelings than staff who perceived that they had been treated fairly. The issue of fairness also arose in section 6.4 Interview Concerns.

Perceptions of fairness were associated with a positive account of the interview process. So, it appears that if staff feel that they are treated fairly by managers, their perception of change is more positive. This supports previous research that shows the important role played by perceived fairness in employees' positive appraisal of change, for example, relating to the introduction of performance-related pay schemes (Kelly & Monks 1998).

6.6.6.5 Summary table - feelings

Table 6.9 - Summary - N, E and WLOC and feelings about aspects of adjustment

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Negative	Worry, fearful

N's were the only group to express worry and fear about aspects of adjustment. However, all personality groups expressed both negative and positive feelings about at least some aspects of adjustment. Negative feelings reported by all personality groups include feeling annoyed, unhappy, upset, apprehensive, frustrated and unfair treatment. Positive feelings reported by all personality groups include feeling excited, positive, more confident, a lot happier, enjoy recognition, fair treatment. Employees expressed far more positive emotions during this adjustment period than they had in relation to other stages of the change process detailed in the previous sections. By the adjustment stage in the change process, although staff were still in the midst of transition, they had "*tangible*" changes to deal with, rather than dealing with potential job insecurity, overall uncertainty and anticipation of interviews. Perhaps the relative lack of uncertainty at this time made way for more positive emotions to be expressed about changes relating to job, role, colleagues, managers and location.

6.6.6.6 Summary table - responses

Table 6.10 - Summary - N, E, WLOC and responses to aspects of adjustment

Personality/ WLOC	Nature of Experience	Illustrations
N	Disengage	Fearful of voicing opinions about new role Passive acceptance of new manager behaviour
E (mostly N/E)	Engage	Assesses new manager for empathy and/or respect - decides whether approachable or not
E	Engage	Settles into team, addresses problematic relationships
I	Disengage	Walk out, switch off, leave Company in response to problematic team relationships
S	Engage	Takes action to address concerns about new role Makes the best of things Takes action to address concerns about new manager
N	Engage	Dwell upon negative feelings about job loss (short term)
S	Engage	Explore job options, focus on future

S's tended to be active in their responses to adjustment, whilst N's tended to demonstrate passivity in their responses to adjustment. S's looked to the future whereas N's tended to dwell upon their negative feelings about job loss, albeit in the short term. S's actively sought to address their concerns about new roles and new managers whilst N's tended to hold back from voicing their opinions about their new roles and managers.

Although E's had expressed most emotional concern about potential team member changes, this group appeared to settle quickly and easily into their new staff groupings, openly addressing any problems. Introverts tended to find it hard to settle into new staff groupings and were reluctant to speak out about any problematic relationships.

During the adjustment period, E's, and in particular NE's, assessed whether their new manager was empathetic, respectful and deserving of respect. This sort of information

would be most salient to E's, as E's made more use of managerial social support in response to consequences of the Demeter change than other groups. N's tended to be most negatively affected by all aspects of the Demeter change, so that having a combination of NE would predispose an individual to assess their manager in anticipation of using their manager as a social support resource.

6.6.6.7 *Linkages between the tables*

N's fear about the possible repercussions of speaking out about concerns with their new role and/or manager led to a passive acceptance of their situation. Whilst aware of the company 'stories' described in Chapter 4 that illustrated the potentially negative consequences of 'speaking out' at Guardian Insurance, S's did not express any such fear and were active in voicing negative opinions about new roles or managers. So, we cannot conclude that S's are 'active' and N's are 'passive' in their coping response. Under these circumstances, it appears to be N's and S's different perception of the consequences of speaking out that determine whether their response is either active or passive. Again, an understanding of meanings and 'sensemaking' (Weick 1995) is all important if we are to fully comprehend why a person adopts a particular response to a situation. Both N's and S's perceived the organisational climate in similar terms. There was a consensus that speaking out was "*frowned upon*", however, S's were prepared to take the risk and voice their opinion, whereas, on the whole, N's were unwilling to risk the consequences of such action.

N's talked about feeling "*let down*", "*bitter*" and "*used*" by managers in relation to job loss. Some S's also expressed negative feelings of "*anger*" and being "*gutted*". However, those S's who expressed negative feelings quickly followed this negativity by thoughts focused upon their future. On the other hand, N's tendency, certainly in the early stages following knowledge of their job loss, was to dwell upon their negative thoughts about management. So, S's appeared to be able to adapt and move away from negative thought more readily than N's. It is possible that S's did not feel as negative as N's initially and that this allowed S's to move on more quickly. However, it could be that S's are able to

release themselves from negative thoughts and feelings more easily than N's and are thus able to engage in adaptive strategies for dealing with their situation more readily than N's.

6.7 Overall Summary

This chapter has described diarist/interviewees' feelings about, and responses to, the various consequences of the Demeter project, which was the most salient change for research participants during the time of the study. Patterns of perceptions and behaviour emerged which related to individual differences in personal/work characteristics and the social environment and also to the broader organisational context as described in Chapter 4. Patterns of perceptions and behaviour were also shown to be related to individual differences in measures of the personality traits Neuroticism and Extraversion, and the behavioural style, Work Locus of Control. The first part of this summary relates to patterns of experience that are associated with an individual's personal/work characteristics and work context. The second part of the summary relates to patterns of experience that are associated with personality dispositions and combinations of these dispositions.

6.7.1 Personal/ work/social factors, location and individuals' experience of Demeter

Apart from personality dispositions, other personal characteristics, along with characteristics of employees' job, work location, social environment and the overall organisational context at Guardian, influenced employees' experiences of Demeter. Personal factors include, age, gender, prior experience of redundancy, and whether an individual was married to/partnered with a fellow Guardian employee. Job role and location both influenced the manner and extent of the impact of Demeter. Social factors that influenced employees' experiences of Demeter included the behaviour of colleagues, and particularly the behaviour of managers. Organisational factors, described in Chapter 4, in particular, bureaucracy, 'rules of the game', organisational politics, legitimacy of senior management, multiple strategies and process fairness also influenced employees' experiences of Demeter.

Older employees tended to report stronger feelings of job insecurity than their younger colleagues. Although previous research has shown that older employees report less anxiety in relation to work stress than younger colleagues (Remondet & Hansson 1991), within the present research context, where financial security was under threat, older employees perceived that they had *"more to lose"* financially than their younger colleagues and were thus more worried about the security of their jobs. A number of participants were married to, or partnered with, other Guardian employees. Not surprisingly, these individuals also tended to report more job insecurity. Many older employees were also more concerned than younger colleagues about the interviews and reported feeling *"out of practice"*. Some of the women with children expressed a greater dissatisfaction with changes to working hours because of the potential difficulties of having to alter their childcare arrangements.

Prior experience of redundancy seemed to influence people's reactions potential job losses. For some, prior experience provided a source of strength. For others, their prior experience appeared to create extra anxiety about the announced job losses as part of the Demeter restructure. Thoits (1995) recounts research with recently divorced individuals which shows that many people are able to learn from their negative experiences. Why some people appeared to learn to be better prepared for the possibility of job loss through having prior experience of redundancy, whilst prior experience appeared to be detrimental to others is an interesting puzzle, but one which the present research was unable to answer.

Some individuals were more affected by Demeter than others by virtue of their particular job role. Staff in underwriting, claims, agency and IT roles appeared to be most affected in terms of changes to work processes, structural changes in their departments, increases in workload and job losses. Individuals in some job roles, eg, typists and secretaries reported very little change.

Managers played an important role in influencing individuals' experience of change. Where managers were perceived as having treated employees *"fairly"*, employees

reported experiencing job loss more positively than when employees perceived that they had been treated unfairly. Willingness to ask managers for support was hampered where employees perceived that managers were disrespectful. Similarly, employees were reluctant to ask managers for help when managers were perceived as lacking empathy or trustworthiness. In situations where managers shared their own change-related anxieties with staff, this appeared to amplify staffs' own negative feelings. Similarly, work colleagues' expressions of anxiety had the potential to exacerbate others' negative feelings.

Location also affected people's experiences of Demeter. Individuals working in Liverpool and Manchester reported a greater sense of job insecurity and uncertainty than those working in Reading and Southampton. The Liverpool branch was closed during the research period and this led to a long period of uncertainty and insecurity for employees. Liverpool's proximity to Manchester seemed to affect some Manchester employees' sense of job security and fuelled uncertainty about the future of the Manchester office. In Reading and Southampton, a number of employees reported that the employment market was buoyant, so that even if they lost their jobs, they could *"walk into another job tomorrow"*.

Factors relating to organisational context, described in Chapter 4, were also important in contributing towards employees' experiences of change. Two examples follow. Firstly, although the Demeter interviewing process was not generally welcomed by staff, it was perceived as *"fair"* which undoubtedly contributed towards keeping *"appeals down to a minimum"*, as suggested by one particular manager. Secondly, a 'shared assumption' about the organisation was that it was best to *"keep your head down"* and *"not speak out against senior management"*. This helped to 'frame' employees' experience of change and inhibited some people from voicing their concerns.

6.7.2 Personality traits N and E and WLOC

'Adjustment' to a new job, role, manager(s), colleague(s), location elicited both positive ("*excited*", "*feel positive*", "*confident*", "*happier*", "*enjoy recognition*") and negative ("*annoyed*", "*unhappy*", "*upset*", "*apprehensive*") feelings from all individual difference groups. However, N's were the only group to report feeling 'worried and 'fearful' in relation to 'adjustment'. N's tended to express the strongest negative emotions in relation to all other aspects of the Demeter change. N's described feeling "*shocked*", "*worried*", "*scared*", "*insecure*", "*useless*", "*vulnerable*", "*upset*", "*on edge*", "*distracted*", "*bitter*", "*annoyed*", "*unsettled*", "*despondent*", "*insulted*", "*nervous*", "*stressed*", "*angry*" about/by the Demeter project. This contrasts with S's tendency to describe feeling positive or neutral about such change, eg, "*not bothered*", "*not affected*", "*confident*", "*enjoy pressure*", "*satisfying*". S's did report feeling sorry for others in relation to the uncertainty generated by the selection process and restructure.

E's and those individuals with an internal WLOC expressed frustration at the lack of information available during the restructure. E's reported feeling "*upset*" and "*worried*" about potential personnel movements, whereas I's reported feeling "*worried*" by the anticipated increased workload caused by such movements. NE's were worried by rumours whereas SE's were aware of rumours, but did not appear to be worried by them. N's with an external WLOC reported feeling suspicious of management. So, although some aspects of the change, eg, 'Adjustment', elicited a range of feelings from all groups, other aspects of the Demeter change tended to elicit different feelings from different personality groups.

If people have different feelings about an event, we might expect them to behave differently in response to that event. With the Demeter change, patterns of behaviour emerged that were indeed related to the individual difference measures under study. Perhaps the most striking differences were between N's and S's responses to the various consequences of Demeter. N's adopted more 'disengagement' responses, ("*switch off*",

'distraction', 'escape', 'illness', "wait and see", 'exercise', passive acceptance', 'holds back'), whereas S's had a tendency towards responses involving 'engagement' with the situation, (*'analyses situation', 'develops contingency plans', "'focus", "get 'stuck in'", 'addresses concerns about new role/manager'*). However, it should be noted that this was a general pattern and there were exceptions. For example, some S's did adopt a disengagement response to 'uncertainty' (*"wait and see"*) and some N's adopted an engagement response to 'interview concerns' (*'analyses situation' - "we are all in the same boat"*) and to 'adjustment' (*'angry with new manager'*). I's responses to 'interview concerns' (*'avoids contact with anxious colleagues'*) and 'adjustment' (*'walk out', "switch off", 'leaves Company'*) were categorised under 'disengage'. Individuals with external WLOC tended to respond to uncertainty by disengagement (*"why bother", "given up", "just accept"*) and SE's adopted a *"wait and see"* (disengagement) approach to rumours relating to job insecurity.

When analysed as a single personality type, N's did tend to cope in a manner that disengaged them from the situation. However, an examination of combinations of N with other personality types showed that most responses, by all groups, involved engagement with the situation. N's with internal WLOC engaged positively with their circumstances by preparing for the interview, *"thinking positive"* and working extra hours to clear the backlog. S's with internal WLOC also engaged positively with their situation through looking for other jobs, reorganising their work to improve their efficiency in dealing with the backlog and focusing upon their future. N's with an internal WLOC engaged with their situation, but in a negative way by *"dwelling"* upon the interview process and upon their negative feelings about job loss.

Those individuals with an internal WLOC engaged with their situation through actively seeking information in order to help in their analysis and decision making about job security and overall uncertainty. These individuals tended to reflect upon prior experiences of change in order to make predictions and lessen their sense of uncertainty. Internals were also able to create a sense of stability for themselves amidst uncertainty by focusing upon their work and attempting to continue working *"as usual"*. Internals were

also active in using the interview as an opportunity to further their careers. E's were active in their response to adjusting to new team colleagues and manager(s) where there were issues to be addressed.

NE's responded to uncertainty by seeking emotional support from colleagues and managers. Their responses to increased workload included both emotion-focused and problem-focused social support seeking. In response to job insecurity, NE's tried to demonstrate high levels of performance as a defense against losing their jobs. NE's with an internal WLOC responded to job insecurity by problem-focused social support seeking (*'talks to colleagues/managers to help form an opinion/make a decision'*), whereas NE's with an external WLOC responded to job insecurity by emotion-focused social support seeking (*'seeks reassurance from/expresses feelings to colleagues/managers'*).

6.7.3 Final summing up

This chapter has presented data showing individuals' experiences of the various aspects of the Demeter change. The Demeter change was reduced in the analysis to 5 main categories, each representing consequences of the change derived from the data. Data was presented for each of the categories and a summary, relating these findings to the literature, followed each category. Tables were presented at the end of each sub-section summarising feelings and responses to each consequence. The chapter concluded with an overall summary.

The patterns of responses described in this chapter and summarised above in sections 6.7.1 and 6.7.2 can be described as tendencies by individuals with particular personal and work characteristics, work context, personality/behavioural style groupings to behave in particular ways in response to change. However, perception is all important. This study reveals that meanings attributed to change and emotional responses to that same change can be quite diverse. Further, it is an individual's perception of change that seems to

determine, firstly, whether a response is warranted, and secondly, the nature of the response.

The summary tables presented in Appendix 6.1 draw together the summary tables presented at the end of each sub-section in the present chapter. The tables are useful in that they clearly show the main argument running through this thesis, ie, that an 'unfolding' major organisational change, such as Demeter, elicits different types of feelings and responses from different types of people. The summary tables also demonstrate that the same types of people may perceive and respond to the various facets of major change quite differently as the change unfolds. For example, extraverts report 'frustration' in relation to job insecurity, 'worry' in relation to uncertainty and 'upset' in relation to adjustment. This highlights the importance of acknowledging that major organisational change is not a unitary phenomena and that the various aspects of major organisational change programmes may raise different kinds of issues, result in different types of consequences for employees, and lead to different types of responses by employees.

The following chapter discusses these findings more fully in terms of the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2, and the 'organisational context' at Guardian Insurance, presented in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented data that showed research participants' experiences of major change. These experiences were examined in relation to individual differences, with a particular emphasis upon individual differences in the personality traits Neuroticism and Extraversion and the behavioural disposition Work Locus of Control. This chapter discusses these findings and the findings relating to the organisational context and change management, presented in Chapter 4, more fully in terms of the literature presented in Chapter 2. An explanatory framework, offering a diagrammatic representation of employees' experiences of major change at Guardian Insurance, is presented at the end of the chapter.

Overall, the present research contributes to existing literature by presenting evidence that organisational change cannot be viewed as 'fixed', but is mutable and emergent, and is negotiated through the complex interplay of many different factors at the personal, group and organisational levels. The participants in this research described a whole range of experiences relating to the major organisational change programme that was being implemented during the research period. The research showed that there were both inter- and intra-individual differences in the way that employees experienced the various aspects of the major change programme. The range of experiences reported in relation to the same major change programme in this research supports the view that organisational change is 'chaotic' (Burke & Litwin 1992) and 'messy' (Guest 1984), rather than being amenable to planned implementation generating predictable outcomes (Novelli et al 1995).

So, the research shows that organisational change is not a unitary phenomenon, but has many different facets and, therefore, results in a variety of consequences for employees. A complex picture has emerged suggesting that perceptions of change and responses to change are influenced by many factors. It appears that at every level in the change

implementation process there is the possibility of a widening of the gap between the intended change and the way change is received. Personality factors, such as, Extraversion, Neuroticism and Work Locus of Control; personal characteristics, such as, age, gender and prior experience; work factors, such as, job role and location; social factors, such as, type of manager and relationship with managers and colleagues, and change context factors, (as detailed in Chapter 4 under the headings organisational context, content and cognition), all seemed to contribute towards creating a gulf between the intentions of managers and the way that initiatives were received and enacted by employees. In particular, the research makes a contribution by showing how the personality factors Extraversion, Neuroticism and Work Locus of Control, and combinations of these factors, influence employees' perceptions of, and responses to organisational change. Further, the evidence presented suggests that the change environment at GID during the research period produced an ambiguous, 'weak' situation where personality became an important determinant of employee behaviour.

7.2 Change management and the organisational context at Guardian

At both the start and end of the research period, staff at Guardian were engaged in continuous improvement initiatives. The first, the 'Vanguard initiative', encouraged staff to question existing structures and processes and challenge their own and their managers' beliefs about their roles in the organisation. The second, the 'Make A Difference' campaign, encouraged staff to be 'entrepreneurial' in attitude. The campaign tried to encourage staff to recognise and put forward suggestions for improving existing work structures and processes and be innovative. These are textbook examples of attempts to develop 'organisational learning' which purports to facilitate change (Pugh 1993). However, change implementation at Guardian was 'top down' with little or no room for staff to exercise the 'bottom up' approach advocated in the 2 continuous improvement initiatives that they experienced during the research period. The failure of management to "*practice what they preach*" and the resulting mixed messages received by staff throughout the research period was symptomatic of Guardian expressing a desire to be a modern, flexible organisation, committed to appreciating and developing its human

resources, but being unable to *"loosen the reins"* and let go of its patriarchal nature. It appears that Guardian were not alone in this regard. Researchers in the mid-1990's pointed out that whilst books such as 'In Search of Excellence' (Peters & Waterman 1982) created the impression that many organisations had moved from the 'mechanistic' to the 'organic' end of the spectrum, in practice few organisations had moved away from traditional organisational structures (Heckscher & Donnellon 1994).

Guardian's approach to major change could be categorised as a 'planned approach' (Burnes 1996). Change was imposed top-down according to a rigid timetable which didn't allow for feedback, reassessment and/or alterations to the change programme, during the implementation process. The failures of this approach can be seen in the rejection and subsequent revamping of the Performance Management System, the hasty removal of flexitime, which left little time to negotiate a replacement system, the lack of adequately trained personnel to deliver the *"new service proposition"* promised to intermediaries via the Demeter restructure, and the gross inequalities in workload following the Demeter restructure. This 'planned approach' to change implementation was accompanied by initiatives such as 'continuous improvement' which were in keeping with the 'emergent approach' (Burnes 1996) to change implementation. This juxtaposition was very confusing for staff, as, for example, initiatives such as the 'core brief' system, devised to promote open, 2-way communication, were implemented whilst staff and managers' pleas for assistance in solving the workload issue were at best ignored and at worst stifled. Further, during the research period there was a perception that the union's traditional role of offering *"a voice for staff"* was being eroded by management, and there were no effective HR structures in place, to provide staff with a 'voice'.

Guest (1995) presents 4 broad 'policy options' in terms of the relative priorities given to Industrial Relations and HRM within organisations. Whilst Guardian management expressed their desire to place a high emphasis upon both HRM and industrial relations, the reality expressed by many staff, including HR staff, was that Guardian was moving towards what Guest (1995 p.125) terms "the black hole" where neither industrial relations

nor HRM are afforded a high priority. Again, the theory and espoused aims of management were not matched by practice and this contributed towards a growing distrust of management by many staff during the research period and a gulf between the intentions of management to change the organisation and the reality experienced by staff. Sahdev et al (2001) warn leaders that 'establishing trust' is fundamental to providing an organisational setting that will enable staff to deal effectively with an ever-changing work environment. It is possible that the lack of trust at Guardian contributed towards the extent of extreme negative reactions towards change, reported by staff, during the research period.

Proponents of the emergent approach to organisational change suggest that turbulent environments are not conducive to planned change because of the requirement for speedy organisational responses in dynamic and uncertain environments (Wilson 1992). Certainly during the 80's and 90's, Guardian, along with other main players in the financial services industry, experienced an extremely turbulent external business environment (John & Davies 1999) and were forced to respond accordingly with internal organisational change. The planned approach adopted by Guardian may have been an unsuccessful strategic approach given the turbulent financial services business environment. Juxtaposing emergent and planned approaches certainly appeared to contribute towards the difficulties experienced at Guardian in smoothly implementing the change programme, through generating confusion amongst staff.

The level of uncertainty that staff might be expected to experience during a major programme of organisational change appears to have been further exacerbated by management failures in relation to other aspects of change implementation. Some individual managers did take the initiative and were able to implement changes successfully, by moving away from, or beyond, the official change implementation instructions. For example, one departmental manager created a transitional rota system following the removal of flexitime, and only introduced flexible working once he felt that his teams were ready. However, such incidents were rare, with managers themselves perceiving changes as "*having their own momentum*" and their role as being "*messengers*

of change" rather than having an active, creative role in decisions about the content, direction and implementation of change. Line managers themselves were working within a context of great uncertainty and appeared to contribute towards generating further uncertainty by failing to mitigate against the 'constraining organisational context factors' described in Chapter 4.

As presented in Chapter 4, the organisational context at Guardian, the content of the change initiatives themselves and cognitive vulnerabilities of managers all conspired to create an environment which served to "constrain the reception of organizational initiatives" (Gratton et al 1999). However, a further major management failure at Guardian, highlighted by the present research, and indeed invoked by some critics of the planned approach to organisational change, was to view employees as blind recipients of change, rather than as co-creators of change (Pettigrew & Whipp 1993). Employees were expected to play the part of passive, unquestioning 'acceptors' of change initiatives. Perhaps in past, more stable times, this approach would have been workable within Guardian. Historically, Guardian could be conceived of as representing a 'strong setting' where staff understood what was expected of them and expressed loyalty and conformity to organisational values, roles and behavioural norms (Furnham 1992). However, in turbulent times where uncertainty is heightened, this thesis argues that organisational 'settings' weaken and behavioural norms are weakened such that person factors come to the fore and individuals' behaviour will become less aligned to the group and more aligned to their own individual personal factors, personality dispositions and personal experience. This isn't to say that unstable environments have no influence upon individual behaviour, but that uniformity of behaviour amongst individuals in response to change initiatives within an unstable environment would be less likely to occur. In an organisational context such as Guardian, where confusion and uncertainty were exacerbated by management failures in both change planning and implementation, we might expect personal factors to be especially pertinent when examining individuals' experiences of change.

So, we have a situation where management intentions when planning and implementing change were not compatible with employees' experiences of change. This incompatibility appears to have arisen out of change management failures illustrated above and detailed in Chapter 4. These failures meant that a very unstable and uncertain working environment was created, where there was a chronic lack of trust. This thesis argues that the uncertain environment produced a wide range of perceptions, responses and experiences amongst staff in relation to the change programme. The suggestion is that if the environment could have offered staff some stability, despite the changes, then perhaps their experiences would have been more aligned both to each other and to the change intentions of those who devised and implemented the change programme. Indeed, recent research (Sahdev 2000) suggests that mutual trust between leaders and staff can provide a secure 'base' that enables successful change implementation.

7.3 Change and the individual

The analysis of individuals' experiences of change in the present research was carried out against a background of considering psychological models for people's experiences of change such as the 'transition curve' (Adams et al 1976) and transactional models of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, Edwards 1992). Both 'transition' and transactional models fit within the interactional psychology tradition (Bowers 1973), where the situation does not exist independently of a perceiver, rather the situation is "a function of the perceiver in the sense that perceivers' cognitive schemas filter and organize situations" (Schneider 1983, p.3). In terms of the transition curve this means that an individual's journey through 'denial', 'defence', 'discarding', 'adaptation' and finally 'internalization' (Carnall 1991) will only be prompted if a change event is perceived as being sufficiently destabilizing for the individual to have to psychologically adjust to the change. Similarly, with transactional models, perceptions of change are all important and appraisal of the situation precedes action.

The previous section established that the environment at Guardian was unstable and uncertain during the research period because of the nature of the major change

programme and the way it was implemented. Such instability and uncertainty could be expected to produce appraisals of threat and promote efforts to adjust to the new environment. The next two sections discuss firstly the transition curve and secondly the psychology literature in terms of the present study's findings about people's experiences of major organisational change.

7.4 Transition curve

The transition curve was one of the change management tools to which Guardian managers were introduced by consultants who were contracted to assist HR staff in devising and implementing the Performance Management System, as an explanation of individuals' responses to change. As suggested in the literature review, Chapter 2, the appeal of the transition curve as a metaphor for change adaptation is that it simplifies a very complex process and provides managers with a means of predicting employees' reactions to change. However, Kubler-Ross (1970) whose work with the bereaved provided a foundation for the transition curve and preceded its use in organisational settings, only suggested that it was the initial reaction of shock and disbelief to a diagnosis of terminal illness that "is typical not only of the news of fatal illness but seems to be a human reaction to great and unexpected stress" (p.234). To the researcher's knowledge, there are no suggestions from her work that the other stages, representative of patients coming to terms with a terminal illness diagnosis, are typical of reactions to other major life events. The present findings indicate that the transition curve is only a useful description of the experience of change under very particular circumstances and as such has limited utility as a tool for change management. Furthermore, the present research findings suggest that the transition curve's use within an organisational change setting may promote a managerialist view of the change process and be harmful to the change process through encouraging managers to place blame upon employees for unsatisfactory outcomes.

When research participants' responses to a known change, such as the removal of flexitime, were examined, patterns of responses in line with stages in the transition curve

were indeed revealed. However, this was only when the individual was very attached to the flexitime system and had a clear idea about what was going to replace the flexitime system. In instances where a person was not happy with the existing system, then their experience of change was not focused upon 'holding on' to flexitime, but upon trying to make sense of the replacement system. Because there was no system in place to formally replace flexitime, many staff replaced the old electronic system with a similar paper and pencil system. Within the transition curve framework, these people could be seen as 'holding on' to the old system, however, with no clear guidelines from management about a replacement system, these people were prevented from 'adapting' and 'internalizing' the change. During much of the research period, participants were struggling to deal with the knock-on effects of change events, such as increases in workload and were not necessarily specifically struggling to deal with the change events themselves.

The transition curve focuses upon the experience of loss that can be generated by major change, with an emphasis on the process of 'letting go' of old behaviours and adapting to new conditions by developing new behaviours (Parker & Lewis 1981). However, the reported experience of many participants at Guardian during the research period was that of uncertainty and a lack of information, so that adaptation to change was often not possible, as individuals were anticipating change much of the time, rather than dealing with tangible change events. For example, the Demeter restructure was first alluded to in November 1996, however, it was not until June 1997, a full seven months later, that staff were given full details of the Partner Support and Response 'streams'. Staff were dealing with the uncertainty surrounding this restructure for seven months, rather than dealing with the restructure itself. So, the transition curve may well account for experiences of individuals in response to a tangible change event, where the event has been implemented and where it is clear what is expected of individuals working within the changed environment. However, the present research suggests that during major organisational change, much of the psychological experience of individuals involves dealing with uncertainty, rumour and speculation, rather than dealing with the actual change events themselves.

A further criticism, noted above, is that the transition curve reinforces a managerialist approach to change, where opposition to change is seen as resistance, rather than as an attempt to negotiate the content of change. The second and third stages of the numerous examples of the transition curve, as applied to individuals adapting to organisational change, (for example, Parker & Lewis 1981, Carnall 1991, Wilson 1993), involve the individual responding to change in ways that are resistant to accepting the change. Resistance to change has been conceptualised by both the management (Kotter & Schlesinger 1979) and organisational psychology literature as something that needs to be "controlled" (McKenna 1994, p.496) by management, rather than seen as perhaps symptomatic of some problem with the content of the change itself, or a problem with, or lack of clarity in the way that the change is being explained and/or implemented. Exceptions include Isabella (1990) who concluded in her study of managers' interpretations of change that managers were not so much trying to 'hold on' to the status quo as trying to understand what the change will mean to them. Categorising negativity about change under 'resistance to change' places the onus upon the recipient of change to adapt to the change, rather than upon the initiator of change to reconsider their change proposal. This approach can have negative consequences. For example, in Guardian, staff's opposition to the PMS during the planning and early implementation stages was rejected and the change was "*bulldozed through*" by senior management, despite the system having been "*fundamentally flawed*". The system was rejected by the union and the flaws were acknowledged, but only after implementation. The system was then abandoned and redrafted to take account of 'the opposition'. If people's negative reactions had been viewed early on as serious attempts to point out flaws in the system, then perhaps the system could have been revised to most people's satisfaction and implemented more smoothly.

7.4.1 Interim summary

The present research found the transition curve to be of limited use in explaining participants' experiences of major organisational change. The composite stages of the transition curve describe a process of 'holding on, letting go and moving on' (Parker &

Lewis 1981). These stages only appeared to relate to research participants' reported experience when participants were dealing with a change where concrete details were known about the change, where people knew what was expected of them once the change had been implemented, and where individuals were happy with the status quo. During the research period, changes tended to be hinted at, then later announced with little detail, so that the full ramifications of changes were only realised at a much later stage. So, apart from adapting to known change events, individuals were also dealing with the uncertainty generated by rumour, speculation and lack of information. It appeared to be the organisational change climate at Guardian that presented research participants with one of the greatest challenges during the research period, rather than adaptation to specific change events. The transition curve does not take account of such experiences. A further difficulty encountered by participants, and not accounted for within the transition curve framework, was the large workload fluctuations that accompanied the changes.

Also, the transition curve describes a particular pattern of behaviour in response to change. The present research has demonstrated that major organisational change elicits different types of feelings and responses from different types of people. Responses may be influenced by personal characteristics such as age, gender and prior experience (section 6.7.1), or work characteristics such as location, job role and type of manager (section 6.7.1). The emphasis of this research, however, has been on the way that personal dispositions influence feelings and responses to major organisational change (Chapter 6) and has demonstrated that the same individual will not necessarily respond in a predictable, uniform manner to change and may respond differently to different facets of organisational change. For example, extraverts expressed anxiety about potential movements of team personnel prior to the restructure, but appeared to adapt well to being in new teams, or having new team members once the new structure was in place. In contrast, introverts did not express great concern about being moved, or having new team members, however, in contrast to extraverts, introverts reported difficulties in adapting to such changes (section 5.6.2). So, the transition curve does not appear to provide an adequate illustration of the experiences of individuals dealing with major change at work.

The appeal of the transition curve for senior managers is clear. The transition curve's focus is upon the individual adapting to change, rather than upon the change being revised to accommodate the feedback of individuals. This gives managers the power to drive changes through and blame problems upon individuals' inability to adapt, rather than upon managers' own change planning and implementation shortcomings. This emphasis upon 'acceptance' of change ignores the potentially positive effect of 'resistance' to change (Piderit 2000) and provides a means of blaming workers for the failures of change programmes (Krantz 1999).

These criticisms are not levied at the transition curve per se, but are criticisms of the use of the transition curve by scholars studying organisational change. Not only does the transition curve encourage a managerialist view of organisational change, but it is generic, simplifying the experience of major change into one set of responses comprising rejection and subsequent acceptance. The present research, however, reveals that individuals report a wide range of experiences of major change and that not all responses to change are negative. One notable exception to much of the 'change and transition' literature is Barger & Kirby's (1995) research which adapted the transition curve and presented the 'pioneer journey to Oregon' as a metaphor for change. Barger & Kirby integrated the Myers Briggs Type Indicator measure of individual differences and the change curve and showed how different types of people deal with the various stages of the change process in a different manner. However, although Barger & Kirby (1995) have sections giving advice about leadership during the various stages of the 'journey', their emphasis is again managerialist. They focus upon offering advice aimed at helping individuals to cope effectively with change, rather than improving the organisational context. Also, as discussed in section 6.2.5.3, the present research suggests that a coping strategy used by one person effectively in response to a particular situation, will not necessarily be effective when used by a different person in the same situation.

Having argued that the transition curve is of limited use as an explanatory framework to describe individuals' experiences of major organisational change, the next section moves

away from the change and transition literature and examines the research findings in terms of the work and stress and coping literature.

7.5 Organisational change and the work & stress and coping literature

7.5.1 Critique of research within the work & stress and coping literature

This research seeks to discover how individuals at the receiving end of major organisational change programmes experience change. In the psychology discipline, research into individuals' experiences of organisational change tends to be reported in the literature on stress in the workplace. The present research has highlighted a number of shortcomings with the way that this literature has looked at organisational change.

Firstly, researchers have tended to operationalise organisational change as a 'stressor' comprising features such as 'uncertainty', 'disruption', 'ambiguity' (Ashford 1988), 'role conflict', 'role ambiguity' and 'role overload' (Shaw et al 1993), 'job change', 'organization structure change' and 'work environment change' (Callan et al 1994). However, these categorisations are based upon assumptions about the consequences of organisational change, rather than upon an analysis of the specific circumstances and change programme(s) of the organisation(s) in question. The present research shows that the consequences of change can be wide ranging, with different consequences being salient at different times in the research process. So, in addition to categorisations in the above mentioned research being developed a priori, such research can also be critiqued on the basis of it being cross-sectional. The present research emphasises that change is a process, with different features of the change process being salient at different times for different people. For example, change-related increases in workload were especially prevalent for most employees in the summer period immediately preceding the Demeter restructure, however, following the restructure, some people experienced dramatic decreases in workload whilst others experienced a heavy workload. Cross-sectional research is able to produce 'snapshots' of people's experiences before, during or after a period of organisational change, but cannot provide descriptions of people's experiences as the change process unfolds. The methods used in the present research have heeded

Lazarus's (1991) call for research that looks at context and process and demonstrates that a consideration of context and process allows for a more complete description of people's experiences of organisational change.

Secondly, the stress and coping literature places an emphasis upon those individuals who experience situations as 'stressful'. This emphasis neglects the experiences of those who do not have negative perceptions about situations that are ordinarily regarded as stressful. Organisational change tends to be looked upon in the literature as an event which is universally stressful (Ashford 1988). However, this thesis presents the experiences of a cross section of people with different backgrounds, job types and personalities and shows a range of responses. Indeed, some individuals did not find the change experience, or at least some aspects of change, stressful. Some talked of "*challenge*", "*stepping up a gear*" and being "*motivated*" by aspects of the change programme. It is important to recognise that not everybody is negative in response to major change at work. As Levi (1990) and Thoits (1995) acknowledge, potentially stressful events may be positively stimulating for some people and negatively stimulating for others.

Thirdly, some researchers suggest that we should identify those methods that help people deal with unstable work environments (Sparks et al 2001), or identify those people who demonstrate "effective coping skills" in relation to change (Callan 1993 p.66) and train those people who don't handle change well to use these methods and skills. This thesis argues that such an approach would have limited use. The present research shows that people perceive change differently for a whole variety of reasons, including psychological type, and it is that perception of change that leads to a response. Whether an individual's coping response is effective or not can only be judged in relation to that person's particular perception of change. For example, Tom's angry behaviour in response to feeling dissatisfied with his new manager could be viewed as maladaptive because being angry resulted in Tom receiving an official warning (section 6.6.3.1). However, when looked at within the context of Tom having been disappointed that he had not received redundancy following the selection process (section 6.6.6.3), anger

could be construed as being an adaptive response, as the subsequent official warning may have paved the way for Tom being offered redundancy at a future date.

7.5.2 Coping and the experience of major organisational change

The literature review, Chapter 2, argued that out of the broad range of stress and coping models presented in the literature, dynamic, transactional models such as those developed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984), and further developed by Edwards (1992) would best account for individuals' experiences during a programme of major organisational change. The present research has found considerable support for both Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) and Edwards' (1992) models. However, the framework presented at the end of this Discussion chapter, based upon the present research findings, whilst containing many features of both Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) and Edwards' (1992) models, differs from both models. Unlike Edwards' (1992) model, the present framework includes personality. Unlike Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) model, the framework allows for a direct effect of personality upon coping and also upon outcome. This section discusses the present findings in terms of the coping literature and presents both confirmatory and deconfirmatory evidence in relation to the extant literature.

7.5.2.1 The role of personality in coping

As Dewe (1991, p.347) pointed out, "how a person thinks in a particular encounter is the key to determining how one copes". Coping is only mobilised if an 'encounter' is appraised as being demanding. The present research has identified various personal and work factors such as age, gender, job role and location that influence perceptions of, and responses to, major organisational change (section 6.7.1). However, the main focus of this research has been to investigate the role of personality dispositions in influencing perceptions of change and responses to change. This research has demonstrated that personality dispositions and combinations of these dispositions do influence perceptions of, and responses to, major organisational change, and further, that responses to change are, on occasion, directly linked to personality (section 6.7.2). In their article 'A place for traits in stress research', Ben-Porath & Tellegen (1990) state that although in his early

research on stress and coping Lazarus emphasised the role of personality traits, Lazarus then "repudiates the relevance of personality traits to this area of research in psychology" (p.14). Lazarus et al (1986 p.992) state "in the trait-oriented approach, it is assumed that coping is primarily a property of the person and variations in the stressful situation are of little importance". This rejection of the relevance of traits is based upon a simplistic 'straw man' view of traits as 'situation blind' tendencies. Ben-Porath & Tellegen (1990) argue that an 'enlightened trait conception' where an individual's behaviour is viewed as "a joint function of personal disposition *and* situation" (p.15) is highly compatible with the 'relational perspective', ie, behaviour is an outcome of a 'transaction' between person and environment, that Lazarus and colleagues bring to their research on stress and coping.

Certainly, the present research supports the view that personality is an important factor to consider when examining the process of coping with major change at work.

Considerable evidence has been presented in Chapter 6 showing that particular dispositions and combinations of dispositions are related to particular ways of perceiving and responding to major change at work. However, like Lazarus, the present research also emphasises the importance of context. For example, managerial support is presented in the literature as being the most useful form of social support at work (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998) and beneficial in ameliorating the negative consequences of workplace change (Dignam & West 1988, Callan 1993). However, during the selection process, because of the anxiety experienced by line managers, who were themselves being re-interviewed for their posts, few staff sought social support from their managers during this time and those that did reported feeling "*even more frightened of the interview*" after speaking with their managers (section 6.4.3). Although those people in the N/E group appeared to be more predisposed to seek social support than other groups during the research period, because of the environmental circumstances, many chose not to adopt this particular coping strategy in response to being re-interviewed for their jobs, and those that did seek social support tended to have an unfavourable outcome. So, this research supports Lazarus (1991) in emphasising the importance of context, but rejects Lazarus's (1991) simplistic view of traits and supports Ben-Porath & Tellegen's (1990)

'enlightened trait conception' that sees behaviour as an outcome of an interaction between person and situation.

7.5.2.2 How do personality dispositions and combinations of these dispositions influence individuals' experiences of major organisational change?

The evidence presented in Chapter 6 suggests that experiences of change are related to individual differences in many factors, including, age, gender, prior experience, job role and location. However, the present research focus is upon the personality traits E and N and the personality disposition WLOC, and these psychological factors appeared to have a strong influence upon individual perceptions of change and responses to change. For example, N's tended to have powerful negative emotional reactions to aspects of change that affected their job insecurity and they mobilised emotion-focused coping strategies in an attempt to ameliorate their emotional response to job insecurity (refers to section 6.2.5.3). In contrast, S's tended to be emotionally neutral in their reports of job insecurity and they mobilised problem-focused coping strategies, developing contingency plans in case of job loss. This finding supports the consistent finding in the literature that N's tend to adopt emotion-focused coping strategies whilst S's tend to adopt problem-focused coping strategies (McCrae & Costa 1986, O'Brien & DeLongis 1996). However, the present research also provides an explanation for N's and S's adopting different strategies. N's and S's different perceptions and resultant feelings in relation to job insecurity appeared to trigger different responses. In contrast to O'Brien & DeLongis (1996) who suggest that N's, through failing to address their problems by choosing emotion-focused strategies, maintain their experience of 'stress', the present research suggests, in line with Pearlin & Schooler (1978), that adopting emotion-focused strategies as a means of ameliorating their feelings of anxiety would be adaptive for these individuals, at least in the short term.

Although the findings above suggest a clear relationship, in accordance with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) model, between the way change is appraised and the way a person chooses to behave, the present research also found support for a direct link between

personality dispositions and coping behaviour that seemed unrelated to appraisal. This finding is not consistent with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) model where there is no direct link between 'person variables' and 'coping'. For example, N's expressed strong anxiety in relation to job insecurity (refers to sections 6.2.5.3 and 6.2.5.4). Many N's dealt with their anxiety about job insecurity by adopting strategies that enabled them to avoid the threat of job insecurity, eg, by putting the situation "*to the back of my mind*", thus reducing their anxiety. So, in keeping with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) account of the coping process, N's appraisal of the situation was related to their approach to dealing with the situation. However, a number of N's with an internal WLOC who also experienced anxiety in relation to job insecurity, talked about preparing for their selection interview, ie, they adopted a problem-focused approach to dealing with their job insecurity. These individuals reported that they were still "*scared*", despite adopting a tactic which is often assumed in the literature to mitigate anxiety (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996). The literature reports an association between internal locus of control and use of problem-focused strategies (Parkes 1984, Amirkhan 1990). This particular example from the present research suggests that personality driven 'coping styles' (Parkes 1994) may sometimes be adopted by individuals, despite situational appraisals that would ordinarily suggest other, possibly more effective strategies, such as use of avoidance strategies in the case of N's with internal WLOC who were experiencing elevated anxiety.

It should be noted however that the present findings do not fully support McCrae & Costa's (1986) assertion that coping behaviour is merely an epiphenomenon of personality. Rather, the present research suggests that sometimes, as in the case of N's with an internal WLOC, people appear to revert to dispositional 'habits' or 'coping styles' in response to their environment. At other times, people appear to respond to their environment according to situational appraisals, rather than habit. For example, the literature presents extraverts as social support seekers in response to potentially stressful situations. However, in the present research, it appeared that few people, from any of the individual difference categories, sought social support in response to concerns about the selection interview (section 6.4.3). This was interpreted as being because there was so little quality support available during the 'selection process' period. It is not clear from

the present research what circumstances dictate whether people either revert to type and behave in an expected manner, or behave in a manner that is consistent with their appraisal of the situation and analysis of the 'coping resources' available to them. It should be noted that in most of the examples from the present research, people's behaviour appeared to follow on commonsensically from their appraisal of their situation, and only on a few occasions was there evidence of habitual coping behaviour, or 'coping style'.

7.5.2.3 Are some coping strategies better than others?

By suggesting that there is a direct link between personality and coping behaviour that bypasses appraisal, the previous section challenges the Lazarus & Folkman (1984) model and also lends further support to the idea that strategies are neither good nor bad and must be judged in relation to the way an individual has perceived their situation. A problem-focused strategy such as preparing for the job selection interview may have helped individuals in the long term, but was seemingly of no benefit in relieving their anxiety in the short term. Indeed, in contrast to O'Brien & DeLongis's (1996) contention that N's failure to adopt problem-focused strategies leads to elevated anxiety, in the present study, N's with an internal WLOC may have experienced elevated anxiety by adopting a problem-focused strategy and focusing upon the issue of job insecurity by preparing for the selection interview. As Carver (1989) suggests, forms of coping that focus upon a problem may have a detrimental effect by focusing upon negativity.

As already reported in section 7.5.2.1, managerial social support is deemed to be the most useful form of social support at work (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998). However, during the selection interview period, those individuals who sought support from their managers and colleagues mostly had a poor outcome. This was because many managers were very busy and frequently absent during this period and because those managers who were available to offer support, were themselves being re-interviewed for their jobs and many were anxious themselves and unable to offer effective support. So again, we return to a leit motif running through this thesis, namely, that an understanding of context and an

appreciation of employees' perceptions of that context are essential if we are to understand employees' experiences of major organisational change.

7.5.2.4 Critique of coping 'inventories'

A range of instruments designed to measure coping behaviour have been developed. These include standard measures, such as the 'Ways of Coping' checklist (Lazarus & Folkman 1984), the COPE scale (Carver et al 1989) and the 'Coping Strategy Indicator' (Amirkhan 1990), and work-specific measures (Latack 1986, Dewe & Guest 1990). Nelson & Sutton (1990), who found no link between coping and outcomes in their work-related research, suggest that standard coping measures are inappropriate for use in a work setting. Indeed, the present research found that E's used 'impression management' as a strategy to deal with job insecurity (section 6.2.6.4). This is an example of a coping strategy, implemented in an organisational change environment, which would not necessarily be revealed in research using standard coping measures. However, the present research goes further than Nelson & Sutton (1990) and suggests that traditional coping measures will be restrictive research tools, not only in a work setting, but in any setting. Traditional measures cannot tap into differences in the way that the same coping strategy may be implemented by different people, or by the same person on different occasions.

So, not only does the present research demonstrate that coping strategies, such as 'social support seeking', assumed to lead to successful adaptation, are, under certain circumstances, ineffective, but the research also shows that a coping strategy may be more or less effective, in response to the same situation, depending upon who is adopting that particular strategy. For example, problem-focused coping was adopted by both N's with internal WLOC and S's with internal WLOC in response to the demands of an increased workload. However, N's with an internal WLOC reported 'working harder', but worked longer hours for no additional monetary or holiday reward in order to deal with the extra work. On the other hand, S's with an internal WLOC also reported 'working harder', but did so by improving their efficiency and reorganising their work so that they

could complete more work within less time. Also, N's and S's both reported adopting a passive 'wait and see' strategy in response to uncertainty about the ramifications of the Demeter project. However, N's talked about 'wait and see' within the context of feeling '*defeat*' and '*unmotivated*', whereas S's talked about 'wait and see' alongside making attempts to '*stay positive*' and '*make the best of it*'. The present research also revealed sub-categories of social support, ie '*instrumental*' and '*intimate*' (Buunck & Peters 1994), which are not included in traditional coping measures, that rendered social support to be helpful or unhelpful in relation to concerns about the selection process.

So, coping strategy categories in the coping inventories used in most coping research (Parkes 1994) are not able to account for the subtleties of behaviour contained within each category, illustrated by the above examples from the present research. These examples demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between personality dispositions and the experience of major organisational change and highlight the importance of an appreciation of individuals' explanations of their responses when striving to understand their experiences.

7.5.2.5 Conclusions based upon previous sections on coping

The present findings, in line with Mattlin et al's (1990) research, suggest that the effectiveness of a coping strategy appears to be dependent upon a match between how a situation is perceived and how a person chooses to respond. It is perhaps flexibility in responding that plays a key role in ameliorating negative experiences of major change at work, rather than relying upon particular 'tried and tested' strategies, such as social support seeking and problem-focused coping, that are assumed by researchers to be effective strategies (McCrae & Costa 1986, Amirkhan et al 1995). As demonstrated in the previous section, uncharacteristically, S's favoured a passive 'wait and see' strategy in response to the uncertainty generated by major change. Such findings challenge the notion that stress management programmes that focus upon teaching individuals particular coping strategies in order to deal with organisational change (Callan 1993), will have the desired effect in mitigating negative experiences of change.

For the most part in the present study, responses appear to be related to perceptions of major change, so it would perhaps be more helpful for researchers and practitioners to focus upon employees' perceptions of change. This could be followed up by attempts to modify the work environment and/or these perceptions, rather than modify people's choice of coping strategies. Indeed, research has demonstrated that individuals' experiences of 'workplace stress' have been significantly reduced following 'stressor reducing' workplace interventions (Murphey 1988) and personal therapy, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (Sparrow 1998) and Counselling (Firth-Cozens 1992) that focus upon perceptions.

7.5.3 Personality and perceptions of major organisational change

We have seen from the previous sections that responses to major change varied according to the particular aspect of major change being confronted and also according to personality dispositions. Whilst there were examples where responses to change appeared to be directly personality driven, mostly, individuals' chosen responses to change, or their chosen 'coping strategies', appeared to be related to their perceptions of change, which in turn were related to personality dispositions.

Some aspects of change appeared to be more salient and/or challenging for some personality groupings than for others. Generally speaking, S's had the most positive perceptions of major change and N's had the most negative perceptions of major change. This is consonant with the literature where high N's are characterised by a tendency towards experiencing anxiety, depression and hostility (McCrae 1992). Such a tendency towards experiencing negative affect would make N's at Guardian more emotionally vulnerable during a period of major organisational change where jobs were under threat, there was a great deal of uncertainty and workload was high.

Whilst N's tended to perceive all aspects of the Demeter project negatively, there were some personality types that had negative perceptions about certain aspects of Demeter,

but not others. For example, S's expressed either positive or neutral comments in relation to most aspects of Demeter, but a number of S's were negative about their new job roles and new managers following the Demeter restructure (sections 6.6.6.1 and 6.6.6.3). Extraverts appeared to be more aware of the change-related rumours that were rife during the research period (section 6.2.2). For extraverts with a neurotic disposition, this awareness of rumours appeared to have a strong influence upon their perceptions of major change. NE's appeared to experience more profound feelings in relation to the job insecurity generated by job loss announcements than other personality groups and these feelings seemed to be exacerbated by their attention to rumours circulating within the office. Lack of stability within teams also appeared to affect extraverts more than other groupings (section 6.3.4.2), although, as has been noted, once personnel changes were put into effect, extraverts tended to adapt quickly and easily relative to introverts (section 6.6.6.2). Also, extraverts and those with an internal WLOC perceived that there was a lack of useful information at certain stages of the Demeter project (see sections 6.2.5.5, 6.3.1), but internals thought information about the selection process was "good" (section 6.4.2).

These findings emphasise that major change is multifaceted, comprising different aspects that unfold over time. Some facets of change may be perceived negatively and some positively and these perceptions appear to be rooted, in part, in personality dispositions. In contrast to suggestions by some researchers (Callan et al 1994), the present findings do not suggest that particular personality dispositions provide protection from negative outcomes of organisational change as a whole. Rather, the present findings suggest that particular personality dispositions and combinations of these dispositions influence perceptions of and responses to different aspects of organisational change. Further, individuals with particular personality dispositions and combinations of these dispositions perceive and handle some aspects of change more positively than others.

Although N's appeared to be most negative about all aspects of change, we cannot conclude that N's are not good at dealing with major organisational change. Much of N's negativity was focused upon issues such as uncertainty and excessive workload, that

could have been ameliorated by effective change management. Given a different setting, N's may not have experienced many of the negative perceptions of and responses to major change reported during the research period. Further, we cannot conclude that companies going through major continuous change would be best served by having a workforce of S's. Part of S's strategy for dealing with major change was to develop contingency plans. In some cases this meant looking for jobs outside Guardian (section 6.2.1). Clearly, whilst this strategy might serve S's well personally, such a strategy would not benefit organisations. Furthermore, the present research suggests that it is important to consider combinations of dispositions, rather than single elements of personality, when examining people's experiences of major change. It is possible that S, in combination with another disposition, might be a detrimental profile for an individual dealing with major change at work.

7.5.4 Interim summary

The present research demonstrates that 'organisational change' cannot be treated as a single 'stressor' variable, but is made up of many different aspects, some of which may translate to other organisational change situations, and some of which may be unique to a particular company, or a particular change event. A priori assumptions about the features of major organisational change may not reflect the reality of those people experiencing such change. Indeed, this research has demonstrated that aspects of the Demeter project, considered to be distressing for some individuals, for example, extra workload, were seen as challenging by others.

In keeping with the transactional model developed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and further extended by Edwards (1992), the present research found evidence that perceptions of major change, or, in Lazarus's terminology, 'appraisals', were related to responses to major change. However, in contrast to Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and Edwards (1992), the present research provides evidence for a central role played by personality dispositions in perceiving and responding to potentially stressful circumstances, in this instance, major organisational change.

The methods employed in the current research have enabled the researcher to examine individuals' strategies for dealing with major change at work along with individuals' explanations for adopting particular strategies. The present research suggests that traditional coping measures (Parkes 1994) may be inappropriate for use in a work context and may be restrictive in any context. The present research revealed a strategy used by extraverts that, to the researcher's knowledge, is not included in existing coping scales, ie, impression management, but may prove to be quite a common strategy within a work context. The current research also revealed underlying differences in people's use of the same strategy, eg, 'working harder', which would not necessarily be picked up in research using traditional ways of measuring coping.

In contrast to research that suggests that certain categories of coping strategy are more effective than others (McCrae & Costa 1986, O'Brien & LeLongis 1996), this research presents evidence that individuals' perceptions of situations tend to precede any response, and that the efficacy of responses can only be judged in relation to such perceptions. For example, N's tended to adopt emotion-focused strategies in response to experiencing powerful negative emotions about threats to their job security, whereas S's tended to adopt problem-focused strategies in response to the way that they appraised the issue of job insecurity. Given that anxiety inhibits clear thinking and problem solving (Taylor 1991), N's priority in relation to dealing with their elevated emotional state would be to deal with their emotions, and as such, emotion-focused coping would be an appropriate response under such circumstances.

When combinations of dispositions were investigated, the relationship between perceptions and responses was not so clear cut. There were instances where it appeared that personality-driven coping 'styles' were adopted, despite appraisals of the situation which would suggest other, more appropriate responses. So, for example, N's with an internal WLOC who reported anxiety in relation to job insecurity adopted a problem-focused approach to dealing with job insecurity, but reported that they remained anxious. It is not clear why and under what circumstances coping 'styles' are employed. Perhaps

having a particular personality disposition, for example N, in combination with another disposition, for example internal WLOC, where these dispositions are usually associated with opposing ways of behaviour, leads to one mode of personality-related coping strategies attaining dominance. The adoption of such strategies would then benefit those elements of appraisal of the situation that relate to the dominant personality disposition, but would not necessarily be of benefit to those elements of appraisal that relate to the other personality disposition. Recent research by Vollrath & Torgersen (2000) has begun to examine the ways in which individuals with combinations of E, N and Conscientiousness experience and manage stress. Their research has shown that individuals with particular combinations of these dispositions are more or less vulnerable to experiencing stress and to poor coping.

Although there was evidence of personality driven coping 'styles', mostly, personality dispositions appeared to be related to perceptions of major change and these perceptions influenced responses. However, an important aspect of perception, an aspect termed 'secondary appraisal' by Lazarus, is concerned with assessing the availability of resources in order to respond in the desired manner to a potentially stressful situation. The context at Guardian therefore played a key role in influencing individuals' responses to change. For example, social support was not readily available during the selection interviews. Guardian's decision that employees should be interviewed by one manager who knew the interviewee and one that did not meant that many managers were absent from their offices during the month long selection process. The support that was available during this time tended to be poor, as managers that were available to offer support tended to be lower level line managers, who were also subject to the selection process, so that many were anxious about being re-interviewed themselves. Therefore, coping behaviour cannot be examined out of context. Whilst managerial social support is presented in the literature as an effective coping strategy (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998), its effectiveness clearly depends upon the particular work context.

Although this research demonstrates that perceptions of major change are related to personality dispositions, it does not follow that there is a particular personality

disposition that is suited to handling major organisational change. Rather, some personality dispositions lead to more or less favourable perceptions of some features of change and other dispositions lead to more or less favourable perceptions of other features of change. For example, extraverts were more concerned about personnel movements than others, whilst individuals with an internal WLOC were more frustrated by lack of information than others, and, introverts appeared to find adaptation to new work groups more problematic than others. Although, overall, N's were most negative about all aspects of major change and S's were least negative, we cannot conclude that N's are not good at handling major organisational change. Much of the anxiety expressed by N's was in relation to knock-on effects of the Demeter programme such as excessive workload, uncertainty and job insecurity. These effects could have been ameliorated by effective change management and this may have enabled N's to have a more positive experience of major change.

We can conclude from the current research findings that personality affects responses to major organisational change. Sometimes personality appeared to relate directly to responses. This was demonstrated in section 6.2.5.4 where a number of neurotic internals, despite expressing high anxiety about job insecurity, chose to adopt a problem-solving strategy, rather than the emotion-focused strategies favoured by others in the neurotic group. Mostly, however, personality appeared to affect responses to major organisational change via perceptions. We can also conclude from the present findings that responses are also both enabled and constrained by context. For example, the availability and quality of social support and the availability and quality of information will either encourage or discourage individuals to seek support and/or information. The present research has demonstrated that perceptions of and responses to major organisational change were varied. This contrasts with other research on coping with potentially stressful situations over time which have also been conducted in naturalistic settings (Folkman & Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990). Such research presents findings that suggest that individual differences are relatively unimportant when examining coping behaviour over time in the same situation. The next section discusses the present findings in relation to these contradictory results from the coping literature.

7.5.5 Strong vs weak situations and coping behaviour

Part of Lazarus's dismissal of the importance of traits in research on the process of stress and coping (Lazarus 1991) is based upon findings from his own and others' research (Folkman & Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990) suggesting that people's coping strategies are similar during the same stage of stressful episodes. Lazarus (1991) criticises industrial psychologists for continuing *"to do lip service to the most advanced theories about the stress process"*, suggesting that the importance of personality factors is exaggerated by such researchers because the methods they use to examine stress are 'static' rather than processual. Folkman & Lazarus (1985) and Bolger (1990) conducted research examining individuals' coping behaviour in relation to stages of an undergraduate mid-term exam and the U.S. Medical Schools' entrance exam (MCAT) respectively. Coping behaviour was examined some weeks prior to the exam, just before the exam and some weeks after the exam, before the results were known. Both studies concluded that individual differences in coping were present, but that most coping behaviour was determined by the situation. Bolger's study specifically examined the role of neuroticism in the coping process and found that neuroticism was related to the use of particular coping strategies, but concluded that *"it is remarkable how situationally directed coping proved to be"* (Bolger 1990, p.535).

How can the present results that show a strong relationship between personality dispositions, perceptions and coping behaviour, in relation to the different aspects of the Demeter project as it unfolded over time, be reconciled with the above studies that point to coping behaviour being situationally determined? As Bolger (1990) points out in the 'limitations' section of his paper, *"unlike many naturalistic stressors, examinations are well-defined, anticipated, and time-limited events"*. The environment at Guardian was uncertain. The changes were not 'well-defined', some were introduced without warning, and deadlines were frequently altered. This makes the environment at Guardian quite distinct from the examination environment described in Bolger's (1990) work. Indeed, as Bolger himself points out, an examination setting is atypical of many naturalistic settings.

An examination environment could be described as a 'strong' setting where students know the date when they will take the exam, they know what they must do to prepare for the exam, they know the sort of questions they will be asked, and they know when to expect their results. By the time students reach the stage where they take undergraduate exams, or an MCAT exam, they will already have had a lot of experience of sitting exams during their school years. Further, students have elected to be put in the situation where they are asked to take an examination, through wanting to take an undergraduate degree, or wanting to get into Medical School. Uncertainties about what result a student will achieve and what the exact questions are going to be on the exam will be tempered by the many certainties students have about an examination setting. So, although the exam situation is potentially stressful because of pressure upon students to perform well, the exam situation is unambiguous and has many certainties. This contrasts sharply with the organisational change environment at Guardian, a 'weak' setting, which was ambiguous and was a setting where employees experienced a great deal of uncertainty. Also, unlike the examination situation, where students elected to take the exam, employees at Guardian had not chosen to work in a dramatically changing environment. Steptoe (1991) and Parkes (1994) both report that ambiguous situations tend to elicit personality-driven coping, whereas unambiguous situations tend to elicit coping behaviour that is related to the situation. The present research demonstrates that major organisational change, as conducted at Guardian, can be considered to create an ambiguous environment which would tend to elicit coping behaviour related to personality dispositions.

The evidence presented in the current research shows that coping tends to be driven by perceptions of major organisational change. The suggestion therefore is that coping behaviour varied considerably according to personality profile in the present research because people with different personality profiles perceived, and therefore experienced, their environment differently. The conclusion being drawn is that if major organisational change planners and implementers are able to devise and implement change programmes, whilst maintaining a degree of stability, certainty and lack of ambiguity, then perhaps employees' perceptions would be more aligned to each other and people's experiences of

change would not be so extreme and ultimately not so harmful to the smooth implementation of major change at work. Indeed, as discussed in section 6.3.4.3, a number of individuals with an internal WLOC, a disposition associated with healthy responses and outcomes to stressful situations (Pervin 1993), attempted to create some stability for themselves amidst the uncertainty by "*carrying on as normal*". If GID management had made greater efforts to keep work groups together, keep to deadlines, ensure that key managers were available and supportive during critical periods and provided employees with accurate and timely information, perhaps the degree of uncertainty experienced by many staff during the research period would have been less, and the overall level of anxiety experienced by employees would also have been less.

7.6 Explanatory framework

7.6.1 Introduction

The fundamental aim of the present research has been to present an account of employees' experiences of major organisational change, as a major change programme unfolded at Guardian Insurance. It has been argued in the present chapter that individuals' experiences of change were extremely varied and that these variations were related to the work context within which the change programme (specifically the Demeter project) was 'rolled out', together with factors relating to individual employees, particularly their personality dispositions. Gratton et al's (1999) model proved useful as a tool for organising data relating to the organisational environment at Guardian (see Chapter 4), but stopped short of explaining the psychological processes of employees that influence the receipt of change initiatives. This chapter has argued that the transition curve in its various representations (Adams et al 1976, Parker & Lewis 1981, Carnall 1991, Wille & Hodgson 1991, Wilson 1993) has limited utility as a model to explain individuals' experiences of major organisational change within the present research context. The present chapter has also shown that although two transactional models of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1984, Edwards 1992) offer a broad match to the present findings, neither model accounts for the role played by personality factors in influencing employees experiences of change, as revealed in the present research.

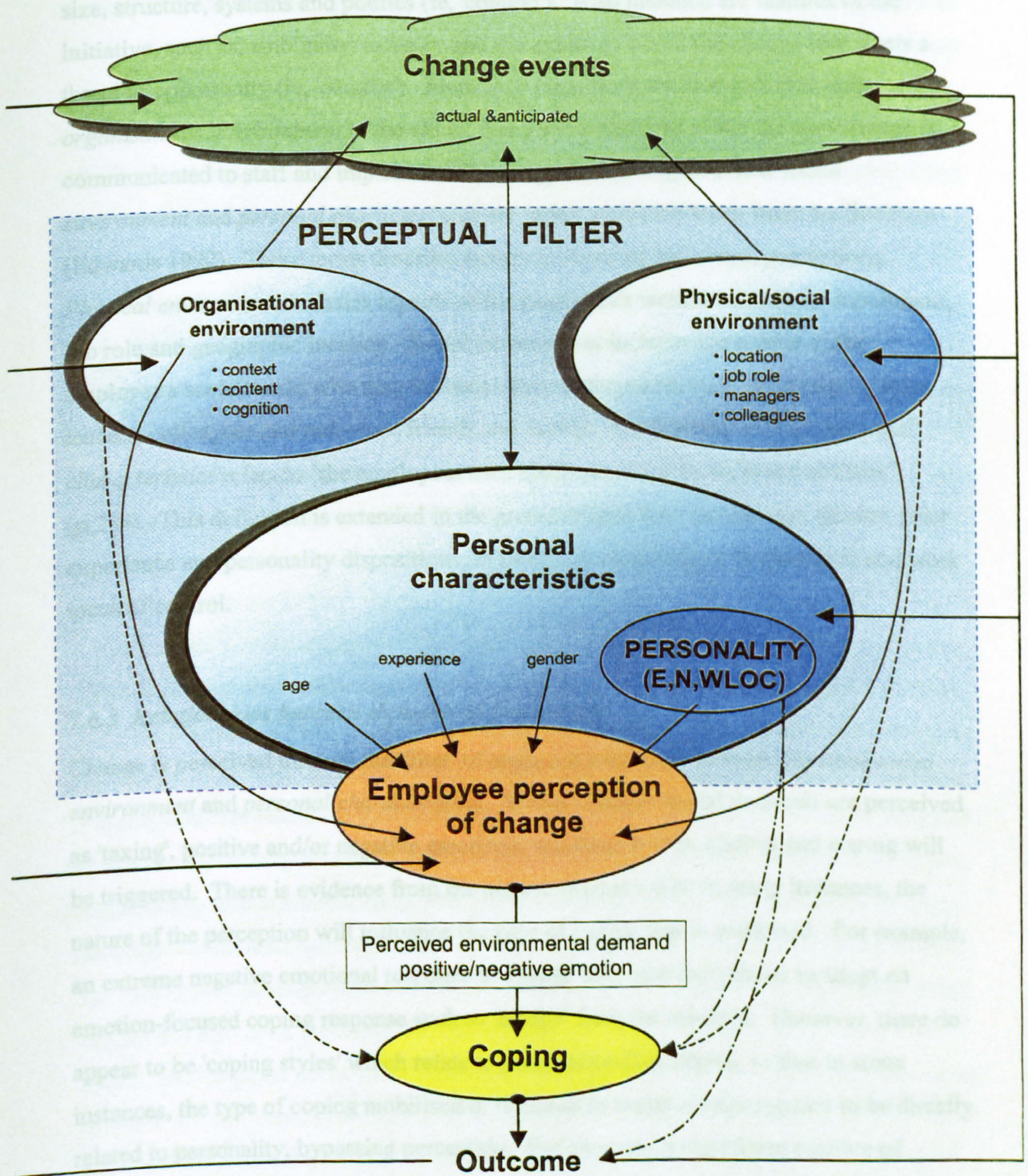
The researcher developed a number of explanatory frameworks during the analysis process as a means of expressing her findings and further developing the analysis. The framework overleaf (Figure 7.1) is one such framework, which evolved through the research process, and represents a simplified, diagrammatic account of employees' experiences of major organisational change. Guest (1984, p217) comments that "organizational change is invariably a messy business", and it is therefore difficult for the researcher "to set boundaries, establish cause and effect and determine what to measure and when". The 'messy' nature of change means that it is impossible to do justice to the complex dynamics of change, through presenting the process in a two-dimensional diagrammatic form. However, although simplistic and tentative, the framework does provide a means of emphasising a number of important factors and suggested relationships that appear to contribute towards the complex, emergent process of change described in the present research.

The next section provides an account of the framework (Figure 7.1).

7.6.2 Description of framework

Change events are represented in the 'cloud' shape at the top of the framework. These are changes as conceived by the individuals who plan, develop and initiate implementation of the changes. *Change events* refers to the change events themselves, but also refers to the anticipation of such changes. In the present study, it was often rumoured changes, or changes that had been announced, but had not yet been implemented, that generated the most extreme reactions. *Change events*, ie, rumours of change and implementation of 'actual' changes, permeate through the organisation to an individual employee via that employees' *Perceptual filter*. Whilst this 'filter' will include a myriad of different interacting factors, the present research has identified and described how employees' *perceptions* of these *change events* are influenced by a small number of these factors. Influencing factors have been organised under three main headings, namely, the *organisational environment* the *physical and social environment* and *personal characteristics*. *Organisational environment* refers to features of the organisation described in Chapter 4, under headings

Figure 7.1 The process of employees' experience of major organisational change – an explanatory framework



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taken from Gratton et al (1999). These factors include the organisational history, type, size, structure, systems and politics (ie, 'context'). Also included are features of the initiative, such as, ambiguity, saliency and the extent to which the change represents a threat or opportunity (ie, 'content'). Managers' cognitions are also included under *organisational environment* to the extent that these cognitions affect the way change is communicated to staff and implemented (ie, 'cognition'). *Physical and social environment* and *personal characteristics* are terms which are taken from the literature (Edwards 1992). These terms describe factors influencing individual perceptions. *Physical environment* includes aspects of the employee's workplace such as department, job role and geographic location. *Social environment* includes the people in the employee's social world who may influence their perceptions, such as managers, team leaders, colleagues and non-work friends and family. For Edwards (1992), *personal characteristics* refers to "the employees own attributes, such as skills and abilities" (p.249). This definition is extended in the present research to include age, gender, prior experience and personality dispositions, in particular neuroticism, extraversion and work locus of control.

7.6.3 Relationships between elements of framework

Change is perceived through the 'filter' of *organisational environment, physical/social environment* and *personal characteristics*. Where change-related demands are perceived as 'taxing', positive and/or negative emotional reactions will be elicited and coping will be triggered. There is evidence from the present research that, in many instances, the nature of the perception will influence the type of coping that is mobilised. For example, an extreme negative emotional response to change may lead individuals to adopt an emotion-focused coping response such as 'escape' from the situation. However, there do appear to be 'coping styles' which relate to personality dispositions, so that in some instances, the type of coping mobilised in response to major change appears to be directly related to personality, bypassing perception. For example, a significant number of internals, anxious about their job security, engaged in problem-focused coping that did

not reduce their anxiety. Type of coping may also be directly influenced by aspects of the organisational context and/or physical/social environment. For example, there may be inadequate resources for an individual to opt for social support as a coping strategy, so that the individual may be forced to adopt other, less preferred strategies.

Coping leads to outcome. In the present framework, outcome is not an objective concept, but is subjective. For example, adopting a problem-focused strategy by preparing for the interview may have helped individuals to achieve more success in their interview. However, for those anxious N's who did prepare for the interview, their subjective experience was that they remained anxious about the interview, despite such preparation. Adopting the same coping response does not necessarily lead to the same outcome. For example, N's and S's both received reassurance from managers when their job security was threatened by the announcement of redundancies. S's appeared to be calmed by such reassurance, whereas N's reported that they still felt anxious. This suggests that, regardless of coping strategy, the outcome may be determined by other factors, such as personality.

There is a feedback loop to explain how the outcome of coping behaviour might feed back into individuals' perceptions of major change. For example, anxious individuals, concerned about their job security following job loss announcements, sought social support. Where the 'supporter' was also anxious, the outcome for the individual seeking support was elevated anxiety. This elevated anxiety further confirms perceived job insecurity. 'Outcome' may also feed back into features of the change itself. For example, many people had negative perceptions about the performance management system (PMS) that GI attempted to introduce at the end of 1996. This negativity resulted in a rejection of the PMS by the union and a subsequent revision of the entire system.

7.6.4 Comparison of present framework with existing models

Edwards' (1992) paper, introduced in Chapter 2, synthesised the most influential occupational stress models, including Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) model, into a single

model based upon cybernetic principles. The framework developed here takes some key terms from Edwards (1992) and is also, in part, based upon a 'closed system'. In the current framework, once change has been perceived as positive or negative, coping will continue until change is perceived as neutral and the 'challenge' or 'threat' has been resolved. Coping behaviour leads to an outcome which then feeds back into a person's perception of the situation via the organisational environment, the physical and social environment and personal characteristics. It should be noted that in a change environment, such as that at GID, many changes were simultaneously discussed and implemented, so that individuals may experience a number of coping 'cycles' at the same time. Edwards includes 'cognitive construction of reality' and 'social information' as two extra factors, not included in the models upon which he based his model. The present research shows that an individual's cognitive construction of the world is linked to personality factors, so that the concept 'cognitive construction' is included in the 'personal characteristics' box. 'Social information', ie, "behaviors, opinions and beliefs" (Edwards 1992, p.249) of people surrounding the individual in their workplace, is included in the present framework under the box representing 'social environment', rather than being shown as a separate factor.

The current research offers empirical support for elements of both Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and Edwards (1992) models. This research shows that 'coping' is triggered by an interplay between the environment (*Change events; Organisational environment; Physical /Social environment*) and the person (*Personal characteristics*), where there is a *Perception* that the environment is *demanding*, resulting in *positive* (eg, 'challenge') or *negative* (eg, 'threat' or 'harm') appraisals that trigger *Coping*. However, the present framework differs from both Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and Edwards (1992) models of the coping process. The present framework allows for a direct effect of personality upon coping and also upon outcome. Personality traits do not form part of Edwards' (1992) model, and his paper notes that a limitation of the model is that "it presumes at least some minimal level of conscious cognitive processing" (Edwards 1992, p.264) so that it doesn't allow for the possibility of a direct relationship between personal factors and coping behaviour. Similarly, in Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) model, 'person variables' always

lead to coping via primary and secondary appraisal, never directly. Further, Lazarus, in a paper on stress in the workplace (Lazarus 1991), strenuously argues for removing personality traits as variables from research into workplace stress. Lazarus's argument revolves mainly around the inappropriate methods used by personality researchers when investigating workplace stress. The present research, whilst supporting the importance of personality in the coping process, has investigated the role of personality using methods that capture context and process, rather than traditional methods which tend to produce a more 'static', acontextual picture.

A further layer of argument from the present research, that is missing from the present explanatory framework, is the suggestion that there are certain conditions that determine the relative weight given to personality and situational factors in influencing an individuals' experience of major change. The argument that an organisational change context would represent a 'weak' situation and would encourage an emphasis upon dispositional behaviour was developed in Chapter 2. The present research findings, when examined in the light of existing literature (Folkman & Lazarus 1985, Bolger 1990, Steptoe 1991, Parkes 1994), suggest that the change environment at GID was sufficiently ambiguous, or 'weak', to give rise to personality factors taking precedence over situational factors in terms of degree of influence upon individuals' choice of coping response. As the present research took place in one Company, with a relatively small number of participants, it was not possible to assess whether unambiguous major change environments would produce coping responses that are driven less by personality dispositions and more by situational cues. Questions about whether all major organisational change environments are ambiguous and, if not, what features of the change environment create or minimise ambiguity are interesting questions for future research.

7.6.5 Summing up and introducing final chapter

This chapter has discussed findings from the present research in light of existing literature on change management, personal change and transition, and the psychology of

work and stress and coping. The discussion has developed the argument introduced in Chapter 6 that an unfolding major organisational change will elicit different types of feelings and responses from different types of people. Furthermore, the discussion has emphasised that the same types of people may perceive and respond to different facets of the same major change in different ways as the change unfolds. A critique of existing frameworks representing personal transition and models of stress and coping processes has been presented. An explanatory framework, combining features of existing frameworks and features derived from the current research was also presented. The next chapter draws conclusions about the relationship between individual differences and employees' experiences of major organisational change. The contributions this research makes to the organisational literature, the change management literature, the personal transition and work, stress and coping literature are presented. The relevance of this research to practitioners is discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of this research, suggestions for further research and some personal reflections upon the PhD process.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the findings in relation to the research question, ie.

'How do individual differences, in particular the personality traits extraversion and introversion, and the personality disposition work locus of control, influence employees' experiences of an unfolding programme of major organisational change?'

Specifically, the previous chapter discussed issues relating to how individual difference factors influence employees' experiences of change, and how the change context also influences these experiences.

This chapter summarises the conclusions drawn from the previous chapter and discusses both these conclusions and aspects of the research methodology in terms of the contribution that the present research makes to the literature. A further section discusses the present research in terms of its implications for those involved in change management. The research is then critiqued in terms of limitations. Suggestions are then made for further research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section where the researcher presents a personal reflection upon the PhD research process.

8.2 Conclusions and contributions

8.2.1 Introduction

Overall, the present research contributes to current knowledge by presenting empirical evidence that change is complex and that employees' experiences of change are influenced by many factors, at the personal, group and organisational levels. The research shows that we cannot achieve a full explanation of an individual's experiences of

change without considering personal factors, the social setting and the broader organisational context.

8.2.2 Organisational literature

Organisational theories tend to emphasise the role of structural and organisational factors as opposed to personal factors, as determinants of behaviour (Spector 1982, Furnham 1995). The present research challenges this view and suggests that although structural and organisational factors are important, personality is indeed a powerful predictor of behaviour at work. The present thesis speculates that the reason employees' experiences of change were so powerfully related to their personality profiles was because the organisational context was 'weakened' by the climate of change, allowing personality factors to achieve more prominence. As this was a study within a single organisation, and the whole organisation was subject to the same change programme, this proposition is speculative, but may stimulate further research (see section 8.4 below).

Notwithstanding this shortcoming, the present research makes a contribution to the organisational literature by suggesting that personality plays a not insignificant role in predicting behaviour at work, within a change context.

8.2.3 Change management literature

This thesis presents evidence suggesting a picture of change as unpredictable, in keeping with those writers who describe change as "a messy business" (Guest 1984, p.217), "a kind of chaos" (Burke & Litwin 1992, p.523), 'emergent' (Pettigrew 1987) and 'non-linear' (Wilson 1992). The present research presents a picture of multiple 'realities', where one person's perception of events is at odds with another person's perception of those same events. Existing research presents evidence to explain the emergent nature of the process of change (Balogun 1999, Gratton et al 1999), however, such research focuses upon the role of line managers in the change process. The present research contributes towards the existing change management literature by presenting evidence from the employee level. The experience of change from the perspective of non-managers, is not currently well-represented in the management literature (Mabey et al

1998). This thesis presents evidence showing that employees are not passive recipients of change, but are instrumental in affecting the change process. This supports Pettigrew & Whipp's (1993) view of organisational members as being 'co-creators' of change. Specifically, the present research suggests that employees' perceptions of change lead them to enact organisational changes in ways that are not always compatible with the intentions behind those changes. It is this gap between the intended change and the way that the change is received and enacted by recipients that contributes towards the emergent and unpredictable nature of the change process.

8.2.4 Transition curve

The wide range of experiences of major change, and indeed differences in intra-individual experiences of change, reported by participants in the present research, challenges the utility of the transition curve as an explanation of responses to major change at work. The transition curve did provide a 'fit' for those instances where an individual understood the details of the change, knew what was expected of them in relation to the change, and was content with the status quo. In such instances it was possible to trace the transition curve stages of 'holding on, letting go and moving on' (Parker & Lewis 1981). However, for the most part in the present research, employees adjusted well to changes, once these changes were implemented, but experienced most difficulty in dealing with the 'organisational change environment' of uncertainty generated by rumour, speculation and a lack of information and the dramatic fluctuations in workload accompanying change. The present research makes a contribution to existing literature on the transition curve by demonstrating the curve's limited use in an organisational setting.

8.2.5 The work stress and coping literature

8.2.5.1 Research approach

In very broad terms, the present research contributes towards the literature on work stress and coping by adopting an innovative research approach that is able to investigate change

as a process, and contextualise participants' reported experiences of change. In the present research, employees' own interpretations of events were analysed and contextualised. This contrasts with traditional approaches to investigating individual differences in relation to the experience of change which involve taking measurements at two or more points in time and then making comparisons, with little or no detailed analysis of context (eg, Ashford 1988, Callan et al 1994, Terry et al 1996, Moyle 1996). The approach adopted in the present research heeds calls from writers in the general area of work stress and coping to acknowledge the processual nature of coping behaviour and to acknowledge an individual's work context (Lazarus 1991, Edwards 1992, Mayes et al 2000).

8.2.5.2 Organisational change as a stressful event?

Organisational change tends to be treated in the individual differences and coping literature as a 'stressful event'. The present research challenges this view in the following ways. Firstly, the present research suggests that change is not an 'event', or 'an all-or-none leap' (Wilson 1992), but is a process that unfolds. In the case of the Demeter project, this process began in November 1996 with rumours of structural changes triggered by the 'skills profile review' and was still not complete at the end of the research period in December 1997. Within that year long period, there were discrete 'events' such as changes to working hours and the selection process which formed a part of the Demeter change project. But, again, these events took time to unfold, from the announcement of these aspects of the Demeter project, to actual implementation and adjustment. Secondly, the present research presented a wide range of responses to change. Not all of these responses were negative about the change, indeed some responses were supportive of the change. This is important to emphasise, as the work on organisational change in the psychology literature tends to focus upon the negative consequences of change for individuals.

8.2.5.2 Change and coping

The present research contributes to the coping literature in the following ways:

Firstly, the findings offer empirical support for aspects of both the Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and Edwards (1992) models. In particular, the present research has applied a longitudinal, processual, contextual approach which is missing from the body of empirical work on coping.

Secondly, the present research provides empirical support, albeit within a specific research context, for Ben-Porath & Tellegen's (1990) 'enlightened trait conception' which views an individual's behaviour as a function of both the person and the situation. Challenging Lazarus's (1991) repudiation of the role of personality in the coping process and emphasis upon context, the present research has presented considerable evidence to suggest that there is a role for both personality (and other individual difference factors, such as, age, gender, job role and location) and context in influencing coping behaviour. The present research further contributes to the debate in this area by suggesting that the reason Folkman & Lazarus (1985) and Bolger (1990) found that choice of coping strategy was influenced by the situation and not by personal factors, when examined processually, is because of the examination environment in which these studies were conducted. Such an environment could be seen as representative of a 'strong setting', or 'unambiguous setting' (Steptoe 1991, Parkes 1994) which would suppress the importance of person factors in influencing behaviour. In contrast, the organisational change setting at GID could be seen to represent a 'weak setting', or 'ambiguous setting' which raised the importance of person factors in influencing coping behaviour.

A further contribution that the present research makes in this area is to suggest that it is employees' initial perceptions of change that trigger coping behaviour. There were exceptions to this pattern, where individuals adopted behaviours that were in keeping with the sort of coping behaviour that the literature has found to be compatible with a particular disposition, rather than being a likely response to the way that the individual

had perceived a particular situation. This pattern arose when there was an overlap of personality dispositions and raises a number of questions which are beyond the scope of the present study, but which could be addressed in further research (see section 8.4 below). However, mostly, coping behaviour appeared to arise out of employees' appraisals of their situation and reflect these appraisals. For example, N's tended to have strong negative responses to those features of the Demeter project that threatened their job security. N's responses tended to be emotion-focused, ie, designed to ameliorate their negative feelings. A number of N's with an internal WLOC reported adopting problem-focused strategies and reported that despite this, they were still anxious. This challenges more recent opinion that it is the choice of ineffective coping strategies that maintains N's anxiety (O'Brien & DeLongis 1996) and therefore contributes to the debate about the relationship between personality, coping and appraisal.

A related issue is the question of whether there are, as some writers suggest, 'good' and 'bad' coping strategies (Callan 1993, O'Brien & DeLongis 1996). The present research makes a contribution to this area of debate by suggesting that the effectiveness of coping strategies can only be assessed in relation to a person's appraisal of their situation and an understanding of the context within which the situation occurs. For example, the same situation may be appraised differently by different people. An effective coping strategy for one person may be wholly ineffective for another person, depending upon their appraisal of the situation. Furthermore, if the context is not conducive to the successful implementation of a particular coping strategy, then the use of that strategy will not be effective. For example, in the present research, N's, who tended to experience anxiety in relation to job insecurity, tended to respond via emotion-focused strategies, designed to reduce negative emotion. In contrast, S's, who did not tend to experience anxiety in relation to job insecurity, tended to respond via problem-focused strategies, designed to address the problem. A small number of researchers such as Carver et al (1989) and Buunck et al (1989) suggest that focusing upon an anxiety-inducing problem can exacerbate rather than ameliorate anxiety levels. So, we can see how emotion-focused strategies might have helped N's because of their appraisal of their situation. We can see how problem-focused strategies might have helped S's, given their appraisal of their

situation. We can also see that emotion-focused strategies would have been inappropriate for S's and that problem-focused strategies would have been inappropriate for N's.

An appreciation of context is also important when assessing the effectiveness of coping strategies. In the present research, 'information seeking' by E's with an internal WLOC, which is judged in the literature to be an 'effective coping strategy' (McCrae & Costa 1986) frequently led to reports of "*frustration*" because of the unavailability of relevant information. Similarly, the use of social support seeking, again deemed to be a useful strategy (Ganster et al 1986, Moyle 1998), was often ineffectual, particularly in relation to alleviating feelings of job insecurity, because of the high anxiety often experienced by the individuals attempting to offer social support. Indeed, I's strategy of avoiding colleagues during periods of 'high anxiety' appeared to be more adaptive, given the organisational climate at GID. So, rather than strategies themselves being 'good' or 'bad', it is perhaps an individual's ability to be flexible in their choice of strategy that marks success. Mattlin et al (1990), suggest that the effectiveness of a coping strategy depends upon a match between how a situation is perceived and how a person chooses to respond. The present research goes further however, by including the importance of context. For example, a number of S's selected an uncharacteristic 'wait and see' strategy in response to uncertainty, where problem-focused strategies would have been fruitless because of the lack of available information. This represents a match between appraisal of the event, choice of coping strategy and environmental support for that particular strategy.

Finally, the present research highlights the following problems in applying coping 'inventories' to research in work settings. The present research revealed the use of coping strategies, such as 'impression management', that would not be represented in traditional coping measures, but which may be highly relevant to a work setting. The present research also revealed subtle differences between the ways individuals perceive events and implement particular coping strategies within a particular context. This cannot be achieved with the use of traditional coping measures.

8.2.5.3 Are some people better at dealing with change than others?

Research into individual differences and organisational change, suggests that individual differences mediate and/or moderate the effect of major change upon outcomes such as job stress, individual adjustment, job satisfaction and well-being (Ashford 1988, Shaw et al 1993, Callan et al 1994, Terry et al 1996, Moyle 1996). The present research argues that the situation is more complex than these studies suggest. As explained above in section 8.2.5.1, organisational change is not a single 'event', but a phenomenon that unfolds over time and comprises different facets, resulting in different perceptions, responses and consequences for individuals as it unfolds. For example, although on the whole, N's perceived all aspects of the Demeter project negatively, there were some personality profiles that had negative perceptions about certain aspects of the Demeter project, but not about others. Although, on the whole, S's were neutral or positive about aspects of the Demeter project, a number of S's were negative about their new job roles and managers following the Demeter restructure. So, not only were there inter-individual differences in the experience of change, but there were also intra-individual differences in the experience of change at different stages of the change process. A further example is that E's tended to be negative about the prospect of personnel changes to their teams, but E's tended to adjust well once these changes had been effected. Conversely, I's expressed little negativity about the prospect of personnel changes to their teams, but a good number reported difficulties in adjusting once team changes had been put in place. This challenges the notion that some personality types are better able to deal with organisational change as a whole than other personality types. The research suggests, therefore, that people aren't either 'all good' or 'all bad' at dealing with organisational change, but that change is multi-faceted and that people are better able to deal with some aspects of change than others, and that to some extent, this is personality dependent.

8.2.6 Emergent explanatory framework

Through the analysis process, the researcher has been developing and refining an explanatory framework to account for her findings. This contributes to our understanding of employees' experiences of major organisational change, but may also contribute to our

understanding generally of the process of stress and coping at work. This framework (Figure 7.1) shares some features both with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional model and with Edwards' (1992) synthesized 'occupational stress' model. However, the framework is specifically related to employees' experiences of major organisational change, rather than being a 'stress' model. There is an acknowledgement that organisational change is not necessarily a 'stressor', but may even be perceived positively by some individuals. Neither is organisational change treated as a single 'event', but is viewed as an unfolding process which has a variety of consequences for individuals, stemming from both the content of the change, and from the manner in which change is implemented.

8.3 Implications for practice

"Management is essentially a human social craft. It requires the ability to interpret the thoughts and wants of others - be these employees, customers, competitors or whatever - and the ability to shape meanings, values and human commitments." (Watson 1994, p.223).

The present research findings echo Watson's (1994) conclusions to his book 'In search of management'. The organisational 'world' that was described by participants in the research was one where there was broad agreement about certain features of the organisational environment, such as, for example, the organisational structure and the organisational climate and the 'style' of particular managers. However, within this shared reality, multiple realities existed, where one person's feelings and experiences of change could differ dramatically from another person's feelings and experiences of that same change. Having presented a view of major change as an emergent, chaotic process, where multiple realities influence the direction of change, the practical implications of this research are that managers need to develop their 'people skills', so that these different realities are recognised. Once managers recognise that staff do not necessarily perceive events in the same way as managers, or even in the same way as each other, then steps can be taken to 'bridge' the gaps in these versions of reality. An example presented in the

last chapter illustrates the effectiveness of this approach. A manager who recognised that many of his staff perceived the 'leap' from 'clocking on' to flexible working to be too great, introduced a transitional rota system and successfully 'weaned' staff into a flexible working system. Also, in section 6.2.4.2, there is an example of a manager helping an employee to make sense of their situation, and through this assistance in 'sensemaking', the manager helped the employee to feel confident about her future.

This thesis also suggests that the turbulent environment at GID created a 'weak setting' (Bem & Allen 1974) that resulted in behavioural norms being weakened and personal factors gaining strength in terms of their influence upon individuals' behaviour. Major change will inevitably result in a certain degree of turbulence, however, this research suggests that if managers are able to create some stability amidst the change for staff, then perhaps the difficulties that arise from staff's widely varying responses to change can be ameliorated. For example, at GID, all but 4 research participants experienced changes to team personnel during the research period. Some changes to personnel were necessary in order to fully implement the Demeter restructure, but these movements could perhaps have been reduced. In this way, employees would have had some sense of continuity and stability which may have minimised the negativity experienced by many staff. A number of employees, particularly those with an internal WLOC, appeared to create successfully a sense of stability for themselves by attempting to "*carry on as normal*". Identifying and emphasising those areas of employees' worklives that remain constant during the change period may assist in reducing the negative impact of change by helping to provide this sense of stability.

The present research has other implications for management practice in dealing with pressure in the workplace. Although some researchers suggest that individuals can be 'trained' to deal with change at work (Callan 1993, Sparks et al 2001), other research has shown that 'work stress management programmes' do not offer sustained benefits (Briner 2002). The present research suggests that teaching people supposedly 'effective' coping strategies may well prove ineffective, as people perceive change in different ways and will therefore need to use different types of coping strategy according to their own

idiosyncratic perceptions of change, and according to the environmental context (see section 8.2.5.2, para 4). A 'one size fits all' approach to helping individuals deal with their personal difficulties in dealing with change is therefore inappropriate, given the variety of ways in which people perceive the same change event, and contextual differences that may influence the effectiveness of a particular strategy.

Given the predominant tendency by N's to perceive organisational change negatively, we could conclude that this finding has implications for the selection of particular personality types in organisations that are subject to a lot of change. However, it should be noted that N's and others tended to respond negatively to issues such as uncertainty and high workload which were effects of the way Demeter was implemented, rather than direct effects of the content of the Demeter change. Given a different setting where uncertainty was reduced and workload fluctuations were better managed, N's may not have experienced change so negatively. Also, although S's appeared to handle these negative effects of change implementation, they often coped in ways that were not beneficial for the organisation, for example, through seeking employment elsewhere. The implication here is that organisations would be best served by acknowledging that different people will respond in different ways to change and attempt to ameliorate negative perceptions of change by improving the ways in which change is implemented.

Finally, the research also suggests that applying the transition curve to an organisational setting can divert management's attention away from the content of the change, allowing managers to focus instead upon persuading individuals to accept the change. This can be dangerous. There may be very solid reasons for individuals taking a 'resistant' stance towards a particular change (Piderit 2000), but the transition curve persuades managers to interpret 'resistance' as something which needs to be 'overcome'. For example, at GID, employees' 'resistance' to the implementation of the PMS was well-founded, as the system was not workable. It would therefore have been inappropriate for senior managers to apply the transition curve framework in this instance and assist employees in adapting to the introduction of the PMS, as the PMS was shown to be "*fundamentally flawed*".

8.4 Limitations

The present research has a number of shortcomings. Perhaps the most obvious weakness is that the research was conducted in a single site, so that the findings are not necessarily generalisable to employees working in other types of organisations. It is possible that employees who choose to work in the financial services industry, and more particularly in the insurance industry, are different from other types of employees. Furthermore, the present research suggests that the organisational context at GID was, in part, a determinant of employees' experiences. This suggests that the types of experiences reported by GID employees would not necessarily be reported by those same employees dealing with major change in a different organisational setting. Despite this weakness, the choice of a single company with multiple sites remains a strength of the research. The researcher was able to spend a considerable amount of time at GID and thus immerse herself in the field, achieve a deeper level of understanding, and therefore analysis, that would not have been possible had the research been conducted in several companies.

A further, related potential weakness of the present study is the danger of the so-called "Hawthorne effect", where the mere presence of the researcher, and the research aims and goals, influence the sort of responses offered by participants (Pettigrew 1995). Before addressing this weakness however, it should be noted that Whyte (1991, p.87) challenges the "Hawthorne effect" as representing "*a monumental misinterpretation of the practical implications of the Hawthorne plant studies*" and claims that "*though there may be a phenomenon such as 'the Hawthorne effect', it did not appear ...at the Hawthorne plant.*" Whyte (1991) then offers numerous plausible reasons for the interesting results that the Mayo group found in their study of 'test room girls' at the Hawthorne plant. Nevertheless, in relation to the present study, the researcher had prolonged contact with research participants at GID, so that a 'researcher effect' cannot be ruled out. The researcher attempted to guard against this by talking about the aims of her research in very broad terms. The research aims were presented as attempting to describe the experience of major change at work, from the employees' perspective, whether those

experiences be positive, negative, or neutral. The researcher also monitored herself carefully so that her responses to participants did not encourage particular 'ways of behaving' from the participants themselves. When obtaining feedback on the researcher's interpretations of particular diary or interview passages, the researcher was careful to ask, for example, 'what do you mean when you say ...?', rather than, for example, 'I've interpreted what you've said in the following way ... would you agree?'. Perhaps most importantly, the sheer length of time that the researcher spent at GID and in contact with the research participants, guarded against employees behaving in an artificial way. The researcher is confident that her presence at GID had ceased to be a novelty by the time the diary interview study began so that research participants' behaviour was likely to have been genuine.

The researcher has argued in chapters 6 and 7 that 'problem-focused' coping might serve to increase rather than decrease an individual's anxiety through forcing an already anxious person to focus upon the source of their anxiety. It could be said that the present research served to increase anxious 'diary interview' participants' anxiety levels, through asking these individuals to reflect upon their experiences in relation to change. However, it was clear from aspects of the participant observation study that many of the employees who were not participating in the 'diary interview' study also expressed feelings of anxiety about aspects of the Demeter change. The researcher therefore feels reasonably confident that the 'diary interview' method did not artificially raise participants' anxiety levels in relation to change.

In the present research, employees' experiences are necessarily based upon qualitative reports. The qualitative approach generates 'rich' data, but has the downside of restricting the number of research participants. Furthermore, because the present research investigated the role of individual differences, participants were categorised into groupings which needed to be compared. This placed a further restriction upon numbers. Although each personality category had near equal numbers at the start of the diary interview study, participant 'fall-off' and replacement recruitment meant that some categories, ie, 'introversion' and 'stability' were under-represented. The relatively low

numbers of participants in these particular categories (ie, 15 I's and 16 S's) is a concern. However, the researcher was careful to use 'counting' (Silverman 1985) in order to justify suggestions that patterns of responses were indeed related to a particular personality type, or personality profile (see Methodology chapter 3, section 3.8.4.2, para 4). A related issue is that whilst internal and external WLOC categories represented individuals with scores 1 standard deviation either side of the mean, E/I and N/S groups were created by dividing scores at the mean. This was because 'diary interview' participants were drawn from a relatively small 'pool', so that after categorising for WLOC, numbers were too restricted to perform the same operation in order to create the E/I and N/S categories. Although an effort was made to select individuals with relatively high and low E/I and N/S scores, this was not always possible. Further research investigating multiple personality dimensions, using this approach, should take this issue into account.

The researcher relied upon employees to volunteer to participate in the 'diary interview' study. This caused problems when some individuals dropped out early on in the study, as the researcher was then unable to recruit sufficient numbers of I's and S's, as mentioned above. In retrospect, it would perhaps have been wiser to include a further GID area in the initial survey, in order to draw from a larger 'pool' of volunteers. However, the downside to this strategy would have been that the researcher would have had to spread her observations over a greater number of offices which may have proved too heavy a load for a single researcher to manage. There is also a concern that the sort of people who volunteered to participate in the research may not have been representative of employees generally within GID. However, the participant observation component of the study allowed the researcher to talk to a variety of employees who were not participating in the study and this data did not reveal any surprises in terms of employees' reported experiences of change at GID.

The diary method has potential limitations that should be considered. Firstly, there was substantial variation in the quality and quantity of information supplied by diarists. However, the researcher was able to compensate for the lack of information to some extent through conducting the interviews. Secondly, although the intention was to collect employees' experiences of change in 'real time' as the change process unfolded, on occasion, employees reported their thoughts and feelings about change-related events that

had occurred up to 3 weeks earlier. O'Brien & De Longis (1996) suggest that ideally there should be no more than one week's distance between an experience and the report of that experience, otherwise there is the risk of exaggerated personality effects. However, the gap between reports was never greater than 3 weeks, (unless an employee was on an extended holiday, or on sick leave), as the researcher made follow-up calls to diarists if she had not heard from them for 3 weeks and asked diarists to make their report over the telephone. Also, diarists had been asked to record their experiences on an 'as and when' basis, either directly in the diaries, or separately for write-up at a later stage. The majority of participants adopted this method throughout the diary period, so that retrospective bias would be ameliorated.

8.5 Further research

A number of avenues for further research are suggested by the present research.

Firstly, the thesis argues that the 'weak' setting at GID may have amplified the role of individual difference factors in determining employee behaviour. The present research, having been conducted within a single company, presents this argument through referencing prior research in different types of settings. Further research could try to identify whether all major organisational change settings are necessarily 'weak', so that individual difference factors are important determinants of staff behaviour. Or, whether some organisational change settings are 'strong' and therefore elicit situational behaviour.

In the present research, employees reported both positive and negative outcomes of having had prior experience of redundancy. Some employees reported that prior experience was helpful when facing the threat of redundancy whilst others reported that having prior experience increased their feelings of anxiety. The present research was unable to answer why prior experience helped some employees but not others. Further research could investigate this issue more fully and attempt to explain why prior experience provides a positive learning experience for some people, but provides a negative learning experience for others.

The present research critiques a number of coping inventories. Further research could investigate coping in a qualitative, processual manner using the 'diary interview' method in a variety of organisational settings in order to advance the development of empirically-based work-specific coping measures. A related direction for further research involves the further investigation of the role of social support as a coping strategy for employees within a work context. As chapter 6, section 6.4.4.4 describes, there are different types of social support at work and some types may be more effective, in particular situations, than others.

Although, for the most part, coping behaviour appeared to be related to an individual's initial appraisal of their situation, there were instances where coping behaviour appeared to be at odds with appraisal, and more in keeping with an habitual coping response in keeping with a particular personality type. In particular, some N's with an internal Wloc opted for a problem-focused approach, in response to feelings of job insecurity generated by the selection interviews. These individuals reported that they still felt anxious, despite having addressed the 'problem'. Further research could address this issue and discover why, and under what circumstances, individuals choose strategies that are a poor match for their initial appraisal of their situation. Findings from the present research tentatively suggest that individuals with particular combinations of personality 'types' might be vulnerable to such 'poor match' choices.

Finally, the questions asked in the research diaries concerned what employees thought and felt about salient changes and what, if anything, they were doing to deal with these changes. The interviews then elicited information, retrospectively, about employees' subjective assessments of their wellbeing, and about how employees felt about the way they had handled their responses to change. The suggestion from the present research that particular coping strategies are only successful when judged in relation to an individual's assessment of their situation and an assessment of their environmental context, could be pursued more rigorously in further research. After the diary question asking "What are you doing, if anything, to deal with these change events/rumours of change/thoughts concerning change? Why?", diaries could contain an extra question about the perceived outcome of having dealt with a situation in the reported manner. This would give a real-time subjective report of the merits of having chosen to deal with change in a particular way.

8.6 Personal reflections upon the PhD process

Doing a PhD is a learning process and my initial interest in the PhD topic was fired, not only by the practical application of the research, but by the possibilities the PhD offered in terms of learning and applying a research approach that was too new to me. I have not been disappointed, and my PhD topic has certainly involved a steep learning curve. My undergraduate degree was in Psychology and my subsequent work experience as a research assistant was also in the psychological field. Both the degree and my research assistant work were steeped in the 'experimental' approach. Although I had some experience with qualitative research, this was mostly in using qualitative methods within a positivist framework. The PhD programme at Cranfield has enabled me to engage in debates about the philosophy of science, and has introduced me to the wide range of possibilities available to researchers in terms of research methods. Within my own research, I have learned about, and applied, participant observation and the 'diary interview' methods. I have also greatly expanded my knowledge and practice of qualitative data analysis and am now competent in my use of the N4 software. The management literature is diverse in its disciplinary base, and exposure to these different approaches to the study of work, organisations and behaviour has been influential in extending my understanding beyond a purely psychological framework.

My PhD research began in January 1996 and has now come to a close in Spring 2002. I have experienced many personal changes along the way, the most life-changing, and certainly life-enhancing, being motherhood. Whilst others manage the combination of a PhD and motherhood extremely well, in retrospect, for me, having a baby in the middle of the PhD process was poor timing. However, while the restrictions imposed by motherhood upon the amount of time available to study have been frustrating at times, the PhD has given me the opportunity to work flexibly, and be close to my child. Also, I have had to draw a firm distinction between 'work time' and 'home time' and have therefore learned to complete both home and work tasks with more efficiency. Finally, through the PhD, I hope that I have become more aware of, and improved, my own coping processes!

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CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

PhD THESIS

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GEORGINA SEERY

**How individual differences influence employees' experiences of major
organisational change in a large UK insurance company**

VOLUME 2 - APPENDICES

Supervisor: Professor Shaun Tyson

May 2002

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APPENDIX 3.1 - Pilot study - survey

Aims

- To test whether Spector's (1986) work locus of control scale is appropriate for use with a UK sample.
- To assess whether Eysenck's EPI questionnaire (1964) can be used as part of a wider set of questionnaires.
- To assess the internal reliability and construct validity of a self-efficacy questionnaire, designed for this study.
- To test the internal reliability of a tolerance of ambiguity measure adapted from Norton (1975) and Ashford (1988).
- To test the internal reliability of job autonomy and skill variety measures taken from Hackman & Oldham's (1975) job diagnostic survey.
- To see how long it would take to complete the set of questionnaires.
- To highlight any problem areas associated with completing the questionnaires.

Method

Participants

Twelve non-managers from 'underwriting' and 'claims' departments at the Croydon office of GID took part in the pilot study. There were four women and eight men. The average age of participants was 31 years, the youngest being 21 and the oldest being 60 years old.

Materials

Apart from the self-efficacy questionnaire, which was specifically designed for this study, the other questionnaires in the questionnaire set were taken from other studies. All have been widely used, except for the tolerance of ambiguity measure, which was adapted from studies by Norton and Ashford, but was chosen as a good alternative to other measures of tolerance of ambiguity, because of its applicability to an organisational

context, and because it is considerably shorter than other available measures. A cover sheet was created which asks for relevant personal and work-related details.

The tolerance for ambiguity measure was dropped after the pilot study because of unacceptable internal reliability. As explained in Chapter 3, section 3.7.2, the 'job characteristics' measure and the 'job performance self-efficacy' measure were also subsequently discarded. These measures will therefore not be discussed in any detail in this appendix.

Procedure (Week 1)

I met the pilot study participants in a conference room. I introduced myself and offered some brief details about my PhD project. Participants had been given an open letter about my project before attending the session, so they were already aware of my background and of the nature of my study. At the session, they were told the following:

'I am a research student from Cranfield University and am doing a project on major organisational change. I have been given the opportunity to do research at Guardian Insurance, and would like to ask for your help in the initial stages of my research. I am an independent researcher, and all of the information I collect during the course of my study will be treated in the strictest confidence. None of the information given to me will be divulged to anyone at Guardian.

'For practical reasons, I will not be doing my main study at your site, but I would like you to help me at this early stage. What I would like you to help me with today, is the survey part of my study. Although most of the questionnaires that make up the survey are standard and used by other researchers, I need a small group like yourselves to complete the set of questionnaires, so that I can see whether, when all the questionnaires are put together in one bunch, they still measure what they are supposed to measure. One of the questionnaires has been created especially for this study, so, in addition to completing the questionnaires today, I would also like you to complete just this questionnaire again next week.

‘In order to ensure confidentiality, I do not want you to put your name on the set of questionnaires. I have numbered each questionnaire and that will be your identifier when you complete the single questionnaire again next week. You will see that there is a yellow ‘post-it’ with the questionnaire number written upon it. Please remove that and keep it so that you can write that number down on the re-test questionnaire next week. Please don’t talk to each other about the questions, as it is individual, not group answers which are important to me.

‘I understand that although some of you volunteered to help me out today, some of you were told to come here. If any of you do not want to take part, please do not feel obliged - I quite understand. Does anyone want to leave? (everyone stayed) OK, does anyone have any questions before we start?’ (One person asked whether they had a time limit. I said no, but that they should try to work quickly through all of the questions).

The questionnaires were distributed. Half of the group (2 women and 4 men) were allocated a set of questionnaires which were arranged in the following order: EPI - self-efficacy - work locus of control - tolerance of ambiguity - job characteristics, whilst the other half were given a set of questionnaires in the following order: work locus of control - tolerance of ambiguity - job characteristics - self-efficacy - EPI. Six questionnaires had a 7-point scale for the self-efficacy questionnaire, with ‘neither agree nor disagree’ as a mid-point, and 6 questionnaires had a 6-point scale for the self-efficacy questionnaire, with no mid-point. Most people finished completing the questionnaires after about 10 minutes. Everyone finished within 15 minutes. We then had a feedback session where I covered the following questions:

- Any problems understanding the instructions?
- Any difficulties understanding the questions themselves? Any confusing questions?
- What about the scales used? Any difficulty interpreting these?
- Any comments about the ordering of the various questionnaires?

There were a number of people who found the 'Yes'/'No' alternatives in the EPI to be too restricting. No one had a problem with the Likert scales. There were some comments about how "odd" some of the EPI questions seemed. There was some confusion over v22 (question 15) of the work locus of control scale, ie, "Most employees have more influence on their supervisors than they think they do". Respondents weren't sure whether the statement referred to supervisors thinking employees have influence, or whether it referred to employees thinking they have influence over supervisors. There were no adverse comments about the way the questionnaires were ordered. Finally, some people said that having 'Yes/No' after the question about whether or not they fully understood what their personal objectives were, was too restricting. Most participants agreed that it would be better to have a range of answers from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Everyone said that they know what their objectives were and what they had to do, but in order to say that they "fully" understood, they would have to refer to the form on which their objectives were explicitly set out in writing.

All respondents agreed to return the following week and we agreed a mutually convenient date and time. I then explained that another part of my research would involve asking people to complete weekly diaries giving an account of changes at work and explaining any thoughts, feelings and actions relating to these changes. I asked for volunteers to take part in a brief 3 week study to assess the practicality of using diaries as a means of collecting data about people's experiences of organisational change. Seven out of the 12 volunteered, and I explained that I would need to see them for an extra 15 minutes the following week, in order to explain in more detail what the diary study involved.

Finally, I explained to participants that I was interested in comparing their answers against information on their last appraisal form. I explained that I quite understood if people were reluctant to give me a copy of their appraisal. I gave them assurances that all of the information would be treated in the strictest confidence, and that they should remove their name from the appraisal, and just put their number identifier on the front, in

order to further ensure anonymity. I asked participants to think about it and, if they agreed, to bring copies to next week's session.

I thanked everyone for being so generous in giving up their time.

Reliability analysis

- EPI - Cronbach's alpha, Extraversion = .86 (alphas range from .76 to .86 in EPI manual (Eysenck & Eysenck 1964))
- EPI - Cronbach's alpha, Neuroticism = .83 (alphas range from .81 to .90 in EPI manual).
- Work locus of control - Cronbach's alpha = .61 (alphas range from .75 to .85 in studies by Spector (1988) and Orpen (1991)). When item v22 (question 15) is removed, alpha increased to .7106. This item was highlighted as confusing and ambiguous by pilot study participants in the feedback session.
- Skill variety - Cronbach's alpha = .91 (Hackman & Oldham 1975, report alpha .71)
- Autonomy - Cronbach's alpha = .75 (Hackman & Oldham 1975, report alpha .66)
- Tolerance of ambiguity - Cronbach's alpha = .35 (Questions based upon a study by Ashford (1988) who reports alpha = .61).
- Self-efficacy - Cronbach's alpha = .83 (questionnaire based upon questionnaires in studies by Ashford (1988) and Jones (1986) who report alphas of .67 and .71 respectively). Questions 1,4 + 6 are all negatively skewed whereas questions 2,3, + 5 have a bimodal distribution. Repeated alpha test for questions 2,3, + 5 alpha = .76.
- One participant who was in the 7-point scale group used the mid-point several times. As no one mentioned having, or not having a mid-point, as an issue during the feedback session, I decided to use a 6-point scale for the self-efficacy questionnaire. This is in keeping with the work locus of control scale in the questionnaire set.

Summary

The questionnaire set was revised as follows as a result of the analysis:

- Tolerance of ambiguity was dropped from the scale because of the low internal reliability of this measure.

- Item v22 (qu.15) was removed from the work locus of control scale because of the confusion surrounding this question, and also because of the increase in internal reliability once this item was removed from the Cronbach's alpha analysis.
- The self-efficacy questionnaire was revised. The three questions which discriminated between participants were kept, and another three questions were developed, using the acceptable originals as a guide.
- In response to feedback about the question preceding the self-efficacy questionnaire, which asks whether people understand their 'personal objectives', a 6-point Likert scale was used to replace the 'yes'/'no' response alternatives.

Procedure (Week 2)

We met in the same conference room as before. Respondents were asked to complete the revised self-efficacy questionnaire. They were given a further copy of the same questionnaire, dated one week ahead and numbered accordingly, along with a stamped addressed envelope, which they were asked to complete the following week and return.

Finally, I collected copy appraisals from those respondents who remembered to bring them. Those who agreed to let me have a copy, but had forgotten to bring copies along with them, were asked to post these the following week, along with the additional self-efficacy questionnaire which they had been asked to complete.

Everyone was thanked for taking part in the pilot, and those who had volunteered to take part in the diary study were asked to stay behind.

Analysis

Cronbach's alpha for the revised self-efficacy questionnaire was .91. However, one of the items showed an unacceptably skewed distribution and was therefore not discriminating between participants. Once this item was removed, the alpha coefficient fell to .88, however, this still demonstrates acceptable reliability.

All twelve respondents returned their re-test self-efficacy questionnaires within two weeks. Test - re-test reliability was calculated by adding the scores for each questionnaire, for each participant, and calculating Spearman's correlation between week 1 and week 2. The correlation was .91, $p < .001$.

Only three out of twelve participants gave me copies of their performance appraisal. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from comparing three people's answers to question 7 of the job performance self-efficacy questionnaire with their appraisals. However, as shown below, the answers of these three people did tally with what was written on their appraisals.

<i>questionnaire score</i>	<i>appraisal comments</i>
1	lacking confidence, need to improve skills, afraid to ask when unsure of things
3	confidence growing, quietly conscientious, organises time, meets deadlines
4	enthusiastic, willing to learn and expand scope

It is possible, of course, that those people who were willing to give me a copy of their appraisal, are those people who would have been realistic about their assessment of themselves anyway, so little can be drawn from this data.

The pilot study was able to demonstrate that the revised self-efficacy questionnaire has good internal and test - re-test reliability⁴, but no conclusions can be drawn about construct validity. However, as the measure is based closely upon other measures which did demonstrate construct validity (Jones 1986, Ashford 1988), it is hoped that construct validity does not prove to be an issue⁵.

⁴ It should be noted that as self-efficacy is expected to change over time, test - re-test reliability is perhaps not a particularly important measure of whether the questionnaire is robust or not.

⁵ As explained in Chapter 3, section 3.7.2, construct validity and reliability did prove to be an issue in the main study, so the questionnaire was dropped from the analysis.

1st August 1996

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[REDACTED]
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To Whom It May Concern

Re: PhD student research project

I am a student from Cranfield University and I am conducting research on organisational change. I am very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to do my research at [REDACTED] and have already made a visit to your site.

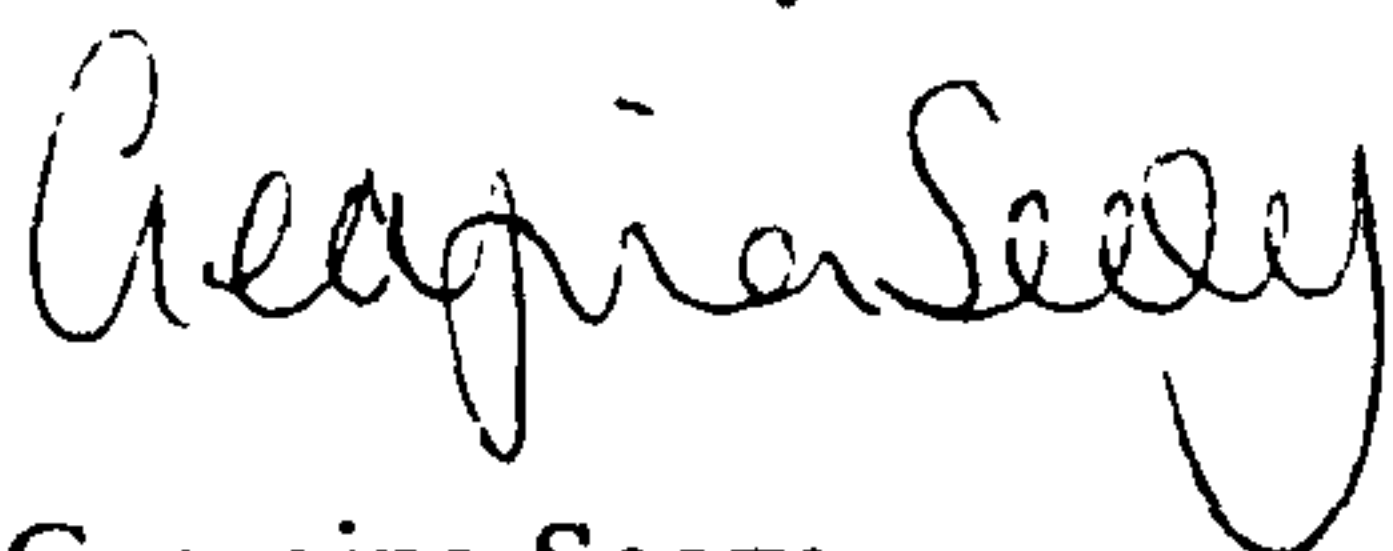
The aim of my research is to look at the process of organisational change through the eyes of those people who are actually experiencing change. I am keen to examine change from the perspective of non-managers, as there is little information available on the experiences of people at 'operational' levels. It is important that we gain a better understanding of the effects of major change and that the voices of people at the forefront of the changes can be heard.

I am an independent university researcher and I am not acting on behalf of anyone at [REDACTED]. All of the information I collect during my research will be treated in the strictest confidence.

The first part of my study involves completing a set of questionnaires which look at work beliefs, job characteristics and personality. This will give me a broad overview of the kinds of people who work at [REDACTED]. Although most of the questions are standard and are used widely by researchers, because I am combining different questionnaires it is necessary to do a pilot study so that I can test whether the questions measure what they are supposed to measure. I am therefore looking for 12-15 volunteers from the Croydon office to complete the questionnaires (which should take about 10 minutes) and take part in a 5 minute feedback session. I will also want these volunteers to complete just one set of 7 questions (which should take about 2 minutes) a few days later. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence, and volunteers will be requested to use a number identifier rather than their name in order to ensure anonymity.

I would be very grateful if you would consider taking part.

Yours faithfully



Georgina Seery

CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRES - COVER SHEET

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in my research project by completing these questionnaires. In order to provide me with some background information, could you please answer the questions below. Thank you. Please use the right hand side of this sheet if you wish to make any comments about the questionnaires.

COMMENTS

1. Date: _____ 2. Age: _____ 3. Sex: F M (please circle)

4. How long have you been working for Guardian? _____ years _____ months

5. How long have you been in your present job? _____ years _____ months

6. What is your job title? _____

Could you please provide a brief description of your job? _____

7. What is your current grade? _____

8. Please tick the appropriate box.

- I have little or no responsibility for the work of others
- I supervise a work team

Here are some statements concerning beliefs about aspects of work. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements by marking the appropriate box. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Disagree very much	Disagree somewhat	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree very much
1. A job is what you make of it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. On most jobs people can pretty much accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If employees are unhappy with a decision made by their boss, they should do something about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Making money is primarily a matter of good fortune.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Most people are capable of doing their jobs well if they make the effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. In order to get a really good job you need to have family members or friends in really high places.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Promotions are usually a matter of good fortune.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. When it comes to landing a really good job, who you know is more important than what you know.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cont...

Continued ...

- | | Disagree
very much | Disagree
somewhat | Disagree
slightly | Agree
slightly | Agree
moderately | Agree
very much |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 11. Promotions are given to employees who perform well on the job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. To make a lot of money you have to know the right people. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. It takes a lot of luck to be an outstanding employee on most jobs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded for it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Most employees have more influence on their supervisors than they think they do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. The main difference between people who make a lot of money and people who make a little money is luck. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please indicate your strength of agreement or disagreement with the following statements by marking the appropriate box. Again, there are no right or wrong answers.

- | | Disagree
very much | Disagree
somewhat | Disagree
slightly | Agree
slightly | Agree
moderately | Agree
very much |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I function very poorly whenever there is a serious lack of communication in a job situation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. In a situation in which other people evaluate me, I feel a great need for clear and explicit evaluations. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. If I am uncertain about the responsibilities of a job, I get very anxious. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The following statements could be used to describe a job. Please indicate whether each statement is an *accurate* or an *inaccurate* description of *your* job by marking the appropriate box. Please try to be as objective as you can in deciding how accurately each statement describes your job - regardless of whether you like or dislike your job. Thank you.

- | | Very
Inaccurate | Mostly
Inaccurate | Slightly
Inaccurate | Uncertain | Slightly
Accurate | Mostly
Accurate | Very
Accurate |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The job requires me to use a number of complex or high-level skills. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The job denies me any chance to use my personal initiative or judgement in carrying out the work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The job is quite simple and repetitive. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please circle the numbers on the scales below which best describe your job. Please circle just *one* number per question. Thank you.

5. How much *autonomy* is there in your job? That is, to what extent does your job permit you to decide *on your own* how to go about doing the work?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____

Very little; the job gives me almost no personal "say" about how and when the work is done.

Moderate autonomy: many things are standardised and not under my control, but I can make some decisions about the work.

Very much: the job gives me almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is done.

6. How much *variety* is there in your job? That is, to what extent does the job require you to do many different things at work, using a variety of your skills and talents?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____

Very little; the job requires me to do the same routine things over and over again.

Moderate variety.

Very much: the job requires me to do many different things, using a number of different skills and talents.

The following questions relate to your job. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements by marking the appropriate box. Please remember that your responses will be treated in a strictly confidential manner. Thank you.

1a. I fully understand what my personal objectives are, and what I need to do in order to achieve them. Yes No

Strongly Disagree Disagree Marginally Disagree Marginally Agree Agree Strongly Agree

1. I feel that my 'personal objectives' are well within the scope of my abilities.

2. I have some doubts about my ability to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform beyond the core requirements of my job.

3. I believe that I am more than capable of meeting my 'personal objectives'.

4. I feel confident that my skills and abilities equal or exceed those of my colleagues.

5. I think that I may not be able to do all that is demanded of me in order to achieve my 'personal objectives'.

6. I am sure that I can easily develop the competencies I need in order to achieve an excellent level of performance at work.

Not at all Confident Unconfident Marginally Unconfident Marginally Confident Confident Very Confident

7. Could you please think back to the year leading up to your last appraisal? How confident did you feel about doing your job during that time?

A 3

The questionnaire overleaf is about the way you behave, feel and act. After each question is a space for answering "YES" or "NO".

Try to decide whether "YES" or "NO" represents your usual way of acting or feeling. Then put a cross in the circle under the column headed "YES" or "NO". Work quickly, and don't spend too much time over any question; I would like your first reaction, not a long-drawn out thought process. The whole questionnaire shouldn't take more than a few minutes. Be sure not to omit any questions.

Now turn the page over and go ahead. Work quickly, and remember to answer every question. There are no right or wrong answers, and this isn't a test of intelligence or ability, but simply a measure of the way you behave.



FORM A

- 1. Do you often long for excitement? YES NO
- 2. Do you often need understanding friends to cheer you up?
- 3. Are you usually carefree?
- 4. Do you find it very hard to take no for an answer?
- 5. Do you stop and think things over before doing anything?
- 6. If you say you will do something do you always keep your promise, no matter how inconvenient it might be to do so?
- 7. Does your mood often go up and down?
- 8. Do you generally do and say things quickly without stopping to think?
- 9. Do you ever feel "just miserable" for no good reason?
- 10. Would you do almost anything for a dare?
- 11. Do you suddenly feel shy when you want to talk to an attractive stranger?
- 12. Once in a while do you lose your temper and get angry?
- 13. Do you often do things on the spur of the moment?
- 14. Do you often worry about things you should not have done or said?
- 15. Generally, do you prefer reading to meeting people?
- 16. Are your feelings rather easily hurt?
- 17. Do you like going out a lot?
- 18. Do you occasionally have thoughts and ideas that you would not like other people to know about?
- 19. Are you sometimes bubbling over with energy and sometimes very sluggish?
- 20. Do you prefer to have few but special friends?
- 21. Do you daydream a lot?
- 22. When people shout at you, do you shout back?
- 23. Are you often troubled when talking to a girl?
- 24. Are all your hates, dislikes and dislikes mutual?
- 25. Can you usually be counted on to help someone who is in a lively party?

- 28. After you have done something important, do you often come away feeling you could have done better?
- 29. Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?
- 30. Do you sometimes gossip?
- 31. Do ideas run through your head so that you cannot sleep?
- 32. If there is something you want to know about, would you rather look it up in a book than talk to someone about it?
- 33. Do you get palpitations or thumping in your heart?
- 34. Do you like the kind of work that you need to pay close attention to?
- 35. Do you get attacks of shaking or trembling?
- 36. Would you always declare everything at the customs, even if you knew that you could never be found out?
- 37. Do you hate being with a crowd who play jokes on one another?
- 38. Are you an irritable person?
- 39. Do you like doing things in which you have to act quickly?
- 40. Do you worry about things that might happen?
- 41. Are you slow and unburied in the way you move?
- 42. Have you ever been late for an appointment or work?
- 43. Do you have many nightmares?
- 44. Do you like talking to people so much that you never miss a chance of talking to a stranger?
- 45. Are you troubled by aches and pains?
- 46. Would you be very unhappy if you could not see lots of people most of the time?
- 47. Would you call yourself a nervous person?
- 48. Of all the people you know, are there some whom you definitely do not like?
- 49. Would you say that you were fairly self-confident?
- 50. Are you easily hurt when people find fault with you or your work?
- 51. Do you find it hard to really enjoy yourself at a lively party?
- 52. Are you troubled with feelings of inferiority?
- 53. Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?
- 54. Do you sometimes talk about things you know nothing about?
- 55. Do you worry about your health?
- 56. Do you like playing pranks on others?

Thank you for taking the time to complete these questionnaires. Your participation is very much appreciated.

As I mentioned in my covering letter, I am going to do a follow-up study using the same questionnaires this time next year. I hope that you will also be kind enough to complete the questionnaires again in a year's time, as this will give me the information I need in order to make a meaningful comparison - and, most importantly, will enable me to complete my research project!

I may want to ask you to consider participating in an in-depth study looking at individual accounts of experiences at work, particularly in respect of organisational change. If you might be interested in taking part and wouldn't mind me contacting you with further details, please tick the box. I would greatly appreciate your additional help.

Thank you once again.

APPENDIX 3.2 - Pilot study - diaries

Aims

- To assess whether the diary method is appropriate for the proposed sample.
Historically, diaries have usually been produced by people from certain social groups and/or with a talent for writing (Burgess 1984). As such, diaries may prove to be an ineffective means of collecting data in the present study.
- To assess whether the diary format is effective in generating the appropriate data.
- To receive feedback from participants on preferred ways of completing the diary (eg, written, typed or audio, filling it in as the week progresses, making notes during the week and filling in the diary at the end of each week, or completing it in one sitting at the end of the week).

Method

Participants

Seven of the people who participated in the pilot survey study agreed to take part in the diary study. However one person was going to be away on a 'continuous improvement' workshop for the following two weeks and didn't want to have to think about completing a diary during this time, and another person was going to be away on holiday for the following two weeks. This left five volunteers - 2 women and 3 men.

Materials

Burgess (1984) distinguishes between structured and unstructured diaries. The focus of the present study is on individuals' perceptions of change, their thoughts, feelings and responses to change. The diary format was therefore developed to reflect these topics, yet allow enough freedom for diarists to express their phenomenological experience of change at work. The resulting format could be described as semi-structured, but still allows diarists the freedom to express "spontaneity, detail and specific insights" (Burgess 1984, p.129).

The first draft (see Appendix 3.2.1) contains seven questions. Five open-ended questions asking what changes are happening, what people think and feel about the changes and what people are doing in order to deal with the changes. A further open-ended question provides an opportunity for diarists to recount anything which they want about their work-life at the moment. Two further questions have Likert scales and address the issue of personal control at work, and performance efficacy.

The three questions relating to thoughts, feelings and responses, were collapsed into one question, following feedback from diarists after the first week of piloting (see Appendix 3.2.2). Further revisions were made following feedback after the three week piloting of the diary. The final diary format, used in the main study, can be seen in Appendix 3.5.

Procedure

Week 1 - Five volunteers stayed behind after the entire group of 12 had completed the revised self-efficacy questionnaire. I explained that the purpose of the diary study was to collect information about organisational change, as change unfolds, and, most importantly, to find out how each individual experiences change. I explained that although the diaries contained particular questions, these questions were open enough to provide diarists with the freedom to express what they think and feel about change, and what they are doing in order to deal with change. I also explained that there is space for diarists to offer any other information, not covered by the first 4 questions, which they think may be of interest. I explained that the main diary study would cover a whole year, so that the two 'scale' questions on personal control and efficacy would provide a rough 'marker' to see how individuals feel at particular points in the year.

We looked through the diary together and read through all of the questions. The only comment at this stage was that it may be difficult to separate thoughts, feelings and behaviour into three different responses, and participants were concerned that they might repeat themselves if we used this format. This was an issue which I had already discussed with colleagues, so I decided at this point to leave the first version of the diary with the participants to complete during the first week, and arranged to meet them the

following week in order to give them a revised version where the questions about thoughts, feelings and behaviour were collapsed into one question.

Participants were given the option of using a wordprocessor (I had prepared a disk containing the diary format in Microsoft Word 6.0), writing by hand, or using an audiotape in order to complete the diaries. None of the participants were interested in using a wordprocessor, or using an audiotape. None of the participants had experience with using an audiotape and thought that this method might be quite difficult, especially if they wanted to add to the diary throughout the week, rather than complete the diary at the end of each week. Although all of the participants used computers a lot in their everyday work, none of them felt able to express themselves easily in a typed format and preferred writing by hand. It was agreed that everyone would write by hand, but if anyone thought they would like to try the other methods, they should feel free to do so.

Week 2 - We met the following week. I collected the diaries from the previous week and gave participants two copies each of the revised diary. All participants agreed that dividing thoughts, feelings and actions into three separate questions made the diaries more difficult to complete, as there was a lot of overlap between these sections. Diarists had no difficulty completing other parts of the diary. Participants were asked to complete the revised diaries at the end of each of the following two weeks and to post the diaries back to me at the end of each week in the stamped addressed envelopes provided. We arranged to meet the week after the last diary had been completed for a feedback session.

Analysis (brief account)

Four out of five participants completed diaries for all three weeks. One volunteer was absent from work for one of the three weeks, so did not complete a diary during that week. Intra-individual answers to the two 'scale' questions were consistent over the three weeks, with a difference of a maximum of one scale point over the three weeks. Inter-individual answers to these questions varied considerably, with a maximum score of 5 and a minimum score of 1 for the 'personal control' question, and a maximum score of 6

and a minimum score of 1 for the 'performance efficacy' question. Answers to the scale questions were reflected in answers to the open questions.

Diaries were coded line by line, and these initial codes were pulled together under themes. A frequency count of codes relating to thoughts and feelings about change, labelled 'positive' and 'negative', revealed three times more 'negative' codes than 'positive' codes which seemed to be a fair reflection of the mood at this site. (During each of my visits to this site, after meeting with the pilot study participants, I spent the day talking informally to people at different levels and in different departments, and went out for lunch with different groups of people). Different change events were salient for different respondents. The original diary format elicited more responses to 'how are you dealing with these changes' than the revised diary format. In the revised format, there was a tendency to only write about thoughts and feelings and leave out actions. Only two diarists used the last open question to express other thoughts which they thought might be of interest.

Feedback session

A week after the final diary had been completed, I returned to the site for a group feedback session with all diarists. All five diarists attended.

Summary

- Diaries took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. All diarists thought the exercise was worthwhile and some said it had been enjoyable.
- Four diarists made notes during the week, and wrote up the notes in their diaries at the end of each week. One diarist worked from memory and wrote the diary at the end of each week.
- No one took the option of using wordprocessing or audiotape. All agreed that the handwriting method was "more in keeping with doing something which asks you to write about personal things".
- People were put off from using the last open question as a forum for expressing other items of interest, as they found the question quite restricting. One person commented

that the words “in your worklife” meant that he didn’t feel able to mention things which were going on at home, which had been affecting his life over the past three weeks.

- Two diarists wrote about actual change events as well as rumours of change at work. Other diarists did not feel that the questions permitted writing about rumours. We talked about ways in which the question could be revised so that people were encouraged to talk both about events and rumours.
- I explained that the revised questionnaire resulted in less being written about how people were dealing with change. Diarists were adamant that the original format was cumbersome to complete, but we discussed ways in which the revised diary could be further revised so that diarists would be encouraged to talk about thoughts, feelings *and* actions.

Further revisions to diary format following feedback (see Appendix 3.5.3)

- Question 1 asks diarists to give an account of current, past and rumoured changes which are salient at the time of filling out the diary.
- Question 2 contains thoughts and feelings in one question and prompts diarists to refer to thoughts and feelings when answering the question.
- Question 3 asked diarists separately what they were doing to deal with change.
- Question 4 was altered, in accordance with feedback from the diarists, to invite people to write about matters outside, as well as inside, the work environment.

FINAL DRAFT FOR CROYDON PILO
APPENDIX 3.2.1

WEEKLY DIARY

Name: _____ **Day:** _____ **Date:** _____

1. What changes are happening at work at the moment?

2. What do you think about these changes? Why?

3. How do you feel about these changes? Why?

4. What are you doing in order to deal with these changes? Why?

5. Are there any other comments you would like to make about your work-life at present?

6. At the moment, how much do you feel that you are able to influence events in your work life? (Please circle the number which best describes how you feel.)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
I feel that I have little influence over events at work I feel that I have a lot of influence over events at work

7. At the moment, how confident do you feel about your ability to perform well at work? (Please circle the number which best describes how you feel.)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
Not at all confident Extremely confident

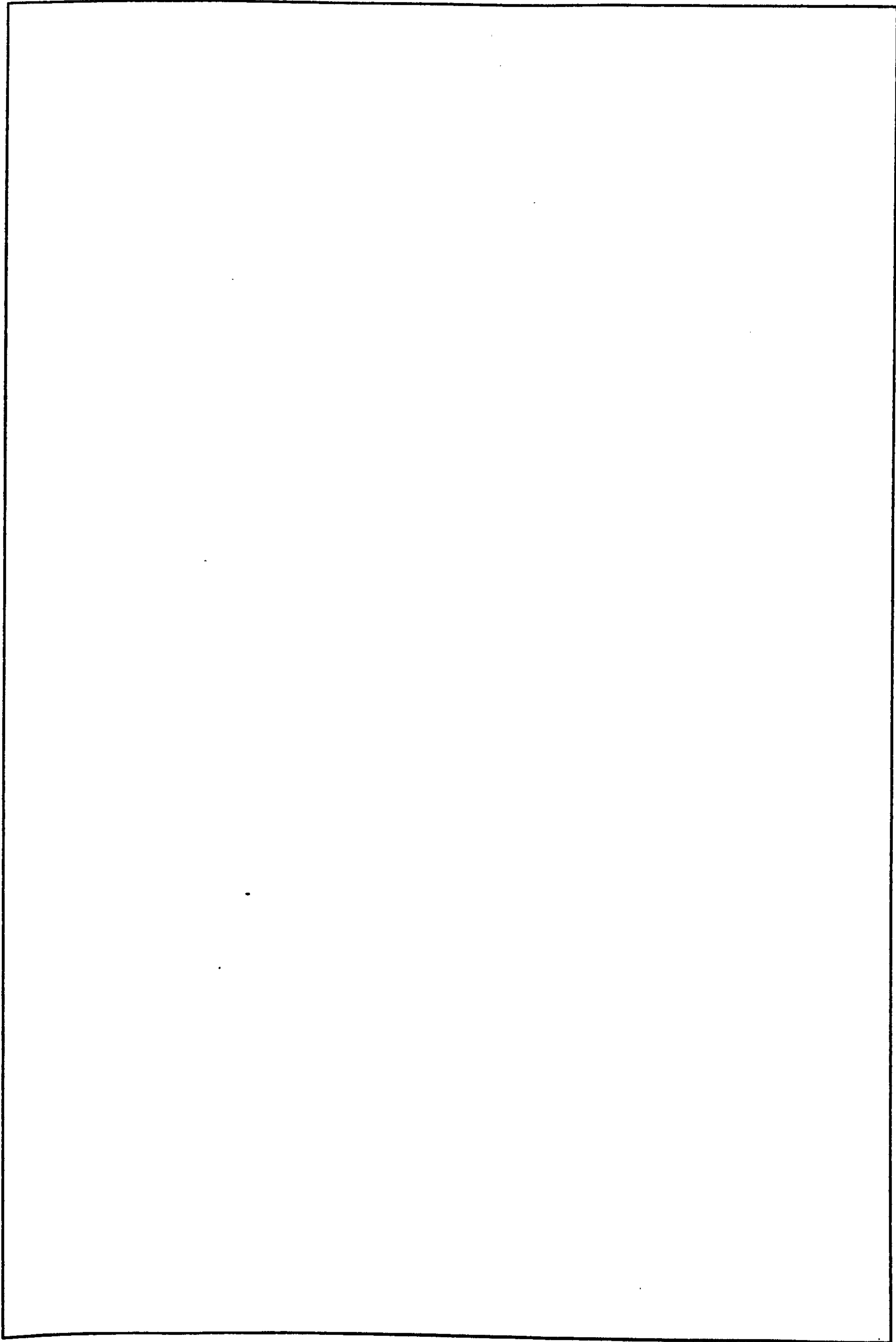
APPENDIX 3.2.2

WEEKLY DIARY

Name: _____ Day: _____ Date: _____

1. In the space below, please describe what changes are happening at work at the moment.

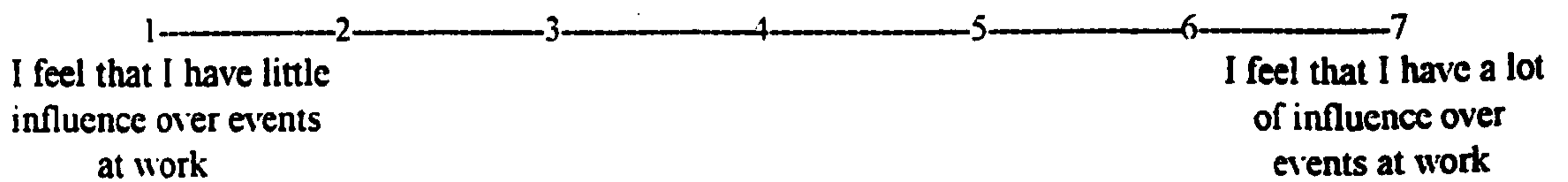
2. What you think about these changes? Why?
How do you feel about these changes? Why?
What are you doing, if anything, to deal with these changes? Why?



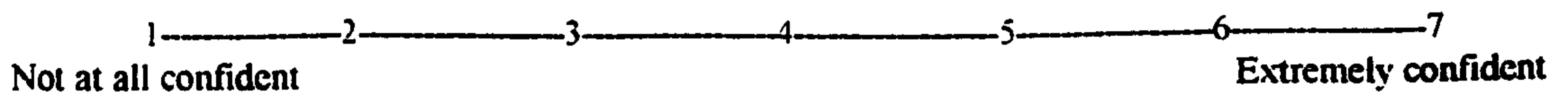
A 27

3. Are there any other comments you would like to make about your work-life at present?

6. At the moment, how much do you feel that you are able to influence events in your work life? (Please circle the number which best describes how you feel.)



7. At the moment, how confident do you feel about your ability to perform well at work? (Please circle the number which best describes how you feel.)



APPENDIX 3.3 - pilot study - interview

Aim

The aim of this stage of the pilot study was to assess the interview schedule developed for use in the main study.

Participants

Three of the employees (2 males, 1 female) from GID Croydon, all of whom had taken part in the pilot diary study, volunteered to participate in the pilot interview study.

Method

Interviews were conducted in a meeting room with the interviewer and interviewee sitting in armchairs around a low coffee table. The meeting room was selected as a suitable venue as it was a private space. The room was 'neutral' as it was used by employees and managers alike. The interviewer began the interview by explaining that the interview was being used as part of a pilot study to assess the interview schedule and that all of the interviewee's responses would be treated in the strictest confidence. The interviewer explained that she would attach false names to each interview document in order to further ensure interviewee anonymity. The interviewee was asked if s/he had any questions and these were dealt with before the interview proper began.

The interview schedule was divided into seven main sections asking questions relating to:

1. Interviewee's history with the company.
2. Description of day-to-day job.
3. Attachment to work.
4. Experience of change implementation.
5. Experience of salient changes.
6. Experience of changes to working hours (issue raised in all diaries).
7. Experience of failed introduction of PMS.

The interviewer covered each of the sections and before closing the interview referred to a checklist to ensure that all areas had been covered. The interviewee was asked whether there were any more questions before being accompanied by the interviewer back to her/his desk where the interviewer made a note of the interviewee's positioning within the office.

Comments

The interview schedule worked well in terms of eliciting information pertaining to the research question and was not significantly altered for use in the main study (see Appendix 3.5.4 for example of first interview schedule). However, when the interviews were transcribed, the interviewer realised that she had been keeping too closely to the running order of the schedule and had perhaps missed some promising avenues of enquiry by not being 'open' enough in her treatment of the interview. Interviews lasted from between 45 minutes and 50 minutes so that there was going to be time in the main study to allow interviewees to expand their responses before moving on. Overall, too much time was spent on issues relating to a person's history with the company and their job and a note was made to make these sections shorter, so that there would be more time to focus upon the sections specifically relating to salient changes.

APPENDIX 3.4 - Main study - survey

Aims

- To obtain data in order to select a sample for the diary-interview study.

Method

Participants

After visiting a number of Guardian Insurance sites, two area office networks of GID (UK) were chosen as a focus for the main study. One network in the North West, and one network in the South East. These office networks were selected for a number of reasons:

- The offices each have departments covering all areas of GID's business.
- The area managers from the North West and South East sites have very different management styles.
- The broad changes affecting GID as a whole are being 'rolled out' in unison at the two areas.
- The South East area has many long serving employees, whereas the North West area has many new and younger employees.
- On a purely practical level, these areas were chosen for their accessibility.

Procedure

After obtaining lists of employees at each of the offices within the 2 areas, 330 questionnaire sets with covering letters (see end of this Appendix 3.4) were sent to all non-managers at the two GID area offices. Fourteen of the 330 questionnaires were returned with a note that the individuals had left the Company, or were about to leave the Company, and 130 completed questionnaires were returned (ie, 41% response rate). Each questionnaire was numbered, and a database with names, addresses and corresponding numbers was created.

The interviewer covered each of the sections and before closing the interview referred to a checklist to ensure that all areas had been covered. The interviewee was asked whether there were any more questions before being accompanied by the interviewer back to her/his desk where the interviewer made a note of the interviewee's positioning within the office.

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Descriptive statistics in brief

- Mean age = 30 years (youngest = 17 years, oldest = 58 years)
- 67% females, 33% males. These figures correspond closely to the ratio of females:males in GID as a whole, according to the 1997 'manpower survey' figures - 65%:35%.
- Ratio of questionnaires sent out to the two areas:-
 - South East = 51.5%
 - North West = 48.5%
- Ratio of questionnaires returned from the two areas:-
 - South East = 53.9%
 - North West = 46.1%
- The largest single group of respondents are underwriters who make up 31.25% of the sample, with claims negotiators and clerks being the next largest groups with 11% each.
- The average time worked at InsCo = 7 years, with a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 30 years. The average time in present job = 4 years, with a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 17 years.
- Mean extraversion score = 13, mean neuroticism score = 10, mean lie score = 3.
- The mean extraversion score is as expected, when compared with Eysenck's mean scores in the EPI manual (1964) for various occupational groups. Secretaries, salespeople, nurses, apprentices and army personnel all score an average of between 12.5 and 13.5. Because of the large numbers of underwriters and claims negotiators in the sample, whose work involves a lot of contact with the general public and external brokers, a relatively high mean extraversion score would be expected.

- Again, the mean neuroticism score, when compared with Eysenck's examples of mean scores from different occupational groups, is as expected. Nurses, student teachers, skilled working class, students and lab. technicians all have comparable mean neuroticism scores.
- The lie score is a little higher than the mean reported by Eysenck (ie, 2.3). However, according to Eysenck, questionnaires cease to be useful when the lie score is above 5. 13% of respondents had unacceptable scores on the lie scale.
- The mean work locus of control score is 47.4, with a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 69, standard deviation, 11.22. There is a good spread of scores, which provided an opportunity to select a representative sample from the upper, middle and lower ranges (Krause & Stryker 1984). The mean is higher than means reported in other studies with other work samples using the work locus of control scale. Daniels & Guppy (1992) report a mean of 39.80 for a sample of accountants, Spector (1988) reports means of 41.7, 36.8, 39.2, 38, 39.4, 36.9 for samples of business administration and industrial psychology undergraduates, department store sales and support employees, mental health agency employees, supermarket clerks & managers, mental health facility employees and municipal managers respectively, and finally, Orpen (1991) reports a mean of 39.91 for a sample of employees from a manufacturing company. If a mid-scale score of 3.5 is added to the mean for the present sample, to account for having dropped one item from the questionnaire, then the mean goes up to 50.5. This higher than average mean, in the direction of externality corresponds with the proposition that there would be a higher than average incidence of externality in this sample. Cronbach's alpha for work locus of control = .81. Reliability falls if any of the items are deleted. The data was subjected to principal components analysis. Prior to rotation, three factors were produced with an Eigenvalue >1 accounting for 29, 22.7 and 9.2 percent of the variance respectively. The first factor relates to questions concerning luck, fortune and knowing the 'right' people, and the second factor relates to questions concerning belief in personal control and effort being related to reward. The third factor contains only one significant item which states "People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded for it." It is possible

that the word "generally" in this question resulted in people with both external and internal orientation agreeing, or disagreeing with this question in the same direction. The other statements in the questionnaire tend to be more forthright in tone. A two-factor solution therefore seems appropriate.

- Extraversion and work locus of control are not correlated.
- Neuroticism and work locus of control demonstrate a significant correlation of .22, ($p = < .008$). This small but significant correlation between neuroticism and the work locus of control construct is compatible with the findings of other studies that show a correlation between locus of control measures and neuroticism (Eysenck & Morley 1994).

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Re: Student research project

I am a student from Cranfield University and I am conducting research on organisational change. I am very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to do my research at [REDACTED] and have already made a visit to your site.

The aim of my research is to look at the process of organisational change through the eyes of those people who are actually experiencing change. Most research into organisational change looks at change from the perspective of management. I am keen to examine change from the perspective of non-managers, as there is little information available on the experiences of people at 'operational' levels. It is important that we gain a better understanding of the effects of major change and that the voices of people at the forefront of the changes can be heard.

I am an independent university researcher and I am not acting on behalf of anyone at [REDACTED]. All of the information I collect during my research will be treated in the strictest confidence. At no time will I divulge any information which can be traced back to particular employees, or groups of employees.

I am writing to ask you to participate in my preliminary study which involves completing the enclosed questionnaires twice - once now, and then again in a year's time. Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. I have already piloted the

questionnaires and on average they take about 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaires will give me a picture of the different types of people at the Company, and of their beliefs about work.

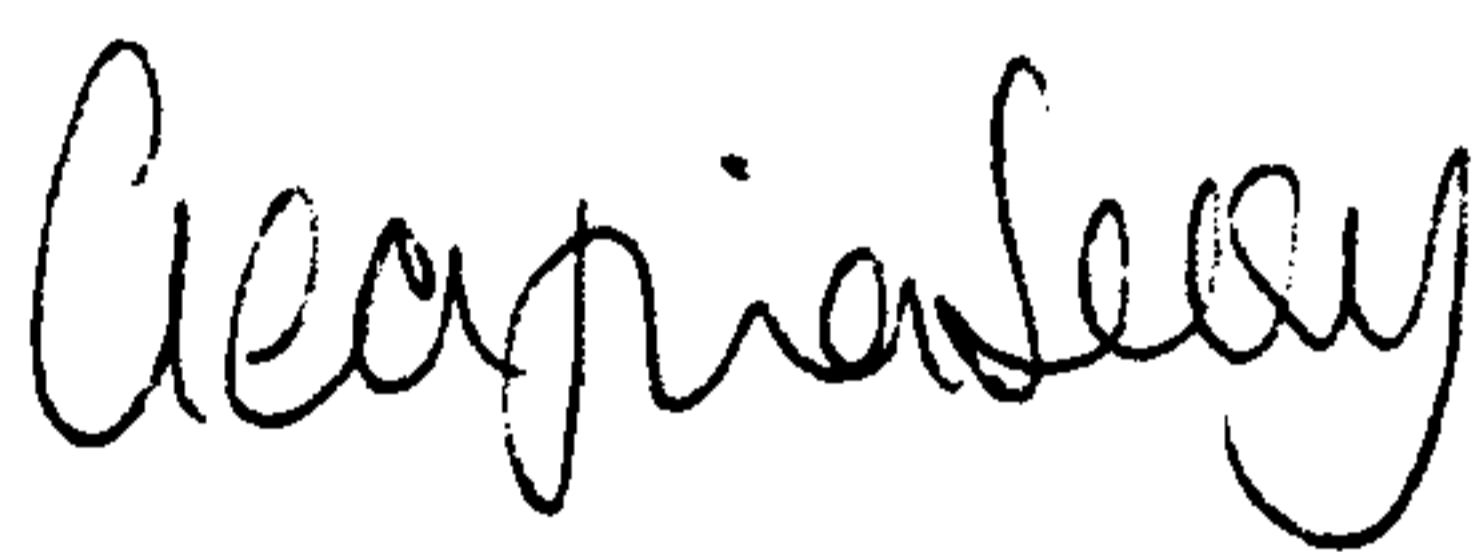
I appreciate that you are busy, but I would be very grateful if you could please take the time to fill out the questionnaires and return them in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. I should stress again that your responses are confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone. Once my research is complete, a general report of my findings will be made available.

I am sending questionnaires to most people at your site, so if you do decide to complete them, I would ask you please not to discuss your answers with other people, as it is very important that I have individual responses to the questions. If you need any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me on (01844) 353904.

In addition to the questionnaires, I want to involve a small group of staff in a more detailed study, and I am also going to be doing some observations at your site of [REDACTED] at work'.

Thank you very much in advance for your time.

Yours sincerely



Georgina Seery

Encs

CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRES - COVER SHEET

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in my research project by completing these questionnaires. In order to provide me with some background information, could you please answer the questions below. Thank you. Please use the right hand side of this sheet if you wish to make any comments about the questionnaires.

COMMENTS

1. Date: _____ 2. Age: _____ 3. Sex: F M (please circle)

4. How long have you been working for Guardian? _____ years _____ months

5. How long have you been in your present job? _____ years _____ months

6. What is your job title? _____

Could you please provide a brief description of your job? _____

7. What is your current grade? _____

8. Please tick the appropriate box.

- I have little or no responsibility for the work of others
- I supervise a work team

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APPENDIX 3.4 CONT...

Here are some statements concerning beliefs about aspects of work. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements by marking the appropriate box. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Disagree very much	Disagree somewhat	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree very much
1. A job is what you make of it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. On most jobs people can pretty much accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If employees are unhappy with a decision made by their boss, they should do something about it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Making money is primarily a matter of good fortune.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Most people are capable of doing their jobs well if they make the effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. In order to get a really good job you need to have family members or friends in really high places.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Promotions are usually a matter of good fortune.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. When it comes to landing a really good job, who you know is more important than what you know.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Continued...

- | | Disagree
very much | Disagree
somewhat | Disagree
slightly | Agree
slightly | Agree
moderately | Agree
very much |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 11. Promotions are given to employees who perform well on the job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. To make a lot of money you have to know the right people. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. It takes a lot of luck to be an outstanding employee on most jobs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded for it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. The main difference between people who make a lot of money and people who make a little money is luck. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The following questions relate to your job. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements by marking the appropriate box. Please remember that your responses will be treated in a strictly confidential manner. Thank you.

Strongly Disagree Marginally Disagree Marginally Agree Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I know what I need to do in order to achieve my personal objectives. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I feel very confident that I can achieve an excellent level of performance in my job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I think that I may not be able to do all that is demanded of me in order to achieve my 'personal objectives'. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I have some doubts about my ability to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform beyond the core requirements of my job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I believe that I am more than capable of meeting my 'personal objectives'. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I am not sure that I can easily achieve an excellent level of performance in my job. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A A I

The questionnaire overleaf is about the way you behave, feel and act. After each question is a space for answering "YES" or "NO".

Try to decide whether "YES" or "NO" represents your usual way of acting or feeling. Then put a cross in the circle under the column headed "YES" or "NO". Work quickly, and don't spend too much time over any question; I would like your first reaction, not a long-drawn out thought process. The whole questionnaire shouldn't take more than a few minutes. Be sure not to omit any questions.

Now turn the page over and go ahead. Work quickly, and remember to answer every question. There are no right or wrong answers, and this isn't a test of intelligence or ability, but simply a measure of the way you behave.

You could have done better!

FORM A-97-

- o you often long for excitement? YES NO
- o you often need understanding friends to cheer you up? YES NO
- re you usually carefree? YES NO
- o you find it very hard to take no for an answer? YES NO
- o you stop and think things over before doing anything? YES NO
- you say you will do something do you always keep your promise, no matter how inconvenient it might be to do so? YES NO
- oes your mood often go up and down? YES NO
- o you generally do and say things quickly without stopping to think? YES NO
- o you ever feel "just miserable" for no good reason? YES NO
- ould you do almost anything for a dare? YES NO
- o you suddenly feel shy when you want to talk to an attractive stranger? YES NO
- ince in a while do you lose your temper and get angry? YES NO
- o you often do things on the spur of the moment? YES NO
- o you often worry about things you should not have done or said? YES NO
- enerally, do you prefer reading to meeting people? YES NO
- re your feelings rather easily hurt? YES NO
- o you like going out a lot? YES NO
- o you occasionally have thoughts and ideas that you would not like other people to know about? YES NO
- re you sometimes bubbling over with energy and sometimes very sluggish? YES NO
- o you prefer to have few but special friends? YES NO
- o you daydream a lot? YES NO
- hen people shout at you, do you shout back? YES NO
- re you often troubled about feelings of guilt? YES NO
- re all your habits good and desirable ones? YES NO
- an you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself a lot at a lively party? YES NO
- ould you call yourself tense or "highly-strung"? YES NO
- o other people think of you as being very lively? YES NO

29. Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?

- 30. Do you sometimes gossip?
- 31. Do ideas run through your head so that you cannot sleep?
- 32. If there is something you want to know about, would you rather look it up in a book than talk to someone about it?
- 33. Do you get palpitations or thumping in your heart?
- 34. Do you like the kind of work that you need to pay close attention to?
- 35. Do you get attacks of shaking or trembling?
- 36. Would you always declare everything at the customs, even if you knew that you could never be found out?
- 37. Do you hate being with a crowd who play jokes on one another?
- 38. Are you an irritable person?
- 39. Do you like doing things in which you have to act quickly?
- 40. Do you worry about awful things that might happen?
- 41. Are you slow and unhurried in the way you move?
- 42. Have you ever been late for an appointment or work?
- 43. Do you have many nightmares?
- 44. Do you like talking to people so much that you never miss a chance of talking to a stranger?
- 45. Are you troubled by aches and pains?
- 46. Would you be very unhappy if you could not see lots of people most of the time?
- 47. Would you call yourself a nervous person?
- 48. Of all the people you know, are there some whom you definitely do not like?
- 49. Would you say that you were fairly self-confident?
- 50. Are you easily hurt when people find fault with you or your work?
- 51. Do you find it hard to really enjoy yourself at a lively party?
- 52. Are you troubled with feelings of inferiority?
- 53. Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?
- 54. Do you sometimes talk about things you know nothing about?
- 55. Do you worry about your health?
- 56. Do you like playing pranks on others?
- 57. Do you suffer from sleeplessness?

PLEASE CHECK TO SEE THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS

Thank you for taking the time to complete these questionnaires. Your participation is very much appreciated.

As I mentioned in my covering letter, I am going to do a follow-up study using the same questionnaires this time next year. I hope that you will also be kind enough to complete the questionnaires again in a year's time, as this will give me the information I need in order to make a meaningful comparison - and, most importantly, will enable me to complete my research project!

A 44

I may want to ask you to consider participating in an in-depth study looking at individual accounts of experiences at work, particularly in respect of organisational change. If you might be interested in taking part and wouldn't mind me contacting you with further details, please tick the box. I would greatly appreciate your additional help.

Thank you once again.

APPENDIX 3.5 - Main Study - 'diary interview' study

APPENDIX 3.5.1 - Letter to prospective 'diary interview' volunteers

October 1996

«FirstName» «LastName»
«Company»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City» «PostCode»

Dear «FirstName»

Re: PhD student research project

I am writing to thank you very much for completing the set of questionnaires I sent you a number of weeks ago. I very much appreciate your time and effort. I am now moving into the next phase of my research which involves a more in-depth study, with a smaller group of people, and I am approaching you because you indicated your agreement to be contacted in relation to further research.

I am now in the process of arranging brief meetings at your particular office with people who may be interested in participating in further research, so that I can explain in detail what the research will entail. I would very much appreciate it if you could come along to one of these meetings to find out more about the research, and to see whether or not you would also like to take part. I hope that you won't mind me ringing you within the next week or so to arrange a convenient date and time when we can meet, if you think that you might be able to participate further.

Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours sincerely

Georgina Seery

APPENDIX 3.5.2 - diary interview study explained

Guidelines document for introducing prospective volunteers to the diary study

Thank you for your participation in my research so far.

My research concerns the experience of people like yourselves who are at the receiving end of major organisational change. There are a lot of assumptions and not enough research into the experience of people like yourselves who have to deal with change.

The aim of the questionnaire study was to find out very broad details of the types of people who work at Guardian. From information in the questionnaire study, I have selected a small group of people from a few Guardian sites to ask if you would take part in a more detailed study. The reason I have chosen you is that I need to have people involved in the study who represent a mixture of ages, have different types of jobs and personalities, and have worked at Guardian for different amounts of time. The study would entail giving me information on a weekly basis about your experience at work and then having a one-to-one hour long interview with me twice during the coming year.

I think that it is important to remind you that I am an independent researcher. I am very fortunate to have been given the opportunity of carrying out my research in Guardian, but I am not taking instructions from anyone at the Company, and any information I collect from you will be for my eyes only, and will not be shared with anyone else. Everything you tell me will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Any questions so far?

What the research entails is completing a weekly diary over the coming year. I would just like to go through the diary questions which I would want you to answer and send back to me on a weekly basis. The questions concern what

changes are happening, or being rumoured to happen, or are occupying your thoughts at the moment, then, what you think and feel about these changes and what you are doing if anything to deal with these changes. Then there is a section for you to tell me anything else about yourself which may be affecting your work at the moment. Finally, there are two scaled questions which are just intended to be markers for me. Now, after running a pilot study in Croydon, this was the final version which I came up with in conjunction with the participants at Croydon. As you see, the questions are open-ended, so that you can write as much or as little as you think is appropriate. Obviously, some weeks will generate a lot of information, and during other weeks, where nothing much is happening, there won't be much to write.

The people at Croydon reckoned that it took about 10 minutes to fill in each week - sometimes a little less. Are there any questions?

Would you all be interested in taking part? (Thank any individuals unwilling to take part for their time and invite them to leave. Continue with those people who would like to participate.)

It is very much your own individual perceptions of what is happening and how you feel that I am interested in. You may know other people who are also involved in completing diaries, but I would rather you didn't talk about what you are writing, because otherwise I will be getting a group perception rather than individual perceptions.

OK. What I will do is give out three blank diaries to cover the next three weeks. Perhaps you could make copies from these blanks to cover future weeks. Now, as confidentiality is a very important issue in a study like this, in order to protect you in case your diary gets lost in the post for example, I will give you all a number identifier for you to put on your diary each week. I am giving you all address labels for you to stick on envelopes to send the diaries back to me each week.

As I mentioned earlier, I will also want to interview you during the year. What I am planning are two interviews. The first will take place at some time between March and May, and the second and final interview will take place at some time between September and November. The study will come to an end at the end of November next year. I should then have an unfolding picture of the process of change for each volunteer over a period of a year.

Are there any questions? Please feel free to contact me at any time, especially during this early stage of the study when there may be questions you have about filling in the diaries. My home telephone number is 01844 353904. There is an answerphone, so please leave a message if I'm not around.

Just one last thing, when you go on holiday, then obviously during this period you won't be completing the diaries. Could you please let me know in the diary you fill in before you go away that you are going away, and let me know for how long. Then, just resume the diaries when you come back again.

OK - anything else?

APPENDIX 3.5.3

WEEKLY DIARY

Name: _____ **Day:** _____ **Date:** _____

1. In the space below, please describe:

- What changes are happening at work at the moment?
- What changes are being talked about/rumoured at the moment?
- What changes are occupying your thoughts at the moment?

(Your response may be about a **current** change and/or about a change which happened **some time ago**, and/or about an **expected** change.)

2. What you think about these changes? Why?
How do you feel about these changes? Why?

(Please try to refer back to **each** of the above questions on thoughts and feelings,
as you write.)

3. What are you doing, if anything, to deal with these change events/rumours of change/thoughts concerning change? Why?

3. Is there anything else about yourself, or about your circumstances, which may be affecting your work-life at the moment?

6. At the moment, how much do you feel that you are able to influence events in your work life? (Please circle the number which best describes how you feel.)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
I feel that I have little influence over events at work I feel that I have a lot of influence over events at work

7. At the moment, how confident do you feel about your ability to perform well at work? (Please circle the number which best describes how you feel.)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
Not at all confident Extremely confident

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

First Interview Schedule

Diagrammatic Summary

(*Thank for participation. Check any queries about/problems with completing the diaries. Reaffirm confidentiality and aims before starting interview*)

SECTION 1

HISTORY WITH COMPANY (from start to present - years, job changes, secondments, types of jobs, exams, change of colleagues, offices, desk changes, line management changes, how Company has changed overall since you started working for them.

(Union member?/depth of involvement?/history?)

SECTION 2

PRESENT JOB

- Describe day to day work. Type of work? Workload? Interest? Variety? Autonomy? Hours? Overtime?
- How many in team? Get on with colleagues? Nature of relationships?
- Get on with line manager? Nature of relationship? EXAMPLES
- Any other managers have direct contact with? Relationship?
- Area manager - Nature of relationship? EXAMPLES
- Team - feel part of? Directive? Participative? EXAMPLES
- Off the job relationships?

SECTION 3

Personal value of work

Can I start by asking what work means to you? What I am trying to get at is why you work? If you were looking for a job - what would be the key things you would be looking for? Why?

SECTION 4

Personal perceptions of change at GI

- Can you give me a **brief run-down** of the sorts of changes which have been happening in the Company over, say, the past year?

Prompt: - Company wide, area, local, specific to team/job - specific examples)

- Can you tell me what you personally think the **Company is trying to achieve** through the sorts of changes which have been happening in recent years?

Prompt: - Information from circulars, memo's, staff presentations, meetings with managers, discussions with colleagues ...)

- What do you think about the way change is implemented by the Company?

Prompt: - Information clarity, prior notice, timing, aims, consultative, follow-through, staff feedback, logical ...)

(* ask for specific **EXAMPLES** to illustrate *)

SECTION 5

Salient changes - positive and negative

- **What organisational changes have been most important from your point of view - by most important I mean which changes have had the most impact upon you.**

Prompts:

when/how announced?

immediate thoughts/emotions/reactions?

how work-life changed

affect upon performance

action taken (if any)

continuing thoughts/feelings/actions through implementation

outcomes? (resulting from action/inaction or not)

Present feelings? affect upon performance?

Future implications?

(* IF ALL NEGATIVE REACTIONS - PROMPT FOR POSITIVE - AND VICE VERSA! *)

SECTION 6

Using Diary to explore process of adjustment to changes in working hours

(* If already mentioned in previous section - expand if necessary - otherwise move on *)

Your diary mentioned changing working conditions - in particular, how working hours will change. Can you please talk me through the process of this change:

Prompts:

When/how did you first hear of the proposed changes?

First reactions? Emotions, thoughts, actions? Why?

What happened when change actually arrived?

Reactions to change (emotion/thought/action)? Why?

Consequences (of change and of reaction to change)?

Comments on implementation - factors which were a help/hindrance

Affect upon work performance

Present feelings/thoughts? Why?

Future implications?

SECTION 7

Adjusting to changes in review process

(* If already mentioned in previous sections - expand if necessary - otherwise move on *)

Some diaries mentioned changes to the review process. Can you please talk me through the process of this change, and then tell me about your first review under the new system (if you have had yours yet):

Prompts:

When/how did you first hear of the proposed changes?

First reactions? Emotions, thoughts, actions? Why?

What happened when change actually arrived?

Reactions to change (emotion/thought/action)? Why?

Consequences (of change and of reaction to change)?

Comments on implementation - factors which were a help/hindrance

Affect upon work performance

Present feelings/thoughts? Why?

Future implications?

SECTION 8

Queries/amplification of issues raised in individual diaries.

Checklist:

working conditions

core benefits - cars

- health insurance

- holidays

- flex-time plan-time

- bonus

- location allowance

PMS

role group

salary band

review process

L&G

Executive restructure

UK Division restructure (closures)

employees leaving

training

short staffed

new manager(s)

SECTION 9

End of interview

Accompany interviewee back to desk - make a note of layout - floor plan - positioning within team - how desk kept.

APPENDIX 3.5.4 CONT...

Summary of type of data elicited from sections of Interview Schedule 1

Introduction. The interviewer explained that the purpose of the interview was to obtain some more background information from interviewees, to clarify diary entries, and to follow through on themes about organisational change, developing from the diary data. Interviewees were asked if they wanted to discuss any issues relating to the diary part of the study, or about the interview. Interviewees asked if they minded being tape recorded and further assurances about anonymity were made.

Section 1. The first section started with a general question about participants' history with the company. Interviewees were asked to describe how the company had changed overall during their period of employment. This section elicited useful background information and also provided information on the extent and nature of organisational change experienced by each of the interviewees.

Section 2. This section asked interviewees to talk about the nature of their present job and their relationships with team colleagues and managers. This section revealed information about channels of communication about change and about supportive/unsupportive relationships.

Section 3. This next section was intended to provide data about the nature of interviewees' attachment to their work. This refers back to section 2.3.1 of the literature review which discusses work orientation and alienation in relation to the experience of major organisational change. This section elicited rich data about work orientation and interviewees' sense of autonomy, but also elicited additional data about interviewees' sense of job security, influence, ability to work under pressure and psychological contract with the organisation.

Section 4. This section asked for information about changes over the previous year in more detail, in particular about change implementation.

Section 5. This section asked interviewees to recount their experiences of the most salient recent changes. The questions in this section elicited information about individuals' thoughts, feelings and responses throughout the change process.

Section 6. This section asked specifically about the changes in working hours, as all participants had mentioned this change in their diaries, and this change affected all but 2 of the participants. Again, this section elicited information about individuals' thoughts, feelings and responses from the time the changes were announced, through the implementation of the changes.

Section 7. This section asked specifically about interviewees' thoughts, feelings and responses to the introduction of the Performance Management System. Again, many diarists had mentioned this change and all were affected by the change.

Section 8. This section was specific to individual interviewees and involved querying, or asking for amplification of issues raised in the diaries. The section also comprised a checklist to ensure that all interviewees had reported fully upon their experience of all changes that had been noted as salient in their particular diaries.

End of interview. Interviewees were asked if they had anything to add that hadn't been covered in the interview. Interviewees were asked if they had any questions to ask me about the research project in general, or any specific queries with regard to the diaries or the research interviews. Interviewees were thanked for taking the time out to be interviewed, and were thanked for their continuing participation in the research project. The interviewer accompanied the interviewees back to their desk and a descriptive note was made of each interviewee's work station and setting.

SECOND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Georgina Seery
Cranfield University**

Diagrammatic Summary

Section 1

Can we start by recapping some of the changes we concentrated upon in your last interview?

- **Looking back, how did you feel about the changes to the working hours?**
- **How do you feel now?**

(Explore: Action taken by self/team in relation to working hours. Implementation issues - what was good? What was bad? What could have management have done differently? Relationships issues - colleagues/managers/unions role in influencing how feel about working hours? Consequences - what is result of change for self/team?)

- **Looking back, how did you feel about the proposed changes put forward under the performance management system (review process, pay structure, grades)?**

- **How do you feel now?**

(Explore: Action taken in relation to PMS (eg, union vote? Asking questions? Dispute grade?) Implementation - what was good? What was bad? What could have been done differently? Relationships - colleagues/managers/union - how various groups influenced reactions to proposed PMS changes)

Section two

Salient changes

Can we move on now to talk about changes which have happened since our last meeting in March/April? What changes have happened/are currently happening? What changes have had/are having the most impact upon you?

(Make sure that you talk to everyone about the Demeter project and the various aspects - area restructure, re-interviewed for job, result of interview, Response/P.Support restructure, consequences of result for self (eg, same job?, same team?, same manager?) for others (eg, redundancy) (Make sure you ask all Reading respondents about their new manager)

Cover the following issues with all change events which raised as important:

IMPLEMENTATION: How were changes implemented? Think/feel about the way change handled? What could/should have been done differently?

RELATIONSHIPS: Who was involved in communicating change? How communicated? Colleagues/ team leader/ section leader/ unit manager/ area manager/ other managers/ union - role in change. Relationships outside work - friends/family/ex-colleagues - role in change. Help/hinder - how?

PERSONAL FRAMEWORK: What are the company trying to achieve? Feelings about change? How did you/do you deal with change? Do you have any influence over direction of change/consequences of change? Has/is change affecting your performance at work? Has/is change affected the way you feel about being at work (ie, general contentment/motivation)?

CONSEQUENCES: Consequences of change for self/team/company as a whole.

Section three

Finally, can I ask you to think back over the past year, since you started your diaries. Can you sum up how the year has been for you work-wise? How do you feel about the company? Has this changed since last year? How do you feel about your work? Has this changed since last year? Have your feelings about yourself changed since last year (more/less confident, more/less optimistic, more/less secure, more/less content) - are any of these feelings related to experiences at work? Which experiences?

Summing up

Thank participant for taking part in research project. Recap what they will receive from me:

- **A copy of a general report about change at Guardian which will be given to all participants. Absolute confidentiality will be respected. Any quotes used in the report will be anonymous. The report will be given to diarists and to other people who have participated less directly in the research - team leaders/managers/admin staff.**

Summary of type of data elicited from sections of Interview Schedule 2

Introduction. Again, the interviewer explained the purpose of the interview. Interviewees were asked if they wanted to discuss any issues relating to the diary part of the study, or about the interview. Interviewees asked if they minded being tape recorded and, again, further assurances were made about anonymity.

Section 1. This section followed up on changes to the working hours and the rejection and subsequent revising of the PMS. The questions asked elicited thoughts, feelings and responses to change. Four main themes emerged through early analysis of the first set of interviews and diaries, namely, 'implementation', 'relationships', 'personal framework' and 'consequences'. The interviewer directed questions about the working hours and PMS which explored these themes.

Section 2. This section uncovered salient changes that had occurred/been announced since the first interview. All interviewees were asked about their thoughts, feelings, responses and the consequences of these changes. The interviewer referred to a checklist to ensure that interviewees talked about all aspects of the Demeter project. The interviewer also referred to checklists developed for each interviewee, based upon individual diary data. Again, the interviewer directed questions about Demeter and other salient changes which explored the emerging analytical themes.

Section 3. This final section asked interviewees to sum up their year (since the beginning of the research project) in terms of change. Interviewees shared their feelings about the company and about themselves in relation to changes at work.

Summing up. Participants were thanked for taking part in the project and were briefed about a report that the researcher was preparing for employee research participants and GID managers about observations of change implementation and employees' experiences of change. Further assurances were made that the report would not mention anyone by name and would not contain quotations that could be traced back to individuals. Any questions about the research project generally, and/or about the report for GID were answered.

APPENDIX 3.6 - Main study - diaries - scaled questions

The diarists completed a section at the end of each of their diaries (see Appendix 3.5.3, diary questions 6 and 7) where they rated the following:

6. I feel that I have little/a lot of influence over events at work.
7. I feel not at all/extremely confident about my ability to perform well at work.

Question 6. This question was designed as a guide to the extent to which diarists perceived that they had control at work. The question linked to locus of control and alienation. The intention was that the researcher would be able to look for relationships between scores on the scale and particular events detailed in the diaries. However, the scale proved to be problematic, as some diarists completed the scale based upon their sense of control at the team level, others upon their sense of control at an area office level and others upon their sense of control at a Company-wide level. It therefore became impossible to draw any meaningful comparisons based upon scores from this scale. The problem came to light early in the research process and the researcher asked all diarists to rate their feelings of influence in terms of salient changes reported in their diaries. However, inconsistency in interpretation of the question persisted. Upon retrospect, it would have been advisable to rephrase the question, so that the meaning was explicit and distribute revised 'blank' diaries to the diarists. Because of inconsistencies in interpretation, this particular question was not used in the analysis.

Question 7. This question was devised when the PMS (Performance Management System) was singled out as a focal change for the study. The survey included a performance self-efficacy questionnaire which was initially designed as a measure which would be triangulated with qualitative data and data from diary question 7, relating to changes in perceived performance in relation to PMS. Because of problems with the performance self-efficacy measure, detailed below, the measure was dropped from the analysis.

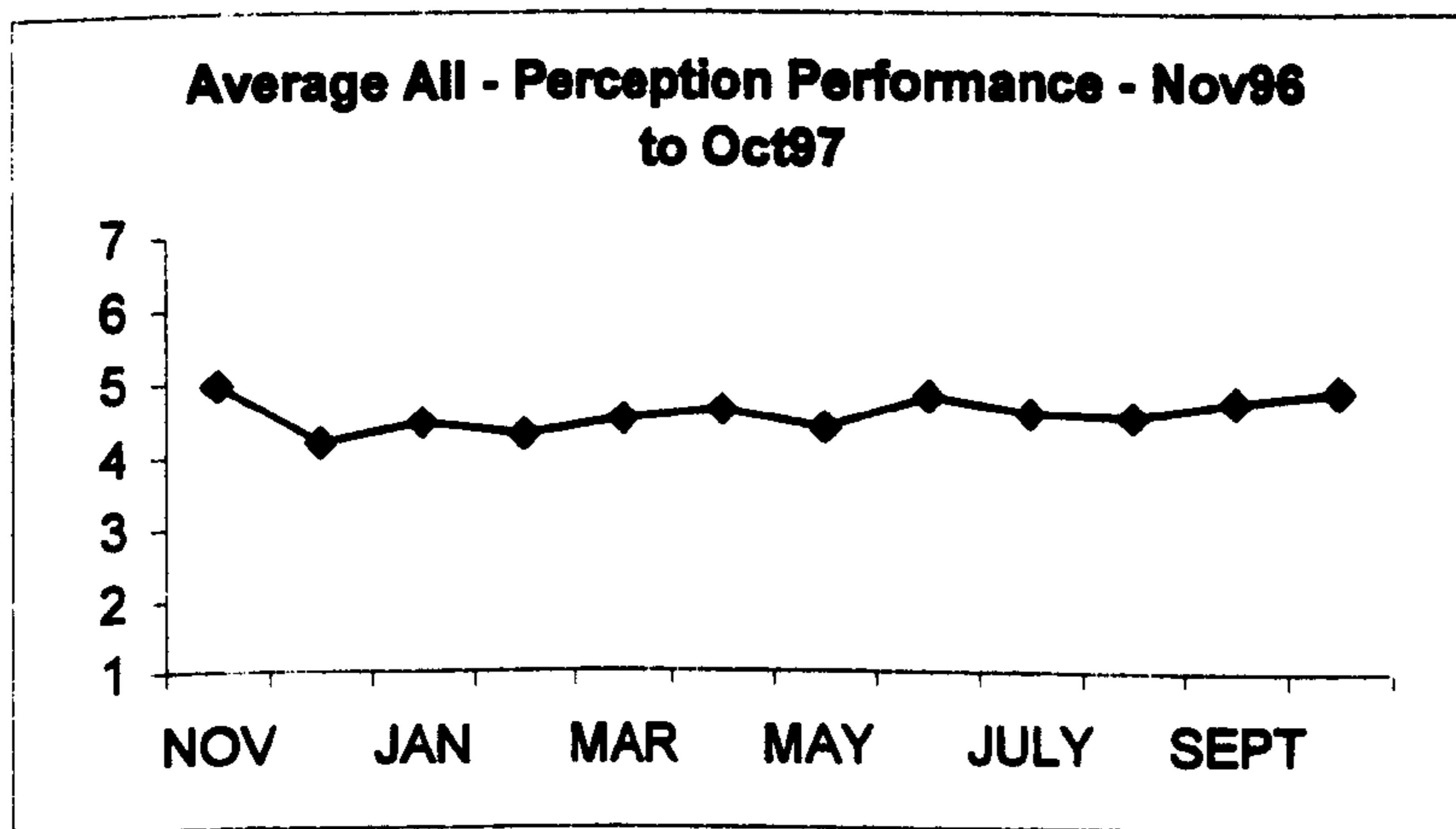
The measure was piloted and seemed to discriminate between individuals. The pilot study participants did not raise any queries or doubts about the measure. However, at the first qualitative interview stage of the research process, it became clear that this measure was problematic. Firstly, 2 of the 6 questions refer to performance in general terms, whilst the other 4 questions specifically relate to aspects of performance labelled 'personal objectives' and 'core requirements of the job', which are labels taken from the 'review' component of the new PMS. Interviewees appeared to differ in their understanding of what was meant by 'personal objectives' and 'core requirements'. Secondly, some interviewees explained that although their performance might have been very high, they may not have been able to achieve their 'personal objectives' and 'core requirements' as set out in their review, because of role changes effected during the research period. This would have resulted in these high performing individuals scoring low on the job performance self-efficacy measure. The reason that these problems did not come to light at the pilot stage only became evident to the researcher once the PMS had been dropped from the change programme. The manager of the office involved in the pilot study had been involved in the development of the PMS, was very committed to the PMS, and had ensured that his staff had a very good understanding of the process and of their responsibilities in terms of reviews. This contrasted strongly with the experience of employee participants in the main study. In light of these problems with the design of the questionnaire, and because the PMS was not fully implemented, the researcher decided that the 'job performance self-efficacy' measure would not form part of the analysis. Furthermore, the rejection of PMS, meant that the performance angle became less important.

However, performance is still an interesting issue, as performance is singled out by some writers on the transition curve (Carnall 1991) as a variable which fluctuates during the process of experiencing and adapting to change.

Despite the many changes (both work and personal) detailed in participants diaries, ratings of perception of performance were relatively stable and high for most people throughout the period of study. The graph below shows the average perception of

performance scores for all diarists. Individual diarists' weekly performance scores were averaged each month to provide monthly data points for individual graphs.

The line graph below was created by combining diarists' scores on question 7 for the period of the diary study. There is a fall in performance in December 1996 when changes to core benefits, working hours and flexitime were announced. Performance is relatively stable until May/June 1997 when there is a slight dip and subsequent rise. This corresponds with diarists being reinterviewed for their jobs and subsequently being told about the outcome of their interviews. Performance scores then continue to be stable until the end of the study.



These findings suggest that many people perceive that they are able to sustain their level of performance despite experiencing major change at work. Any change-related 'dips' in level of perceived performance appear to be temporary.

APPENDIX 3.7.1 - NUD.IST v.4 coding system

Q.S.R. NUD.IST Power version, revision 4.0.
Licensee: Georgina Seery.

PROJECT: GID, User Georgina, 3:11 pm, Apr 8, 2002.

```
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 (2 11 4) /basedata/jobyears/5plus

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 (3 3) /interview+diary data/diary

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 (5 8 2) /HEADINGS 1/Change events/restructure 93-94
 (5 8 3) /HEADINGS 1/Change events/skills levels
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 (5 10) /HEADINGS 1/Implementation
 (5 11) /HEADINGS 1/Salient changes

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(5 30) /HEADINGS 1/closure

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(6 9) /HEADINGS 2/Company goals
(6 10) /HEADINGS 2/Implementation
(6 11) /HEADINGS 2/Workload pressure
(6 12) /HEADINGS 2/Year summary

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(7 6) /ALL HEADINGS/Salient changes

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(8 1 1 1 8 2 1) /Responses/coping method/active/perspective/think +ve/humour
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(8 1 3) /Responses/coping method/psychophysical reaction
(8 2) /Responses/Home-Work boundary

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 (11 2 6 4) /Belief system/Co. attitude/psych.contract/reward
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 (12 7 2) /implementation/Personal touch/has personal touch
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 (12 11) /implementation/lack planning
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 (12 17) /implementation/imposed
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 (12 20) /implementation/confusion
 (12 21) /implementation/positive comments
 (12 22) /implementation/follow-through
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 (12 24) /implementation/communication
 (12 25) /implementation/unprofessional

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 (13 9 2) /consequences/workload/workload decrease
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 (13 20) /consequences/job loss-threat

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(14) /Feelings
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(14 2 3) /Feelings/Feelings +ve/pressure - less
(14 2 4) /Feelings/Feelings +ve/secure
(14 2 5) /Feelings/Feelings +ve/confident

(100) /working nodes
(300) /analysis notes
(D) //Document Annotations

(F) //Free Nodes
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(F 2 2) //Free Nodes/prior experience/negative
(F 2 3) //Free Nodes/prior experience/neutral
(F 2 4) //Free Nodes/prior experience/learn from

(I) //Index Searches

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APPENDIX 3.7.2 - data reduction - case study summaries - examples

Summaries were created for each diarist-interviewee, drawing upon data from dairies and from both interviews one and two. Summaries were created in answer to the following questions:

- How is change perceived?
- How does person respond to change?
- Factors affecting perceptions/responses?
- Features of implementation helping/hindering adjustment.

These summaries were a useful aide to analysis. In creating the summaries all of the diary and interview data for each participant was 'pulled together' and this provided an overall view of individuals' experiences of change. These summaries were compared and patterns emerged that were investigated further in more detailed analysis of raw diary and interview data.

Three examples are presented representing participants from different offices, in different types of jobs and with different personality profiles.

***Summary case study**

***Karen – Reading, underwriter (Corporate - Partner Support), internal, extravert, neurotic**

***How change is perceived?**

Karen expects change to happen". "I expect the changes that happen because there are always changes within companies. I think that there will always be changes – nothing ever stays the same." [diary]

***How person responds to change?**

Sometimes Karen takes changes in her stride and sometimes worries about changes. Has a 'wait and see' attitude. Doesn't see the point in finding out more information in advance of changes happening. Would rather wait until the change happens and then deal with it. "I just switch off until it affects me. I probably don't start worrying then." [interview 1]. Karen 'switches off' in order to contain her worry.

Was worried about the selection process and sought reassurance from team leader and colleagues and was also encouraged by reflecting upon her past positive experiences of change at the Company. Was worried about changes to flexitime, but those have worked out in her favour. Talks about structural changes as being "annoying" and "here we go again" rather than being worrying. Ultimately, if she didn't like the changes, Karen says she would look for another job. One priority is flexible working because she has a horse to look after.

***Factors affecting perceptions/responses?**

Past experience. Karen has seen that structural changes happen quite frequently. "You settle down and they move it around again" [interview 1]. Karen believes that she is better able to deal with structural change because she's experienced it before, "I do think that you know the more it happens the more you are used to it." [interview 1] She also knows that changes experienced so far have worked out well for her, "My past experience of change is that the outcome has always been positive for me." "I haven't

had any changes that have affected me badly so I thought that I should be OK.”
[interview 2]

Team support. Karen looks to her team leader for support, “I panicked about possibly being moved. I used to moan to my team leader and he gave reassurances that we wouldn’t change teams.” She also talked to colleagues before her selection interview, “before our interviews the team sat around and chatted about it all”.

Too much information. Karen talks about her ‘wait and see’ attitude in relation to the amount of information she receives leading up to changes. “I’m not one to read everything ... we’ve always been getting circulars and that, we’ve always got loads of things through. I wait until it happens. I’m not really bothered about knowing in advance.” [interview 1] She prefers to ignore the information and wait until the change is in place so that she can assess the change through experience.

Lack influence. Karen believes that she has a minimum amount of influence within her own team, but that she has no power to influence the direction of changes. “I don’t believe I can really influence the management’s decisions that much. We all make our views but in the end it is the management that makes decisions not us.”[diary] Karen’s ‘wait and see’ attitude also seems to stem from her belief about her lack of influence over events, “I can’t influence what happens in the end anyway. You just have to try and take them as they come about.” [diary]

Personal life. Responsibilities looking after horse. Any changes (eg, extended hours/flexitime removal) that threaten to interfere with looking after horse are responded to at an early stage rather than ‘wait and see’ approach.

***Aspects implementation that help/hinder adjustment to change?**

***Help**

Support from team leader, departmental manager. The team leader and departmental manager supported the team in relation to an increase in working hours. They put the team's case to the branch manager.

***Hinder**

Frequency of change. Karen finds the frequency with which structural changes occur "a bit frustrating at times because once you get into the swing of your work, they move it around so it is a bit annoying." [interview 2]

Amount of information. Karen thinks there is too much information given out about changes. "I don't think there is ever too little information. Always too much." [interview 2] This leads her to "switch off until it affects me". [interview 1] 'Switching off' from the changes may hinder Karen's adjustment to change. She will not be able to raise questions about forthcoming changes ahead of time contributing to her sense of a lack of influence. [Analysis note: 'switching off' is a device Karen uses to reduce worry, so from her perspective, this response might be considered helpful in adjustment to change]

Top manager/Executive don't understand day to day processing work. Karen believes that her team have been struggling with doing the L&G work because there was a lack of preparation on the part of managers between taking over L&G business and integrating the business into the teams' day to day work. Karen thinks that if managers understood the day to day processes, then processing changes would be smoother. "Top managers, Executive, don't see how the teams work, don't consider our day to day work. Just give us files without any preparation. We have just had to muddle through with no set guidelines even on how to handle L&G files. They should have thought about it a bit more really. Dealing with L&G policies, we needed more help." [interview 2]

***Summary case study**

***Susan - Manchester, motor claims, external, introvert, stable**

***How change is perceived?**

Flex. perceived negatively. Saw flexitime as a bonus and felt that this was being taken away. Couldn't see at the time how a replacement system could work well. [diary] In the first interview, Sue accepts change and doesn't feel she can do anything about it " .. you just accept it because it is a big Company and you sort of feel it is out of your hands, they don't take any notice, you know managers or whatever they are not going to take any notice of us." [interview 2 516] However, at the local level, she sees her team leader taking notice and acting on the teams behalf, eg, introducing overtime and getting rid of a team member who wasn't "pulling their weight" [diary Apr 97] In the 2nd interview, she seems more positive about having influence "I think on our department – I think (head of dept.)is good. If we go to (team leader) with a problem or things that we aren't happy about I think (team leader) will go to (head of dept.) and s/he will listen and will do what s/he can to help. Like with the overtime, that's an example." However, perceived influence is still very much at departmental level. When major change is announced, Sue feels "intimidated" {int 2 1373} by being in a conference room environment with lots of people she doesn't know. When people do ask questions, Sue's experience is that answers are "usually a bit vague." [int 2 1378]

***How person responds to change**

In response to the announcement of 350 job losses nationwide following the L&G merger Sue says "I will continue working as hard as possible and hope that my skills and efficiency at work pay off and help me keep my job." [diary Dec 96]. Is also proactive in coping with extra pressure at work "I will continue going into work earlier each morning and having shorter lunches to try to stay on top of the extra work I am getting" [diary Feb 97]. Sue says that she can cope with extra pressure but gets annoyed with a few people who can't cope and let their work build up to such an extent that other's (like Sue) have to do it for them [diary Feb97]. Does overtime in order to reduce backlog.

***What factors affect perceptions and responses?**

Feels relatively secure about position, so wasn't unduly concerned by the selection process. Analysed work situation, realised needed more not less people on section so didn't perceive threat to job. Also obtained reassurance from team leader. Noone in team was especially worried/concerned. Is able to cope with pressure, extra workload demands, although doesn't like having a big backlog. Is prepared to put in extra hours unpaid in order to reduce workload.

***Features of implementation helping/hindering adjustment?**

Help? Management alleviating extra pressure resulting from changes (engineers' work moved to claims, movements of staff in preparation for structural changes to department) by introducing overtime, giving time off the phones. Believes information is sufficient and clear. Good relationships with team leader means that can easily ask for and receive support.

Hinder? Perceived lack of preparation/thought by senior management before implementing, leads to big fluctuations in workload and change that good in theory but not practice [int. 2)

***Summary case study**

***Lisabeth, Southampton, underwriter (Personal lines, Response), external, extravert, neurotic**

***How change is perceived?**

Lisabeth feels that “we can’t stop them (the company) from making changes and that she can’t do anything about influencing the direction of the changes. [diary]

Sometimes Lisabeth perceives that change is necessary in order to “move forward”.

Some changes made sense to her (eg, extended hours and flexible working to keep up with other insurance companies), but other times changes appeared to be unnecessary (selection process – not much change after all the interviews, just a few temps lost their job). Lisabeth said that she was "shocked" by a number of changes (working hours, PMS). Implementation appeared to have an impact upon how Lisabeth talked about the various changes. The following changes were perceived as having been badly implemented: PMS implementation was perceived as bad (lack thought/planning, “chucked at” staff, unfair implementation of a fair system); structural changes to sections (lack of forethought meant untrained staff struggling with new work), selection process (no thorough explanation early on of why the interviews were taking place, what was to be achieved and what the resultant changes to sections would be), removal of flexitime (no proper explanation – guessed it was to save money so don’t have to pay ‘plantime’ for the system). Changes to working hours were fully understood and accepted with little comment.

***How person responds to change?**

Says that she is shocked by changes on the one hand, and on the other hand talks about accepting the inevitability and indeed the benefits of changes. Very nervous about interview especially (asked colleagues what they were asked in their interviews), asked for reassurance from team leader (but assurances didn’t lessen her insecurity about her job). Will speak out when unhappy about the consequences of change [eg, need for training following changes to sections - see int.2]. Responds badly to the consequences of section changes [increased pressure - higher workload - "can't cope" diary/int.2]. Takes

it out on her husband "always takes things home". Finds it difficult to switch off from work. Doesn't like being moved around, or changes to team personnel - finds this "very unsettling" [diary/ int2]

***Factors affecting perceptions/responses?**

Has been moved around a lot since starting work at Guardian. Doesn't like having to move seat/team and start working with new people. Feels very unsettled by this. Was negative about selection partly because she anticipated being moved again and her prior experiences of this was not positive. Lisabeth's manager was insecure about keeping her own job following selection. This made Lisabeth more insecure. She felt more confident once she knew that her boss had kept her job. Lisabeth's job insecurity could also be related to personal circumstances. She shared information about difficult personal financial circumstances and she was also pregnant and relying upon going back to work following maternity leave. Doesn't work well under pressure. Many of changes introduced created more work pressure in the short term.

Features of implementation helping/hindering adjustment?

Help. Joking around the section about who would be in or out, lightens the mood/morale [diary/ints 1 and 2]. When she understands why changes are taking place, she is uncritical (working hours). Received support from manager when finding extra workload difficult after return from work following miscarriage. Also received support and encouragement from manager in relation to working on a new section following selection.

Hinder. Section manager and team leader sharing their insecurities about their jobs because of selection process made Lisabeth more insecure. Not getting full background about why the company makes particular changes in advance of the changes being introduced. Lack of fairness in implementing PMS [Lisabeth was disappointed that others in her team, doing the same job, earned far in excess of her just because of length of service]. Team leader has "favourites" - Lisabeth not one of her favourites, so feels left out sometimes - wishes could be closer to team leader so could get more support [ints 1 and 2].

APPENDIX 5.1 - 'diary interview' participants

Background information - mini case studies - alphabetical listing

Personal details	Angela, age 38, female, single, location Reading, employed 8 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Angela worked in a Corporate underwriting team of 6, dealing with Watford area intermediaries. Corporate underwriters were based on the 2 nd floor. The offices at Reading were pleasant and Angela was pleased with her working environment. She got on very well with others in her team, although they were having difficulty in keeping up with the heavy workload during the research period. Again, workstations were divided by screens and people organised in 'blocks' according to their team. Angela's team leader sat diagonally opposite her and her Corporate superintendant had his own small office about 6 feet away from her work station. There was a lot of absence due to sickness in Angela's team during the research period, including Angela herself, which led to further increases in workload for those remaining. Angela got on well with her team leader and superintendant, but the superintendant lost his job following the restructure. This was a blow to Angela as he was the only other person who had moved over from Watford and had supported Angela a lot.
Background events	Angela had moved to Reading from the Watford branch of Guardian when that had closed in early 1996. Angela's personal life was still very much attached to Watford. She went back to Watford most weekends to stay with friends and also went there every Wednesday evening to her fencing club. Angela said that she " <i>suffer(s) with nerves</i> " and had stress-related symptoms such as eczema and stomach pains on a number of occasions during the research period.

Personal details	Catherine, age 26, female, married, location Manchester, employed 7.5 years, Agency then Claims then Accounts
Work setting	For most of the research period Catherine worked on the top floor in the Agency department. Although she was part of a team of 8, she had been working on a special project for the past year, unrelated to Agency work, with the Compliance officer. When this work came to an end and after the announcement that the Agency department was going to close, she took a job in Claims on the 4 th floor. Most of the Agency group had been together for more than 7 years and were very close. They often socialised together outside work. Although Catherine liked all the team, she felt that her team leader and superintendent didn't " <i>develop people</i> " enough and give enough autonomy and responsibility to the rest of the team.
Background events	As a response to feeling vulnerable at work in terms of her job security, Catherine enrolled at her local college to do a business administration course. She described this as " <i>tiring but satisfying</i> ". Catherine was very close to her family and dependent upon them for advice about what to do about work problems.

Personal details	Dan, age 27, male, married, location Reading, employed 3 and a half years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Dan worked on the 2 nd floor in a team of 6 Corporate underwriters with Karen, another diary/interview participant. Their work environment was pleasant with lots of natural light. Four were relatively new to the team, but the team got on well, supported each other, and all liked their team leader and department manager. Following the restructure, there was some friction between the branch manager and Dan's team over the team's non-compliance with the revised working hours. Both the team leader and department manager supported Dan and his team in this regard.
Background events	Dan completed a law degree, but decided he didn't want to pursue a career in law and " <i>just fell into this job</i> ". He didn't particularly enjoy the job, but didn't know what he wanted to do work-wise, so the job suited him " <i>for the time being</i> ". Guardian " <i>were very understanding</i> " when Dan became ill with an " <i>unspecified post viral syndrome</i> " and was off work for a month and came back part-time for 3-4 weeks before returning full-time in August 97.

Personal details	Darren, age 23, male, single, location Manchester, employed 4.5 years, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	Darren worked on the 2 nd floor and dealt with intermediaries in the Liverpool/Preston area. The floor was described as <i>"fairly relaxed"</i> . Darren went out of the office to visit brokers from time to time, but would have like to do this more frequently. Although he said that he enjoyed his job, Darren said that he was only <i>"in insurance because I didn't know what else to do"</i> . He didn't see underwriting as his career. Darren was interested in football and pop music and his desk was decorated with pictures of his football and pop music idols. Before an Executive visit, he was asked to remove these pictures, but put them up again once the visit was over. Darren socialised with members of his team <i>"fairly regularly"</i> . Darren thought his team leader was <i>"OK, neither good or bad as a manager"</i> .
Background events	Darren talked in his diary jokingly about having <i>"usual women hassles"</i> from time to time during the research period, but generally reported that nothing was bothering him. Pay at GID was an issue for Darren as he referred to being in heavy debt which he found it difficult to get out of because of being poorly paid.

Personal details	David, age 23, male, single, location Manchester, employed 3 years, Agency then Claims
Work setting	David worked as part of a team of 8 on the top floor of the Manchester office, in the Agency department until the department closed at the end of June 97. Apart from the superintendent, he was the only male worker in his team. He found the work in Agency <i>'a bit boring sometimes'</i> although he liked his colleagues and they socialised together from time to time. Once Agency closed, he was relieved to have found a job where he was stimulated, autonomous and busy in claims on the 4 th floor.
Background events	David described himself as <i>'not phased by anything'</i> and didn't report anything about his outside life that affected his work.

Personal details	Doreen, age 58, female, married, 2 children, 3 grandchildren, location Southampton, employed 11 years, Cashier
Work setting	Doreen worked on the ground floor of the Southampton office. She worked very closely with one other colleague, but they were joined by another person during the research period in anticipation of the increased workload following the restructure. Doreen and her colleague had worked well together for many years and were very upset at having a new person in their team whom they perceived as being incompetent. Doreen worked in a corner of the office that was rather dark and cramped, but Doreen and her colleague had livened the area up with some plants that they had brought in from home .
Background events	Doreen's daughter had a baby in January 97 and Doreen took time off during the first half of 97 to help look after the baby. Doreen was upset that the mistakes made by her new colleague might reflect badly upon her and upon her other work colleague. Doreen described taking a " <i>great pride</i> " in her work and felt that her new colleague's " <i>poor work</i> " undermined Doreen and her other colleague's hard work.

Personal details	Dorothy, age 47, female, married, location Southampton, employed for 7 years, Receptionist/Admin
Work setting	Dorothy worked in a small group of 4 women behind the reception desk, on the ground floor, at the main entrance to the building. Her team leader was also a good friend. One of the team members had transferred to reception at the beginning of the research period. She was not liked by the other team members who described her as " <i>brusque and unfriendly</i> " and " <i>not suited to a front office position like reception</i> ". When the position of team leader came up towards the end of the research period, all 3 remaining team members applied for the position. Dorothy said that she only applied for it to try to prevent the latest team member from being successful. The position was not filled and the team were told to report to the Facilities superintendent who moved from Reading following the restructure.
Background events	For the first 6 months of the research period Dorothy was studying for her driving exam. She failed her test twice, but passed the third time. Dorothy reported that she found it tiring having to concentrate on the driving theory and practice. She moved house at the end of May 97 around the time of the Demeter job interviews. Dorothy said that there was " <i>a lot going on</i> " at that time, but that she was " <i>coping fine</i> ".

Personal details	Gerry, age 50, male, married, 4 children, location Liverpool, employed 30 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Gerry worked in a team of 12 underwriters in the single crowded floor that remained of the Liverpool office. Julia, another research participant was a co-worker. Although Gerry reported that he didn't <i>"have anything against"</i> his manager, he described his manager as <i>"weak and unsupportive"</i> .
Background events	Gerry described having difficulties with his teenage daughter and that the pressure he was under at work was affecting his family life. He described feeling angry and taking that anger home with him. Gerry felt a keen sense of responsibility towards his family and often described work events in terms of the affect they would have on his family life. He described how his work life affected his family life, but also how his family life affected his work life.

Personal details	Harvey, age 23, co-habiting, location Manchester, employed 7 and a half years, LAN administrator
Work setting	Harvey was based on the top floor of the Manchester office, although his work took him all around the building as it involved maintaining, repairing and upgrading the computer systems. Harvey found the top floor to be <i>'a bit too quiet'</i> and he was happiest moving around working on different floors. He didn't like having to be at his desk doing paperwork when the area manager was in his office <i>'because of the tense atmosphere'</i> . His manager didn't <i>"know anything about the job"</i> , so Harvey was left alone and was very happy to be <i>"left to get on with it."</i>
Background events	Harvey moved out of his parents' house and into a flat with his girlfriend during the research period. Harvey found the house move to be <i>'tiring'</i> and had discovered that conflict had developed with his girlfriend now that they had moved in together because of the extra hours Harvey worked at GID. Harvey enjoyed his job however and said that his girlfriend would have to learn to accept that he worked long hours.

Personal details	Helen, age 27, female, newly married, location Manchester, employed 10 years, Agency then Accounts
Work setting	Helen worked on the 5 th floor of the Manchester building in the Agency department. She enjoyed her working environment very much. She liked her work, her colleagues and managers and was extremely upset when the news came that the Agency department was closing. Helen got a job in accounts following the selection interviews and started work on the ground floor in August 97 after a period of helping out in the claims section during July97. Because most of the Agency team moved to the accounts team, Helen said that she enjoyed the new work situation and enjoyed being on the ground floor ' <i>away from the big boss</i> ', ie, the area manager.
Background events	Helen got married just before the start of the research period. She reported that her husband didn't really understand what she was going through with the changes at GID. She found herself talking to her mother a lot which helped, but she was disappointed that she couldn't talk with her husband about her concerns at work.

Personal details	Jane, age 33, female, married, location Manchester, employed 11 and a half years, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	Jane worked on the 2 nd floor in the Customer services unit. Jane was working in commercial property, but dealt directly with the insureds, so worked within Customer services, despite doing commercial insurance work. At the start of the research period, Jane worked in a team of 6 including one part-timer. By the time of the restructure, the team had diminished to just 3 members. Jane's team didn't have a team leader from September 96 until after the restructure in October 97 and felt as though they were being ' <i>left to drift</i> '. Another CS team leader was supposed to support them, but Jane and her colleagues felt unsupported. Despite this, Jane said that the team pulled together and even ' <i>produced the best work state figures for the year</i> ' during the research period.
Background events	Jane reported that she tried ' <i>not to mix home life and work</i> '. However, leading up to the interviews she reported that she had a lot of discussions with her husband and wider family about whether she should start applying for other jobs or ' <i>sit tight</i> ' and see what happens. These discussions helped Jane decide what to do.

Personal details	Jean, age 49, female, married, 3 children, location Manchester, employed 14 years, copy/audio typist
Work setting	Jean worked in a team of 12 on the ground floor of the Manchester building next to the reception and post areas. Unlike in the rest of the building the work area on the ground floor was gloomy, as there were very few windows and thus very little natural light. The area Jean worked in was referred to as <i>"the typing pool"</i> . Desks were arranged in blocks of 4 or 6 with separating screens. The team leader allocated incoming work to typists. Jean described her team leader as being <i>"on a level with us - easy to talk to"</i> .
Background events	Jean didn't report anything that affected her work life. Indeed, she described herself as being <i>"a very steady, level person who isn't really flustered by things."</i>

Personal details	John, age 21, male, single, location Manchester, employed 3 years, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	John worked on the 2 nd floor in the Customer services unit in a large team of 12 underwriters dealing with Personal lines insurance. John was in the same team as Darren and Martin who are also diary/interview research participants. The floor was generally described by most people as <i>"fairly relaxed"</i> compared with other floors, although the underwriters did have to deal with sharp increases in workload during the interview period and leading up to the restructure. John got on well with his team leader who <i>"doesn't hassle us or push us to do things"</i> .
Background events	John was a serious football fan and he said that his moods reflected how his team had performed the previous Saturday. John frequently reported having arguments with his girlfriend, who had moved away to study at University, but who visited Manchester regularly at the weekends. He lived at home with his parents and on a few occasions reported that he was upset because of his parents arguments. He would have liked to move to his own place, but said that he couldn't afford to because he was in debt. John frequently reported having financial problems mainly due to his car breaking down and regularly needing major, expensive repair work.

Personal details	Julia , age 32, female, single, location Liverpool, employed 15 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Julia worked in a team of 12 underwriters in the single crowded floor that remained of the Liverpool office. Gerry, another research participant, was a co-worker. Julia said that although she <i>"felt sorry"</i> for their manager, who was under a lot of stress because of the changes, she felt annoyed at his lack of support.
Background events	Julia's sister also worked for an insurance company and was made redundant just before Christmas 1996. Her mother was very upset and worried about her two daughters and this made Julia feel more upset about the imminent closure of the Liverpool office.

Personal details	Julie , age 34, female, co-habiting, location Southampton, Employed for 18 years, Engineers' assistant
Work setting	Julie worked on the 2 nd floor of the Southampton building in an area screened off from the claims teams who occupied the rest of the floor. Julie's team consisted of 9 women. Julie was the most experienced team member and although she didn't officially hold a 'team leader' post, she was looked upon as the team leader. Julie complained throughout the research period that her department was seen by the rest of the company as <i>"a necessary evil"</i> and for this reason was <i>"stuck in the dark ages"</i> without having the benefit of computer technology. Clerical backup was done on paper and in ledgers. This was due to change, but, unbeknown to the engineers and engineers' assistants, the engineers department was to close and be re-located to Farnham following the restructure, so the long-awaited computer system never materialised during the research period.
Background events	Julie's partner was an engineer who worked at the Guardian office. Julie's decision-making in relation to the closure of the engineers department and the re-location to Farnham were bound up with her partners decisions. Julie had become disenchanted with her work situation. She enjoyed her job, but was becoming increasingly frustrated during the research period because <i>"we can't do the job we are supposed to do because of staff numbers, lack of training and lack of equipment"</i> .

Personal details	June , age 56, female, married, 4 children, location Manchester, employed 15 years, admin support, u'writing
Work setting	June worked on the 2 nd floor in the same team as Jane, another of the diary/interview research participants. June provided clerical support both for her own team and for other Customer services teams on the 2 nd floor. Her desk area was decorated with lots of postcards and photographs of her family. June described her work as <i>"monotonous, not everybody's cup of tea, but I like it"</i> . June said that she <i>"look(s) after the morale of the team because we don't have a team leader as such"</i> .
Background events	June's husband worked in the same office on the ground floor in the post room . June described Guardian as her <i>"extended family"</i> and felt <i>"protective and motherly"</i> towards her colleagues. June reported that it was the social aspects of work that were most important to her, rather than the work itself.

Personal details	Karen , age 20, female, single, location Reading, employed 2 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Karen worked in the same team as Dan on the 2 nd floor in a team of 6 Corporate Underwriters. Karen looked to her team leader for support on a number of occasions during the research period. She was one of the younger members of the team and felt <i>"looked after by the others"</i> which she liked.
Background events	Karen had her own horse and was a very keen horserider. One of her main reasons for wanting to work for Guardian was because of the flexible working that enabled her to leave work before 5pm each day so that she could see to her horse. During the research period, Karen had been able to negotiate with the team so that the changes to the hours and removal of flexitime had not changed her ability to leave work before 5pm. However she was aware that this might change and was looking into the possibility of alternative employment.

Personal details	Kate, age 24, female, married, location Manchester, employed 3 years (graduate programme), Claims Personal liability
Work setting	Kate worked in a Personal liability claims team on the 4th floor. The 4th floor was very crowded and there seemed to be a lot of re-shuffling of people on the 4th floor during the research period in an attempt to create more space and in the lead up to the Claims Process Review. Kate liked the department manager but didn't "respect" her superintendant because he was "just not skilled technically or in management". Following her promotion to team leader after the restructure, Kate stayed sitting in the same desk space and was a lot happier with the new manager who replaced her old superintendant..
Background events	Kate felt that her 'graduate trainee' status set her apart from other staff who perceived that she received "preferential treatment". Following the restructure, Kate was promoted to team leader and there was a lot of jealousy in her team and bad feeling towards her because of this appointment. This was confirmed independently by one of Kate's colleagues. The claims department had moved from the Liverpool office 6 months prior to the start of the research period. Kate had chosen to relocate from Liverpool to Manchester along with her husband who also worked for GID as a claims inspector. Kate and her husband wanted to start a family. Although Kate was quite negative about GID she said that she stayed working for the company because she loved her work and also because if she did become pregnant, GID offered generous maternity leave.

Personal details	Lillian, Age 27, female, single, Southampton, employed 9 years, Claims - household
Work setting	Lillian worked on the 1st floor of the Southampton office in the household claims section. There were 12 in Lillian's team, although the team was split informally into 2 according to type of household claim. The team had all worked together for a number of years and got along very well. Although the office environment at Southampton was generally run down, Lillian's team occupied a pleasant space and were not as cramped as other teams. Lillian described the section as very friendly, but says that she doesn't "get involved with all the gossiping and discussing that goes on in the section". Two other diary/interview participants, Mia and Sue, were in the same team as Lillian. Lillian liked her claims manager and team leader, but thought that her section leader withheld information both from the team and from his superiors.
Background events	Lillian had a number of friends who worked in other insurance companies. Lillian thought that, compared to other insurance companies, Guardian treated staff well.

Personal details	Lisa, age 24, female, single, location Manchester, employed 6 months, Claims - Household & Personal liability
Work setting	Lisa worked in the claims department on the 4 th floor in a large team of 16. Most of her work was related to household claims, but she had started being trained to do Personal liability claims. Lisa's desk space was very cramped. She described her department as being <i>"extremely busy and hectic"</i> . Lisa was involved with training other people to do household claims and was regularly interrupted by her colleagues to answer questions relating to household claims, often whilst she was on the telephone to a customer. Lisa liked and respected both her team and unit manager.
Background events	Before joining Guardian, Lisa had been working for another insurer and when first interviewed for the research, she thought that Guardian were <i>"wonderful in terms of benefits and working environment"</i> compared to her previous employers. At the 2 nd research interview she described feeling <i>"more cynical and guarded"</i> and feeling <i>"not as rosey"</i> about Guardian. Lisa described her father as being a major influence in her life and someone to whom she turned when she needed advice. She spoke to her father regularly about the changes at work.

Personal details	Lisabeth, age 21, female, married, location Southampton, employed 5 years, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	Lisabeth worked on the 3 rd floor of the Southampton office in Customer services underwriting. The whole floor was part of the Customer services department. Lisabeth dealt with motor and household insurance and was part of a large team of 22. The team was subdivided into 2, each with a team leader. Lisabeth found her team leader a bit <i>"cliquey"</i> in that she felt that the team leader <i>"has her favourites"</i> . Lisabeth felt excluded from the team sometimes. Lisabeth put this down to being young, but she was upset by the favouritism from time to time. During May 97, after a desk change around, Lisabeth found herself sitting in the cubicle next to her team leader. Lisabeth reported that she started getting on much better with her team leader from then on.
Background events	Lisabeth had a serious car accident in November and a subsequent miscarriage. She was off work for a month following the accident, during which time she started counselling sessions. Lisabeth became pregnant again in May 97 and was worried about having another miscarriage. Lisabeth took quite a lot of time off early on in the pregnancy because of morning sickness and again late in the pregnancy. Lisabeth decided that she would like to come back to work part-time after the baby was born, and this was approved by her manager. Lisabeth's salary was lower than that of others in her team, but she did manage to secure a small raise during the research period, but not enough to <i>"bring me up to the level of everyone else"</i> .

Personal details	Louise, age 20, female, single then married at end of research period, location Manchester, employed 6 mo's, Secretary to Claims manager
Work setting	Louise worked on the 4 th floor as secretary to the manager of the Claims department. Her desk was situated immediately outside the Claims manager's office. Louise frequently complained about lack of space and lack of privacy, but towards the end of the research period had managed <i>"to gain an extra few feet and get a bit more privacy"</i> . Her desk was extremely neat and tidy in contrast to the general appearance of desks on the 4 th floor. She got on very well with the Claims manager, but often reported friction with a particular Claims superintendent who worked close by. Louise reported that because of her close relationship with the Claims manager, she had a lot of <i>"in advance"</i> information about change which had to be kept from her colleagues in claims. She said that she found it difficult to <i>"keep secrets"</i> and reported that although she enjoyed <i>"being in the know"</i> , she also experienced some discomfort because of this.
Background events	Louise had a lot to deal with in her personal life during the research period. She became engaged at the start of the research period and was married in September 1997, towards the end of the research period. Louise's mother was diagnosed with liver cancer in May 1997 and died in July 1997. Louise was very close to her mother and took some time off work during the May-July period to be with her mother. Although Louise took some time off and reported that <i>"my mind is not on work at the moment"</i> , she also reported working hard during that period and said that <i>"working is good to take my mind off it"</i> . Louise said that Guardian were very understanding and that <i>"they (her managers) have told me I can leave the office at any time I need to"</i> .

Personal details	Lucy, age 27, female, divorced during research period, location Southampton, employed 8 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Lucy worked on the 7 th floor in a small team of 3 which was part of a larger team of commercial underwriters. The team worked exclusively for 2 large clients and were quite autonomous. Lucy liked her colleagues and felt that they all worked well together. Lucy got on well with her manager and was frequently chosen by her manager to go to visit clients. Although essentially Rachel and Lucy did the same job, Lucy had higher <i>"underwriting skill levels"</i> than Rachel. Lucy was offered and accepted a team leader position starting July 97 heading up a new team on the 4 th floor dealing with a free insurance scheme. This was a lot of work, but Lucy found it <i>"very enjoyable and satisfying"</i> .
Background events	Lucy had moved to Southampton from the Guardian office in Birmingham 18 months prior to the start of the research period. She split up from her husband and decided to <i>"make a clean break and move from Birmingham"</i> . Lucy's divorce was granted in February 1997 and she was relieved when it was over. Lucy was off work for 6 weeks during November/December convalescing following a bout of glandular fever.

Personal details	Margaret, age 56, female, married, 2 children, 1 grandchild, location Manchester, employed 13 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Until the restructure, Margaret worked on the 1 st floor in a Corporate underwriting team headed by <i>"a very ambitious team leader"</i> . There were 8 in her team and both Margaret and her team leader described their team as <i>"a flagship and a pilot scheme for the area"</i> . The team were encouraged to <i>"take charge of our own destiny"</i> and were told <i>"if we don't get the business in and do a good job, then we won't have a job"</i> . Margaret described being <i>"under pressure all the time really"</i> at work. Margaret had <i>"run in's"</i> with her team leader over the amount of pressure she was being put under.
Background events	Margaret's husband also worked as an underwriter for GID. Margaret described how the atmosphere at home was very tense during the selection interview period because both her and her husband felt vulnerable because of their age. Margaret suffered two bereavements during the research period. Firstly, her mother died at the start of the research period. Then, her closest friend was diagnosed with a brain tumour in April 1997. Her friend had an operation and chemotherapy and died at the end of August 1997. Her son got married in June 1997 and this was described as <i>"the only high point of a terrible year"</i> . Margaret fainted at work at the beginning of June 1997 and went to see her doctor. She started taking Prozac on the advice of the doctor. The Prozac gave Margaret side effects so she stopped taking them at the end of June and started to see a stress counsellor and a hypnotherapist. Margaret reported having fainted or <i>"nearly fainted"</i> or that she <i>"had a funny turn"</i> at work on 4 occasions during the selection interview period in May/June 1997. Margaret reported feeling somewhat better following the stress counselling and hypnotherapy sessions.

Personal details	Martin, age 25, male, single, location Manchester, employed 7 years, Corporate then Personal lines motor underwriter
Work setting	Martin had been in the same Corporate underwriting team as Margaret, but had transferred in January 1997 <i>"because of the pressure"</i> when a Customer services position became vacant. Martin worked on the 2 nd floor in the same team as John and Darren, 2 other diary/interview research participants. The team had 12 people, but a sub-group of 5 worked on motor. Martin hoped that he wouldn't be moved back to the 1 st floor because <i>"for the money you earn the pressure is immense, so I'd rather have less pressure, that's the bottom line."</i> His new team leader was described as <i>"nice, a bit soft really, which is good - less grey hairs for me"</i> .
Background events	Martin enjoyed the social aspect of his work life and was active in making arrangements for the team to go out to social events like bowling and go-Karting. Martin also socialised regularly with other underwriters outside his own team. Martin had been on the work 'social committee', but they hadn't met in months because management had stopped them from holding their bi-monthly hour long meeting during work time and it had proved too difficult to arrange a non-work time that suited everyone. Martin expressed bitterness towards Guardian management, reporting that <i>"management are cutting away all the time at any benefits or perks we had"</i> .

Personal details	Mia, age 26, female, divorced then co-habiting, location Southampton, employed 9 years, Claims - household
Work setting	Mia worked in the same team as Lillian and Sue on the 1 st floor of the Southampton building. The group of 12 women in the team had all worked together for a number of years and got along very well. Mia did report that sometimes the team was <i>"a bit too gossipy and bitchy"</i> for her liking. Mia got on well with the claims managers and her team leader, but thought that her team leader was often <i>"at the hub of the gossip"</i> which Mia didn't think was appropriate. Mia was critical of the claims superintendent (also called section leader) whom she accused of trying <i>"to protect his image, so things don't get through to the top because he doesn't want to look bad."</i>
Background events	Mia lived with an underwriting team leader from Guardian. She had split up from her husband a year before the research started. Her parents were very angry with her and she hadn't spoken with them since splitting up with her husband. Mia lived with her new boyfriend at her home. Mia was pregnant at the start of the research period, but had a miscarriage in November 96. Mia sold her home in May and had a further miscarriage a week before moving into her boyfriend's parents' home. Mia's interview date was 3 days after she had a miscarriage. Mia found this period very difficult, as she felt unable to explain her volatile emotional state to her colleagues and managers. Mia and her boyfriend moved into their own home in July. Mia became pregnant again in November 97 at the end of the research period.

Personal details	Nicola, age 27, female, single, location Manchester, employed 6 months, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	Nicola was one of the few Personal lines underwriters working on the 1 st floor within the Corporate section. The business Nicola worked on had been transferred from Liverpool in early 96 and most of Nicola's team were relatively new recruits to Guardian. There were complaints that there was no one to train them adequately. All but one of the Liverpool staff who transferred over to the Manchester team returned to Liverpool to work for Eagle Star within a month. Nicola was very focused upon her backlog of work during the research period and mostly reported that she was extremely busy with a very high backlog of work. The pressure of work was so great towards the end of the research period that Nicola started applying for other jobs and left Guardian for another insurance company in December 1997. Nicola liked her team leader and described him as being <i>"on the same level as us - down to earth"</i> .
Background events	Nicola described her ability to <i>"draw a firm line between work and home"</i> so that although she frequently described being under a lot of pressure at work, she said that this didn't impact upon her home life. Nicola described herself as <i>"sociable"</i> , but although she got on well with her colleagues, she didn't socialise with people from work.

Personal details	Paul, age 25, male, married, location Southampton, employed for 6 years, LAN administrator
Work setting	Paul was based on the 1 st floor at the edge of the accounts and cashiers section. There were a team of 4 LAN administrators for the South East area and although Paul was based mainly in Southampton, he was called away to work at the other offices from time to time when there was <i>"a big job on"</i> . Paul worked all over the building maintaining, updating and fixing computers. Paul got on <i>"extremely well"</i> with the Facilities manager who gave Paul <i>"a great deal of autonomy"</i> . Paul moved from Reading to Southampton once Southampton became the area office and was very pleased that he had made the move.
Background events	Paul's wife also worked at Guardian and relocated from Reading with Paul 6 months prior to the start of the research period. Paul's wife became pregnant early on in the research period, but the baby was diagnosed at 20 weeks as having severe spina bifida with the recommendation to terminate the pregnancy. Paul was extremely upset by this and took some time off work so that he and his wife could <i>"spend some time together and try to come to terms with what has happened"</i> .

Personal details	Peter, age 17, male, single, 1 child, location Manchester, employed 3 months, Post messenger
Work setting	Peter was based on the ground floor as a post messenger, but moved around the office during the day delivering and collecting post. Peter was not liked by the other 2 messengers who had both been working at Guardian for over 20 years. Peter was seen as <i>"a rebel who gives cheek and won't wear the proper uniform"</i> . Peter knew that he wasn't liked, but said that <i>"it's just water off a duck's back to me"</i> and that <i>"there's plenty that does like me in the building"</i> . Peter didn't like being <i>"told what to do"</i> and was much happier when one or other of the messengers was off sick or on holiday so that he could <i>"do things the way I want to do them"</i> . Peter described the job as <i>"quite boring really, but it's ok being able to move around the floors and it's money at the end of the day"</i> . Peter was made redundant following the restructure but was offered a panel beating apprenticeship which commenced in November 97 at the end of the research period.
Background events	In March 97 Peter was involved in a <i>"scuffle"</i> at work with one of the other messengers. This was said by other staff to be the reason he was made redundant. During June Peter was being investigated by the police for his role in an attack on another young man after a night out drinking. Peter said that he knew he was <i>"in the right so I'm not bothered"</i> . In September 1997 Peter was <i>"surprised"</i> to discover that he had a 7 month old son. He found out after his ex-girlfriend contacted him unexpectedly. He said that he intended to start having regular contact with the baby and that he saw having the baby as <i>"a huge responsibility"</i> .

Personal details	Rachel, age 25, female, location Southampton, employed for 8.5 years, Corporate underwriter
Work setting	Rachel worked in a small group of 3 women who worked exclusively with 2 large clients. Lucy, another diary/interview participant was on her team. They were part of a larger team of commercial underwriters working on the top floor of the building. Generally the 3 got on very well, but Rachel was <i>"a bit jealous of the favouritism"</i> she perceived was given to Lucy by their manager.
Background events	At the start of the research period, Rachel had a boyfriend who worked away a lot and she didn't see him as much as she would have liked. This was affecting her concentration at work. Their relationship ended in February and she started seeing someone else and reported that <i>"he's lovely - completely different to Dave and for once I'm well happy, so I'm happy at work."</i> This coincided with Rachel being reprimanded by her manager for spending too much time on personal phone calls at work. Rachel often reported feeling <i>"picked on"</i> by her manager. Pay was also an issue. One of the group was paid more than the others, although there was a perception that they all did the same work. Rachel frequently opted to do overtime on Saturdays in order to <i>"make ends meet"</i> .

Personal details	Ron, age 21, male, co-habiting then married June 1997, 1 child, location Manchester, employed 2 and a half years, Admin support - underwriting
Work setting	Ron worked on the 3 rd floor, which dealt mainly in personal lines business, in a corner of the office, cut off from the main office by a high screen. His area housed printers which printed off insurance policies and schedules generated by underwriters. Ron worked with one other young man and they checked the policies and schedules against the relevant files before posting them off. Ron said that being separated off gave him and his partner a lot of autonomy which he liked. Although he was part of a larger team, he felt <i>"We are more like a team of 2 really. No one knows the in's and out's of our job"</i> . Ron didn't have much to do with his team leader, because Ron thought that he didn't know anything about Ron's job. Ron tended to bypass his team leader and go straight to his unit manager. This annoyed the team leader, but Ron said that he <i>"didn't care"</i> . Following the restructure there was friction between Ron and his partner because Ron's partner was with Partner Support and put on fixed hours, whereas Ron was grouped with Response and continued having flexitime.
Background events	At the start of the research period Ron's baby was only a few months old and he described feeling <i>"exhausted having disturbed sleep"</i> . Flexitime suited him very well because he could <i>"go later into the office if I've had a rough night"</i> . Ron got married in June 1997, during the interview selection process, and described the preparations leading up to the marriage as <i>"a strain"</i> . His grandmother died suddenly just before his wedding and this was a source of great sadness for Ron and for his family.

Personal details	Sarah, age 30, female, co-habiting, location Manchester, employed 10 years, Claims, Motor
Work setting	Sarah worked in a motor claims team with 13 other people. Although her speciality was motor, she was keen to do personal injury claims and had been promised this as a <i>"sweetener for getting me to move over from Liverpool last year"</i> . Sarah was one of the more senior members of her team and was frequently called upon for advice. Sarah resented having to <i>"shout over 6 lots of desks all the time"</i> . Her desk was situated at the end of her team's block, next to bookshelves with books relating to claims and insurance law which the underwriters sometimes needed for reference. She wasn't happy with her location, but said she <i>"will stick it out because they should be moving me to personal injury soon anyway"</i> . Sarah reported that the motor claims team was <i>"very hectic with always too much work and too little time"</i> . Following the restructure, Sarah was promoted to team leader with claims Response and remained in the same desk space. The promotion was <i>"bitter sweet"</i> as Sarah's chances of being trained in personal injury claims became even more remote. Sarah got on well with her superintendent but didn't trust her department manager.
Background events	Although pleased personally about moving from Liverpool to Manchester, Sarah was not happy with how things had worked out for her work-wise. She had been expecting to be trained on personal injury claims, but had ended up training other people on motor and said that her <i>"personal training and development record for the last 18 months is empty"</i> . But, Sarah felt that financially it would be beneficial for her to stay at Guardian for a year or so. Part of her benefits involved membership of a share scheme where she stood to gain a lot if she didn't withdraw before October 1998.

Personal details	Sheila, age 47, married, 2 children, location Reading, employed 16 and a half years, typist
Work setting	Sheila worked on the 3 rd floor of the Reading offices. Sheila was only 1 of 2 typists. She had watched the 'typing pool' diminish from <i>"30 girls to just us 2"</i> during her years with the Company. Although the 3 rd floor was very quiet, Sheila liked her location. Sheila and her colleague were <i>"hidden away"</i> behind a high partition screen. Sheila was happy with her team leader and department manager. She described them as <i>"trustworthy and reliable in the way they give us information about what is going on"</i> . Following the restructure, Sheila was moved <i>"right in the middle of the 1st floor, overlooked by everybody"</i> . Sheila wasn't happy about this, but once she'd moved she said it was fine and that people left her and her colleague to <i>"get on with our work"</i> .
Background events	Sheila said that she took the job when her children were older because she was <i>"bored at home"</i> . She stressed that she didn't need the money, but liked being busy and there wasn't enough to stimulate her at home.

Personal details	Steve, age 31, male, married, location Southampton, employed 5 and half years, Post messenger, union rep and branch delegate
Work setting	Steve worked as a post messenger and was based in the large post sorting section on the 1 st floor. However, he also had responsibility for stationery for the area and spent his mornings in the basement of the building in the stationery room. Here he was alone and it gave him <i>"space to pursue my involvement as BIFU rep and branch delegate to the unions division council"</i> . Steve did not get along with his team leader who was suspended for 3 weeks during the research period pending the outcome of a disciplinary hearing involving her treatment of one of Steve's post room colleagues. Although Steve reported that the managers were generally supportive of his union involvement, Steve felt that his team leader resented the time he spent on union business and made <i>"life difficult"</i> for him. Following the restructure, Steve moved to the claims department in a new role where he would sort, deliver and collect post within the department.
Background events	Steve was married to a team leader at GID who also worked on the 1 st floor at Southampton. Steve was concerned that his move to the claims department would limit the amount of time he would be able to spend on union business, but was <i>"glad to get away from my old team leader"</i> .

Personal details	Sue, age 34, female, married, location Southampton, employed 8 years, Claims - household
Work setting	Sue worked in the same team as Lillian and Mia on the 1 st floor of the Southampton building. The 12 team members had all worked together for a number of years and got along very well. <i>"We all help each other out here. If someone needs help, there's no need to ask, another colleague will just step in without even being asked."</i> Sue liked her immediate team leader, but didn't get on well with the claims superintendent or the claims department manager. The claims department manager was generally well liked by staff at Southampton, but Sue had had a bad experience with him in the past and reported that she <i>"can't forgive him"</i> . Sue thought that the claims superintendent was <i>"too ambitious for his own good. He just doesn't tell it how it is and management are going to find out I hope"</i> .
Background events	Sue had a history of stress-related illness. During the research period she was off work <i>"with stress"</i> after Christmas 96 for 5 weeks, again in August 97 for 2 weeks and again in October/November 97. Sue took medication for stress. Sue thought that changing her medication over Christmas 96 had caused the first bout of illness, but she blamed pressure at work for the other 2 bouts of illness. Sue reported that she relied a lot on her husband for support and advice. Sue's husband was a manager and Sue felt that he understood the situation at Guardian and was able to <i>"make me less worried about things"</i> .

Personal details	Susan, age 26, female, married during research period, location Manchester, employed 18 months, Claims, Motor
Work setting	Susan worked in the same large claims team as Sarah. Susan was happy that she sat near her superintendant because Susan liked her and felt that she could draw on her superintendant's expertise at any time because they sat so close. Although Susan was relatively inexperienced, because she had worked for Guardian a year longer than most other workers in her team, she was thought of as being senior and called upon to help people out with their workload and train newcomers. The team was always very busy and the workload too high for the number of staff. There was a company wide freeze on recruitment during the research period and a virtual ban on overtime, so that conscientious people like Susan ended up working many extra hours unpaid.
Background events	Susan said about her job at Guardian ' <i>this is a job for now, not a lifelong career. I get paid OK and can do the job OK, so it's alright for now</i> '. Susan had moved up to Manchester from Kent because her husband had relocated with his job. She thought that they would probably move back down South in a year or so. They got married in June 97 following the selection interview period, but despite organising much of the wedding herself, Susan did not report feeling under pressure during that time.

Personal details	Tom, age 25, male, single, location Reading, employed 6 years, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	Tom worked on the 1 st floor of the Reading office in a busy Customer services team of 9. The team was very noisy with phones ringing constantly, people asking each other questions, and often having to shout over several people. Tom thought that his manager was " <i>OK, but full of the usual management jargon so it's difficult to take him seriously</i> ". Following the restructure, Tom got a new manager whom he didn't like and with whom he had a number of heated arguments. Tom got on well with his team and team leader. Tom didn't see any good career prospects with Guardian and felt that the Customer services underwriters were overlooked in favour of the Corporate underwriters. He sensed a strong division between the 1 st and 2 nd floors and felt intimidated if ever he had to visit the 2 nd floor.
Background events	Tom was not happy with his job and talked about his wish to take time off and travel to Australia. He had joined Guardian straight from school and had surprised himself by staying there for 6 years. Although he wanted to leave, he said that he was " <i>scared to leave because it is the unknown</i> ". Tom put himself forward for voluntary redundancy, but was not offered redundancy. He looked for other jobs during the research period, but although the job market was buoyant in Reading at that time, he couldn't find anything that he liked.

Personal details	Tracey, age 21, female, co-habiting, location Reading, employed 3 years, Accounts clerk
Work setting	Tracey worked on the 1 st floor of the Reading office. Although the physical working environment was very pleasant, Tracey said that she was unhappy at work because she was bullied by her colleagues. Tracey liked her department manager, but said that her team leader was a bully. Tracey described being " <i>picked on</i> " because she wouldn't work extra hours unpaid when the workload was heavy. Tracey was paid considerably less than her colleagues, many of whom had been in their jobs for many years and were overpaid according to market rates because of having received large yearly increments.
Background events	Tracey moved in with her boyfriend in November 96 at the start of the research period. Generally she reported feeling happy with her life outside work, but very unhappy with her life at work. In March 97 Tracey started to say that she was having money worries and that living away from her parents was more expensive than she had imagined. The lack of pay rise, coupled with her unhappiness at work drove Tracey to look for another job and she left the Company at the end of the research period.

Personal details	Trudy, age 33, female, single, location Reading, employed 5 years, Personal lines underwriter
Work setting	Trudy worked on the 1 st floor of the Reading office in the Customer services underwriting section. Trudy worked mainly with household insurance, but was also trained to deal with motor insurance. Trudy was not happy at work and had put her name on the voluntary redundancy list 6 months prior to the start of the research period. Trudy thought that her colleagues were " <i>OK</i> " but didn't like her team leader and manager because she felt that they had singled her out for taking too much time off sick.
Background events	Trudy had 2 jobs. She worked in a bar on weekday evenings after working at Guardian. Trudy was concerned that the changes to the hours might interfere with her night time job. Trudy said that she drank alcohol as it " <i>relieves the tension</i> " she was under at Guardian. Trudy said that she had to have 2 jobs " <i>in order to make ends meet</i> ". Trudy left the company at the end of August 1997 without serving notice after she had a letter directing her to see the company medical examiner because of the amount of sick leave she had taken during the previous 9 months.

Personal details	Vicky, age 24, female, married, location Reading, employed 7 years, Receptionist/Accounts clerk
Work setting	Vicky worked behind a reception desk at the entrance to the Guardian offices in Reading. The working environment was light and spacious. She worked in a small team of 3 which was part of the larger accounts team. Although Vicky got on very well with her colleague, she described her team leader as <i>"a workaholic who can't have a laugh and has always got his beady eyes on you"</i> . Vicky enjoyed the times when her team leader was out of the office, but felt <i>"under constant watch"</i> when he was around. Vicky was the union representative for her floor.
Background events	Vicky had been trying to have a baby for the past 4 years and had just had IVF treatment at the start of the research period. The treatment involved frequent trips to the hospital but Vicky said that the company had been very understanding. Her first attempt was unsuccessful and very upsetting for Vicky. She tried again some months later and discovered in July that she was pregnant with twins. This coloured Vicky's views about the company. Vicky did not intend to go back to work after having her babies and was <i>"just marking time until I leave"</i> . Vicky's main focus during the research period appeared to be upon her fertility treatment and then her pregnancy and reported <i>"I have so much more on my mind and work is at the bottom"</i> .

APPENDIX 6.1 -

Summary tables showing participants' feelings about and responses to Demeter

The following tables draw together all of the summary tables presented at the end of each section of Chapter 6. The first table summarises participants' feelings about the various aspects of Demeter and categorises these as either positive, negative or neutral. The second table summarises participants' responses to the various aspects of Demeter. These responses are categorised as either leading to engagement with the situation, or leading to disengagement from the situation (Steptoe 1991).

Table 6.11 - Summary of feelings about Demeter change

Feelings - Positive/negative	Personality/WLOC	Job Insecurity Examples	Uncertainty Examples	Interview Examples	Workload Examples	Adjustment Examples
Positive	N					Excited, positive, confident, happier, enjoy recognition, Treated fairly
Negative	N	Shocked, worried, scared, insecure Useless, vulnerable On edge, distracted Annoyed, angry, bitter, upset	Unsettled, angry, despondent	Angry, insulted Worried, nervous	Stressed, upset, angry	Worry, fearful Annoyance, unhappy, upset, frustrated Apprehensive Treated unfairly
Positive	S	Confident		Confident	Like pressure, like to be busy, satisfying	Excited, positive, confident, happier, enjoy recognition, Treated fairly
Neutral	S	Not bothered, not worried, not affected	Not enough information to comment	Interviews just a formality/routine		
Negative	S		Feel sorry for others			Annoyance, unhappy, upset, frustrated Apprehensive Treated unfairly
Negative	N/E	Worries triggered by rumours				
Positive	E					Excited, positive, confident, happier, enjoy recognition, Treated fairly
Negative	E	Frustrated by lack of information	Upset, worried by anticipated team member movements			Annoyance, unhappy, upset, frustrated Apprehensive Treated unfairly
Positive	I					Excited, positive, confident, happier, enjoy recognition, Treated fairly

Table 6.11 Continued ...

Feelings - Positive/negative	Personality/WLOC	Job Insecurity Examples	Uncertainty Examples	Interview Examples	Workload Examples	Adjustment Examples
Negative	I		Worried about increases in workload if lose team members			Annoyance, unhappy, upset, frustrated Apprehensive Treated unfairly
Positive	Internal WLOC					Excited, positive, confident, happier, enjoy recognition, Treated fairly
Negative	Internal WLOC	Frustrated by lack information	Frustrated by lack information			Annoyance, unhappy, upset, frustrated Apprehensive Treated unfairly
Positive	External WLOC					Excited, positive, confident, happier, enjoy recognition, Treated fairly
Negative	External WLOC					Annoyance, unhappy, upset, frustrated Apprehensive Treated unfairly
Negative	N/External WLOC		Suspicious of management			

Table 6.12 - Summary of responses to consequences of Demeter change

Engages with/ Disengages from	Personality/ WLOC	Job Insecurity Examples	Uncertainty Examples	Interview Examples	Workload Examples	Adjustment Examples
Disengage	N	Hope, wait + see, switch off, escape, distraction, Stress related illness	Wait + see (defeated, unmotivated, performance suffers)		Exercise, walk away from situation, Stress-related illness	Fearful of voicing opinions re new role, Passive acceptance manager behaviour
Engage	N			Analyses, 'all in the same boat'		Dwells upon negative feeling about job loss
Engage	S	Analyses situation, looks at 'big picture' Develops contingency plans			Focus, get 'stuck in', challenge, interested, like pressure	Addresses concerns about new role, makes best of things, Addresses concerns about new manager Explores job options, focus on future
Disengage	S		Wait + see (ride it out, try to stay positive, make the best of it)			
Engage	N/IntWLOC	Prepares for interview Positive thinking		Interview preparation	Work extra hours	
Engage	N/ExtWLOC			Dwells on problem		
Disengage	N/ExtWLOC	Wait + see, ignore Hope				
Engage	S/IntWLOC	Job seeks Prepares for interview Contingency plans			Reorganise, improve efficiency, 'step up a gear'	
Engage	IntWLOC	Seeks information	Information seeking Reflects upon/analyses prior exp. of change Carry on as usual	Uses interview as opportunity to develop career		
Disengage	I					Walk out, switch off, leave Company in response relationship issues
Engage	E					Settles into team, addresses relationship issues

Table 6.12 - Continued ...

Engages with/ Disengages from	Personality/ WLOC	Job Insecurity Examples	Uncertainty Examples	Interview Examples	Workload Examples	Adjustment Examples
Disengage	ExtWLOC		Why bother, given up, just accept			
Engage	N/E	Impression management - demonstrates high performance level	Seeks support, talks to colleagues/ managers to obtain reassurance, express emotion		Seeks support - both problem- and emotion- focused	
Disengage	S/E	Wait + see - in respect of rumours				
Disengage	S/I			Avoid contact with anxious colleagues		
Engage	N/E/IntWLOC S/IntWLOC	Seeks support, talks to colleagues/ managers to help form an opinion, make a decision				
Engage	N/E/ExtWLOC	Seeks support, talks to colleagues/ Managers to obtain reassurance, to lessen worry, to express emotion				